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22 DECEMBER 2017 • WWW.THEJC.COM • £2.50
ספר זכרון • 4 TEVET 5778 • 7757 • SINCE 1841

Transgender Charedi wins landmark appeal

BY DANIEL SUGARMAN

► THE COURT of Appeal has overturned a family court ruling that barred a transgender Charedi father from having face-to-face contact with her children.

In a decision with widespread implications, the three appeal court judges held that the religious views of a child's community should be secondary to the need to maintain contact between a parent and child. Writing of this specific case, Sir James Munby, President of the Family Division, ruled: "The best interests of these children seen in the medium to longer term is in more contact with their father if that can be achieved."

"So strong are the interests of the children in the eyes of the law that the courts must...persevere. As the law says in other contexts, 'never say never'. To repeat, the doors should not be closed at this early stage in their lives."

In January of this year, a family court in Manchester ruled that the transgender father should not have direct con-

tact with her five children because there was "a real risk, amounting to a probability, that these children and their mother would be rejected by their community" if that happened.

The family court judge also ruled that there was "no evidence that any person in a position of authority or influence within the community wishes to challenge the behaviour of its members" and consequently there was no prospect of a court order bringing about a change in the community's attitude to the family.

The judge did, however, permit the father indirect contact, such as writing to the children on their birthday.

In overturning that ruling, the Court of Appeal noted that in cases where "religion is not in play" courts were willing to "invoke robust methods where that is required in the child's interests". In a significant widening of previous decisions, Sir James held: "Should the approach be any different

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Leading lights



PHOTO: FLASH90

► Jerusalem's Old City is lit up with festive illuminations on the last night of Chanukah this week

Rabbinic guide to help your fridge pass the Shabbat test

BY DANIEL SUGARMAN

► IS YOUR oven Shabbat compliant? How about that gleaming new fridge or your hi-tech freezer?

For religious Jews worried about the halachic status of their household items over the day of rest, help is now

at hand. The Federation of Synagogues has produced an online guide, detailing issues to watch out for.

FedTech is intended to "offer guidance to the kosher consumer in choosing new appliances which will be compatible with the needs of the Torah-observant Jewish householder".

New technology may have made appliances more efficient, but it has complicated the business of keeping them Shabbat-friendly. The use of features such as LED lights or hidden door switches has removed the possibility of simply removing a light bulb or loosening a door spring to ensure

a device does not breach halachah. Even items installed with a special "Sabbath mode" may not do the job, the guide warns.

Rabbi Yisroel Moshe Guttentag, head of the FedTech initiative, said that it had become clear from the increasing number of questions received from Fed-

eration members that an educational resource was necessary.

"Many European manufacturers are now offering Sabbath-friendly functions; however, since this is not always as a result of rabbinic input, one needs to seek rabbinic advice when deciding how to use them," he said.