



CHICAGO RABBINICAL COUNCIL

מועצת הרבנים דשיקגו

תשפ"ב The Year in Review

SEPTEMBER 2021 • TISHREI 5782

Updates, Insights, and Divrei Torah from the cRc



כתיבה וחתימה טובה!

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Greetings from the Executive Director



We are proud to present this year's edition of *Chadashot*, and to share some of the incredible work that the staff and membership of the Chicago Rabbinical Council have been engaged in during this past year.

Once again, this year we recognize the accomplishments of so many individuals, working together, to be *Mekadesh Shem Shamayim*. The cRc staff represents a team of hard working, creative and dedicated individuals, from leading *Talmidei Chachamim*, technical experts and support personnel, working together to address the needs of the community. The membership of the cRc are Rabbis who are committed to leading and growing the community, and inspiring us to greater heights. And finally, we are blessed to be part of a community that supports the work of rabbinic leadership, and that supports one another.

On Rosh HaShanah we celebrate the creation of the world, and God's ultimate Kingship over it. However the *Midrash* notes that, in fact, Rosh HaShanah marks not the beginning of Creation, but rather the sixth day of Creation, when man was created. There is a common custom to start the davening on Rosh HaShanah morning with *Adon Olam*, and the Vilna Gaon reportedly offered a particular explanation for this custom. We say *Adon Olam asher malach, betereh kol yetzir nivra*, praising God as Master of the universe, even before the world was created. However, we continue, *le'eis na'asah...azai melech shemo nikra*, that only after Creation, when mankind finally came into existence, was God truly crowned as King.

We bear an incredible honor and responsibility. It is through each of us and our actions that God's Kingship is actualized in this world.

This has been a challenging period, and while we may have been forced to curtail certain activities, we found opportunities to grow and develop in new ways. For example, our Beth Din added two new *Dayanim Kevuim*. In addition, we have upgraded our offices, developed new websites and community publications, and we are developing new community programs for the coming year.

As you can imagine, these pages only partially represent the complex expert work and long hours that are invested in providing the services that we all rely on. Thank you in particular to Mrs. Gavriella Bachrach who has edited this edition, as well as our other community communications, with diligence and commitment.

We are excited to continue working with you in the coming year *HaBa Aleinu LeTovah*, to better serve the community needs. May Hashem grant all of us and all of *Klal Yisroel* a year of good health and good life, so that we can continue our *Avodas HaKodesh* together.

Rabbi Levi Mostofsky
Executive Director,
Chicago Rabbinical Council

HaRav Yona Reiss
AV BETH DIN

Rabbi Levi Mostofsky
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Rabbi Sholem Fishbane
KASHRUTH ADMINISTRATOR

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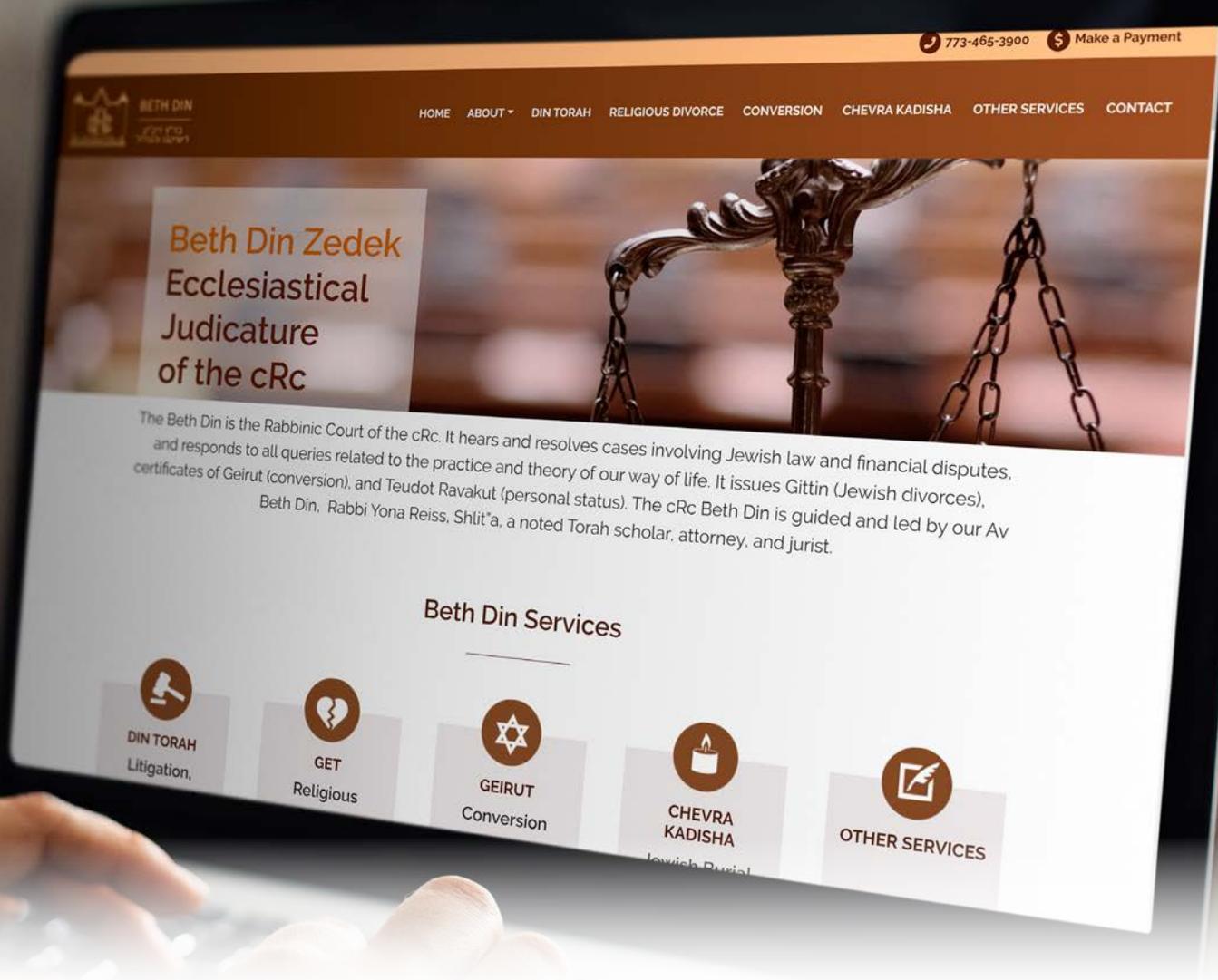
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The cRc is proud to announce the launch of two new websites.

Beth Din

The new cRc Beth Din website is a rich resource of information and practical tools for the community to better access the expert services of the cRc Beth Din. The site includes dedicated sections for **Jewish Divorce (Get) • Jewish Conversion • Adjudication • Chevra Kadisha • Other services**

For more information, please email bethdin@crcweb.org

MyJewishTradition

MyJewishTradition is a new platform for welcoming those new to the Orthodox Jewish community. We are currently building a website, www.myjewishtradition.com, to develop an organic, growing resource and tool. Regular presentations by celebrated speakers, as well as timely resources and materials are designed to enrich, inform, and inspire.

For more information and to sign up for updates, please email myjewishtradition@gmail.com

To be a “Mevakesh”

by Rabbi Yona Reiss

Av Beth Din, cRc

Our preparations for Rosh Hashanah begin with the daily recitation of the psalm “*L'Dovid Hashem Ori v'Yishi*” (Tehillim 27) – “G-d is my light and my salvation.” One of the key lines in this *mizmor* is the famous plea of Dovid Hamelech, “*Achas Sha'alti Me'es Hashem, Osah Avakesh*” – that “I seek of G-d one request.” The one request, of course, is “*Shivti B'vais Hashem Kol Yemei Chayai*” – “to dwell in the house of G-d all the days of my life.”

There is a story told about Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz zt”l, the Mir Rosh Yeshiva, that when he was a young man he visited the Yeshiva of Novardok where his uncle, Rav Avrohom Yaffen zt”l, was the Rosh Yeshiva. His uncle showed the young Rav Chaim the *beis midrash* and the students who were all learning with great intensity. R' Chaim asked his uncle which student was the biggest *masmid* (most studious), and his uncle pointed to one student. Then he asked which student was the biggest *baki* (most knowledgeable) and his uncle pointed to a different student. R' Chaim kept on asking more and more questions in this vein, such as which student was the greatest *mephalpel* (most innovative) and each time his uncle dutifully pointed out different students who fitted the bill. Finally, R' Chaim asked, “which student is the best student in the Yeshiva?” Rav Yaffen brought his nephew to a corner of the *beis midrash* where there was a student who had not been previously identified, and responded, “this student is the best student in the yeshiva.”

