

# THE Daf HaKASHRUS

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE  RABBINIC FIELD REPRESENTATIVE



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## OU LEADS KASHRUTH CRISIS CONFERENCE

### DAF NOTES:

The following front page article appeared in Hamodia's September 20, 2006 Weekend edition following the recent tragic meat scandal in Monsey, NY. It is reprinted with permission.

#### *Rabbanim, Mashgichim, and Businessmen Convene to Resolve Kashrus Crisis*

By Hamodia Staff

In light of the recent, devastating revelations that *treif* meats were packaged and sold to unsuspecting kosher consumers, an urgent meeting was held on Monday, arranged and hosted by the Orthodox Union – which gives a *hashgachah* on nearly every Glatt Kosher *shechitah* in the United States. Participants included other kashrus organizations who give *hashgochos*, and all the decisions were discussed and voted on until conclusions satisfactory to all were reached.

In addition to the Rabbonim who give *hashgachos*, slaughterhouse owners and managers were invited as well to discuss the practical ramifications of incorporating the proposed upgrades into their current business models as well as adapting their businesses as necessary.

Among the participating Rabbonim were Harav Hillel Weinberger of *Hisachdus Harabonim* (CRC) which gives a *hashgachah* on Vineland and G&G; the Nirbator Rav, who gives a *hashgachah* on Allie; Harav Menachem Meir Weissmandel, who gives a *hashgachah* on Rubashkin; the Debreciner Rav and Harav Yitzchak Stein who give a *hashgachah* on International Glatt; and Rabbi Moshe Edelstein and Rabbi Miller of Khal Adas Jeshurun, who give a *hashgachah* on Empire.

Representing the OU were Rabbi Menachem Genack, Rabbinic Administrator/CEO of the Kashrus Division of the Orthodox Union, and Rabbi Moshe Elefant, Executive Rabbinic Coordinator/COO of the Kashrus Division of the Orthodox Union.

*continued on next page*

## A MILESTONE IS ACHIEVED

*Harry H. Beren ASK®8 Kosher Training Program graduates its 500th student from America and abroad*

BY REGINA AVSHALUMOVA

Assistant to Steve Steiner – Director of OU Public Relations



**THE CLASS OF 2006:** Harry H. Beren ASK®8 participants are joined from left to right, front row by Rabbi Yosef Grossman, Director of ASK® and Kashrut Education; Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, Executive Vice President of the Orthodox Union; Rabbi Menachem Genack, Chief Executive Officer and Rabbinic Administrator of the OU's Kashrut Division; Rabbi Moshe Elefant, Chief Operating Officer and Executive Rabbinic Coordinator of OU's Kashrut Division.

When the Orthodox Union Kosher Division's ASK® training program ended in late August, and when the students returned to their communities around the world, a landmark had been reached. With the completion of the program, the eighth in a series held in alternate summers, the OU passed the 500 mark in terms of those who have been trained to be experts in the complex field of kosher certification.

The Harry H. Beren ASK®8, as it was known this year, was made possible by the Harry H. Beren Foundation of Lakewood, NJ, which provides financial support to educational programs of ® Kashrut.

This year's programs drew the largest number ever of participants, with 24 in a three-week internship session and 75 in a one-week training program. The students who intend to go into kosher supervision full-time and have already developed an extensive background in kosher law usually attend the three-week session. They are currently pursuing rabbinic ordination or are involved in a post-ordination *kollel* — an institute of advanced Jewish studies. The one-week students include as well synagogue rabbis or members of a community *Vaad HaKashrut* who conduct kosher supervision on a local level.

According to Rabbi Yosef Grossman, Director of ASK® and Kashrut Education, "This program has enabled kashrut certification organizations throughout North America and around the world to strengthen their staffs as a result of the expertise provided by OU senior rabbis. We consider this program a service to the

*continued on page 11*

## CRISIS

continued from previous page

Dr. Steve Katz, a member of the OU Kashrus Commission; Allen Miller, the CFO of the Orthodox Union; and Rabbi Luzer Weiss of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (Kosher Law Enforcement Division) participated as well.

Also attending the meeting were Marvin Raab and Heshy Lefkowitz of Vineland; Mr. Greenbaum of G&G Chickens; Yossi Rubashkin of Rubashkin Meats; Sruly Weinstock and Mottel Bergman of Allie; Yanky Chaimowitz of International Glatt; Mr. Fink of David Elliot Poultry; Rabbi Yisrael Weiss, head of Rabbinical affairs for Empire; and Greg Rosenbaum of Empire Chicken, who participated via telephone.

Both short term and relatively long term steps were discussed. According to Rabbi Moshe Elefant, there were four primary items on the agenda.

