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בס"ד
תשרי תשפ"ג
TISHREI 5783



לשנה טובה ומתוקה
WISHING YOU A HAPPY,
HEALTHY & SWEET NEW YEAR



KOSHER SPIRIT



is dedicated to

RABBI BEREL LEVY OB"M and RABBI DON YOEL LEVY OB"M,
who set the standards of kashrus at Kosher Certification and who
inspire us daily to perpetuate and uphold their legacy.

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SOUL NUTRITION

by Rabbi Chaim Fogelman



photo credit: Marko Dasher

Dear Reader,

As we conclude the shmitta year, it's tempting to think we can ease our intense focus on the fruits and vegetables that we usually take for granted as kosher. Yet, this coming year will still come along with plenty of reasons to be careful, because many fruits that grew during shmitta will actually be available on the market this coming year and still retain *kedushas shvi'is*, like wine and Israeli esrogim. Therefore, it's doubly

important to check for the symbol on all packages, even ones that you regularly buy, because if products contain shmitta produce they will not be certified kosher.

In Israel one can never simply buy fruit without knowing the history of the fruit tree it grew on! One needs to know that the mitzvos HaTeluyos Ba'Aretz were observed (shmitta, terumos and ma'asros, etc.).

This was one of the reasons I spent a few weeks in Israel this summer.

The agricultural community in Israel has transformed the land from a mostly barren desert to a booming agricultural market on the cutting edge of the latest high-tech innovations, including sophisticated watering systems, expert know-how, and plain ingenuity. In addition, since it is Eretz Yisroel, great attention must be paid to when and how the saplings (small little baby trees that are started in greenhouses) are planted in order to properly observe the mitzvah of orlah.

Although orlah is applicable everywhere, in Eretz Yisroel we take a stringent approach and there is no room for any leniencies. If one is in doubt if the produce is orlah then it is not permissible. Great effort is put in to record and monitor the origin and planting date of every sapling to ensure the prohibition of consuming orlah is not violated. Events such as rocket strikes or tractor accidents that destroy small trees or vines, or irrigation hoses that need repair requiring the vines to be uprooted and replanted, must all be recorded so the new trees will not be harvested until after the years of orlah.

At -certified wineries, expert agronomists are sent year-round (even outside of the growing season) just to monitor, map, and photograph all of the vineyards and their plants.

Our sages tell us, "Ki adam eitz hasadeh." "Man is like a tree in the field." May we grow to be strong, may we grow to be fruitful, and may we grow spiritually.

Wishing you a happy, healthy and sweet New Year,

Rabbi Chaim Fogelman

Editor in Chief, Kosher Executive Kashrus Vaad

What's the Brocha? **HaTov V'HaMeitiv**



The blessing of HaTov V'HaMeitiv is said when one gives thanks to Hashem for various types of pleasure received¹. In addition to the regular brocha for wine (Borei Pri HaGofen), the Chachomim required us to add the blessing of HaTov V'HaMeitiv on wine, as explained below.

When a second wine² is brought to the table and there is still some wine left over from the first wine³, one has to say the brocha of HaTov V'HaMeitiv, unless there is a good reason to suspect that the second wine is inferior to the first⁴.

If the first wine was a very good wine⁵, the second wine has to be clearly better.⁶

This blessing is thanks for His goodness (HaTov) and for the good of others (HaMeitiv), therefore the blessing only applies when there is more than one beneficiary in the good cause⁷. Therefore, HaTov V'HaMeitiv can only be said when at least two people are dining together and when both wines are consumed in the same place.⁸ The participants must also share ownership in both wines and consume both wines. During a meal, by placing the wine in front of everyone, the host shows that he would like others to share in his joy by partaking of the wine.⁹ The owner's immediate family is automatically considered to share the ownership.

If both wines were brought to the table together¹⁰, one should say Borei Pri HaGofen on one wine and say HaTov V'HaMeitiv on the other wine, unless one wine is clearly better than the other wine. If one is clearly better, one should only say Borei Pri HaGofen on the better wine and no brocha on the second wine. If one mistakenly said Borei Pri HaGofen on the lesser wine, he should then say HaTov V'HaMeitiv on the better wine.¹¹

During a meal (when one washes for bread), everyone should say the brocha, but if they are drinking wine outside of a meal setting, one person can say the brocha of HaTov V'HaMeitiv on behalf of everyone.¹² The wine consumed at the end of Birkas HaMazon does not require the brocha of HaTov V'HaMeitiv because the HaTov V'HaMeitiv blessing of Birkas HaMazon (the fourth blessing) includes this wine.¹³ ❏



By Rabbi Sholom Ber Lepkivker
 ❏ Rabbinic Coordinator

1 סדר ברכת הנהנין פי"ב א'
 2 Even if it is the same type but fermented in different barrels.
 3 שם י"ח
 4 שם י"ג
 5 Either taste or special properties. See שם י"ג
 6 שם י"ד
 7 שם כ'

8 שם י"ט
 9 ראה לוח ברכת הנהנין פי"א, י"ב
 10 שם ט"ו
 11 According to the Mishnah Berurah, only if the wine was not in front of him and he did not have it in mind, can he say HaTov V'HaMeitiv.
 12 סדר ברכת הנהנין שם כ"א
 13 שם

JOO LIES DATES

THE BEST DATE YOU'VE EVER HAD




By Morgan Toland

Joolies brings organic medjool dates to the forefront of produce as a healthy on-the-go option for snackers everywhere. Medjool dates, also known as the king of dates, are a great source of energy, have a low glycemic index, and are full of beneficial nutrients. In a joint partnership between the Kohl Family Farm and Venice Brands, co-founders David Kohl and Greg Willsey are on a mission to share the nutritious goodness of Joolies' organic medjool dates. David Kohl is the managing partner of La Quinta Date Growers, one of the largest growers of organic medjool dates in the United States. The farm is one of the first date producers to become organic and operates at the forefront of sustainability and environmental awareness. Greg Willsey is the founder of Venice Brands, a Los Angeles based consumer brands platform focused on incubating, investing, and building successful customer facing brands across the food, beverage, fitness and pet verticals.


Joolies is changing the date-ing game! Growing for nearly 20 years, the family farm includes roughly 1,000 acres of date palms, along with a 100,000 square-foot facility in the heart of Coachella Valley, California. At Joolies, we take pride in our organic roots and sustainable farming practices to support the environment and minimize both plastic use and waste. From palm tree to package, sustainability never takes a back seat. Joolies uses paperboard material sourced from recycled paper products, utilizing less than 2g of plastic per package. In addition, we are the only date grower that is certified USDA Organic and Glyphosate Residue-Free, which means no harmful chemical herbicides, pesticides, or fungicides in our products.

