

Voice OF THE VAAAD

Issue 2 - Cheshvan 5778 November 2017

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Dear Fellow Community Members,

It is with much pleasure that I present to you the second issue of our newsletter. The responses I have received from our inaugural edition are much appreciated. In our latest edition, I present to you two feature articles and pertinent local information. The first article is an overview of the *halachos of bishul yisroel* and how it pertains to our modern cooking. The second article features highlights of our Bikur Cholim Society. The Jewish people are crowned with the mandate of living with humility, compassion and acts of kindness. Through our joint efforts to assist our fellow brethren with the special mitzvah of *bikur cholim*, we are answering our call. I urge you all to familiarize yourselves with what our Bikur Cholim Society is accomplishing and join the effort. With more manpower and continuous funding, we will be able collectively to continue to excel in this mitzvah.

You will find a list as well of all OV certified food establishments in town. I hope you will utilize this information to help patronage our local kosher establishments. The *kelim mikvah* information has been updated to better serve the needs of our community.

It is my hope to update the OV website over the coming months to contain accurate local information with a new user-friendly design.

Wishing you all a safe and warm winter,

Rabbi Yitzchak Kowalsky
Senior Rabbinical Coordinator
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Kosher Cooking - It's Not Just the Ingredients

Kosher cooking brings to mind the classic taste of gefilte fish and chopped liver. This article will not address the development of such pivotal trends in our history, rather the halachos of how even “kosher” food might not always be so “kosher.”

The kosher food industry is booming in the 21st century. However, it's not just the ingredients to consider rendering an item kosher in the kitchen; one must also ensure that there are no violations of *bishul akum*. Loosely translated this means food cooked by a gentile, which is Rabbinically prohibited. The Rabbis of old knew that Jewish identity is the key to our survival as a nation. To this end, they enacted specific laws¹ regarding food preparation which limit unnecessary socialization that could lead to intermarriage². *Chazal* were also concerned that one who is not sensitive to kosher laws³ might inadvertently mix in some non-kosher ingredients.

Food cooked by a Jew is referred to as *bishul yisroel*. Before we discuss what qualifies for *bishul yisroel*, we need to point out that there are two important exceptions which limit the *halacha*⁴ of *bishul akum*. First, *Chazal* only prohibited us from consuming foods cooked by a non-Jew which could not be eaten raw. *Chazal* understood that since the item can be ingested in its raw state, cooking it is not considered a significant⁵ enough change to warrant a prohibition. Second, items not fit to be served at a royal banquet⁶ are permitted even if a non-Jew cooks them. Here too, the level of appreciation to the cook would be minimal since the food is not classified as a prestigious item. With these two rules in mind we can now develop an understanding of the challenges faced in modern food production. The *poskim*⁸ tell us that in each generation and locale it needs to be determined what foods might fall into one of the above categories. For this *halacha* we can't use the standards of what once was, they need to be continuously updated. For example, in the USA it is common to consume many varieties of raw mushrooms. This was not always the case, as earlier *poskim*⁹ classified mushrooms as items that are fit for a royal banquet (and not eaten raw) and would therefore be prohibited if cooked by a non-Jew. However, since today they are commonly eaten raw, even if a non-Jew were to cook them, they would be permissible¹⁰. Some common examples of food that can be eaten raw and would therefore not have any *bishul akum* concerns are: water, milk, applesauce, dried fruit, ketchup and many canned vegetables (string beans, peas, carrots, pickles, corn).

A common question that arises in this topic is how do we classify food

products as being suited for a royal table. We may have a particular food item which can be served at a royal banquet when prepared in a specific manner, but would be totally unsuitable if prepared in a different manner. For example, potatoes in a mashed form are suitable at a royal banquet. However, a potato chip would not find its place in such a distinguished setting. Do we suggest that all potato products need to be *bishul yisroel*? Some contemporary authorities¹¹ have stated that it is appropriate to be strict in this matter. However, the consensus of the national *kashrus* certifying agencies¹² is to rely on the ruling of many other *poskim* and determine each item in its current form and therefore certify potato chips without any concern of *bishul akum*.



What are some of the methods that *halacha* views as valid for qualifying as *bishul yisroel*? The *Shulchan Aruch*¹³ rules that it is not sufficient for a Jew to light the fire before the pot is placed on top of it. The Jew must either light the fire after the non-Jew placed the pot on the stove¹⁴, or light the fire and place the pot on top of it. The *Rema*¹⁵ is more lenient and allows a non-Jew to place a pot on a flame that was already lit by a Jew. The *Rema* adds that even if a Jew has a partial role in preparing the flame, it is classified as *bishul yisroel*. For example, if a Jew adds fuel (wood chips) to the preexisting fire or even if the non-Jew lights the flame from an existing flame lit by a Jew, it is sufficient.