R' Chaim was astonished at his uncle's answer. “I don't understand,” he said. “This student was not identified by you as the biggest *masmid*, or the biggest *baki*, or the biggest *mephalpel*, or the best in any single category of learning – how can you say that he is the best overall student in the Yeshiva?” Rav Yaffen answered, “because even though this student is not the biggest *masmid* or *baki* or *mephalpel*, he is the biggest *mevakesh* (seeker).” That student eventually became the legendary Steipler Gaon.

The key to success to a new season of *Teshuva*, of repentance and return to G-d, is “*Achas Sha'alti*” – being a “*mevakesh*” – a seeker of G-d. Sometimes, a person may not have a full understanding of appreciation of what it means to “dwell in the house of G-d,” and sometimes the prospect of being on such an exalted level seems too daunting or demanding to be realistically achievable. However, the key is to have the desire to rise to that level, to seek greater heights, and to have the inner drive and passion for excellence in the service of Hashem.



The *Midrash* states (see *Tana D'Bei Eliyahu* chapter 23)

that every person is obligated to say, “*Matai Yagi'u Ma'asaei L'Ma'aseh Avotai*” - when will my deeds reach the deeds of my forefathers, of Avrohom, Yitzchak and Yaakov?” Rav Aryeh Zvi Frumer zt”l, also known as the Kozioglover Rav, asks in his introduction to his book *Eretz Tzvi* that that this type of aspiration seems quite presumptuous. How can we expect to be on the level of the patriarchs? The Kozioglover answers in the name of the Rebbe of Parshischa that the goal isn't necessarily for our deeds to replicate those of our saintly patriarchs, but rather to “touch” their level, which is reflected in the root of the word “*Yagi'u*” – namely, “*Li'ga*”, to touch. Perhaps the idea here as well is that our obligation is simply to seek to ascend to the high level of our forefathers, even if realistically we can only “touch” the tip of our aspiration. Through our act of seeking greatness in the service of Hashem, we demonstrate what we view as truly valuable and worthwhile in our lives, and we are assisted by Hashem in achieving that goal (see *Shabbos* 104a).

Chazal further teach us (*Megillah* 6b) “*Yaga'ti velo Matzati - al Ta'amin, Yaga'ti u'Matzati- Ta'amin.*” A person who claims to have strived but not to have achieved, is not to be believed. But a person who says, “I have strived and achieved” – is believed. The act of seeking G-d is truly a guaranteed recipe for success, provided that a person is truly sincere and persistent.

Every *Teshuva* season presents an unprecedented opportunity for seeking and growth. This past period of pandemic peril has presented us with an opportunity to reflect upon what really matters to us in our lives. It is thus with greater meaning that we can articulate the words “*Achas Sha'alti Me'es Hashem, Osah Avakesh*” – that we seek one request from Hashem. We have learned what a privilege it is to be able to “dwell in the house of Hashem,” and we can thus repeat this singular request throughout these days of mercy and forgiveness with a fresh fervor and renewed vigor. All it takes to be worthy of sitting in the Divine Presence throughout our lives is to be a “*mevakesh*,” to genuinely seek it. May this be a year of seeking and achieving in the service of Hashem, and of rising to our highest spiritual levels in the process. *K'siva v'Chasima Tova.*

We are working on Shemittah!



The cRc recently launched a new monthly newsletter to address issues of Shemittah. To sign up to get it by email, please contact office@crcweb.org

Visiting Eretz Yisroel During Shemittah

by **Rabbi Dovid Cohen**
Administrative Rabbinic Coordinator,
cRc Kashruth

Visiting *Eretz Yisroel* affords us an opportunity to perform certain mitzvos that are not available to us in *chutz la'aretz*. As relates to food, this includes separation of *terumah* and *ma'aser*, an added sensitivity to issues of *arlah*, and the need to give *terumah* and *ma'aser* to a *kohen*. This year, 5782, is *shemittah* and that adds a few more *mitzvos* to the above list. This article will briefly highlight *shemittah*-related *mitzvos* which are most relevant to tourists. We will *Y"Hashem* print articles each month during *shemittah* to provide more details.



Produce of the *shemittah* year has "*kedushas shevi'is*" which means that it cannot be wasted (this includes leftovers), used in an atypical manner, purchased like other items, or taken out of *Eretz Yisroel*. Furthermore, there is a Rabbinic prohibition called "*sefichin*" which says that vegetables harvested during *shemittah* are completely forbidden. In addition, farmers are severely restricted in how they can work their fields. With all of these *halachos*, how do people have anything to eat?

A simple option is that raw materials can be saved

from before *shemittah* or imported from *chutz la'aretz*. Others will source ingredients from non-Jewish farmers or specially designed greenhouses that potentially have the *halachic* status of not "growing in the ground of *Eretz Yisroel*." Many farmers participate in the *heter mechirah*, whereby the farms are sold to non-Jews (much like *mechiras chametz*), and then consider that to be a "non-Jewish farm." Lastly, if fruit grows in farms which *shemittah* is observed in the traditional manner, those fruits might be distributed using a communal mechanism known as "*Otzar Beis Din*."

With all of those choices, each consumer must pose the following questions to his Rabbi:

1. If produce comes from non-Jewish farmers in *Eretz Yisroel* (a.k.a. יבול נכרי), must I treat it with *kedushas shevi'is*? Most communities in *Eretz Yisroel* are lenient on this manner, but those who follow *Chazon Ish* are *machmir*. [All agree that the prohibition of *sefichin* does not apply.]
2. Should I rely on the *heter mechirah*? If I rely on the *heter mechirah*, should I treat the produce with *kedushas shevi'is* (see #1 above)? There is much controversy regarding the efficacy of the *heter mechirah*. Mainstream American *hashgachos* and *Mehadrin* Israeli certifications do not rely upon *heter mechirah*, but the Rabbanut (Israeli Chief Rabbinate) does.
3. Is greenhouse produce considered to have grown "in *Eretz Yisroel*"? Does it depend on which method was used? What about items grown in the Northern Arava? Should that be treated as within the *halachic* borders of *Eretz Yisroel*?
4. If I have *shemittah* produce, what are the guidelines for treating it with *kedushas shevi'is*?

With all of these issues to bear in mind, some might find it simpler to ask the Rabbi for specific *hechsherim* that they can rely on and then only use items certified by those *hashgachos*.

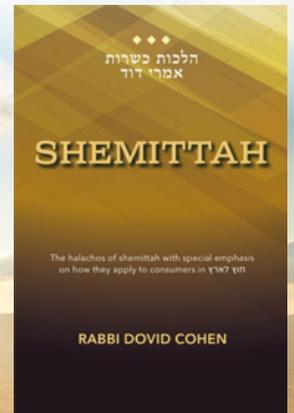
Separate from the above issues that relate to food, tourists must also be cognizant of the restrictions on plowing, planting, pruning, watering or otherwise cultivating items growing in *Eretz Yisroel*. These *halachos* are not limited to farmers and potentially apply to anyone who moves a flowerpot from one place to another, pulls branches off a tree, or spills a beverage onto the grass. These are all areas where one should seek direction from a Rabbi before travelling.

In this context, it may be worthwhile for visitors to arrange to visit a farm which observes *shemittah*. On a simple level, the visit will be educational as to what farmers may or may not do during the *shemittah* year. But on a deeper level, it is inspiring to observe firsthand the farmers' display of *emunah* (trust in Hashem). They take a Sabbatical for the sole reason that it is a *mitzvah* and do so confident that Hashem will reward their decisions. This is a message that can resonate with us even when we return to our daily lives in *chutz la'aretz*.

May we be *zocheh* to the rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdash* and the time when we will all live in *Eretz Yisroel* observing these *mitzvos* on a regular basis.

A more detailed and comprehensive treatment on the subject of *shemittah* is available in the recently released book by Rabbi Cohen, available at www.kashrushalacha.com.

Archives of previous shiurim can be found at https://www.crcweb.org/kashrus_shiurim.php or on the *Kashrus Halacha* podcast.



Meet Some of the Newest cRc Members

The cRc is comprised of rabbis from across the United States, Canada, and Israel. While they share common goals, the rabbis' interests and backgrounds are diverse and add to the flavor of our organization.

The cRc relies on the input and leadership of its membership to guide the organization's service to the community," said Rabbi Dr. Jerold Isenberg, Membership Committee Chairman. "The cRc's work is largely an expression of the membership, and the rabbis' commitment to serving the religious needs of their communities."

Let us introduce you to three of our newest members. Rabbi Mark Simon Glass, who grew up in Manchester, England, Rabbi Tuvia Brander, originally from Boca Raton, Florida, and Rabbi Yehuda Meyers, a fourth generation Chicagoan.

Rabbi Mark Simon Glass

Congregation Beth Israel Abraham and Voliner in Overland Park, KS

Rabbi Glass assumed his new position as Rav of Congregation BIAV (Beth Israel Abraham and Voliner) a year ago during Covid. Their community warmly welcomed him and his family despite the fact that people were hesitant to interact with others because of the pandemic.