Our California farm is single-origin, vertically integrated, and operates as a zero-waste facility. We are an eco-conscious company at the core and upcycle our imperfect dates into value-added products, cull into cattle feed and palm fronds into fertilizer. We do all we can to support the environment and are constantly looking into more sustainable solutions to strive to be our best.

Kosher has always been one of our requirements as a brand to ensure the highest quality products and represent our customer's values. Aside from our USDA organic and glyphosate residue-free certifications, all of our products are kosher certified. We offer organic medjool dates in pitted and whole sharable sizes, pitted snack packs, premium and upcycled "ugglies" in bulk, and value-added date syrup. As dates are a symbolic food for the Jewish community, we wanted to provide products our loyal date-ers could completely support and trust. After launching our value-added date syrup, the product was not initially kosher. However, we

changed our business structure and completed several measures such as switching co-packers and upgrading the manufacturing process to achieve the certification and uphold the kosher symbol throughout our entire portfolio. Throughout our experience,  Kosher has been a helpful and informative partner as we continue to develop our brand and launch new products.

Upon launching in February 2019, Joolies applied for kosher certification to be inclusive of all communities and religious backgrounds. Rabbi Shlomo Klein is our  Kosher Rabbinic Coordinator and he works closely with Katrina Jully, Senior Technical Services Manager at Joolies. Katrina and the  team work together to overcome anticipated challenges as Joolies continues to expand and grow the brand. In addition to Rabbi Klein, the  Kosher team assisting Joolies includes local rabbinic field officials, along with several representatives in the data entry, ingredient approval, product approval, and Halacha and policy departments. Throughout his experience with Joolies, Rabbi Klein stated, "I have found the Joolies quality and management teams strongly dedicated and devoted to the kosher program. Joolies is committed to bringing products that are at the highest levels of quality and kashrus to their loyal customers."

As of this month, Joolies continues to showcase its kosher priority in its latest product, Jooliettes. Diced organic medjool dates panned in high-quality chocolate offer a fresh twist on a childhood classic. Jooliettes brings innovation to the chocolate-covered fruit category with a strong health focus. Made with only the best, organic ingredients, Jooliettes includes three different flavor combinations: Sea Salt Dark Chocolate, Blood Orange Dark Chocolate, and Matcha Dark Chocolate .

autumn Health Benefits

As the season transitions from summer to fall, Hashem gives us many opportunities to do teshuvah and make spiritual improvements, like the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, Yom Kippur, and Hoshanah Rabba. The fall also provides new opportunities to improve our physical health, as well.

Pumpkins, squash and other starchy vegetables are in season. They are high in vitamins and fiber, so they help you feel full and promote healthy digestion.

The beauty and color of the fall landscape provides a natural boost to happiness and mental health. Yellow conveys energy and fun, and red improves attention span and confidence.

Fall's cooler temperatures make it easier to get outside and exercise, whether it's hikes, apple picking or even walks around the neighborhood.

Our bodies get more rest during the fall due to the cool weather and earlier sunset, which promotes better overall health.

It's just as important to stay hydrated during the fall as in the summer. Fall breezes create dryness in the air that can lead to dehydration.

Outdoor exercise is even more beneficial than indoor exercise, and offers increased mood improvement, lowers risk of depression and boosts self-esteem.

Autumn is marked by a return to routine (think start of the school year), which leads to better overall health and wellness habits.

Popular fall spices, like nutmeg, cinnamon and ginger, offer their own health boosts. Nutmeg aids in relaxation, while cinnamon might boost cognitive function, and ginger improves circulation.

Even a 2-minute walk after meals can help lower your risk for type 2 diabetes by improving digestion and lowering blood sugar levels.



Pulled Sticky Silan Brisket in Pan Juices



Introducing Food You Love: That Loves You Back, Rorie Weisberg of Full 'N Free's latest hit, published by ArtScroll. If you thought healthy food was weird, bland, or boring, think again. This cookbook transforms all your traditional favorites into nourishing, good-for-you, well-balanced dishes that you, your family, and your guests will love, from Sunday morning breakfast through Saturday night melaveh malka. Plus, you'll find actionable tips on shopping, menu planning, and food prep that make a healthy lifestyle more attainable than ever. Get a taste of Food You Love in these recipes that taste as delicious as they look.

This delicious, naturally sweetened pulled brisket is a real crowd pleaser. Its versatile, goes-on-anything flavor profile elevates so many dishes. Try it over mashed potatoes, brown rice, zoodles, or spaghetti squash, stuffed into a sweet potato or baked potato, in a bun, or even to top a latke on Chanukah! It freezes beautifully, and leftovers repurpose so well.

YIELDS 8 SERVINGS

4 lb second cut brisket

This recipe can also be used on short ribs or flanken, which will be melt-in-your-mouth, falling-off-the-bone tender!

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 Tbsp kosher salt | ½ cup silan |
| 1 tsp black pepper | ½ cup red wine |
| 2 Tbsp olive oil | 1 cup chicken broth |
| 2 onions, thinly sliced | |
| 6 cloves garlic, crushed | |

1. Season brisket with salt and pepper; massage seasoning into meat.
2. Preheat oven to 300°F.
3. Heat a Dutch oven or large skillet until piping hot. Add oil; sear meat on each side for about 5 minutes or until a golden crust forms. Transfer meat to a platter; set aside.
4. Add onions to the pan. Flash-sauté onions while scraping up any meaty bits from the bottom of the pan.
5. When onions are translucent, add garlic; cook for about 1 minute, just until fragrant. Return meat to the Dutch oven along with any pan juices that have accumulated on the platter. If not using a Dutch oven, transfer the meat and onions to an oven-proof roaster or aluminum pan.
6. In a bowl, whisk together silan, wine, and broth. Pour over meat; cover tightly. Bake for 6 hours or until meat can be pierced with a fork with no resistance.
7. Remove from oven. While the roast is still hot, pull the meat with two forks. Gently mix pulled meat with onions and pan juices.

Rorie Weisberg, CHC, is the author of newly released cookbook Food You Love: That Loves You Back. Her passion? Making a healthy lifestyle doable and delicious, favorite foods included. Rorie is the health ambassador of Kosher.com and a popular health columnist, lecturer, and founder and CEO of Full 'N Free, LLC, an exclusive line of better-for-you baking essentials. Purchase Food You Love on ArtScroll.com and at your local Jewish Bookstore.

UPON CLOSER INSPECTION:


A PEEK INSIDE THE
Ⓚ TOLAIM DEPARTMENT




*One of the thrip specimens
found in the samples
(enlarged to show detail).*





BY RABBI OSHER GUTNICK,
EUROPE COORDINATOR

The  recently received a request from one of our certified companies in Switzerland – a manufacturer of muesli bars – to approve freeze-dried raspberry pieces for one of their products. The manufacturer of the raspberry pieces, located in Poland, did not have a valid kosher certificate, so the muesli bar company asked us to conduct an inspection to determine whether the raspberry pieces could be approved.

