

7) disagree. They are of the opinion that the reason applies even to a sage who started while young. It is human nature to become more insensitive with age. The Jewish courts must be seeking to acquit the accused. Elderly sages are often harsh. Even when a sage first ascended to the position at a young age, now that he is very old, he must step aside from capital cases (*Ma'adanei Asher Parashas Shoftim*).

How Did the Converts Shmayah and Avtalyon Serve as Members of the Sanhedrin?

Our *Gemara* teaches that a convert or an illegitimate child cannot serve on the *Sanhedrin*. Only those who are born of good lineage, like *Moshe Rabbeinu*, may become members of the *Sanhedrin*. *Pirkei Avos* lists generation after generation of leaders of the *Sanhedrin*. Among the leaders mentioned there are *Shmayah* and *Avtalyon*. One was the *Nasi* of the *Sanhedrin*; the other was the *Av Beis Din* of the *Sanhedrin*. They were converts. In light of our *Gemara*, how could they have been members of the *Sanhedrin*?

Magein Avos (1:10) suggests that *Shmayah* and *Avtalyon* were singularly special. When there is no Jewish-born sage equal in stature and learning to the sage who is a convert, the convert should be appointed to the *Sanhedrin*. *Shmayah* and *Avtalyon* had no equals. Singular converts can serve on the *Sanhedrin*. *Maharal* suggests that *Shmayah* and *Avtalyon* were not actual converts. Their mothers were born Jewish. Their fathers were converts. They were born as Jews and therefore were *meyuchasin* enough to serve on the *Sanhedrin*. *Tumim* (*siman* 7:1) also deals with this problem.

Tumim first quotes *Knesses Hagdolah*. *Knesses Hagdolah* argues