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3700 Henry Hudson Pkwy Bronx, NY 10463

AVRAHAM WEISS
Senior Rabbi

5 Shevat 5774
January 6, 2014

STEVEN EXLER
Rabbi

Via Facsimile and Federal Express

SARA HURWITZ
Rabba

Attention:
Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef
The Rishon LeZion
Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel
80 Yirmiyahu St. (Beit Yahav)
Jerusalem

Attention:
Rabbi David Lau
Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel
80 Yirmiyahu St. (Beit Yahav)
Jerusalem

ELLI KRANZLER
Shaliach Tzibbur

BERNARD HOROWITZ
Ba'al Kriah

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Director of Youth Programming
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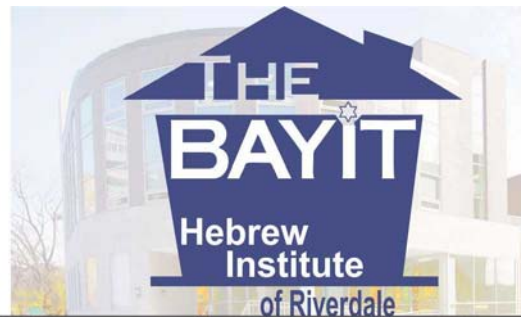
HILLEL JAFFE
Secretary/Treasurer

GILLIAN STEINBERG
Financial Secretary

As the lay leadership of an Orthodox synagogue that serves several hundred families under the spiritual guidance of Rabbi Avraham Weiss, we respectfully write in the spirit of *ahavat Yisrael* to express our tremendous sorrow and disappointment with the decision of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate and our great love and support for our *Morah D'Atra*.

During the 41 years that he has served as the Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, Rabbi Weiss has taught us by example through his commitment to *halacha*, Orthodox practice, and great love for Israel and all Jews. He has inspired and taught hundreds, if not thousands, of *baalei t'shuva* individuals and families, helping them seek out and ultimately embrace a *halachic* way of life. With Rabbi Weiss's encouragement, mentoring and emotional support, more than 100 families from the synagogue (including his own daughter and her family) have made *aliyah*. Rabbi Weiss has made our synagogue a *makom Torah* and a model of how a place of worship can become a spiritual home that is open and welcoming to all. Through his teaching and by example, Rabbi Weiss has strengthened our commitments to *halacha* and Orthodoxy; we proudly note that these commitments are evidenced by the fact that the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale is an Orthodox Union synagogue.

Given Rabbi Weiss's and our synagogue's credentials and absolute commitment to *halacha* and Orthodoxy, we were shocked that the Chief Rabbinate of Israel refused to accept Rabbi Weiss's letters attesting to the Jewish identity of our fellow congregants. This refusal adversely impacts all of our members and challenges the legitimacy of our entire *kehilla*. Moreover, it calls into question the Orthodox credentials of every rabbi and challenges the legitimacy of the Orthodox *kehillot* that they lead and serve.



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For the Chief Rabbinate to reach this conclusion based upon the undisclosed allegations of a few unnamed rabbis and without citation to any traditional *halachic* authority suggests a political rather than religious basis for this decision. We ask that you name those who have questioned Rabbi Weiss's Orthodoxy and provide citations to the applicable sections of the *Shulchan Aruch* to support your claim that Rabbi Weiss's *halachic* opinions "cast doubt on the level of his commitment to the customary and acceptable Jewish *halacha*." We also ask the Chief Rabbinate to share with us the clear and objective criteria by which it determined from which Rabbis it would accept letters when evaluating personal status issues.

We request that you reconsider your position and immediately reverse your decision regarding our *Rav*. Furthermore, we understand that you have similarly rejected letters from rabbis of other Orthodox communities in the U.S. attesting to the Jewish identity of their members. We urge you to reverse your position in all these cases, and rely exclusively on the legitimacy and trustworthiness vested in these Rabbanim by their Orthodox *kehillot*, since their local communities know them best.

We look forward to receiving your reply.

Sincerely,
The President and Executive Committee of the
Hebrew Institute of Riverdale – the Bayit
together with Past Presidents

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David Schwartz, President
David Braunstein, Executive Vice President
Arthur Bloom, Shira Gordon and Robert Santoriello, Vice Presidents
Ilene Paikin, Recording Secretary
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