

Lawsuit: NYC's Shearith Israel Shul Accused of Firing Employee Because of Premarital Pregnancy

Alana Shultz is alleging leaders of the oldest congregation in the U.S. acted “callously...for her apparent failure to adhere to their religious morals”

By [Hannah Vaitsbitt](#), September 24, 2015

A former program director at Manhattan's Shearith Israel, the [oldest Jewish congregation in the U.S.](#), has filed a [lawsuit](#) against the synagogue, alleging discrimination after leaders of the shul fired her upon learning she had gotten pregnant before marrying, [reported](#) *The Wall Street Journal* on Tuesday.

[Alana Shultz](#), who worked at Shearith Israel on the Upper West Side since 2004, was fired in July, a month after her June wedding to Slava Rubin in an Orthodox ceremony. According to her complaint, Shultz informed a synagogue official herself that she was in fact 19 weeks pregnant when she married her husband. Upon returning from her honeymoon in July, she was promptly informed that she was to be fired in an organizational “restructuring” executed by the synagogue. The complaint alleges that [Shultz was offered six weeks pay with no medical benefits](#) on the condition she sign an agreement promising not to wage legal action against the synagogue. [Reported](#) *the New York Daily News*:

Alana Shultz says that Rabbi Meir Soloveichik and Congregation Board member Michael Lustig at Congregation Shearith Israel “callously fired (her) for her apparent failure to adhere to their religious morals at a time when she was at her most vulnerable.”

Rather than accept her employer's offer, Shultz instead retained an attorney, which sent the synagogue rushing to re-hire her, as per her complaint. Shultz said in a statement: “After working tirelessly at the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue for the last 11 years I am beyond saddened they've forced me to file this lawsuit, which I hope will help other women avoid what they did to me during what should be a time for celebration and joy.”

The synagogue, alternatively referred to as the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, founded in 1654, is headed by Rabbi Meir Soloveichik, who is named as a defendant in the lawsuit, alongside board member Michael Lustig.