In his inspection report, the visiting rabbi noted a couple of concerns. “The products are not checked for tolaïm [insect infestation] – not even a cursory inspection during the production process.” He added as a side-note: “I’ve seen more immaculate facilities in Poland.”

After reviewing the report, the  Executive Kashrus Vaad determined that several samples of the raspberry pieces needed to be inspected for tolaïm. The consumption of even a single insect is forbidden by the Torah, and bug-prone products require close scrutiny.

The manufacturer duly shipped several samples to  Headquarters, where they were checked by our in-house tolaïm experts. The results were worse than we anticipated; all of the samples were found to be infested with thrips – tiny winged insects, about 1mm in length. The moisture content of the product (which can be a mitigating factor when evaluating tolaïm issues) was less than 5%.

The  Tolaïm Committee convened and sought the advice of our Posek, a world-renowned expert on the topic. The Rav concluded: “After seeing the pictures of the insects it’s very evident that the process is not doing anything to eliminate or disintegrate the bugs.... I would be very hesitant to certify bug prone products.”



We carried the news to our Swiss company, expecting them to react with dismay. But they were grateful for being made aware of the issue.

“THANK YOU FOR THE FEEDBACK, EVEN IF IT IS NOT POSITIVE,” THEY WROTE. “APART FROM THE KOSHER STATUS, WE DO NOT WANT ANY RAW MATERIALS WITH THRIPS...”

“We will not be sourcing any raw materials from [this supplier].”

Kashrus and quality do not always go hand in hand. But in this particular case, we ended up doing our certified company a great service by identifying what for them was a quality issue, which may well have carried highly unsavory consequences for their brand.

The Torah tells us that when Moshe Rabbeinu sent spies to the land of Canaan, they were intimidated by its inhabitants: “In our eyes, we seemed like grasshoppers, and so we were in their eyes (Bamidbar 13:33).” If the spies’ point was to illustrate how small they felt, why did they use grasshoppers as an example and not ants? The Kli Yakar provides a unique interpretation: When viewed from a distance they indeed looked (and felt) like ants, but upon closer inspection they appeared as grasshoppers.

The whole issue of tolaïm might seem insignificant at first glance – a mild inconvenience to be swatted away. But it is bigger and more complex upon close examination. The  is fortunate to have a committee of rabbis who specialize in this enigmatic field. More broadly, this episode is a reminder for all involved in kashrus that our work is never small or insignificant in the eyes of the companies and consumers who rely on us. 

HAKHEL

The Eighth Year



By Rabbi Avraham Rapoport,
Affiliate Office Rabbinic Coordinator

As we begin the Hakhel year, following a year of shmitta, one may ask why we are revisiting this topic now that the shmitta year is over. It may be a surprise to many, but the shmitta cycle doesn't end just because the seventh year has concluded. Several of the halachos of shmitta can apply in the eighth year as well (and sometimes even sometimes beyond that). For example, certain produce grows in the seventh year but only reaches the marketplace in the eighth year. Also, some of the halachos of shmitta are only applicable in the eighth year (i.e.,

biur shevi'is). Therefore, the eighth year in the cycle continues requiring our close attention to the halachos of shmitta as they can still apply.

The Torah commands two shmittos in the seventh year, Shmittas Kesafim and Shmittas Karkaos.

Shmittas Karkaos is one of the Mitzvos HaTeluyos Ba'aretz and by definition does not apply to anything grown outside of Eretz Yisroel. While in the past, those living outside of Israel had little to worry about in terms of Hilchos Shmitta, the increased export of Israeli-grown produce in the recent years has changed that dynamic. Now, consumers living outside of Israel can purchase fresh as well as

processed Israeli-grown produce. In Israel, kosher consumers are typically more aware of these laws, and when they purchase produce, they verify that the merchant is supervised by a reliable kosher agency for all Mitzvos HaTeluyos Ba'aretz, including shmitta. Outside of Israel some consumer are less aware of these laws and therefore not as familiar with the myriad of halachos pertaining to shmitta. Additionally, grocery and produce stores outside of Israel rarely have kosher supervision to verify the origin of the produce and whether or not shmitta halachos are relevant for that item.

Before we dive into this, it is important to note that there are many

detailed halachos of shmitta with a lot of varying rabbinic opinions which are beyond the scope of this article. The purpose of our article is to bring you the basic rules and thus increase your general awareness. We will highlight general halachos and hopefully draw attention to a number of practical points that need to be considered.

Relevant Halachic Concepts

Kedushas Shevi'is:

Shmittas Karkaos (during shmitta) includes numerous halachos:

- a. Most agricultural work (i.e. plowing, planting, etc.) is not allowed.
- b. The owner of the field must make the land hefker (ownerless), leave it unlocked, and allow unhindered use of the produce.
- c. The fruits of shmitta are allowed to be eaten but must be treated b'kedushah. This means eating them in the typical manner of consumption and only disposing the produce, peels and leftovers after they rot of their own accord and are deemed inedible.
- d. It is also prohibited to derive commercial benefit from shmitta produce or to purchase shmitta produce. Therefore, consumers can only purchase shmitta produce via a reliable Otzar Beis Din. (The Beis Din appoints laborers to harvest the shevi'is fruits, store them and distribute them for consumption. They are only allowed to charge money to cover the wages of the workers and other direct expenses involved in bringing them to the consumer, but not for the actual product.)
- e. In the eighth year, after the produce from the seventh year is no longer available in the field, we must also remove leftover produce of that variety that is in our possession (both at home and business).

Fruits - The determining factor of whether a fruit has kedushas shevi'is is the חנטה (chanatah). Chanatah is also the time when the fruit becomes chayav b'maasros. Therefore, if the chanatah was in the sixth year and the harvest was during shmitta, the fruits do not have kedushas shevi'is. However, if the chanatah was during the seventh year, even if the harvest was in the eighth year, the fruits would have kedushas shevi'is.

Olives and grapes – These fruits attain the status of kedushas shevi'is when the fruit reaches the point of one third of its total growth during the shmitta year.

Sefichim

1. M'd'oraisa, sefichim have kedushas shevi'is and are allowed to be eaten. However, after the Chachamim saw people secretly planting vegetables, grains, and legumes and later claiming that the crops sprouted and grew by themselves, they prohibited the consumption of sefichim crops. This is known as issur sefichim.
2. This prohibition refers only to field crops, including grains, legumes, and vegetables, which need to be replanted each year.
3. In order to be considered sefichim the produce has to grow during the shmitta year. The amount of growth differs between grains and legumes (grains - the five types of grain, legumes - crops whose seed is eaten, but not the vegetable / plant itself such as: beans, peas, sunflower seeds, etc.) and vegetables. Grains and legumes that reached a third of their growth during

Some terms relevant to this article:

מצות התלויות בארץ

Mitzvos HaTeluyos

Ba'aretz-Agricultural mitzvos specifically pertaining to the Land of Israel.