These leniencies of the *Rema* are relied upon by Ashkenazim but are generally not accepted by the *Sephardim*¹⁶. Accordingly, stoves and ovens with pilot lights that stay lit continuously will be considered *bishul yisroel* as long as a Jew lit the pilot light¹⁷. Even with the leniency of the *Rema*, the *kashrus* agencies encourage the *meshgichim* to re-light all the pilot-lights to ensure that none of the non-Jewish kitchen staff accidentally relit one of the flames. However, one must keep in mind that many stove tops today have an electric ignition without a continuously burning pilot light and therefore would pose a concern for *bishul akum*. This dilemma often arises in homes which have hired non-Jewish domestic help who are cooking in the kitchen. Care must be taken to assure no violations of *bishul akum* are transpiring even with the most kosher of ingredients.

1 Meseches Avodah Zarah 35b – The Talmud there also discusses the laws governing bread, wines, cheeses and milk. See “Voice of the Vaad” Issue 1 for an article discussing the decree on bread.

2 Taz YD 113:7, see Taz YD 152:1 who emphasizes that there is no permissibility here even in situations of enmity.

3 Rashi in Meseches Avodah Zarah 38a. See Pischei Teshuva YD 113:7, Kaf HaChaim YD 113:1, Shu”t Tzitz Eliezer 9:41.

4 Shulchan Aruch YD 113:1

5 Even though the food item is now a different product i.e. raw apple to applesauce

6 Rashi in Meseches Beitzah 16a

7 The *poskim* discuss at length how to define a royal banquet in contemporary terms, see Ohel Yaakov 113:34-36.

8 Chelkas Binyamin YD 113:5,9

9 See Shach YD 113:2

10 See Ohel Yaakov 113:46

11 Rav Elyashiv zt”l quoted in Ashrei Halsh (YD 8:1) – the rationale given is that they are suited to dip into soft cheeses. See however Ohel Yaakov (113: f59) where he suggests that in countries that would not serve potato chips at royal banquets even Rav Elyashiv zt”l would agree to be lenient. In Emes L’Yaakov (YD 113: f42) Rav Yaakov Kamentzky zt”l is quoted as being strict in this matter as well, the rationale given is that we classify all potato products as being in one category, namely fit for a

royal banquet. However Rav Yisroel Belsky z”l (Shu”t Shulchan HaLevi BH #25) wrote that he is very skeptical if Rav Kamentzky zt”l in truth held such a position, as in his opinion it is not properly rooted in earlier halachic sources.

12 See <https://www.star-k.org/articles/kashrus-kurrents/4268/insights-from-the-institute-6/>

13 YD 113:7

14 Shu”t Yabia Omer 5:20:7

15 YD 113:7

16 Rav Ovadia Yosef zt”l (Shu”t Yabia Omer 9:6) rules that although a Sephardic Jew should follow the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch, if he is a guest in the home of an Ashkenazi Jew he can be lenient and rely on the leniencies of the *Rema* to qualify for *bishul yisroel*. See further Shu”t Ohr L’Zion (Vol 2: Introduction Par 2)

17 There is a discussion in the *poskim* if the *Rema* meant that these leniencies should be relied upon a priori or only post factum, see Chelkas Binyamin YD 113:82. However Rav Shmuel Fuerst shlita”a (audio recording available at <http://psak.org/audios/2010/r%20fuerst%202010-10-24%20bishul%20akum.mp3> minute 54:35-56:15) quotes Rav Moshe Feinstein zt”l and Rav Y.E. Heinken zt”l who both permit pilot lights a priori. However Rav Aharon Felder zt”l (Reshumei Aharon Vol. 1 YD 113:2) quotes Rav Moshe Feinstein zt”l as saying that one should not rely on pilot lights to satisfy *bishul yisroel* a priori. See further, opinion of Rav S.Z. Auerbach zt”l quoted in Sefer Halichos Shlomo (Aseres Yemi Teshuva 3: f 11).

Bikur Cholim Society of the Vaad Hoer of St. Louis

It is recorded in the historical diaries¹ of Jewish communities throughout Europe, that starting from the 14th century, societies were established for visiting and caring for the sick. These societies paid physicians, pharmacists and midwives to care for needy patients.

The various communities contributed to the expenses of these societies through specific taxes levied for this purpose. There were also “sleep-in societies” whose members spent the night with the patients to care for their needs. The performance of the mitzvah of *bikur cholim* is deemed as one of the most important *mitzvos*² in the Torah. In this week’s *parsha*, we find the paradigm of *Bikur Cholim*, when *Hashem* visited *Avraham Avinu* while he was recovering from his *Bris Milah*. *Chazal* teach us that *Hashem* visited *Avraham* specifically on the day of greatest weakness and physical vulnerability, to inquire if he needed anything. The *Gemara*³ uses this incident to teach us a great lesson. We must learn to emulate *Hashem* and ensure that we are properly tending to the needs of the sick.