The first item was the need to upgrade the existing *simanim* on meat packages. While some poultry is already individually packaged at the slaughterhouses, a large portion of poultry as well as most meats are shipped in bulk from the slaughterhouses. While there is somewhat less concern in regard to the individually packaged items, steps were discussed to ensure that the tape and plumbas that are being used are tamperproof.

The Rabbonim unanimously agreed on the necessity to significantly upgrade the existing *simanim* on all meat and poultry products, including those which are shipped in bulk.

Unrelated to the most recent crisis, the OU has been holding discussions with an Israeli company which, together with Dupont, have invented a type of hologram which apparently cannot be duplicated or forged.

The possibility of using such a high tech symbol, which will be put on each piece of meat and chicken and can be removed by the consumer, is one of several options being considered. Bar codes and forensic accounting are also being investigated.

The second item up for discussion was the fact that most food distributors in the United States do not have any kashrus certification. Some distributors may in fact be selling non-kosher meats and poultry together with the glatt kosher products, *chas veshalom*.

To remedy this, the kashrus organizations have decided to insist that all slaughterhouses under their *hashgachah* will only be permitted to deal with distributors that have a reliable *hashgachah*.

The companies were informed of this decision yesterday, and are in the process of informing the distributors.

The third item on the agenda was in an area that both the companies and the kashrus organizations have little control — namely, the repackaging done at local stores. Since these stores are generally not under *hashgachah*, agencies have little control over their actions.

The OU and the Hisachdus (CRC), among others, forbid their symbol — which is legally copyrighted — from being placed on products that have been repackaged.

“Our position is clear,” Rabbi Elefant says. “Once the original packaging is taken off, our *hashgachah* is over.”

Hisachdus has also taken strong steps in this regard, even sending inspectors to supermarkets to ensure that its *hashgachah* is not used on repackaged items.

However, Rabbi Elefant says this is an area where the consumer plays the crucial role. “If consumers will refuse to buy repackaged items unless the repackaging is done under a reliable *hashgachah* — that will help. As the saying goes — ‘the customer is always right.’”

Rabbi Elefant stressed that this applies to all products, everything from meats to candies. “The message must go out, all repackaged items must have a reliable *hashgachah* on the repackaging,” he says.

The fourth item was the fact that in many cases there are red flags alerting those in the kosher food industry as well as consumers to a potential problem. These red flags may include a distributor who always seems to have what no one else has, or one that consistently, inexplicably, has lower prices than its competitors.

The Orthodox Union has agreed to serve as a clearinghouse for such complaints regardless whether it gives supervision on the products involved or not. Anyone who comes across red flags can contact the OU. Complaints will be thoroughly investigated.

The meeting participants’ goal is to have a concrete, detailed plan of action by October 17th, at which time, they hope, it will be immediately implemented. Rabbi Elefant stressed, however, that this alone will not suffice to prevent incidents such as that which occurred in Monsey. There must be other steps taken as well.

prove that it’s an obligation for everybody to worry not only for their own kashrus, but for the kashrus of the rest of Klal Yisroel as well. In the past three weeks we came to see that kashrus is in good hands, for the OU has taken upon itself the difficult task of supplying Klal Yisroel across the globe with kosher food.

Three weeks seemed to me to be a short time to learn everything about kashrus. Rabbi Grossman proved me wrong. With his wisdom and precise planning he managed to utilize every minute to the fullest, making sure we get a feel of everything. It was a common occurrence for Rabbi Grossman to come in at the end of a lecture and inform the speaker that he has only 42 seconds left...

Our learning program combined the *הלך הנעשה* together with the *חלק הנשמע*.

The *חלק הנעשה* included the following:

continued on page 12

## A CHAVER HAKOLLEL FROM WILLIAMSBURG REVIEWS ASK<sup>U</sup> 8

Summary of OU Internship Program – 2006

BY RABBI YITZCHOK BRAUN

The work of kashrus organizations is generally done “behind the scenes” far from the public eye. At the OU however, it is not like that at all. The OU made it their policy to educate and share with the public many details of their work in kashrus. Hence, we had the opportunity during the past three weeks to learn firsthand what the famous symbol <sup>U</sup> stands for and see kashrus in action.

The *Chofetz Chaim* wrote a *sefer* *דבר בעתו* which deals specifically with the topic of kashrus. He devoted a few chapters to

## MILESTONE

continued from

page 9

Jewish people because the OU is strengthening the kashrut infrastructure worldwide.”

Other kosher certification agencies and institutions regularly send their staff to the OU for in-service training.

Indeed, a wide variety of organizations were represented this year as in the past, including COR (Kashrut Council of Canada) in Toronto; New Square (NY) Kashrut; Maimonides Hospital, Metropolitan Jewish Geriatric Center, and Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center, all in Brooklyn, NY; the Bialystoker Center in New York; and even the Union Israelita Del Peru in Lima.