קדושת שביעית

Kedushas Shevi'is -

Any produce grown during the shmitta year has the status of kedushah which it retains until the produce is deemed inedible by natural means.

ספיחים

Sefichim -

After growth of a harvest of legumes, vegetables, or grain that grew from seeds which were not intentionally planted during the sixth year.

ביעור שביעית

Biur Shevi'is -

The process of physically removing leftover peiros shevi'is shmitta fruits' from one's possession at the end of the fruit's specific harvest season in the eighth year, and declaring it ownerless.

שמיטת קרקעות

Shmittas Karkaos -

The cycle in which it is forbidden for Jewish people to work the land in Israel during each seventh year.

חנטה

Chanatah -

The beginning phase of the fruit's growth.



shmitta are considered sefichim. However, if they reached a third of their growth before shmitta, even though they were harvested during shmitta, or if they reached one third of their growth after shmitta, even though they started growing during shmitta, there is no prohibition of sefichim.

Vegetables are considered sefichim as soon as they start to grow during shmitta. However, if they started growing before shmitta, even though most of their growth was during shmitta, and they were harvested during shmitta, there is no issur of sefichim. (Chazon Ish)

4. Grains, legumes, and vegetables included in the issur of sefichim are prohibited for eating and other uses forever.
5. The prohibition of sefichim applies to both human and animal food.
6. Fruits are not considered sefichim, since even if a tree is planted during shevi'is, one will not be able to derive any benefit from it during shmitta. Therefore, "shema yavo adam b'shevi'is atzma" does not apply to these crops. Perennial crops, such as bananas, are also considered fruits for the purpose of these halachos.

Sefichim After Shmitta:

Vegetables that started growing during the shmitta year, continued growing into the eighth year and were then harvested, are prohibited b'issur sefichim in the eighth year for the amount of time that it would take to grow that variety of vegetable, or until Chanukah of the eighth year. (Even if the vegetables were harvested before those times in the eighth year, they become permissible for consumption once the above-mentioned times for the prohibition of sefichim has passed.)

This only applies to vegetables. Regarding grains and legumes, once they have reached a third of their growth during shmitta, they are prohibited forever even if they continued growing on the eighth year.

As mentioned earlier, the gezeirah of sefichim refers to produce that grew by itself and was not intentionally planted. However, vegetables or grains that were grown in a forbidden manner during shmitta are also included in the gezeirah of sefichim.

In summation, vegetables that were planted, grown, and harvested during the seventh year, whether they were planted and grown in a forbidden manner or they took root and grew by themselves, will be forbidden to eat forever! It is, therefore, also important during the eighth year to verify the origin of vegetables and when they grew in order to ascertain if there is any concern of sefichim. However, if fruits were grown in a forbidden manner, they retain their status of Kedushas Shevi'is and, l'halacha, are allowed to be eaten.

Biur:

1. Chazal learned from the pesukim that there is an obligation of biur for peiros shevi'is at the end of the harvest season of each variety of fruit. When the time of biur arrives, if a person has more than three meals worth of produce for each member of the household for one week, he must remove any excess peiros shevi'is from his home (even if the fruits were taken from hefker or Otzar Beis Din) and make them hefker.
2. Peiros shevi'is that have not yet completed their growth cycle in the seventh year but overlap with the beginning of the growth of the new crop in the eighth year (such as pecans) are exempt from biur.

3. The time for biur varies for each species according to its growing times and the time at which the harvest in the fields is complete. There are species that have more than one growth cycle per year and there are species that include several varieties that each have a different harvest time. Therefore, it is important to verify the times of biur for each variety of produce according to information provided by a reputable kosher certification agency.

4. Peiros shevi'is are not actually burned as we do when burning chametz before Pesach. Rather, the fruits are made ownerless in front of three people by stating that they are hefker. After the biur the owner can retake ownership of the fruits. The biur can be made in front of friends even though the owner knows that they will not take it from him. Even

after biur the fruits remain kedoshim b'kedushas shevi'is.

5. If the time for biur has passed and the fruits were not made ownerless the fruits are forbidden to eat.
6. Shmitta produce is generally not permitted to be removed from Eretz Yisroel (some are lenient for items that are used for a mitzvah, like esrogim). If it was removed, biur must be observed outside of Israel for produce with the status of kedushas shevi'is when the time for biur arrives in Israel. It is generally forbidden to move the produce requiring biur from one place to another but it is permissible to bring it back to Israel in order to perform biur there.
7. A pot used to cook peiros shevi'is does not require kashering after z'man habiur.
8. It is important to be aware of the time of biur for any produce of Israel that has is particularly long shelf life (i.e., preserved food in cans, spices, wine, olive oil, etc.).

In conclusion:

Even in the eighth year the source of the fruits and vegetables must be verified and halachos of shmitta must be taken into account regarding both consumption and biur.

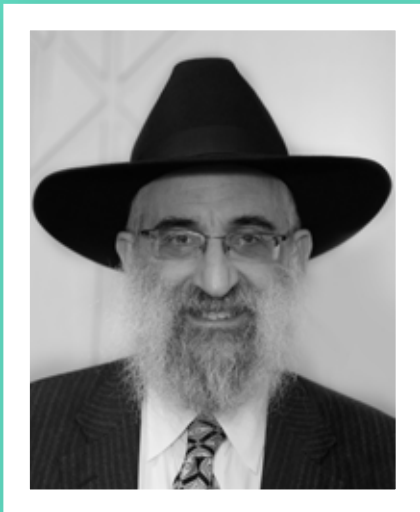
1. Fruits that sprouted during shmitta and were harvested during the eighth year have kedushas shevi'is. This is commonly found with citrus fruits and avocados that are harvested in Israel in the winter of the eighth year.
2. Olives and grapes that reached one third of their growth during shmitta and were harvested in the eighth year have kedushas shevi'is. In fact, all the olive products and wine that are produced in Israel during the eighth year are actually from harvests of shmitta fruit.
3. Legumes of any kind such as sunflower seeds, peas, etc. that have reached one-third of their growth during shmitta are prohibited forever as sefichim.
4. Vegetables that began to grow and were picked during shmitta remain prohibited as sefichim forever. Therefore, preserved, frozen, or pickled vegetables, etc. from shmitta are forbidden forever.
5. One should pay special attention to vegetables that are kept refrigerated and marketed as fresh to ensure that they are not prohibited as sefichim.
6. Vegetables that began to grow in the seventh year and were harvested in the eighth year are only allowed to be used at the time when there

is a similar harvest for it from produce that grew in the eighth year. All sefichim are permitted after Chanukah of the eighth year.

