

# Voice OF THE VAAAD

Issue 3 - Shvat 5778 February 2018



Taharath Israel Mikvah



Insects to Inspect



Fruit & Vegetable List



Halacha Corner

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VAAD HOEIR of ST. LOUIS ועד העיר סט. לואיס

## TAHARATH ISRAEL St. Louis Mikvah Association

For generations our St. Louis community has been blessed to have a society charged with the mission to oversee the upkeep of our mikvaot, Taharath Israel – St. Louis Mikvah Association.

The society has been responsible for the upkeep of two *mikvaot* and the *kelim mikvah*. The Sylvia Green Memorial Mikvah located on the Millstone Campus was constructed in 1979 and the Rivkin-Zuckerman Memorial Shabbat Mikvah located in the Young Israel was constructed in 1995. For many years Rebbetzin Pesia Rivkin a"h, as president of the association, spearheaded the efforts to ensure the upkeep of the *mikvaot*. Two individuals who have committed themselves for the past number of years to ensure the upkeep and continuous running of the *mikvaot* have been Mrs. Chana Huber and Rabbi Yerachmiel Frank. The *mikvaot* have continuously been under the *halachic* guidance of the *Rabbanim Achraim of the Vaad*, Rabbi Menachem Greenblatt and Rabbi Yosef Landa.

For many years now the *mikvah* has been running on a deficit. There is a misnomer that

supporting a *mikvah* is considered a charitable cause<sup>1</sup>. The *Shulchan Aruch*<sup>2</sup> codifies a ruling that each individual residing in a community is obligated to pay for the building of a *mikvah*. Even those individuals who do not use the *mikvah* must pay for its construction and maintenance. This need is codified as a tax that must be levied for all members of a community to contribute to.



Most urgently, funds are needed to repair the leaking roof in the Sylvia Green Memorial Mikvah. The towels and amenities as well need to be replaced. The *kelim mikvah*

which serves the entire community is available free of charge. Recently at the request of many community members the availability of the *kelim mikvah* has been increased. The need to update that *mikvah* as well is long overdue.

The long-term viability of the *mikvah* in its current situation is not stable. Without

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# Insects to Inspect

**Bugs in food: not a pleasant thought but a reality nonetheless. According to the FDA<sup>1</sup> it is to be expected that many of our food items contain insects.** For example, current standards allow an average of 60 aphids and/or thrips and/or mites per 100 grams of frozen broccoli. This can be an overwhelming challenge for the Torah observant Jew.

The injunction not to consume insects is one of the most serious prohibitions in the Torah. Someone who eats one whole insect, even a miniscule one, can transgress four, five or six prohibitions, depending on the type of insect.<sup>2</sup> The Torah divides insects into three groups: water insects (examples: crabs, worms in the belly cavity of fish, parasites on the skin of carp), land insects (examples: ants, worms in fruits, citrus scales on the peel of citrus fruits) and flying insects (examples: flies, mosquitoes, bees).<sup>3</sup> One who eats a water insect transgresses four Torah prohibitions; one who eats a land insect transgresses five Torah prohibitions; and one who eats a flying insect transgresses six Torah prohibitions.<sup>4</sup> It therefore behooves us to ensure we do our utmost to be careful to avoid any consumption of bugs.

Over the past number of years there has been a heightened awareness for the kosher consumer to check many fruits and vegetables for insects. Many are wary to address this reality and wish to remain with a status-quo approach. This is incorrect from a *halachic* perspective for many reasons. Firstly, until the mid-nineteen seventies the use of DDT<sup>5</sup> and other strong pesticides in the USA had greatly reduced the infestation problem in much of our produce. Once the FDA banned the use of such pesticides the infestation problem began to escalate in the USA. Secondly, although farmers today still use a variety of pesticides, insects often develop immunity to them over time. Thirdly, the organic movement has gained much popularity. The phrase “organic” connotes that the products were grown without pesticides or other synthetic herbicides. Lastly there is a metaphysical reason as well for the influx of insect infestation. The *Ohr Hachaim Hakodesh*<sup>6</sup> explains why the manna that some left over in the desert turned wormy. The defiance of the word of Hashem



not to leave over the manna caused the food to become wormy. Similarly, he writes, the prevalence of insects in produce in each generation is a direct result of sin.<sup>7</sup>

