

# Agudath Israel of Illinois Launches Local Division of Chayim Aruchim

On Tuesday, January 12, Agudath Israel of Illinois hosted a meeting for all Chicago-area rabbis to launch a local division of Chayim Aruchim, Agudath Israel of America's Center for Culturally Sensitive Health Advocacy and Counseling.

Over the years a dramatic shift has taken place in the ethos and practice of medicine and health care, presenting new challenges to Orthodox Jewish patients and their families. Chayim Aruchim, was founded in order to help families dealing with end of life issues who found themselves facing medical personnel and health care providers whose values and policies ran contrary to Jewish law. Chayim Aruchim advocates for patients' religious rights as they undergo medical treatment.



The meeting was organized by Rabbi Yitzchok Bider, executive director of Agudath Israel of Illinois, and Rabbi Yaakov Robinson, executive director of

the Midwest Agudas Yisroel Council of Synagogue Rabbanim. The event brought together over 30 local rabbis as well as representatives from Chicago Hatzalah, Chicago Center for Torah and Chesed's Refoeno Health Care Society, and the Chicago Mitzvah campaign.

Rabbi Robinson delivered opening remarks before introducing the keynote speaker, Rabbi Eliezer Gewirtzman of Chayim Aruchim. Agudath Israel's Rabbi Shmuel Fuerst and Rabbi Yona Reiss of the Chicago Rabbinical Council shared their personal experiences and stressed the critical importance of this initiative.



(L to R) Rabbi Shmuel Fuerst, Dayan for Agudath Israel of Illinois, Rabbi Shlomo Soroka, Agudath Israel of Illinois' director of government affairs, Rabbi Yona Reiss, Av Beis Din of the Chicago Rabbinical Council (R)

Rabbi Shlomo Soroka, director of government affairs for Agudath Israel of Illinois, shared recent legislative developments regarding treatment of the terminally ill, including the recently passed "Right to Try Act" (for full text, [click here](#) ). He emphasized the importance of being familiar with federal and state law regarding patient rights. Additionally, Rabbi Soroka urged the rabbis to encourage their communities to sign Agudath Israel's Halachic Medical Directive for Illinois.

Agudath Israel of Illinois will form a taskforce of attorneys, who specialize in elder law, medical malpractice, and estate planning. These lawyers will aid community members in the legal aspects of patients' rights.

"The launch of the Illinois division of Chayim Aruchim was the result of collaboration between many organizations." said Rabbi Soroka. "This collaboration will hopefully continue as we work together on this project as well as others that will benefit the greater Chicago Jewish community."