7. One should pay special attention to canned fruits and vegetables, spices, wine, and all types of nuts whose shelf life are particularly long. Wines that are affected by shmitta will not bear Ⓚ certification, so consumers should be extra-vigilant to check each bottle for a kosher symbol.
8. If there are fruits and vegetables in one's house that have kedushas shevi'is, it is important to find out the z'man habiur and perform biur accordingly. Some people outside of Israel are makpid to eat kedushas shevi'is fruits before the z'man habiur due to the opinion that biur must take place in Israel.
9. After the z'man habiur, if it is impossible to verify that biur took place or that the fruit was under the auspices of Beis Din at the time of biur, the fruit should not be purchased. Ⓚ

REMEMBERING RABBI DON YOEL LEVY OB" M

Kashrus Administrator of
Kosher Certification
1987-2020



RESPONSIBILITY OF A

KASHRUS AGENCY

Written by Rabbi Don Yoel Levy OB" M

TO WHOM IS THE KASHRUS AGENCY RESPONSIBLE?

It seems like a strange question. Of course, we are obligated first and foremost to Hashem! The core of a kashrus agency's responsibility is to ensure that all the products under its certification are 100% kosher. As we delve into this matter, we find that a kashrus agency actually has a very complicated balance of responsibilities. The agency is accountable to Hashem, but it also has responsibilities towards the consumer public,

the certified companies, and, finally, to itself and its reputation.

A kashrus agency's responsibility toward the consumer public is a given. The agency is providing a service to kosher consumers and the consumer relies on the kosher supervision when purchasing products for oneself and one's family. It goes without saying that the kashrus agency has an obligation to disclose its kashrus standards and alert the consumer when there is a kashrus issue.

The kashrus agency's obligation to the certified company is multi-faceted. (Of course, we are not discussing a company who would like to "just" receive certification



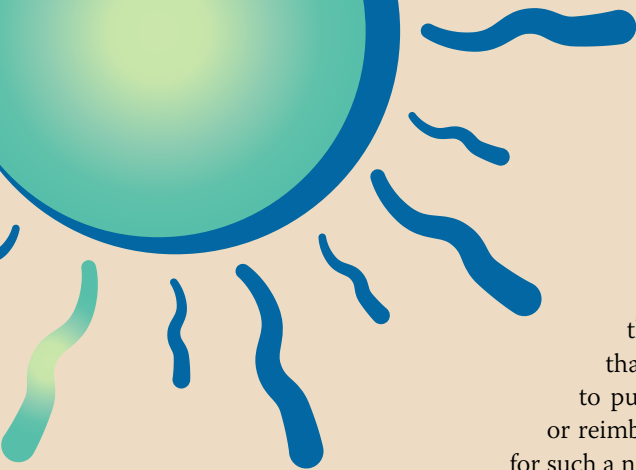
with the least hassle. Nor are we discussing an agency wanting to provide certification with the least effort on their part.) The agency must provide the best possible kashrus certification, because that is what one is contracted for. In addition, the agency has to provide proper customer service to the company. This includes answering questions and submissions in a timely manner, problem-solving, providing competent, professional mashgichim, providing proper documentation, and so on. The kashrus agency also has a responsibility to back up the company when false allegations are made about the company's kashrus status. When such slander occurs, it is imperative that the certified company can rely on the backing of its kashrus agency and its efforts to preserve the company's reputation.


In addition to balancing responsibilities towards consumers and certified companies, a kashrus agency has an obligation to uphold its reputation and the reputation of its Rav HaMachshir, as well. An integral part of kashrus is the reputation of the kashrus agency. All companies want an agency that has a sterling reputation and is known for a high level of kosher supervision in order to market their product to the largest group of kosher consumers. Kashrus agencies are acutely aware of this and work diligently to protect their reputations. Consumers also benefit from the agency's efforts to uphold a good reputation, because they are ensured that the kashrus agency will do its best to provide the most stringent kosher certification.

What happens when there seems to be a conflict between an agen-

cy's obligations to Hashem, consumers, the certified company, and itself? It is safe to assume that a reputable kashrus agency's obligation to Hashem, to follow Halacha, remains steadfast, no matter what the situation. But what happens when there is conflict between the other obligations? On one hand, a kashrus agency is hired by a certified company and feels some sort of loyalty to the company. On the other hand, the agency has a responsibility to the consumer who relies on the kosher symbol when purchasing products.

What happens if the certified company is found with a questionable ingredient, or even G-d forbid, a non-kosher ingredient in one of the certified products? Many companies would like to keep the mishap under wraps, but consumers want (and deserve) to be notified that there is a problem



with a product. To avoid an unpleasant dilemma in such a situation, the  has a clause in the certification contract that requires the company to publicize this information or reimburse the kashrus agency for such a notification.

These situations do happen and someone has to take responsibility when it does.

DOES THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR KOSHER ERRORS FALL ON THE CERTIFIED COMPANY, OR ON THE KASHRUS AGENCY?

If the company blatantly fooled the agency, the answer is simple. But, what happens when there is a misunderstanding? What if the company claims that they were authorized to use the ingredient? The kashrus agency knows that if a mistake on behalf of the agency is publicized it may affect the agency's reputation.

What happens when there seems to be a conflict between an agency's obligations to the consumers, the certified company, and itself?

In such a situation, to whom does the agency have primary responsibility? To itself? To the certified company?



When a ship is sinking, it is well known that the last person to leave the ship is the captain. Getting his crew and passengers to safety is his responsibility.


In his later years, my father, Rabbi Berel Levy ob"m, worked intensively for the Lubavitcher Rebbe ztz"l in Russia. One of the burning issues for Russian Jews at the time was trying to escape Communist Russia. Since they were Chassidim, many people would request that my father ask the Rebbe to grant them permission to leave.

The Rebbe answered my father with the following story. A political official in Israel came to the Rebbe and boasted that he was taking all of the rabbis, shochtim and teachers out of Morocco and bringing them on ali-


yah. The Rebbe said, "Gevald! When the Nazis ym"s came into a city the first people they would kill were the rabbonim, shochtim and melamdim." The Rebbe said, "How can you take these people first and leave the rest behind?" Therefore, he concluded those who did not have problems with the authorities must stay behind in order to help the people there.

The message is quite clear. As a Rav HaMachshir, you are the last one you should think about. The agency's responsibility is first to Hashem, then to the consumer, the company, and lastly to itself.

Last Pesach we had an issue where a shaila came up on cocoa that we certified along with another Rav HaMachshir. At the , we are proud that we did not attempt to cover up the issue and blame the certified company. Rather, we showed complete transparency to the consumer public and did not try to place fault on the company. There was actually no shaila found, but the  tested the cocoa anyway and found that there was no issue.

