

## **First Liberty Encourages NY High Court to Protect Ancient Jewish Religious Practice**

*Firm files amicus brief on behalf of Agudath Israel of America*

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**Albany, NY**—First Liberty Institute and law firm Vinson & Elkins LLP today filed a friend-of-the-court [brief](#) in the Court of Appeals of the State of New York on behalf of Agudath Israel of America, a national grassroots Orthodox Jewish organization. The case, *The Alliance to End Chickens as Kaporos, et. al. v. The NYC Police Dept., et. al.*, involves an activist group seeking to prevent Orthodox Jewish communities in New York City from participating in a millennia-old religious ritual known as Kaporos.

“Banning a thousand-year-old religious tradition would impose a tremendous burden on the Orthodox Jewish community and clearly violate the U.S. Constitution,” said Roger Byron, Senior Counsel to First Liberty. “The First Amendment protects the peaceful religious practices of all faiths. Sadly, the Orthodox Jewish community repeatedly has been targeted simply for exercising its beliefs.”

Kaporos is a sacred religious ceremony performed by Orthodox Jewish congregations, where the atonement of sins is contemplated through prayer and the kosher and humane killing of a chicken. The ceremony takes place during the holiest days of the Jewish calendar.

Animal rights activists in New York have sought to force government officials to prohibit the ceremony because they allege that Judaism allows the ancient practice to be performed a different way. First Liberty argues in its brief that it is not the role of the government to tell religious communities how to exercise their religious beliefs.

“The effort by animal rights activists to force the government to shut down an ancient religious tradition has profound and troubling First Amendment implications,” said Jason Levine, the Vinson & Elkins partner who led his firm’s work on the brief.

Last year, First Liberty and network attorneys successfully defended Chabad of Irvine, a small congregation in California, against two lawsuits brought by activists opposed to Kaporos. First Liberty continues to defend the synagogue on appeal.

Learn more at [FirstLiberty.org/agudathisrael](http://FirstLiberty.org/agudathisrael).

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### **About First Liberty Institute**

[First Liberty Institute](#) is a non-profit public interest law firm and the largest legal organization in the nation dedicated exclusively to defending religious freedom for all Americans.

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