Rabbi Glass grew up in Manchester, England. He attended Yeshivat HaKotel and then Yeshiva University where he majored in philosophy for his Bachelor of Arts, and Jewish philosophy, for his Masters in Bernard Revel Graduate School. He is obsessed with soccer, likes graphic design, and is

a reader of nonfiction (including, of course, literature on soccer!).

His goal is to try to return a sense of normalcy to his community and return to running events. He'd like to bring back the interactions his shul members used to have with each other.

Rabbi Glass appreciates being part of the cRc because it gives him the opportunity to be part of a larger group of people dealing with the same challenges.



Rabbi Tuvia Brander

Young Israel of West Hartford, CT

Rabbi Brander grew up in Boca Raton, Florida. After high school, he studied at Yeshivat Har Etzion for two years, and attended YU where he majored in Mathematics and Judaic Studies. During a summer in college, Rabbi Brander spent a summer as an actuarial intern for Blue Cross Blue Shield in Kansas City and with the BIAV Overland Park Jewish community teaching Torah and learning about the community. Rabbi Daniel Rockoff, the Rav of BIAV at that time, encouraged him to follow his passion and talents and explore a life of *Avodas HaKodesh*. Rabbi Brander

subsequently attended YU for Semicha where he was a Wexner Graduate Fellow. He acknowledges, without a doubt, that he was heavily influenced by his father who was a pulpit Rav for many years.

Rabbi Brander enjoys amateur archeology and



fishing. Rabbi Brander appreciates the opportunity he has to seek guidance from Rav Reiss and enjoys connecting and engaging with the chaverim of the cRc. Rabbi Brander continues to work to enhance the kashrut in the Greater Hartford region and he avails himself of the chance to learn from all

the *kashrut* opportunities the cRc offers. He has attended AKO conferences and is most grateful for all the digital cRc resources as well as all the ways the cRc continues to enrich his community through their guides, support and *hadracha*.

Rabbi Yehuda Meyers

Lincolnwood Jewish Congregation AG Beth Israel, Lincolnwood, IL

Rabbi Meyers' paternal great-grandparents immigrated to Chicago from eastern Europe in the early 20th century. He grew up in West Rogers Park, and went on to study in Israel at Yeshivat Shaalvim and Yeshivas Mir Yerushalayim. Upon returning from Israel, he enrolled at Yeshiva University and earned a BA in psychology, as well as Semicha from RIETS, and a Masters in Education.

Rabbi Meyers feels blessed not only to be the Rav in his shul, but more significantly, he, his Rebbetzin, and their young children feel fortunate to be part of a warm and welcoming community comprised of people with a sincere and heartfelt appreciation for Yiddishkeit. He has remarked that one of the unique niceties about LJCAGBI, is that it has the genuine, warm feeling of an "out-of-town" community while being located right in the heart of the Chicago Jewish

community.

He is very grateful to be part of the cRc, and for the opportunity to learn from and collaborate with the other Rabbanim. In particular, Rabbi Meyers is fond of acknowledging the immense bracha it is both for him personally and for the entire city of Chicago, to have Rabbi Yona Reiss as part of our community.

Rabbi Meyers and his Rebbetzin look forward to continuing to contribute to the Chicago Jewish community for many years to come and to, G-d willing, be Mekadesh Shem Shamayim, in all their endeavors.



Chanukah packages, including cRc certified products and a Divrei Torah booklet, were mailed to members to enjoy during the Zoom meeting, in lieu of an in-person dinner this year.

Rabbi Dovid Cohen's weekly kashrus shiur is broadcast via Zoom on Friday mornings at 9:30 Central Time. To be informed in advance of the shiur topic and if there will be a shiur on a given week, please be in touch with Rabbi Cohen directly at dcohen@crcweb.org.

Publications distributed through the year



Some Recent Membership Programs





**The Chicago Rabbinical Council congratulates this year's recipients
of the cRc Torah Achievement Award:**

Sushie Turin

Bais Yaakov High School

Yair Chinn

*Fasman Yeshiva High
School*

Dov Applebaum

*Ida Crown Jewish
Academy*

Hudi Yarmove

*Lubavitch Girls High
School*

**The cRc wishes Mazal Tov to this year's winners of the
Rebbetzin Shoshana Schwartz, a"h, Torah Essay Contest:**

Reuvi Kupchik

Fasman Yeshiva High School

**Winner of the Maintaining Halacha
Through the Pandemic category**

Sara Willner

Bais Yaakov High School

**Winner of the
TaNaCH category**

MAZAL TOV TO OUR RUNNERS UP

Shira Broder

Bais Yaakov High School

Chaya Toba Chait

Bais Yaakov High School

Ayelet Dallal

Ida Crown Jewish Academy

Chani Haskell

Bais Yaakov High School

**We congratulate the winners on their excellent work, and wish them and all who participated great
success as they continue their Torah education in Israel.**

**The cRc thanks Rabbi Michael Myers, Education Committee Chairman,
for coordinating these programs.**





Up, Up, and Away: A Rosh Hashana Message

by **Rabbi Joel Gutstein**

Congregation Yehuda Moshe, Lincolnwood, IL

One summer day about twelve years ago, we received an envelope in the mail. That is not so surprising, as we receive mail on a daily basis. What was unusual though about this piece of mail is that it came in a larger than usual white envelope and had a return address from somewhere in Michigan. It was not addressed to my wife, me or anybody else in our house. Rather, it was addressed to "resident" followed by our address.

Most of the time, when we receive mail addressed to nobody in particular, we throw it out. Most likely it is not anything vital for us, the community or the Jewish people. However, this envelope seemed a bit suspect. On the envelope wasn't the usual 42 cent postage at the time. It contained something and had postage of \$1.56.

I did not want to open the envelope because I was afraid of what might be inside. I certainly was not going to give it to my kids to open. My mother-in-law was not at our house, so she was not an option to open this envelope. So, I made an executive decision. I took our younger children and we drove to the Lincolnwood Police Department, hoping that they could help us and perhaps even give our children a tour of the facility.

We walked into the police station and explained our problem about this package. The officer took the package and said, "we'll give it to one of the new guys to open." He disappeared into the back of the station. A few minutes later the officer reappeared and asked the kids, "Did one of you have a Bar-Mitzva recently?" Our daughter raised her hand and answered that she had a Bas-Mitzva. The officer pulled out a beach ball.

On the Sunday of our daughter's Bas-Mitzva, a couple of our kids attached beach balls to helium-filled balloons.

On the beach balls they wrote a message, "If you find this, please return it to 7029 N. Kenton, Lincolnwood, Illinois. Along with the beach ball was a note from a woman in Michigan. She was on the beach in western Michigan late on that Sunday afternoon. Suddenly, she saw this balloon coming towards her. She reached up, caught the balloon, and read the message on the beach ball. She was now returning the beach ball and telling us that the balloon had flown all the way over to the other side of Lake Michigan.

Events happen for a reason. Now, what is a lesson we can learn from this story? The kids did not expect anybody to really answer their request and return the beach balls. How far did they think the balloon was going to travel? Maybe they would fly for a few blocks . . . maybe even a few miles . . . maybe to our side of Lake Michigan. The kids never imagined that their balloon would fly all the way over Lake Michigan.

One of the main lessons of our adventure is that we often perform actions or write words without realizing how far our actions can extend . . . how far our actions can travel and the impact that they can have on others. One small action . . . one seemingly little *mitzva* . . . can have a resounding effect. Rabbi Yisroel Salanter said that when a Jew does a *mitzva* in Lithuania, it saves another Jew in Paris. Why? Because the merit of a *mitzva* is so great, its power travels around the world.

If you want to imagine the effects of a *mitzva*, it is almost like the effects of a volcano exploding. When the island of Krakatoa blew up from a volcano in 1883, it was such a strong volcano that the cataclysmic explosion was distinctly heard as far away as Perth in Western Australia about 2,000 miles away, and the island of Rodrigues near Mauritius, about 3,000 miles

away. Recordings show that the shockwave from the final explosion reverberated around the globe 7 times in total. Ash was propelled to a height of 50 miles. Average global temperatures fell by as much as 1.2 degrees Celsius in the year following the eruption. Weather patterns continued to be chaotic for years and temperatures did not return to normal until 1888. There are numerous documented reports of groups of human skeletons floating across the Indian Ocean on rafts of volcanic pumice and washing up on the east coast of Africa, up to a year after the eruption.

So, one explosion had a ripple effect around the world. The same is true of a *mitzva*. If you would like a different type of example, the Torah is compared to a tree. עץ חיים היא, *it is a tree of life*. After a tree is planted, its roots can spread a good distance from the tree. A *mitzva* does the same. Its effect spreads far from where the *mitzva* was performed.