At the , we always try our best to learn from the past. Even though we still stand behind what we certified last year, there is a saying that "good has no boundaries". Whatever one does, there is always room for improvement.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe says that during the month of Elul, which is the month of introspection, even a tzaddik (a righteous person) can do teshuva (return). When one does teshuva one elevates oneself, and achieves a higher level. Since we are all a part of Hashem, a chelek Eloka'i mi'ma'al mamash, even a tzaddik can bring himself to a higher level. One can always find a better way to do things and with that in mind, as we proceed toward the New Year, we have already undertaken methods to improve on the past years and continue on our never-ending quest to improve kashrus. May our diligence in upholding high standards in the area of kashrus, and in halacha in general, help to bring the immediate Redemption and may we all be written in the Book of Life.

Today the Executive Vaad HaKashrus strives to uphold the rigorous kashrus standards set by Rabbi Levy OB"m and continue to provide consumers worldwide with Kosher Without Compromise. 





BY RABBI SHLOMO KLEIN,
© RABBINIC COORDINATOR

Tzadik Katamar Yifrach

THE RIGHTEOUS WILL FLOURISH LIKE THE DATE PALM

Dates, a sweet and delicious fruit, feature prominently in the Torah and continue to be an important part of our holiday *minhagim*, especially on Rosh Hashanah. Chazal say that anytime honey is mentioned in the Torah it refers to date honey. Date honey (also known as date syrup or silan) is listed as one of the seven special species that the Torah attributes to Eretz Yisroel. Moreover, the Torah, on numerous occasions, praises Eretz Yisroel as a land flowing with milk and honey. The Talmud (Kesubos 10b) credits dates with several significant health and nutritional benefits: they are fulfilling and satisfying, cleanse the body, prevent anxiety and worry, and heal various physical illnesses.

Dates are one of the *simanim* at the Rosh Hashanah table and it is the custom of many communities to prepare food where date syrup/silan is a key ingredient.

The date palm tree is a symbol of righteousness (Psalm 92) and the Jewish nation as a whole are compared to

a date tree in the Song of Songs (7:7). The Medrash (Bereishis 41) enumerates seven special qualities and characteristics that are found both in palm trees and in the people of the Jewish nation. It is interesting to note that a date tree in Yiddish is a “Teitelbaum”. This is the family name of many prominent Jewish families, including that of the famous Chassidic dynasty of Sighet-Satmar (my wife is a branch of that holy tree), and that of the great, sweet, and unforgettable Senior Rabbinic Coordinator at the ©, Rabbi Leizer Teitelbaum, z”l.



Kashrus of Dates and Date Products


In the past, people thought that they were able to determine the kashrus status of a product by looking at the product or by examining the ingredient panel. It is now more commonly known that the ingredient panel is not the full story (even if the ingredients are understood and assuming there are no unintentionally omitted ingredients). Many ingredients are hidden in general terms like “natural flavors” and many products contain additives and processing aids that are not required by law to be declared on the ingredient panel. This includes citric acid as a pH adjuster, stearates as anti-caking, anti-foam oils as release agents, enzymes to break down juices, collagen as filtering aid, glycerin coatings as anti-clumping, and more. Additionally, even a perfectly kosher product can become not-kosher if the product (or any of its ingredients) was processed on non-kosher equipment or in a non-kosher environment¹.


1 ביו"ד (ס"ק"ג ס"ד) איתא דדבש של עכו"ם מותר ואין לחוש שהרתיתו בכלי של איסור משום דבשר נותן טעם לפגם בדבש, והיינו אפי' אם ידוע לנו שהכלי הי' בן ימנו דאי' אינו ב"י בלאו האי טעמא הוי נטלי'פ (עיי"ש בש"ך וביאור הגר"א). ודנו הפוסקים אמאי אין לחוש שהרתיתו הדבש בכלים שבישלו בהם שאר מיני איסורים כגון דגים טמאים הלב עכו"ם יין וכדו' וכתבו (ע"י הטיב פ"ח ס"ק"ג, יד יהודה שם סקכ"ב ודרכי תשובה שם סקס"ב וסקס"ד) דגם שאר איסורים נותנים טעם לפגם בדבש עור תי' שלא היו רגילין לבשל שאר איסורים בכלים שמרתיתין דבש, ונפק"מ בין הת"י באופן שידוע לנו שהרתיתו הדבש בכלי שבישלו בו שאר מיני איסורים דלטעם הראשון עדיין מותר ולטעם השני אסור. לענינו יש לדון אם דבש תמרים נכלל בד"ן זה. דהנה בב"י ס"י קכ"ב וקס"מ פ"ז ממאכ"א הי"ח בתחילת דבריו השווה דבש תמרים לסתם דבש לענין דין זה שכתב דהא דכוספן של גוי, שהוא פסולת של תמרים שעושים ממנה שכר, מותר מהאי טעמא דדבש שהבשר נותן טעם לפגם בכוספן ואפי' אם בשלו הכוספן בכלי בן ימנו. אך בהמשך דבריו מביא מתשובות הרשב"א ומדרייק מדברי הרמב"ם (וכן מביאר מדברי רש"י ע"י לח): דבשר אינו נותן טעם לפגם בכוספן ורק אם בשלו הכוספן בכלי שאינו ב"י הוי לפגם. ולא בריא לי האם בחזרתו סובר





When a product proudly displays the  symbol on the packaging, the customer can rest assured that the product is kosher without compromise. We ensure that dates and the various date related products bearing the  symbol are all made with kosher ingredients and processing aids that meet our high kashrus standards and they are processed in kosher certified facilities on kosher equipment.

-certified date products are of the highest quality and our clients' excellent quality control teams spare no effort to prevent infestation and remove defective products.

To conclude with a sweet vort. The Ponim Yofos explains the verse in Psalm 92: "A righteous person will flourish like a date palm, like a cedar in the Lebanon he will grow tall." A date palm generally grows much shorter than other types of palm trees and cedar trees. This is because the date palm channels most of its energy into its offspring to produce healthy, nutritious and delicious fruit. Similarly, a righteous person devotes much of his time and energy to teach, guide and build up his children and students. One might think that the righteous person sacrifices and gives up from his own personal growth and achievements; however, the opposite is true – they continue to grow tall and strong like the cedars of Lebanon because you never lose when you selflessly empower someone else to grow. 



הביי דכל דבש תמרים אין דינו כדבש סתמא ובכלי ביי נותן טעם לשבב (דהא בתחילת דבריו חישב כוספן לדבש תמרים), או דלמא במסקנא סובר הביי ריש לחלק בין כוספן לדבש תמרים דדוקא לענין כוספן שנעשה מפסולת של תמרים וגם עושים ממנה שבר שהוא משקה מר ובוה ייל שאין הבשר נוטלי"פ (בעין הסברא בהא דעכבר דדברא דסי ק"ד דלא הוי נוטלי"פ בשכרא) ואו נמצא דדבש תמרים דעלמא גם למסקנת הביי הוי נוטלי"פ בבשר ומותר בשל גוי. כל זה לפלפולא בעלמא שכמוכן מוצר בהכשר האו קיי מעיד שנעשה בתכלית ההידור בלי להסמך על ביטולים ונותן טעם לפגם וכדו'. ועיי אגרות משה יו"ד ח"ב סי' מ"א.