Our community of St. Louis is blessed to have such a society. The Bikur Cholim Society of the Vaad Hoer is an all-encompassing life cycle organization. From providing postpartum mothers with care baskets and support, to assisting those caring for loved ones at the end of life, and all medical situations that fall in between. The range of services that our community members provide locally is vast. Those who need assistance know to turn to **Mrs. Miriam Florans** for help. Whether it’s helping arrange transportation, sending over home cooked food, arranging visits to hospitals, maintaining and stocking the kosher pantry in St. Louis Children’s Hospital and on and on, Mrs. Florans and her dedicated team of local volunteers pull it all together.

With the recent opening of the **Ohel Rina and Michael House**, we have raised the bar in observing the precious *mitzvot* of *bikur cholim* and *hachnasat orchim*. Generously donated by **Michael and Carol Staenberg** renowned for their philanthropic work, the amenities our community can now offer those visiting from out of town in need of medical assistance are awesome.

St. Louis is a city blessed with many top ranking medical centers. Many specialized procedures are performed locally with tremendous success. This affords us the opportunity to open our community to our visiting brethren seeking medical attention.

Our Bikur Cholim committee attends to every detail in accommodating these families at such a vulnerable time in their lives. The range of requests from visiting families can vary greatly. Some need home cooked food, others a trip to Busch Stadium, while some need a listening ear and a shoulder to lean on. While the visitors are here they often have a special milestone to celebrate. Whether it’s a birthday, *siyum* or a celebration upon finishing a series of treatments, our community members swing into action to help arrange whatever is necessary for the party.

Everything that patients and their families need is provided to make our

guests feel most comfortable. Families visiting our community are often coming from foreign countries alien to American culture and language. They are most grateful to be welcomed with such open arms. The Nusach Hari “pizza nights” open invitation to all families visiting for medical treatments, is always an appreciated venue for our guests. When the family can’t make it down to the shul to enjoy the pizza, the offer of delivery to their location is always much appreciated. This beautiful act epitomizes our community’s ability to emulate the *chesed* of *Avraham Avinu*.

Recently a family visiting from Israel whose child needed medical assistance was at a loss for what to do with their other child during their stay. When **Mr. Daniel Lefton**, then board president of Epstein Hebrew Academy together with **Rabbi Yaakov Green**, Head of School of Epstein Hebrew Academy, heard that there was a child who needed a school, they opened their doors to welcome him. The family was so appreciative of the opportunity their son had to learn and be together with other children during this time. This act was such an unbelievable lesson imparted to the children of the school, to live with the mitzvah of *hachnasat orchim*.

Many times family members accompanying the patient themselves need medical assistance during their stay in St. Louis. Already burdened with caring for their loved one, they are not prepared to deal with their personal ailments as well. Our community physicians graciously give of their time to administer proper medical examinations and treatments gratis for the visitors. This selfless act of kindness is yet another hallmark of our community.

Mr. Arik Levy has organized a WhatsApp group specifically for volunteers from the community to assist with the various requests that come in. Typically, within minutes of posting a need on WhatsApp, there is a flood of responses. Whether in Chesterfield or University City, various members from the entire community have been able to assist with this mitzvah of *bikur cholim*. Over the past few years, Arik has dedicated himself to oversee close to 50 families who have come for various medical treatments. Often, he is contacted months in advance by family members to assess what accommodations they will need when they arrive. When they learn that everything will be provided for them, they are in disbelief. Some just call a day before, because they have already heard that St. Louis is equipped to host for *bikur cholim*. Frequently the visiting families have been preparing for years in anticipation of their medical treatments. Already overwhelmed by the medical and emotional aspects of the illness, the relief we are able to provide is a remarkable *Kiddush Hashem*.

This is a tremendous *zechus* for our community and is creating a feeling of unity amongst community members. The Ohel Rina and Michael Bikur Cholim house is open to Jews of all affiliations. Located in University



OV Certified Food Establishments



Baked Goods:

- Toby's Challah House (pareve) – 8262 Tulane Ave., 63132
- Breadsmith (pareve) – 10031 Manchester Rd., 63122
- Cham Bakery (pareve) – 6818 Manchester Ave., 63143
- Krispy Kreme (dairy) – 5 Locations:
 - 10880 W. Florissant Ave, 63136
 - 1871 Bowles Ave, 63026
 - 6935 South Lindbergh, 63129
 - 6021 Mid Rivers Mall Dr., 63304
 - 5812 North Illinois St., 62208
- Schnucks (dairy/pareve) - 4 Locations items bearing OV sticker:
 - Ladue Crossing – 8867 Ladue Road, 63124 (Bakery and Fish / Sushi) - Select items at the Kaldis Coffee Shop.
 - Chesterfield – 141 Hilltown Village Center, 63017 (Bakery)
 - Mason - 12756 Olive Blvd Olive Blvd, 63141 (Bakery)
 - Spoede - 10650 Olive Blvd, 63141 (Bakery)
- Dierbergs - West Oak – 11481 Olive Blvd., 63141 (Bakery)

