

**SB536: Divorce and Annulment - Removal of Barriers to Remarriage**  
**Position: FAVORABLE**

In my position as Executive Director of Ahavas Yisrael Charity Fund, we have encountered several unfortunate cases of agunos in our community. I will profile three of them.

**Case 1 - Debby**

Debby is a Baltimore native who was married in Baltimore, and quickly found out her husband was abusive. They lived in Israel for the first few years of their marriage. Her husband followed and controlled every part of her life. They have 3 children, the oldest of whom is hearing impaired and had behavioral issues. For ten years, Debby tried to make the marriage work, but she finally found the strength to ask for a divorce. Her husband refused to give her get and Debby escaped with her children, coming back to Baltimore, with the hope that her husband would eventually give her a get. He never gave any financial support to the family, and she was/is struggling to make ends meet. Caring members of the Baltimore community who sympathized with her plight raised \$100,000 to give him, as an incentive to give her a get. However, he adamantly refused, saying, "I won't take any money or give her a get because that would mean she won!" He is presently sitting in jail in Israel for not giving his wife a get - this is the Israeli law. Debby remains an agunah and is being helped by our charity organization.

**Case 2 - Cindy**

Cindy's husband presented as an overly caring and doting husband and Cindy believed she married a great guy. After only a few years, Cindy realized her husband was unfaithful, as well as a dishonest scoundrel. Initially, Cindy was not anxious to get divorced because she couldn't support the family on her own. When her husband's infidelities became too much for her to bear, she asked him for a get. Her husband made conditions for giving her a get. Each time his conditions were met, he changed his mind and added other conditions. This despicable behavior went on for many years, until it seemed like Cindy would never see a get. One day out of the blue, he told her he would give her a get, and before he could change his mind, community activists arranged for the get to be written and given. Cindy's children are now grown and on their own, she has a job, but their lives were terribly affected.

**Case 3 - Eve**

Eve's husband was a successful lawyer who comes from a respected and well-known family. They have three children together. Over the years, his personality changed, both in and out of the home. He was disbarred as a lawyer, was unemployed, and became a tyrant at home. Eve and their children were afraid of his temper and frequent outbursts. Despite marriage and family counseling they received, Eve realized that her husband was no longer the man she married and she wanted out of the marriage badly. Eve took out a restraining order against her husband and he was not allowed to get near her or the children, which infuriated him. Eve asked for a get, but her husband refused to give her one. Despite the many attempts of Rabbis, lay leaders and friends, her husband would not budge. Five years later, he still has not given Eve a get and although she has moved on in life and lives with her children in a condo a few blocks away from him, she cannot get married until she receives a get, and that doesn't seem to be forthcoming any time soon. She would not have managed financially without the support of our charity organization and continues to need assistance.

In all of these cases, the children are the collateral damage and are scarred for life. These women were left financially drained and were and still are assisted by our charity organization.

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