**Rabbi
Sholom Ber Hendel,**

© *Kosher Executive
Kashrus Vaad and
Executive Rabbinic
Coordinator*

What is vanilla?

Vanilla is the world's most popular flavor. About 75 percent of commercial vanilla flavor is used in the chocolate and ice cream industries, with the remaining 25 percent used in many other types of products, including baked goods, yogurts, coffees and beverages.

Natural vanilla beans are the second most expensive spice (after saffron), due to limited supply, high demand, and a long and costly growing and manufacturing process. Very little of the vanilla flavor in the world is from natural vanilla beans; artificial or imitation vanilla make up the majority of the vanilla used in most products.

How is vanilla made?

Vanilla beans were first discovered in Mexico, and are now grown in many tropical parts of the world, with Madagascar being the largest producer. Since the majority of vanilla beans are grown in a single country, hurricanes and other local events can greatly affect the supply and cost of natural vanilla.

Vanilla beans grow in pods on trees¹ for about nine months. After nine months, the green vanilla beans are harvested and undergo a long curing process to develop their flavor and smell.

The first step is a hot water treatment to activate the natural enzyme in the bean and start the curing process. Over the next few weeks, the beans are laid out in the sun during the day, and wrapped in cloths and packed in boxes to sweat at night. The vanillin flavor starts to develop and the pods turn brown. The pods are then dried and aged for a few months until they fully develop their vanilla flavor.

The pods are exported to extraction facil-

ities around the world where they are milled and soaked in a solution of alcohol and water. During this process, the alcohol extracts the flavor from the beans. Although the main flavor component of the beans is vanillin, there are other flavors that contribute to the taste as well. That is why natural vanilla is richer in flavor than imitation vanilla flavors. After extraction, the solids are filtered out and the natural vanilla extract is packaged.

Due to the high cost and low supply of vanilla beans, there is a large market for artificial flavoring, which may not provide the same richness of flavor, but can be a reliable supply and cost-effective source for a flavor that is in very high demand.

One way to produce vanillin is through the fermentation of carbohydrates – typically sugar (possibly with brewer's yeast) or rice bran. A microorganism is fed with carbohydrates, along with vitamins, minerals, and other additives, and metabolizes them into a liquid solution, the vanillin. This solution is filtered, washed with alcohol, concentrated, crystallized, filtered again, and then packaged. According to food labeling regulations,² such a product can be labeled as natural vanilla.

¹ Vanilla beans are not considered legumes (kitniyos).

² Food produced through microbial fermentation is considered natural - US FDA 21CFR101.22 and European regulation 1334/2008.

Artificial vanilla can be produced by using a petrochemical called guaiacol. The guaiacol is reacted with other chemicals in a series of reactions to produce vanillin. The vanillin is separated from the mixture and processed to purify and remove any other chemicals. The vanillin solution is then mixed with ethanol, which causes the vanillin to crystallize. The liquid is removed and the vanillin is dried and packaged.

Another chemical that can be used for artificial vanillin is lignin, a chemical byproduct of paper production from wood. Lignin is a large molecule that can be broken down into smaller components through chemical treatments, and those small components can go through an oxidization treatment to turn them into vanillin.

Is vanilla kosher?

The main kashrus concern with extract from vanilla beans and artificial vanilla is the alcohol that can be derived from sugar or corn, but can also be produced from a grape source (Stam Yainom), dairy source, or from chometz sources, such as wheat and barley, which pose an issue for Passover.

When vanilla is produced by fermentation there are many ingredients involved. All ingredients, additives, and processing aids need to be kosher for the vanilla to be certified kosher.

All types of vanilla, regardless of the production method, require a reliable kosher certification.

INTERESTING HALACHIC ANALYSIS: WHAT HAPPENS IF THERE IS A MISTAKE?

As we all know, mistakes can happen in a kosher kitchen. Typically, when a non-kosher additive is accidentally added to a kosher mixture, we can apply the laws of *bittul* (nullification). If something becomes *bottul*, it is nul-

lified because it comprised less than 1/60th of the mixture and the finished product can usually be declared kosher, *b'dieved* (after the fact). One of the exceptions to the rule is "*milsa de'avidah leta'amah*" - anything intended to add flavor cannot be nullified as long as the flavor is noticeable³.

Vanilla is meant to provide flavor and is typically used in small amounts of less than 1/60th, so it might seem that the final mixture should be declared non-kosher, even *b'dieved*, since the vanilla would not be *bottul*. However, after careful analysis, the actual flavor component of the vanilla is from a kosher source⁴ and is not the kosher concern. Only the alcohol, which is merely a processing aid and not part of the flavoring itself, is not kosher certified. Therefore, in the final review, natural and artificial non-kosher vanilla can sometimes be nullified if it is accidentally used and is less than 1/60th of the mixture.

Vanilla from Israel

In a recent industry development, an Israeli company started growing vanilla beans in tropical greenhouses in Israel. If an Israeli vanilla bean was grown during a *shmitta* year, or has any issue with *mitzvos hateluyos ba'aretz* (orlah, terumos, ma'asros, etc.), and is used in a product, it would not be nullified even when less than 1/1000th, because the flavor itself is the kashrus issue. (K)

³ See more in page 18 of the Kosher Spirit – Tishrei 5781.

⁴ This refers to the vanilla beans or chemicals used to create imitation vanilla. If fermented vanilla extract is mixed into a kosher product it will also usually be the same ruling because the main ingredients are usually kosher and possible non-kosher additives are typically not considered the main contributors to the flavor (and would be nullified because *zeh vazeh goreim*).



HAKHEL

From a talk given by the Lubavitcher Rebbe tz"l on Shabbos Parshas Bereishis, 24th Day of Tishrei, 5741 (1980)

The verse states that Hakhel would influence a Jew "all the days which you live upon the face of the earth." The inspiration and the lasting influence of Hakhel is even greater than that of the three Pilgrim Festivals enumerated in the Torah.¹

Simchas Torah is connected with Mattan Torah. Likewise, Hakhel has a unique relationship with Mattan Torah. The commandment in Torah regarding the Hakhel is stated as follows:

Hakhel (assemble) the people, the men and the women and the children, and the stranger that is within your gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear Hashem, and observe to do all the words of this law; and that their children, who have not known, may hear, and learn to fear Hashem all the days which you live on the land (Ibid. 31:12-13).