**ASK@ PARTICIPANTS FROM OTHER INSTITUTIONS** (Left to right:) Rabbi David Greenbaum, New Square Kashrus; Rabbi Abraham Gruenwald and Rabbi Aaron Wajsfeld, Metropolitan Jewish Geriatric Center; Rabbi Grossman; Rabbi Tsvi Heber, COR; Rabbi Mattis Weinberg, Maimonides; Rabbi Avrohom A. Brickman, Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center; Rabbi Yehuda Blank, Bialystoker Center; Rabbi Arie Halperin, Union Israelita Del Peru

Likewise, ASK@ attracts individuals who travel far and wide to OU Headquarters in New York for their training. This year four advanced rabbinical students came from Israel; a food chemist traveled from Manchester, England; and a former director of the Edmonton, Canada *Vaad HaKashrut* came, joined by Canadians from Montreal and Toronto.

Rabbi Alan Kalinsky, Director of the OU's West Coast Region, who does kosher supervision as part of his job, flew to New York for the one-week seminar to fine-tune his skills.



ASK@8 INTERNS



**AN INTERNATIONAL FLAVOR:** ASK@8 participants from out of the U.S. included, from left to right: Rabbi Aaron Possik, Edmonton, Canada; Rabbi Leib Irons, Rabbi Elchonon Greenblatt and Rabbi Peretz Moncharsh from Jerusalem; Rabbi Grossman; Rabbi Shlomo Werner, Montreal, Canada; Rabbi Ari Halpern, Lima, Peru; Rabbi Tzvi Heber, Toronto, Canada; and, Rabbi Shimon Black, Salford, England.

Questionnaires revealed that the participants considered themselves privileged to hear from the OU's foremost experts on kosher ingredients, kosherization procedures and insect infestation issues, among other topics. They visited factories and restaurants as well as meat processing facilities and the kitchen at Manhattan's Grand Hyatt Hotel, where kosher meals are served to hundreds of people simultaneously at organizational events.

The students were impressed with both the knowledge and dedication of Orthodox Union personnel and admired the fact that the OU was willing to share its expertise with one and all, even from other kashrut organizations.

How did the participants feel upon completion of the program?

Charles Ziontz, formerly of Houston, TX but now living in Brooklyn, NY summed it up this way: "Who could expect to have a week of programs and lectures worth thousands of dollars basically for free? Thank you very much Orthodox Union for the privilege."

"I never went home disappointed from any of the days in the entire three weeks," remarked Yehuda Gras, an ASK@ intern from Brooklyn.

## KASHRUTH advisory

In the past, the NESTLE GOOD START BABY SOY FORMULAS have been marked  $\text{OU}^{\text{D}}$  because of dairy equipment. Recently, the  $\text{OU}$  began kosherization for the soy powders. Presently, the  $\text{OU}$  is not kashering for liquids

Nestle soy baby powder formulas with an 8/1/07 expiration date are pareve, even with an  $\text{OU}^{\text{D}}$  symbol. Liquid Nestle soy baby formulas are, and always have been, pareve ingredients manufactured on dairy equipment.

Labeling for the powders will soon change. Nestle is just exhausting their current inventory of  $\text{OU}^{\text{D}}$  labels.

**HIDDEN VALLEY ORIGINAL RANCH DIP MIX** (1 oz packet) produced by HV Food Products Co., Oakland, CA is an OU-D certified product which contains dairy ingredients as listed on the ingredient panel, but the dairy designation has been inadvertently omitted. Future packaging will be revised.

**ASSORTED LAFFY TAFFY BAG** (32 oz) produced by Nestle, Glendale, CA come with outer bags which were mistakenly printed with an  $\text{\textcircled{D}}$  symbol instead of an  $\text{\textcircled{U}}$  symbol. The individual Laffy Taffy wrappers correctly bear the  $\text{\textcircled{U}}$  symbol, as the product is actually pareve.

Effective Thursday, August 17, 2006, **BERMUDA CAFÉ AND RESTAURANT**, located at 1635 Coney Island Ave., Brooklyn, NY will no longer be certified by the Orthodox Union and the Vaad of Flatbush.

**FERRARIS ASSORTED CRACKERS** produced by Productos Ferraris, Argentina bear an unauthorized  $\text{\textcircled{U}}$  symbol and are not certified as kosher by the Orthodox Union. Consumers spotting these products are requested to contact the Orthodox Union at 212-613-8241 or via email at kshalerts@ou.org.

**CAMPBELL'S VEGETARIAN VEGETABLE SOUP** produced by Campbell Sales Company, Camden, NJ is no longer certified as kosher by the Orthodox Union. Product bearing the  $\text{\textcircled{U}}$  symbol was manufactured prior to the termination of the kosher certification and is kosher.

