

Semichah (Ordination) of Judges

Ref: *Sefer Shoftim, Hilchot Sanhedrin, Chapter 4*

Semichah is the selection of judges by previously ordained judges to maintain the level of standards in the *Sanhedrin* and *Bet Din*. Applies mainly to *Eretz Yisrael*.

🔔 Reminder:

Pack on *Eretz Yisrael*



The person receiving *semichah* is called by title Rabbi and is told that he now has the authority to render judgement, even in cases of *knasot* (financial penalties).

Semichah given by *Nasi*, and that given by another judge, carry the same weight but the



Rabanim ordained that *semichah* should only be given with permission of the *Nasi*.

Semichah given to a *zaken* (elder) must be given by a minimum of 3 people, 1 of whom must have also received *semichah*.

Mosheh Rabenu conveyed *semichah* by placing hands upon the recipient, but we just grant the title of Rabbi to the recipient.

Semichah could be conveyed in writing, but this only applies in *Eretz Yisrael*. *Semichah* cannot be conveyed to elders outside of *Eretz Yisrael*.

The term *Elokim* applies only to a court which received *semichah* in *Eretz Yisrael*.

One judge could convey *semichah* to many individuals at once.

Semichah may be granted to an individual in just one area of his expertise (e.g. only financial matters etc), or can impose other restrictions.

A court with *semichah* in *Eretz Yisrael* which departed to the Diaspora, may judge cases of *knasot* (financial penalties) in the Diaspora.

The *Rosh Galuyot* (Exilarchs) of Babylon functioned as Kings and could appoint judges to the court all over the world.

🔔 Reminder:

Pack on Kings

Pack on *Eretz Yisrael*



Judges with *semichah* can compel litigants in *Eretz Yisrael* to appear before them. However they may not compel litigants in the Diaspora; Litigants may select not to be judged by him.

Conversely, judges appointed by the Exilarchs can compel litigants anywhere in the world to appear before them and accept their rulings. However, since they do not have *semichah*, they may not judge cases of *knasot* (financial penalties).