After one plants a tree, that tree can continue to produce fruit for years to come. A *mitzva* can yield benefits for generations to come. The same is true about the words we speak or write. Words said in one part of the world can be heard or read almost instantly halfway around the globe, whether by the internet, television, radio or telephone. So, we must be aware of everything that we say and do, because it all can have a strong effect beyond our wildest imagination, as is stated in the Midrash Rabbah of Parshas Shoftim. "They asked the serpent, 'Why when you bite one limb, does your venom travel throughout the body?' The snake responded, 'Why don't you ask that of one who slanders others. He stands in Rome and kills in Syria. He stands in Syria and kills in Rome.'"

In our balloon adventure, what made the balloon travel -- helium. I checked a source to know a bit about helium. Helium was discovered during a solar eclipse in 1868. It is a colorless, odorless, tasteless, non-toxic gas. In 1903, large reserves of helium were found in the natural gas fields of the United States, which is by far the largest supplier of the gas. Helium is used for inflating balloons and for providing lift in airships, just to name a couple of its uses.

Helium is also a good parable for a *mitzva*. Like colorless, odorless, tasteless, non-toxic helium, *mitzvos* can sometimes seem to be

plain and ordinary – run-of-the-mill actions, steps that we would do anyway under regular circumstances. But, when we investigate the *mitzvos* further, we find that they have tremendous strength and moving power – like helium which can lift airships.

So, perhaps in this new year, these are two ideas to keep in mind and try to develop: 1) – we can be like helium – not full of hot air, but, rather, have the ability to move people, communities and nations, even though we each are only one person. We can move mountains. 2) - every action we do . . . every word we say . . . can affect others all over the world, well beyond what we could imagine.

Through our efforts to make changes for the betterment of ourselves, the community, the Jewish people, and the world in general, we ask G-d to bless us with a year that is truly inspiring – to ourselves and for others – a year of health and happiness – a *Shana Tova U'misuka* for us and the entire Jewish people!

A LOOK BEHIND THE SCENES

with cRc Kosher

Prepare for Rosh Hashanah with an Inside Look into Some Timely Topics

SUNDAY

9.05.21

שבת ט"ו אלול

8:00-9:00 PM



RABBI YOSEF LANDA
Rabbinic Coordinator, cRc Kosher

Chalav Yisroel:
It's not just about Milking Cows



RABBI REFOEL DOVID OPPENHEIMER
Rabbinic Coordinator, cRc Kosher

Pas Yisroel at Commercial Bakeries:
The Glow Bar



RABBI YOCHANAN SCHNALL
Rabbinic Coordinator, cRc Kosher

A Sweet New Year:
How Do They Get Honey in Plastic Bears?



RABBI DOVID COHEN
Administrative Rabbinic Coordinator, cRc Kosher

Shemitta Produce:
It's Sooner Than You Think



Moderated by **RABBI SHOLEM FISHBANE**
Kashrus Administrator, cRc Kosher



SPECIAL BONUS!
PAS YISROEL CEREALS:
THE INSIDE SCOOP
ON CHEERIOS

This is a virtual program.
Zoom Meeting ID: 822 3436 9540 | Password: 099616
<https://kshr.us/KashrusWebinar>



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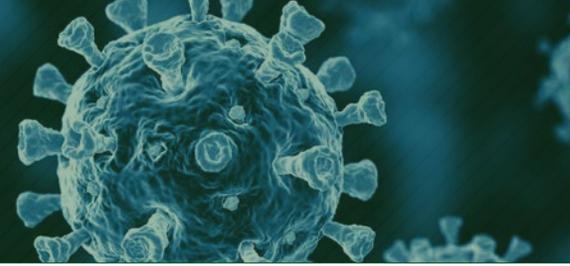
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Reflections on Covid



Some of our members shared their insights about how they and their congregations have grown throughout the pandemic.



Rabbi Chaim Twerski

Bais Chaim Dovid of Lincolnwood, IL

Before Covid, our shul made a joint effort on not talking at all during *davening*. When returning to shul after being closed for two months during Covid, we were so grateful, the level of reverence during *davening* grew. The shul became even quieter. One was able to hear a whisper when we returned. We appreciate being in shul now even more than before.

We need to hold onto that gratitude.

There was also a deepening of the closeness of the *tzibbur*. Precautions practiced during Covid were taken seriously even when not everyone agreed with them. Opinions of the minority were respected by the majority.



Rabbi Akiva Males

Young Israel of Memphis, TN

One realization I have from Covid is how essential every member of the shul is.

Scientists talk about how removing one species from the ecosystem has a chain reaction. Covid made it clear how vital each individual of each component of society is – from the elderly, young, singles, marrieds, and children.

If one tells a group that they have no place in shul or if they are not comfortable attending, everyone is affected. If children don't want to come to shul because they are required to wear masks, and they cannot tolerate wearing them anymore, we all lose out. If children don't come, there are no youth groups, so mothers don't come. Even *chinuch*-wise – this affects kids missing out on learning how to *daven*.

There is still a vital segment who is not coming, either because of regulations or because of personal decisions. This all has a chain reaction.

Every person. Every age. Every gender. Without them we are not complete.

How absolutely essential every person is!



Rabbi Louis Lazovsky

Congregation Beth Hamedrosh Hagadol Kesser Maariv Anshe Luknik, Skokie, IL

Three functions of shuls are that they are places of Torah, *avodah* (*tefilla*) and *gemilut chesed*. All three of these

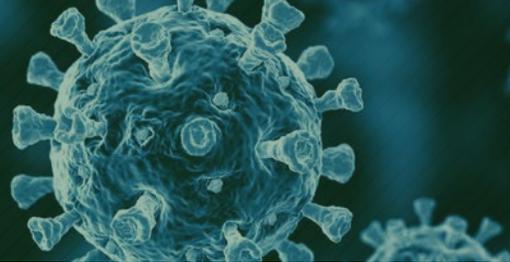
functions have taught us very important lessons during the pandemic. The first lesson that has emerged from the pandemic that has not changed for thousands of years is that the Jewish people need to pray to Hashem when they are in trouble. They need to reestablish their relationship with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* and speak with Him in front of the *Aron Kodosh* along with the *tzibbur*. This is crucial whenever we face a personal, communal, or general *tzara*.

A second lesson more important than ever that has emerged during the pandemic is that shuls have become sources of *chesed*, where people can connect to others, learn of and provide for their needs.

My Rebbe HaRav HaGaon Aharon Halevi Soloveichick *ztk"l*, has taught that we must always follow the Torah and what the *halacha* tells us to do. If we follow the *halacha*, we can only find *bracha*. We must certainly follow *halacha* regarding the laws of *pikuach nefesh*. We must encourage everyone to become vaccinated, wear masks, and practice social distancing until the end of the pandemic.

Finally, the pandemic has also taught us that we need to focus on what is important in life. There is a *mashal* of a king who sent his son away to a distant village because of his public impertinence to the king. Unbeknownst to the prince, the king also sent his most trusted servant to watch over the prince from afar to keep the king apprised of how the prince was faring. After months

Reflections on Covid



passed, the servant reported that the prince was not doing well and was in danger of freezing to death. The king sent a delegation to the prince stating that his majesty would like to see the prince back in the palace. The king informed the prince that he was so overjoyed to see his son, that he would grant the prince one wish and provide it for him whatever it was. The prince responded, "Dear Father, I am so cold, can you please provide me with a warm coat so that I can survive the bitter cold winter?" Everyone in the King's court was overjoyed that the prince would survive the winter. The king, however, sobbed. He scolded members of his royal court, saying, "My son could have asked for anything. Why did he ask for a coat? Why didn't he ask to return to the palace?" That is the *mashal*.

The *nimshal* applies to all of *Klal Yisroel*. We have been separated from the true King, the *Melech Malachei Hamelachim* for so long, we forget to ask to return to the palace, to the land of Israel and to a rebuilt *Bais HaMikdash*. May the coming new year bring an end to this bitter pandemic and may Hashem usher in the year of the final redemption for *Klal Yisroel* and all humanity.



Rabbi Eitan M. Allen, BCC
Rabbi/Chaplain Park Plaza, Chicago, IL

There were many difficulties and losses during this year. For my congregants who are mostly elderly and look forward to seeing their loved ones, the inability to have families from the community join us for Shul was particularly difficult. So much of people's Shabbos experience was seeing their *mishpacha* so when that was not an option there was a pronounced hole.

Every Friday night while the men were *davening* the ladies used to have high school girls come and sing with them after *Licht Bentching*. When this was not possible I learned how valuable the songs of young people can be.

I also came to realize how much we take our Shul and *Tzibur* for granted. During the worst of the lockdown I got into the habit of *davening* Shabbos morning in the same spot at home. How surreal it felt when I was a *minyán* of one. I came to appreciate every small *kibud*

from *Gelilah* to *Pesicha* when we could not gather for *minyanim*.

As I got so used to *davening* alone, I realized maybe for the first time the truth behind the maxim of *Chazal* that "*Brov Am Hadras Melech*" – I truly never realized the power and the beauty of the *tzibur* and how it glorifies Hashem until it was ripped away so drastically.

