

These cantors have engaged a lawyer and tried to get a hearing at the State House. They succeeded in getting a hearing. Another hearing was granted them, and since there was no opposition the hearing committee ruled in favor of the cantors. We now read in the papers that the cantors' argument was that they have always been the "religious representatives" of the Jewish people, and that the rabbis are only "judges", who answer questions and solve problems when called upon to do so. And, therefore, the cantors alleged, they, the cantors, have always performed the marriage ceremonies among the Jewish people. This argument has caused the hearing committee which was composed of men to whom the whole problem was entirely foreign, to rule in favor of the cantors.

Such falsehood must not be tolerated by us, for if we passed it over in silence, the Talmudic words could justly be applied to us (גיטין נ"ו) "The modesty of Rabbi Zechariah Ben Avcules has ruined our house, has burned our temple, and has banished us from our land." It seemed that rabbis could no longer perform marriage ceremonies, this being the sole right of the cantors.

We called together all the members of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of Massachusetts (not just "a few rabbis" as the newspaper report would have it; or, in other words of the cantors' attorney," a few fanatics") and all the rabbis unanimously agreed that we must raise our voice in protest and demand that the bill be held over until we had our say in the matter. Many rabbis even resented that we kept silent so long. "We should have come out with it dauntlessly" they said, "disregarding public opinion." "The religious Jew," they argued, "would always side with us, and the non-religious element will not care, anyway, as they will prefer the cantors to the rabbis."

At the same time we were informed by the newspapers that the cantors had presented to the Legislature a document signed by a reformed rabbi, permitting the cantors to perform marriage ceremonies. If this report be true, it is amazing, indeed surprising, that the reformed rabbi in question should have signed such a document. We know that this rabbi is a well educated and wise gentleman, and he certainly must have known that it isn't reform ceremonies that the cantors are after. For everyone knows, and, above all, the reformed rabbi himself that a reformed Jew does not seek the services of a cantor for the purpose of performing a marriage ceremony, this honor belonging exclusively to the reformed rabbi, for the ultra reform faction knows of no cantors even inside the temple. The so-called "conservative-reformed" Jew, on the other hand, engages a conservative-reformed rabbi as a rule, so that excludes the possibility of the cantors trying to get permission to officiate at weddings of the latter type. The only kind of a ceremony, then, to which the cantors seek legal access is one performed for the orthodox class of Jews, who wish to marry their children "according to the Holy Torah and they should be observed, and the officiator should honestly and sincerely mean it when he pronounces the words of the "Blessing" "He who sanctifies His people Israel by the rite of the canopy and the sacred covenant of wedlock" — mean it according to all the holy traditions and inferences connected with these words since time immemorial. And when the officiator blesses the bride and the groom "O make these loved companions greatly to rejoice, even as of Old thou didst gladden thy creature in the Garden of Eden," he should really understand the meaning of the blessing and believe in it with all his heart and soul. Now then the question arises, what authority did that reformed rabbi have to overrule our holy code of laws, our (שלח ערוך) by issuing the permission that he did? Wouldn't it be much more appropriate for him to tell the cantors that he cannot interfere in orthodox Jewish affairs? When parents, and the bride and groom wish a ceremony "according to the laws of Moses and Israel," and the marriage officiator does