**ARCHER FARMS POULTRY & MEAT SEASONING** UPC #085239025932 produced by Target Corp. Minneapolis, MN bears the  $\text{\textcircled{U}}$  symbol and contains dairy ingredients as listed on the ingredient panel. The dairy designation was inadvertently

omitted and the mislabeled product is being withdrawn from the marketplace.

**ARCHER FARMS STEAK SEASONING** (UPC #085239025352) produced by Target Corp. Minneapolis, MN bears the  $\text{\textcircled{U}}$  symbol, contains dairy ingredients as listed on the ingredient panel. The dairy designation was inadvertently omitted and the product has been withdrawn from the marketplace. The Orthodox Union does not certify dairy products which are exclusively used with poultry and meat. This product will no longer bear the  $\text{\textcircled{U}}$  symbol.

**TRADE EAST GARLIC BREAD SEASONING** 20 oz (Food Service Only) produced by Gordon Food Service, Grand Rapids, MI bears an unauthorized  $\text{\textcircled{U}}$  symbol and is being withdrawn from the marketplace. Individuals spotting this product are requested to contact the Orthodox Union at 212-613-8148 or via email at kshalerts@ou.org.

**JOJO'Z ENTERPRISES OIL** (in totes) produced by Jojo'z Enterprises (AKA ZMG Inc.) is an industrial product which bears an unauthorized  $\text{\textcircled{U}}$  symbol and is not certified as kosher by the Orthodox Union. Anyone spotting this product is requested to contact the Orthodox Union at 212-613-8148 or via email at kshalerts@ou.org.

**FRUIT AND NUTTY FIESTA TANGO** Mix 13 oz (UPC #5351946126) is a certified  $\text{\textcircled{U}}$  product which contains dairy ingredients. The dairy designation has been inadvertently omitted. Corrective action has been taken.

Effective Sunday, October 1, 2006, **LA CARNE GRILL**, located at 340 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10016 will no longer be certified by the Orthodox Union.

**POCAHONTAS PORK AND BEANS IN TOMATO SAUCE**-Food Service (#10 can) produced by Progressive Group Alliance Inc. mistakenly bears an unauthorized  $\text{\textcircled{U}}$  symbol. The product is being withdrawn from the marketplace.

## REVIEW

continued from  
page 10

Going to restaurants and caterers and seeing the daily obligations and hardships of a Mashgiach in the field, which include but are not limited to *bedikas Tolaim*, *bishul akum*, keeping control of inventory, separating between meat and dairy etc.

Visiting meat and poultry facilities and witnessing *shechita*, *melicha*, *nikor*, etc. being performed. This was a great experience especially for those of us learning *ד"א דעה ד"א* to gain a better understanding of the halachos.

Touring factories and learning how Schedule A and Schedule B work which is the foundation of the OU's system to keep control over factories throughout the world. Additionally, after being prepped by Rabbi Blugrond, we got to know how some large high tech machinery used in food production work and the complications involved when koshering them, or better said we got to know how much we don't know.

Meeting with the rabbis of various *Vaadim* and learning the differences between national kashrus organizations and local ones.

Hands on *Bedikas Tolaim* along with a highly informative presentation by Rabbi Yosef Eisen.

As for the *חלק הנשמע* we had the *זכות* to hear various distinguished rabbanim and OU personnel who showered us with a wealth of information in such a short time. They covered many topics relevant to kashrus such as flavorings, enzymes and emulsifiers, product rework, common steam, compatible ingredi-

ents and much more. This was in addition to other issues like unauthorized OU's, OU online, forming a local Vaad etc. This allowed the interns to gain an enormous amount of knowledge in kashrus in general and the uniqueness of the OU in particular.

וזהו איש אחד מן הרמות צופים it says שמואל א' א'. *Rashi* brings from Chazal that since the word *רמותים* is plural we learn that there were two *רמות* (high mountains) *זו את זו* שצופות ורואות *זו את זו* that saw one another. Why is this important for us to know, and what is it coming to teach us? *Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik Zt'l* gives a remarkable peshat that these two *רמות* are *מרמז* on the two *הכמות* – *הכמות התורה והכמת העולם* which are indeed two big mountains each with vast amounts of *חכמה*. However, they have to be *צופות* *זו את זו* ורואות, they have to see each other and work together side by side. They are dependant on each other.

At the OU you have both mountains working hand in hand. They have famous *poskim* and esteemed rabbanim guiding them through every step and every quandary. On the other hand they have a staff of highly trained professionals in many aspects of food technology (chemists, engineers etc.) who use their expertise to help out in the complex field of kashrus. These two *רמות* working together form the uniqueness of the OU.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the entire staff at the OU, specifically Rabbi Grossman, for this gift that will stay with me forever. Anyone who has been through this course is left with a positive attitude towards kashrus in general and the OU in particular.