I often felt blessed to live in a time with technology be it email, Zoom, etc and wondered how intensely lonely it would truly have been without these technological life lines. Ultimately realizing how needy I was for other Jews and the community at large, made the principle of "*Kol Yisrael Areivim Zeh La Zeh*" really hit home.

May Hashem hear our prayers this season when we recite the *Avinu Malkenu* – "Our Father our King withhold plague from Your heritage". May we merit a year of health both in body and spirit.



Rabbi Baruch Hertz
Bnei Ruven, Chicago, IL

During COVID, despite all of the hardships, many families became so much closer during a time when we had no one but our immediate families. Nothing else counted.

People drew nearer to their spouses, to their children- and the deepening of those bonds has fortified and strengthened us against the hardship.

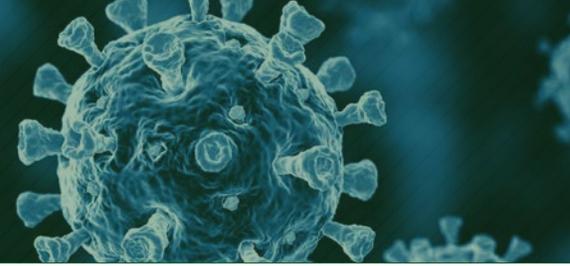


Rabbi Micah Greenland
National Conference of Synagogue Youth

There is simply no replacement for in-person engagement, and COVID took a great spiritual toll on our community as a result of the distancing requirements and the number of people who were homebound. Still, through painstaking additional effort, it was possible to engage people 1-on-1 and in small groups even as the pandemic was at its height. Maintaining that effort at 1-on-1 individual contact is a lasting lesson that we must maintain.

Covid was certainly a reminder that the preciousness

Reflections on Covid



of life is paramount and can't be taken lightly. I was incredibly struck by the *poskim* who responded to matters of individual and communal importance with incredible sensitivity and *mesiras nefesh*.



Rabbi Ephraim Friedman

Ezra Franco Sephardic Kollel, Aventura, FL

Very briefly stated, I believe one of the main lessons to be learned from Covid is to learn to appreciate and not take for granted everything we are blessed with in the areas of both *ruchnius* and *gashmius*. Being deprived for a significant period of so many of our daily basics should help us be grateful of all the time that we are able to enjoy them.



Rabbi Gershon Albert

Beth Jacob Congregation, Oakland, CA

COVID taught our community that we are both more vulnerable and more resilient than we ever imagined possible.

CHEVRA KADISHA

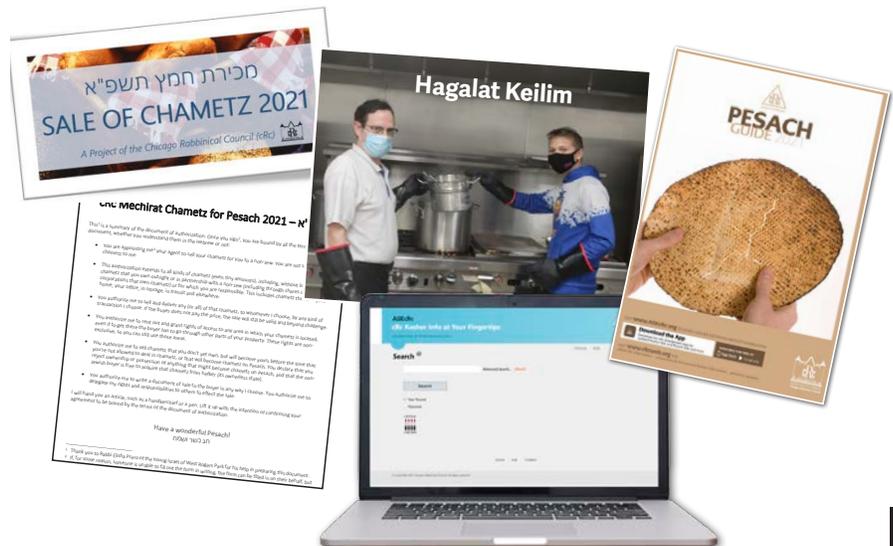
Thank you to Mrs. Adina Aberman and Mrs. Raphaela Stern, who have joined Mrs. Ellen Center in leading our Womens' Chevra Kadisha. Thank you as well to all who have joined the Chevra Kadisha for your dedication and efforts!

The cRc welcomes Mr. Stewart Cherlin as our new IT Manager.

The cRc deeply thanks Mrs. Jan Mishkin for her 15 years of devoted service, and we wish her much hatzlacha on her retirement.

Pesach Resources

Once again the cRc was able to provide important educational and communal materials to enhance Pesach observance in the Chicago and world-wide Jewish community.





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 Teazen
 Third Act Foods
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Tzadik Management



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 Chicago Mitzvah Campaign
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 Circle U Foods, Inc.
 EnSpice Inc.
 Harris Spice Co, Inc/Spice Products
 Mid Continent Spice
 Waves Caribbean



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 Bulkmatic LLC Decatur, IL - Trucking Wash
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 Bulkmatic LLC Paris, IL - Trucking Wash
 Quala - Trucking Wash Kansas City, KS
 Quala - Trucking Wash Oakland, CA
 Quala - Trucking Wash Oklahoma City, OK
 Quala Barberton, OH - Truck Wash
 Quala Houston (Channelview) TX - Truck Wash
 Quala Savannah, GA - Truck Wash
 TOTAL CLEAN LLC - Trucking Wash



TRUCKING

Bulkmatic Transport Company dba Bulkmatic L.L.C. - Dry Bulk, Indiana
 Caleb Chemical Inc. - Trucking/Railcars
 CMP Truck
 Crowe Transportation Inc
 D Mueller Trucking
 Envision Contractors, LLC - Trucking/Railcars
 Frauendienst Enterprise, LLC - Trucking/Railcars
 Hydrite Chemical Co. - Trucking/Railcars - Red River Valley & Western Railroad Co. Wahpeton, ND
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Yom Kippur: The Gift of Life

by Rabbi Ariel Rackovsky

Congregation Shaare Tefilla, Dallas, TX



Prepared in partnership with cRc president Rabbi Shaanan Gelman. Derived from remarks on Yom Kippur 5781 at Congregation Shaare Tefilla, Dallas, TX

Some congregants may struggle with the *Avodah* of Yom Kippur. First of all, most of it is in small fonts in the Artscroll *machzor*, and to the uninitiated, may even seem to be composed of archaic poetry. In addition, Rav Avraham Danzig, in his work *Nishmat Adam*, identifies several inaccuracies in the text that we recite. But strangest of all, to some, is the way we end it off - with a rousing, upbeat tune (composed by the great Yigal Calek) proclaiming אמת מה נהדר היה כהן גדול בצא' תו מבית קדשי הקדשים בשלום בלי פגע פגע. After all of the complex *Avodah*, with its multitudinous instructions, we don't praise the *Kohen Gadol* for the tasks he executed or the atonement he attained. Instead, we praise him for... not dying. And this is the prayer that Rav Soloveitchik felt was mandatory, and many of his students have ruled that it cannot be skipped. What kind of day is it when all that you are celebrating is that someone didn't die? Is that the best we can do?

Perhaps the explanation for the primacy of this *piyut* may be derived by taking a step back and appreciating the joy that was associated with Yom Kippur in general. Our Sages pointed out (see *Ta'anis* 26b) that the two most joyous days in the calendar are Tu B'Av and Yom Kippur. We know about Tu B'Av as a day for matchmaking- actually, Yom Kippur was, too. But how can Tu B'Av be considered in the same category as Yom HaKippurim!? The Talmud (*Bava Basra* 121a) explains that each year the Jews wandered in the desert, knowing that a death sentence hovered over their heads. Rashi elaborates that for forty years, they dug their own graves, anticipating the thousands of deaths that had become an inevitability each Tisha B'Av. On the next day, someone would announce - "separate the living from the dead:"

ולמחר הכרוח יוצא וקורא: יבדלו חיים מן המתים, וכל שהיה בו נפש חיים - היה עומד ויוצא.

In the fortieth year, though, a miracle took place, in that every one of the *Bnei Yisrael* woke up the next morning. Convinced that they had erred in the calculation of the date, they repeated the dreadful task of going to sleep in their crypts, yet to their delight they rose in the

morning once again. This repeated itself for several days until the 15th of Av when the Jewish children understood that the plague had ended, there would be no more death and no more tears. Imagine that joy they felt when they were given a new lease on life! That is the joy you feel when you anticipate the worst and then get a miraculous reprieve. You take a step off the sidewalk and a bus misses you by two inches. A doctor calls up a patient and says the sentence everyone wants to hear in this position- "The results are benign." This is the joy our sages describe the *Kohen Gadol* felt - "In truth, how wondrous it is - that the High Priest is still alive!" During *Bayit Sheni*, the survival of the *Kohen Gadol* was not something to take for granted. In a time when corruption was rampant and the high priesthood was for sale, he did not always survive the day. Imagine how cynical one must be when the expectation of most of *Klal Yisrael* is that the High Priest will fail! "Emet! Mah Ne'hadar!" How resplendent was the *Kohen Gadol*... when he emerged unscathed!

