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Controversy Continues Over Conversion Ritual For Ethiopians

JERUSALEM (WNS) — The controversy over whether the thousands of Ethiopian Jews who have just immigrated to Israel must undergo "Lehumra" -- a form of conversion ritual -- was heightened here when Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi Avraham Shapiro sharply criticized two former

Chief Rabbis for maintaining it was not required. Shapiro said in an interview published in the religious daily Hatzofe that he could not understand why former Chief Rabbis Shlomo Goren (Ashkenazic) and Ovadia Yosef (Sephardic) have reversed what

he claimed was their own long-standing position on the issue. According to Shapiro, the conversion requirement for Ethiopian Jews was upheld by all past Chief Rabbis of Israel and is the universal view of Torah scholars abroad.

Goren and Yosef, in separate public statements, have disagreed with a recent ruling by the 10-men Chief Rabbinate Council which has caused anger and distress among the Ethiopian emigres. The Council, meeting under the chairmanship of Shapiro and Sephardic Chief Rabbi Mordechai Eliahu, held that the newly arrived Ethiopian Jews must undergo ritual immersion and swear a formal undertaking to observe Halacha -- religious law.

The Council agreed that the males need not undergo bloodletting, symbolic of circumcision, inasmuch as all Ethiopian Jews have been circumcized. Goren and Yosef, citing rabbinic sages of the past, declared that the Ethiopians are fully Jewish and require no conversion, symbolic or otherwise.

"As far as I know," Shapiro said, "the entire Torah world is shocked by (Goren's and Yosef's reversal) and their determination that (the Ethiopians) are full Jews without the need for any process whatsoever..."

The immigrants themselves say that having suffered so much in their native country for being Jews it is an insult and travesty to have their Judaism impugned in Israel. Lehumra is a Halachic concept applied when the smallest doubt exists of a person's Jewish identity. Shapiro said conversion was required because of the possibility that the practices of Ethiopian Jews in matters of marriage and divorce were not according to accepted halachic standards.

Imperial Palace Poker Giveaway Gains In Popularity



AT THE IMPERIAL PALACE, A "POKER FACE" HAS A SMILE! Here Dorothy Burke and Bob Adbnour (3rd and 2nd place winners) congratulate Julius Solomon (center) for his first place, \$500 finish in the weekly Imperial Palace Poker Giveaway.

Tournament chips may not be "real money," but the \$1,000 given away every Friday in the Imperial Palace Poker Giveaway is definitely legal tender. Ask Julius Solomon of Canoga Park, CA, who kept a "poker face" while outlasting 140 players and left smiling ear-to-ear thanks to his \$500 prize. Or ask Bob Adbnour of Tulsa, OK, or Dorothy Burke of Las Vegas who took \$300 and \$200 for second and third places. In fact, everyone was smiling and thanking Joe Palmarozzo, Poker Manager, for a great time.

In the four weeks of his Giveaway, Joe has never had less than 100 entrants. "This week I had to turn five players away because they were too late to register," Joe said regretfully. "Qualified players must register in the Poker Room Friday morning between 9:00 and 9:30 to be guaranteed a seat."

To qualify, a person plays ten hours during the week in the Imperial Palace Poker Room. There is no buy-in.

During the Giveaway, play alternates in rounds between Texas Hold 'Em and Stud, giving "specialists" in either game an equal chance to win.

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