

Jewish congregation in Manhattan accused of firing employee because she was pregnant at time of wedding

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Leaders of Congregation Shearith Israel on the Upper West Side are accused in a discrimination lawsuit.

Leaders of an elite Upper West Side Jewish congregation discriminated against an employee after learning she was pregnant at the time of her Orthodox marriage, a new suit charges.

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.”

Shultz, who worked as a program director starting in 2004, says she was 19 weeks pregnant when she married her husband on June 28.

When she returned from her honeymoon a month later a supervisor brought her into a meeting with Soloveichik, who never spoke.

“He had his head turned to the side, looking away from her. Callously, Rabbi Soloveichik thereafter intentionally refused to look at, speak to or acknowledge in any way Ms. Shultz throughout the entire meeting,” papers read.

Her firing was attributed to restructuring within the congregation, she says.

“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,” she said in a statement.

She turned down an offer from her bosses to accept six weeks of pay and sign a waiver preventing any future lawsuits.

When she lawyered up, the congregation attempted to rehire her, documents claim.

Founded in 1654, Congregation Shearith Israel is the oldest Jewish congregation in the U.S.

Shultz seeks damages to be determined at trial.

“Filing this case on the eve of Yom Kippur will hopefully give the defendants some time to reflect on their atrocious conduct toward a pregnant loyal former employee,” said attorney Doug Wigdor.

A message left with Shearith Israel was not returned.