Yom Kippur and Tu B'Av are the happiest days for precisely the same reason. For on both days, we assumed we had reached the end of the book we were writing, but realized there are more chapters to be written. That book is the *Sefer HaChaim*. And that's why we never skip the *Avodah*. There is something majestic in simply living another day. In years like the ones we have been experiencing, the gift of life itself- whether after illness or being spared from it- is, indeed, glorious. Being able to inhale fresh oxygen without a ventilator, being able to walk without difficulty- to kiss our children and even to see them on a screen, are all blessings that we dare not take for granted!

It's true; after 5780 and 5781, many of us feel like we are just limping across whatever finish line this is- or that the finish line was in sight and now has receded into the far distance. Perhaps this year, we will derive our inspiration from the *Kohen Gadol*. With all the lofty and intense thoughts that were on his mind and on the minds of the Jewish people, making it through another year was the most noteworthy. This year, perhaps that is enough- שהחיינו וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה.

Keeping Your Simchah Kosher All the Way

by Rabbi Sholem Fishbane

Kashruth Administrator, cRc



KOSHER L'MEHADRIN – OR IS IT?

Reb Dovid and Rivka S. were thrilled to be making a vort for their first daughter. What a zechus! The chasan was a true ben Torah, just right for their aspiring eldest, and their hearts were filled with grateful prayers and ambitious hopes for their future bayis ne'eman. To ensure that the celebration would be at the finest spiritual standard, Reb Dovid chose a caterer with excellent kashrus certification and the highest personal reputation. He wanted the fare at his simcha to be at a level that the most stringent of his guests could enjoy without hesitation.

Rivka is a busy working woman and esthetics are not her forté, so even though they intended to keep the affair fairly modest, Reb Dovid and Rivka decided to also hire a party planner, to help enhance the presentation. They settled the menu with the caterer, discussed a few points with the party planner, and sat back to eagerly await the occasion.

The big day arrived. As the first guests began to trickle in, Reb Dovid took a moment to survey the hall and make sure everything was in place. Wait! What were those elegant petit fours on the far table? And the stylish sushi set up in the corner? That was not in the contract with caterer! Deeply concerned, he went over to the caterer's representative in the kitchen and demanded to know what it was all about. "Oh, those tables have nothing to do with me. Your party planner took care of that."

"But what is the hechsher on all that fancy food?" Reb Dovid inquired.

"Not my department," was the reply. "I can tell you the exact origin of everything that I'm serving, but I'm not a navi. How should I know what the party planner did?"

It was a bit late to get hold of the party planner and start rearranging things. Should he spirit away the unfamiliar delicacies? Post a sign giving fair warning? The presentation was indeed flawless, but his dreams for an event at the highest kashrus quality were badly chipped.

The S. Family could live in Chicago, they could live in Lakewood, or they could live in Monsey. This issue is endemic to the frum community, affecting

every segment of our community.

Over the years, the cRc has made efforts to sound the alarm regarding this, and *baruch Hashem*, it appears that awareness has been spreading and communities near and far are now seeking communitywide solutions.

Before we discuss solutions, let's first spell out the challenges.

THE SIMPLE SIMCHOS OF YESTERYEAR

Years ago, people making a *simcha* had two options to choose from: Home-cooking or catering. If the *simcha* was a homemade affair, guests were aware that the *kashrus* of the food being served was as reliable as the kitchen of the hostess who prepared it. With this knowledge in hand, they could make an informed decision whether to partake freely in the delicacies or to unobtrusively suffice with bottled soda and crackers.

In a catered *simcha*, there were two possible scenarios.

At a fully catered affair, the caterer provided all the food, soup to nuts, as well as tableware, waiters, and a *mashgiach* on premises. The *kashrus* agency certifying the caterer set the standards and the *mashgiach* made sure that the entire event ran according to the standards set forth by that agency.

The second catering scenario was a "drop-off" affair. In this situation, the caterer prepared all the food in his certified kitchen and delivered it sealed to the *simcha* hall. This arrangement offered the host the convenience of a prepared meal at a savings in price. The trade-off was that the moment the seal on the food trays was broken, the certifying entity was no longer responsible for what happened to its contents.

A person attending the event could easily tell whether this was a fully catered affair or a drop-off event, and again – based on that information – he could be an intelligent kosher consumer and determine whether or not to partake.

WHAT CHANGED?

Nowadays, *simchos* have become much more complex than a standard fruit cup (with a Chinese paper umbrella

adorning it), vegetable soup, and chicken-and-potatoes menu, with bright pink sherbet for dessert. A *simcha* is no longer just a happy occasion surrounding a meal; it has become a culinary, esthetic experience – the more sophisticated and original, the better.

Though caterers have spruced up their menus and presentation, many hosts try to enhance their event over and above what the caterer can provide, often by hiring the increasingly popular party planner or event planner.

An event planner is someone who coordinates all aspects of private *simchos* or professional events. He or she takes care of the niggling details involved in planning and coordinating an event that may overwhelm inexperienced hosts and organizations. This may include choosing a venue, arranging transportation, ordering special centerpieces, gifts, and keepsakes, and so on.

A party planner can be a real lifesaver. No wonder that there are more and more people nowadays who are attracted to this option.

WHEN THE CATERER AND PLANNER WORK SIDE BY SIDE

At the same time, we must be aware of possible issues the new arrangement may possibly present – and often does.

An established caterer with recognized supervision has been thoroughly briefed by his certifying agency. He knows exactly what is expected of him in order to qualify for this level of supervision, what are the absolute no-no's, when he must consult his supervisors on a questionable situation. The party planner may be well-intentioned, but since he or she is rarely working with that same understanding of the guidelines of a certifying agency, there is a serious possibility that *kashrus* rules will be breached.

Sometimes, the planner works as an adjunct of the caterer, merely setting up the caterer's food and decorating the room. But other times, the party planner, at his or her own discretion, brings in additional food, such as "must-have" trendy specialty cookies and petit fours from unsupervised personal kitchens of private home businesses. The sweet table may be set up independent of the caterer, but served simultaneously, just a few feet away from the caterer's dessert stand.

Needless to say, uncontrolled "enhancements" of this kind can severely compromise the integrity of the event's *kashrus*. If the *simcha* is a catered affair in a shul or catering hall, guests may assume that all the food being

served is under the supervision of the caterer's *hechsher*, sweet table included, and be led to indulge in food that is below their usual *kashrus* standards.

Another sticky subject is the caterer/party-planner dynamics: The planner is often the one to recommend the caterer and work with him directly. While the caterer is committed to the *kashrus* standards set by the caterer's certifying agency, his allegiance to the event planner, who has referred this job to him and will hopefully do so again, may dissuade him from interfering with the party planner's arrangements or asking too many questions.

Of course, many party planners go the extra mile to make sure that no *halachic* corners are cut in the process of producing a successful event. And certainly, no upstanding host intentionally seeks to trip up his guests with a less-than-ideal *kashrus* standard. At the same time, we, as kosher consumers, have to open our eyes and understand possible issues that may present themselves.

In short, the situation at many catered events today has become somewhat of a minefield. It has become difficult to tell whether an affair is fully certified or a blurred combination of certified foods from the caterer and items and/or *keilim* of undetermined and unsupervised origin provided by the party planner.

KOSHER CONSUMER – BEWARE!

"What problems could there be already?" the innocent kosher consumer may wonder. "Aren't you making a mountain out of a molehill?"

Ask any *mashgiach* and you will be astonished at the number of *halachic* issues that can arise at any unsupervised *simcha*, and even more so, at a Shabbos affair. Here are just a few examples:

- **Unsealed meats** that are left unattended in the presence of non-Jews may be disqualified from use.
- **Bug checking**, if not performed as required on items brought in from unsupervised sources, may cause an untold number of *halachic* violations.
- **Purchase of food** from multiple venues that may come from questionable or unreliable sources.
- **Liquors and hard drinks** have many *kashrus* concerns, among them *chametz she'avar alav haPesach*.
- **Wine**: If not *mevushal* and handled by the wrong people, may be disqualified from use.