Restaurant & Take Out:

- Kohns Kosher Delicatessen – 10405 Old Olive Street Rd., 63141
 - Busch Stadium – Kohn's Kosher Stand – Located in Sections 147 & 446
 - Scottrade Center – Kohn's Kosher Stand – Located in section 111
- Gokul Indian Restaurant (vegetarian) – 6101 Delmar Blvd, 63112
- Washington University South Forty Dining (open to the public) (dairy/meat) – Bear's Den/ L'Chaim
- Taste of Jerusalem @ STL Kollel (available Fridays) (meat) – 8202 Delmar Blvd, 63124
- Elefant Pizza (dairy) – 8262 Tulane Ave., 63132
- Circle @ Crown Café (dairy) – 8350 Delcrest Dr., 63124

Candy & Nuts:

- Wine and Cheese Place – 457 N New Ballas Rd – 63141 - items bearing OV sticker
- Mound City – 7831 Olive Blvd., 63130

Frozen Treats:

- Tutti Fruitti - 2 Locations, Only items marked with OV sticker:
 - 7708 Delmar Blvd., 63130
 - 4906 Laclede Ave., 63108
- Ted Drewes - 2 Locations, Check OV letter for approved items:
 - 6726 Chippewa, 63109
 - 4224 S. Grand Blvd., 63111

Bikur Cholim Society *Continued from p. 2*

City, the Ohel Rina and Michael House is accessible to local synagogues and opportunities for *Shabbos* meals in the community. This gives the visitors a feeling of being welcomed by the community.

The home is always fully stocked with linens, towels and provisions to make their stay as pleasant as possible. This past *Pesach* season an influx of families were visiting for various medical treatments, and all requested food kosher for *Pesach*. Within a few days of notice, **Mrs. Yocheved Whitten** and **Mrs. Michal Pudles** organized a community wide effort to provide the visiting families with all their needs for *Pesach*. The generosity of this act did not go unnoticed by its recipients. The visiting families were truly touched and awed by the abundance of home cooked *Pesach* food available to them, donated by local community members.

This tremendous operation is not the work of a single individual. Rather, a team of dedicated community members are constantly involved to ensure everything is properly prepared. **Mr. Arik Levy, Mr. Murray Bressler, Mrs. Pnina Glassman, Mrs. Miriam Florans, Mrs. Korey Fredman, Ms. Lynda Fields, Mrs. Marni Lichtenfeld** and many others have been the driving force behind so much of this operation.

Families contacting us for accommodations often need to be redirected to other community members who have opened their homes. Since June 2016 the Ohel Rina and Michael house, has been occupied non-stop! **Dr. Dovid and Mrs. Gitty Greengart** have recently renovated their basement to accommodate families visiting for medical care.

We are now reading the *parshios* of our forefather *Avraham Avinu* and his dedication to *chesed* and helping all those who came under his wing. In this spirit, the *Rabbanim* of our local shuls have dedicated the week of *Parshas Vayera* as a time for the community as a whole to show their support for the mitzvah of *bikur cholim*. Continuous funding is required to maintain this vital branch of *chesed* in our community. The ground work has been laid, the pieces are in motion, and now it is up to the greater community to have an ongoing merit in keeping this operation running smoothly. Please give generously. This is a special opportunity to impact the lives of so many of our brethren at a time they need us most.

Tax deductible donations can be made on the web at: www.bcstlweb.com or checks can be made out to **“Vaad Hoer” - memo Bikur Cholim and mailed to 4 Millstone Campus Drive, St. Louis, MO 63146.**

¹ See Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol 14, pg. 1498-1499

² Aruch Hashulchan YD 335:2

³ Sotah 14a

Kelim Mikvah Update:



During office hours the Kelim Mikvah is available via entrance through the Vaad office door. At other times the Kelim Mikvah is accessible through a rear door entrance. The code to enter is aleph, gimmel, hey. Please use parking lot in the front of the building. During the winter months (November-March) the Kelim Mikvah may not be accessed after 4 pm and in the summer not after 7 pm.

Effective immediately the fee for the men's Mikvah for *Shabbos* use is \$6 for all patrons. Checks should be made out to “Taharath Israel” and sent to Vaad Hoer - 4 Millstone Campus, St. Louis, MO 63146.