During the Hakhel the king of Yisroel read the Torah to the Hakhel gathering. Similarly, at the time of the giving of the Torah, G-d commanded the king of the nation of Yisroel, Moshe Rabbeinu, to "Assemble Me the people, and I will make them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days that they live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children." Another similarity is the fact that the whole and complete Torah was given at Mattan Torah, and the verse regarding the Hakhel states that the purpose of Hakhel is that Jews "observe all the words of this Torah." The similarities of Hakhel to Mattan Torah underscore the connection of the one to the other.

There is, however, a major difference between the Hakhel which took place prior to Mattan Torah, and the Hakhel which occurred once every seven years at the Holy Temple. The verse which commands the Hakhel which occurs once in seven years states: "assemble the people – the men and the women and the children." Regarding the Hakhel which occurred prior to Mattan Torah, however, particulars are not enumerated.

The verse simply states: "assemble the people," without making any differentiation between men, women, and children. The explanation for this is as follows: The giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai had more profound effects than the obvious result that we now had the Torah whereas before we didn't. The event of Mattan Torah also effected a major change in the world. Before the giving of the Torah our patriarchs knew the Torah and learned the Torah. Each patriarch received Torah knowledge from the patriarch(s) that preceded him, and then added to it.² This is espe-

cially evident regarding our forefather Ya'akov, who sat in the tents of Shem and Aver.

The Tzemach Tzedek explains that the names 'Shem,' and 'Aver,' correspond to the written and oral Torah respectively. The word 'Shem' means name, and refers to the written Torah, as the Talmud states: "the entire Torah is names of the Holy One, blessed be He." The word 'Aver' means to pass, and refers to the oral Torah which is passed from generation to generation.

It is thus understood that since the patriarchs studied Torah, the children of Israel must have also studied Torah prior to Mattan Torah.

As already mentioned, Mattan Torah affected a major change in the world; it was an event that dramatically changed the world. At Mattan Torah all the various levels and differences in the body of the Jewish people became clearly defined. Mattan Torah placed the boundaries between the Jewish people into a clear, concise, and set pattern – heads, tribes, elders, offices, men, little ones, wives, strangers, etc.

Mattan Torah also defined the division between men, women, and children which has been extant ever since. The verse regarding Hakhel which occurred prior to Mattan Torah does not enumerate who would be assembled at Hakhel. The verse only says "assemble the people." However, regarding the Hakhel which occurred after Mattan Torah, the verse states: "assemble the men, women, and children." This was because at that time there existed set divisions within the Jewish camp. Each of these divisions among the Jewish people has its individual advantage. Rashi cites the opinion of Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah who said, "the men come to Hakhel to learn, the women come to listen, and the reason the children come to Hakhel is to give reward to those that bring them." The children have the advantage that they "cause others to receive reward for bringing them to Hakhel." This last advantage embodies the concept of "and the hearts of the parents will return through the children."

The advantage that children possess may be understood as follows: There are two methods of prayer to G-d. One is to have high, lofty thoughts during prayer. The other is to pray with the simple intentions of a child. The essential part of a Mitzvah is its actual performance; the intentions during the performance of a Mitzvah are of secondary importance. Prayer is the "service of the heart," and one fulfills his obligation of prayer when he prays with "the intentions of a child."

In the actual fulfillment of a Mitzvah all Jews are equal. A person may be a great scholar who understands the secrets and allusions, the reasons and intentions, of the Mitzvos. Nevertheless, the essential point of each Mitzvah, for him as well as another Jew, is to actually do the Mitzvah. In this aspect – fulfillment – the greatest scholar, and the simplest Jew, are equal. Likewise, in regard to prayer, one who prays "with the intention of a child" is compared to one who fulfills Mitzvos simply because Hashem commanded them.

During Mattan Torah the concept of "we will do before we will listen" was achieved. This is the idea of fulfilling a Mitzvah because "Hashem has sanctified us with His commandments." This is the concept of "Na'aseh" – we will do. We do not fulfill the commandments because we understand them. That is the concept of "Nishmah" – to listen and understand. Regardless of how high a level of Nishmah we reach, there must be the attitude of Na'aseh before Nishmah. This is the major achievement of Mattan Torah.

We see this on Simchas Torah, when we rejoice with the Torah closed and dressed in its garments. We celebrate the joy of mitzvos that applies equally to all Jews, rather than the inner understanding, which may be only attainable to a select few.

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1. Although Hakhel occurs once every seven years, it is nonetheless, an ascent onto a higher level of holiness. The holiness and inspiration which the current Hakhel provides are in addition to the influences of the previous Hakhel which are felt "all the days which you live upon the land."

2. This is because the commandment to learn Torah obligates us to explore and study the very depths of Torah. In Hilchos Talmud Torah the Alter Rebbe states the Halachic decision that "if one has the capability to produce new insights in his study of Torah, and he does not produce these original explanations in his study, than he has not fulfilled his obligation in the study of Torah."



The Jewish calendar system rotating on a 19-year cycle, institutes a leap year periodically to compensate for the days lost in the juxtaposition between the lunar and solar calendars, the Jewish calendar being based upon the lunar calendar. This past year, a leap year, concludes an entire 19-year cycle and effects a perfect correspondence, leaving no disparity, no extra days or moments, between the two calendars.

This calendar adjustment is reflected in a Jew's service to Hashem. The Baal Shem Tov explains that everything a Jew sees or hears should serve as a lesson in one's service to Hashem. Particularly, the fixation of the calendar, which is a mitzvah of the Torah, contains valuable lessons in the service of Hashem.

The leap year teaches every Jew that during the leap year one can compensate for the service one has not fulfilled in previous years. Although this concept applies

throughout the entire leap year, there are particular stages within the year when the concept is more relevant. For example, the month of Elul was instituted as a time of Teshuvah for the entire year. Within Elul itself, the last 12 days are of special importance. Each day serves as a period of Teshuvah for one month of the previous year.

Erev Rosh Hashanah contains the potential to effect Teshuvah for that month of Elul (which in turn effects a Teshuvah for that entire year, which subsequently can effect a Teshuvah for the entire past 19-year cycle).

On this one day, Erev Rosh Hashanah, each Jew has the capability to compensate for all the deficiencies of his previous 19 years. Teshuvah is a movement which is above time and is possible in one moment, with one turn of attention. It is within the grasp of every Jew. The realization that Teshuvah can have such far-reaching effects, is within our potential and should motivate every Jew towards increased joy in his study of Torah and performance of mitzvos.

“

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Why don't we wear shoes on Yom Kippur?

On Yom Kippur, when a Jew does teshuvah he elevates the whole world – even the ground that we walk on becomes *admas kodesh* (holy ground). That may be one of the reasons we don't wear our shoes, because when one walks on holy ground, we remove our shoes. We learn this from the Torah, when Hashem said to Moshe Rabbeinu, as he approached the burning bush, “Remove your shoes; the ground that you are standing on is holy.”



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