- **Fish and meat** served at the same course can be a problem, if there is no careful separation to make sure nothing falls from one into the other and if separate utensils are not provided.
- **Amirah L'akum:** Many lay people are not aware of complex *halachos* relating to the prohibition of instructing non-Jews to perform forbidden acts on Shabbos.
- **Chazarah Issues on Shabbos:** Don't expect the unsupervised teenagers working weekends as waiters to be experts on *hilchos chazarah*.
- **Setting up and operating on Shabbos & Yom Tov** without any proper supervision can easily lead to serious questions of *chillul* Shabbos.
- **Meat and Dairy:** Though this problem is less prevalent at private *simchos*, it can arise at a professional event, where a *fleishig* dinner is served, but dairy coffee and cake is available at a hospitality station outside the main hall for guests to visit on their way home.

The matter of utensils is a subject in itself. If there is no authorized *mashgiach* overseeing the dishes, flatware, pots, hot box, props for cold and hot displays etc., there is no way to be sure that the utensils were strictly used for kosher food, for *fleishig* or *milchig*, or to verify what was put into the utensils at any other affair where it was dropped off previously. This can be a serious concern in dish and silverware rentals as well. Party planners who are not restricted to the guidelines of a particular certifying agency may unthinkingly mix *keilim* used for items of different levels of certification, heat up *pareve* foods for a *fleishig* event in a hot box used within 24 hours for *milchig* items – the list could go on and on.

Party planners are by and large *erliche* individuals, who probably comply to the highest standards of *kashrus* at home. However, the nature of large-scale hosting is such that a trained professional is necessary to ensure that all is done according to *halachah*.

OPEN YOUR EYES!

The purpose of this article is, first and foremost, to raise questions and promote consumer *kashrus* awareness in light of today's reality. At this point, most guests at *simchas* have no clue as to the issues involved. Strange as it may seem, many individuals who are exacting about products that enter their home and about the conduct in their own kitchens become naively trusting when they sit down at someone else's *simcha* table, regardless of whether the affair is fully catered or a hodgepodge of supervised catering and other contributing factors. So, the first step is: Open your eyes! "*Kabdehu v'chashdehu*" – While you must

certainly give full respect to your host, do not assume that "anything Reb Dovid would serve at his *simcha* must be just fine" unless you can corroborate that assumption with certified facts.

SEEKING SOLUTIONS

Along with fellow members of AKO, the cRc is actively working on ways to deal with the problem we have been discussing. Some caterers post a certificate or put cards on the tables stating what exactly is certified at the event and what is not. In the absence of such a certificate at an event, we urge people to seek out the *mashgiach* and clarify the situation with him. If no *mashgiach* is present, the consumer would be wise to assume that the event is not actively certified.

None of us would imagine a kosher caterer or restaurant that operates without a *hechsher*, and the time has come to expect the same of party planners.

In truth, it may be challenging for party planners, who rely on homemade products to please their hosts, to receive a proper *hechsher*. A simpler approach may be for the shuls housing many of the *simcha* halls to take a more active role and establish clearly enunciated protocol so that they can control what is being served on their premises. These protocols, with *halachic* decisions ruled by the Rav of the shul, could address issues such as using non-*Chalav Yisrael* products, certification necessary for alcoholic drinks, what non-Jewish workers may do to prepare and serve the food on Shabbos, and so on. These protocols would guide caterers and party planners in their menu planning and logistics, ensuring maintenance of the shul's *kashrus* standards.

Until this happens, *baalei simchah* hiring party planners would do well to hire a *mashgiach* of their own and request a list from the party planner detailing all the sources of food that will be used. This list can then be brought to their Rav or local *kashrus* expert for consultation on the reliability of the sources.

Confirmation should be obtained from the party planner that all utensils that need *tevilah* were *toiveled*, and for a Shabbos affair, the *baalei simcha* should seek their Rav's guidance in obtaining proper oversight to assure that no *chillul* Shabbos will take place.

New innovations inevitably bring with them new issues. The party planner *kashrus* issues are among the new *halachic* challenges of our generation, and we are hopeful that with joint effort on the part of the public, caterers, and *kashrus* establishments, we will find the solutions that will safeguard the *kashrus* achievements we have worked so hard to attain.

Remembering Rav Gedalia Dov Schwartz zt"l

הגאון הרב גדלי' דוב בן אברהם זצ"ל • נלב"ע כ"ד כסלו תשפ"א

As the first yahrtzeit of our beloved Rosh Beth Din, Rav Gedalia Dov Schwartz, zt"l approaches, cRc rabbis reflect on how the Rav's teachings and influence continue to reverberate, within the Beth Din walls, and beyond.

"One powerful message Rav Schwartz left is that being an effective *dayan* is 95% human relations," said Rabbi Reiss. "We always bear that in mind when we are dealing with the sensitivities of parties in front of us whether in a *get*, *geirus* or *din Torah* proceeding.

Rav Schwartz never compromised on the highest standards of adherence to *halacha* but he also never compromised on the need to treat people with dignity and kindness."

Rav Schwartz's brilliance is legendary. "I continue to quote Rav Schwartz zt"l on *piskei halacha* very often," said Rabbi Leonard Matanky, Rabbi of Congregation KINS, "and still get calls asking what was Rav Schwartz's position on different topics."

"In many of the *dinei Torah* we've adjudicated since Rav Schwartz's passing we've looked at previous rulings issued by Rav Schwartz zt"l for guidance in terms of how to navigate the different issues from the perspective in Jewish law and how to express the bottom line in a way that will be appreciated by the parties," said Rabbi Reiss.

The Rav's strength continues to serve as an inspiration. "When difficult decisions had to be made and the different sides were weighed, once a decision was made, Rav Schwartz stayed firm with it no matter how much pressure there was," said Rabbi Matanky.

"Rav Schwartz stood up for what was right in the community," said Rabbi Elisha Prero, Rabbi of Young Israel of West Rogers Park. "When Rav Schwartz moved to Chicago, he had an immediate and significant impact on *kashrus* standards that were then adopted as policy. Those standards have had a significant positive effect on the level of *kashrus* observance in our community."

Rav Schwartz's respect for fellow rabbis was exemplary. "Rav Schwartz was always a pleasure and easy to work with," said Rabbi Shmuel Fuerst, Dayan, Agudath Israel



of Illinois. "We had not one disagreement in all the years Rav Schwartz zt"l was here."

"Another lasting impact that Rav Schwartz made is that Rav Schwartz had a close relationship with Rav Avrohom Chaim Levin zt"l," said Rabbi Prero. "Because of that relationship, the city was able to establish certain community standards and methods for resolving sensitive issues because of friendship that crossed the cultural or ideological lines that frequently separate different groups within our community. We are still benefiting from that relationship throughout our community."

Rav Schwartz's greatness and respect for others also engendered respect for the *rabbanim* who were close to him, including the cRc staff and membership. He was relied upon as an erudite authority, a mentor, and a support for rabbis throughout the community, and around the country.

"We have a reminder of Rav Schwartz zt"l when we look at the placard emblazoned on the wall of the Beis Din," said Rabbi Reiss. "*Tzedek tzedek tirdof*. Rav Schwartz zt"l was the personification of not only of Torah erudition but also personal integrity."

May we continue to keep the lessons of Rav Schwartz alive in our everyday lives.

The Beth Din had a busy and productive year, creatively navigating the challenges of the COVID pandemic, and slowly resuming Beth Din activities in our offices. We are extremely appreciative to our *Chaver*, Rabbi Leonard Matanky, and his congregational staff, for opening Congregation KINS to the Beth Din, enabling us to officiate *Gittin* safely and comfortably in the spacious quarters of the shul until it was safe enough to re-open at our Beth Din chambers.

Several *Geirut* candidates had to wait for travel restrictions to abate. Since our last report, the number of cases of *Gittin*, *Geirut*, *Dinei Torah*, and letters of personal status for individuals and families

who made *aliyah*, is working its way back up to and beyond previous numbers.

Our summer intern, Gavriel Cohen, did an exhaustive study and analysis of all our *geirut* candidates in the last several years, which provided us with invaluable information in terms of assessing our internal processes and planning for the future. We look forward to sharing his study and statistics with our *chaverim* at a future meeting. We thank Gavriel for his dedicated efforts and wish him well in his future endeavors.

We thank the member rabbis who support the work of the Beth Din, and contribute to the important work that so many rely on. Rav Reiss concluded his *chaburos*

on *hilchos geirut* and has now been delivering *chaburos* on *Hilchos Shabbos*. We extend a *yasher koach* to our *chaverim* Rav Zvi Engel and Rav Joel Gutstein for completing the curriculum of the *chaburos* in *hilchos geirus*. We also thank our *chaver* Rav Dr. Hertz Hillel Yitzhak for his selfless dedication as one of our *dayanim* for *Geirut* and to Rav Yosef Schanowitz for serving as



Pictured is Rabbi Abramson, the Menahel of the Beth Din, speaking at Gavriel's goodbye party.

our chairman and contributing to many of the meetings with candidates during this period.

Din Torah cases have been increasing, a testament to the growing community appreciation of the cRc Beth Din as an address to adjudicate differences *al pi derech HaTorah* and with respect and finesse. Each case is handled with patience, fortitude, and scholarship by our *Dayanim*. At this time special recognition should be accorded Rav Daniel Raccah, our Senior *Dayan*, and to our newly appointed *Dayanim* Rav Yisroel Langer and Rav Aaron Kraft.

We continue to work on ensuring a smooth *Get* process for couples, streamlining the experience and improving the interviewing process. Couples of any religious background or affiliation can

THE ROLE & RELEVANCE OF THE CONTEMPORARY BET DİN:
DURING BOTH NORMAL AND CHALLENGING TIMES

RABBI YONA REISS
Av Beth Din, 212 P.T. 212
Chicago Rabbinical Council (cRc)

STEPHEN J. LANDES
Of Counsel,
Locke Lord LLP

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7TH
10 A.M. – 11 A.M.

ZOOM MEETING ID: 817 4175 3571
PASSCODE: 608369

Coordinated by
Congregation Or Torah
Skokie, IL

In partnership with
cRc
Chicago Rabbinical Council

For more information please contact the Chicago Rabbinical Council (cRc) (773) 250-5499 office@crweb.org

also be assured that, for a minimal fee and a small investment of time, we can provide a Jewish divorce that will be universally accepted. Rabbi Reiss is increasingly engaged in divorce mediation, and in helping resolve differences with compassion, equity and peace. We have also worked with Shalva, the women's social service agency, in a joint educational effort to improve communication and services to couples seeking solutions during this most difficult time in their lives.



Our conference schedules were again postponed because of Covid-19, but Rav Reiss was still able to travel to Jerusalem in July and delivered *shiurim* in several shuls in Bet Shemesh, at Yeshivat Har Etzion, and the YU Gruss Center in Bayit VeGan. He also spoke via Zoom at the annual international *Halichos Am Yisroel* conference of *Dayanim* in February, delivered *shiurim* and lectures at numerous other venues, both in Zoom and in person, and continued to publish articles in local and international publications.

As we continue to monitor the latest updates of the CDC, we are grateful to our Av Beth Din for his constant

guidance and consultations with the medical profession to help us navigate the many challenges in connection with the Coronavirus pandemic. With constant pressures daily and with the Yomim Noraim approaching, our *chaverim* regularly seek his guidance for ensuring both a healthy and meaningful *davening* at our respective synagogues.



Looking towards the coming year, we are excited to work with our expanded group of *Dayanim Kevuim* and to find ways to better serve the community. We are developing new online tools for easier access to our services, and we are exploring ways to expand the reach of our offerings. We hope that the expanding work of the Beth Din will enhance peace and harmony in the community. As we are assured that *Zion BeMishpat Tipadeh* (Yeshayahu 1:27), we hope that our work will contribute to the *geulah*, and to true peace in the world.



Rabbi Reiss spoke with talmidim in Gush at Rimon in Mamila.



Rabbi Reiss delivered a Shiur at Bet Midrash Torani Leumi in Beit Shemesh entitled "The ABC's of DNA."



Rabbi Reiss gave a shiur on "Questions of Gittin, Gerus, and Mamzerus that Came Up During Corona" at Yeshiva Har Etzion (picture from the Gush weekly newsletter).

Insights From Our Two New Dayanim Kevuim

We asked Rabbi Kraft and Rabbi Langer to share a few insights they gained after working in the cRc for almost a year.



RABBI AARON KRAFT:

This year I've certainly grown in my appreciation for applying the *halacha* to complex realities that face us. But what stands out is the way Rabbi Reiss and the other *dayanim* approach each case with sensitivity and compassion. The issues that come to the Beth Din impact people's lives in significant ways and Rabbi Reiss models how to maintain the integrity of *halacha* with understanding and care.

Working with *geirim* who come to the cRc has also been rewarding. Learning from community *rabbonim* and members of other *batei din* involved in *geirus* has broadened me. Many of the individuals who seek conversion also have inspirational stories that we all learn from.

Rabbi Kraft was a Rosh Chaburah of the Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Kollel, and was a member of the Kollel Elyon, the most prestigious Post Semicha program at Rabbeinu Yitzchok Elchanan Theological Seminary, RIETS.

RABBI YISROEL LANGER:

Over the past year I have learned a new application for the mishna in Pirkei Avos of "הוֹוּ מִתּוֹנִים בְּדִין." "Be deliberate in judgement."

It does not just refer to deciding and formulating a decision with patience. It also has to do with listening to the litigants, and making sure each one feels heard and fully understood. Rav Reiss makes sure that each litigant states his case fully without being rushed. He shows the litigants that he fully understands what each one says by repeating to them what they said.

If a judge appears to show more respect to one opponent over another, it will stifle the litigant from saying what he feels. It is inspiring to see the respect Rav Reiss, Rav Raccah, and Rav Kraft have for each of the parties.

Rabbi Langer is an alumnus of the Chicago Community Kollel, a member of the Midwest Bais Horaah under the auspices of Rav Shmuel Fuerst, and is Rav of Congregation Bais Yitzchok.



The cRc's 2021/5782 Guide to a Kosher New Year

It is customary to eat certain foods and simanim on Rosh Hashana. Below are the Chicago Rabbinical Council's recommendations to avoid any kashrus concerns on these items. All further inquiries can be checked on www.ASKcRc.org or by calling the office (773) 465-3900.



Honey

Requires kosher certification, as packaging equipment for retail honey may be produced on non-kosher lines.



Carrots

FRESH OR FROZEN (including baby carrots) with no questionable additives are acceptable without hashgachah.

CANNED
Requires kosher certification.



Leek

Cut along full length of the leek so every leaf is separated. Wash each leaf thoroughly under running water.

Cabbage

FRESH GREEN
Remove and discard 4 outer green leaves. Rinse remaining leaves thoroughly (front and back) under a stream of water.

PRE-WASHED
Acceptable without kosher certification; no further washing is required.



Beets

RAW No checking required.

COOKED, CANNED OR JARRED Requires kosher certification.



Pomegranate

FRESH No checking required.

Dates

FRESH Slice open a handful from the container and check inside. If no insects are found the rest may be eaten without checking. This applies to all dates - domestic and/or pitted.

DRIED with no additional flavors are acceptable even without certification. Slice open a handful from the container and check inside. If no insects are found the rest may be eaten without checking. This applies to all dates - domestic and/or pitted.



Gourd

FRESH No checking required.

CANNED
requires kosher certification.



Raisins

All domestic do not require certification, unless they are oil treated or flavored. No checking required.



Fish / Head of Fish

RAW FISH It is preferable to purchase raw fish in a kosher fish store. If this is not possible, one must first make sure the fish is, in fact, a kosher species. The only reliable method of determining that a fish is from a kosher species is by inspecting its scales to be sure that they are the type that can be removed from the fish without ripping any flesh. (One notable exception is salmon where the flesh-color is unique and is considered a clear identifying mark of the kosher, salmon fish.) Secondly, the knives used to scale, eviscerate, fillet and/or cut the fish may have been previously used for non-kosher fish. To avoid this issue it is necessary to ask the store employees to clean the knife and work on a clean piece of butcher-paper. If this is not possible, there is basis to permit the purchase of packaged, pre-cut fish but it is necessary to scrub clean any surfaces that had been cut.

SMOKED / COOKED / PROCESSED / JARRED / CANNED
Requires kosher certification.



Head of Sheep

Requires kosher certification.

Black-eyed Peas

RAW A general inspection is needed to rule out obvious infestation.

COOKED, CANNED OR JARRED
Requires kosher certification.



Fenugreek

FRESH Use cRc cleaning thrip-cloth method, as directed below.



Spinach

FRESH Use cRc cleaning thrip-cloth method, as directed below.

PRE-WASHED Use cRc cleaning thrip-cloth method, as directed below.

FROZEN OR CANNED Requires kosher certification.



Thrip-cloth Method (using a silk cloth)

You will need a large bowl, dish soap, 2 strainers, a thrip-cloth, and a light box.

1. Separate the leaves and place them into a bowl of water.
2. Put enough dish soap (a good choice would be Seventh Generation 0% fragrance) or kosher vegetable wash into the bowl until the water and leaves become somewhat slippery.
3. Agitate and soak the leaves in the soapy water for 1- 2 minutes.
4. Remove the leaves from the bowl and discard the water.
5. Repeat steps 2-4. Alternatively (instead of repeating steps 2-4) one can wash each leaf under running water (both sides) and then place leaves into a new bowl of soapy water.
6. Remove leaves and pour the water through a thrip-cloth (fine silk cloth that can be purchased from the cRc) that is sandwiched between 2 strainers.
7. Check the cloth carefully on top of a light box or similar apparatus. If a bug is found, repeat. If no bugs are found, rinse and enjoy.

FURTHER DIRECTIONS on checking for infestation can be found on our website at www.crc kosher.org

*The Chicago Rabbinical Council
wishes everyone a Kesiva Vchasisma Tova.*