Infestation in produce has been a challenge for kosher consumers for millennia. The *Gemara* and *halachic* literature deal quite extensively with the need for us to check our food. Almost every food that has problems today with infestation has already been mentioned in earlier halachic sources. The *Gemara*<sup>8</sup> mentions various examples of bug-infestation in food: worms in water, bugs in lentils, small flies in legumes, worms in dates, dried figs, olives and grapes and on and on.<sup>9</sup>

Does this mean we must all purchase magnifying equipment to search all our produce? The answer is a resounding no. The prohibition of consuming insects applies only to those insects which are visible to the naked eye of a person with average vision.<sup>10</sup> Magnifying equipment and a light box might be used to make the checking easier, but they are not necessary to find insects that would not be visible due to their

size. However, the colors of certain insects match that of the vegetable they infest. Those of course increase our challenge to find and remove them. Care must be taken as well, because what at first glance may appear to be a piece of dirt, may in actuality be an insect. Another concern is that bugs often hide in the crevices of a leaf or inside a broccoli floret; this does **not** make them invisible to the naked eye. It is therefore crucial before someone starts checking their produce to know what type of bugs to look for.<sup>11</sup>

Many question why bugs are not considered nullified in the produce they dwell in? Don't we have a general rule that matters which are prohibited from eating are nullified when there is 60x more permissible matter than that which is prohibited? The answer to this is found in the *Gemara*:<sup>12</sup> because lashes are administered to one who consumes any whole bug irrespective of its size<sup>13</sup>, the laws of *bittul* (to become nullified) do not apply to a whole bug.<sup>14</sup> This *halacha* is codified in *Shulchan Aruch*<sup>15</sup> that a *beriyah* (a whole being) is not *batel* in a mixture. Even if the produce may be hundreds<sup>16</sup> of times larger than the insect, the insect is not *batel* and

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# Fruit & Vegetable List'

**Alfalfa Sprouts** - A general inspection is needed to rule out obvious infestation.

**Artichokes - Hearts** - **Not recommended at this time.**<sup>2</sup> **Bottoms** - A general inspection is needed to rule out obvious infestation.

**Asparagus - Green** - Cut off tips and discard. Remove all triangular side leaves and wash well. Or you may peel it like a carrot, no checking is required. **White** - Rinse well with water.

**Barley** - If it comes with reliable kosher supervision, no checking is necessary. If it doesn't, one should do a cursory inspection of the barley before use. It can be placed in a bowl of cold water for a short time so that any insects will float to the top of the water and then can be removed. (This is also applicable if one stores any barley for a prolonged period of time.)

**Basil - Fresh** - Thrip cloth method. **Dried** - Is acceptable without kosher supervision as long as no added kosher sensitive ingredients.

**Beans - Dry** - See Barley. All frozen and canned beans require proper kosher supervision.

**Bean Sprouts** - A general inspection is needed to rule out obvious infestation.

**Beets** - A general inspection is needed to rule out obvious infestation.

**Blackberries** - **Fresh/Frozen are not recommended at this time.**<sup>3</sup>

**Blueberries** - Rinse well in water and a cursory inspection for maggots is needed.

**Bok Choy** - Thrip cloth method.

**Broccoli - Florets** - Thrip cloth method. **Slaw or Stems** - A general inspection is needed to rule out obvious infestation.

**Brussel Sprouts** - **Not recommended at this time.**

**Butternut Squash** - A general inspection is needed to rule out obvious infestation.

**Cabbage - Green and Red** - Star-K - Thrip cloth method. cRc - Remove and discard 4 outer green/red leaves. Remove remaining green/red leaves and rinse them thoroughly under a stream of water. The remaining white/red leaves may be used without any further checking other than a cursory inspection for obvious insect infestation. All pre-washed green or red cabbage is acceptable even without kosher supervision. **Napa** - Thrip cloth method.

**Carob** - Do an internal and external inspection for any signs of infestation.

**Carrots** - A general inspection is needed to rule out obvious infestation.

**Cauliflower** - Star-K - Thrip cloth method. cRc - Remove green leaves from head. Cut head into eight pieces. Then follow thrip cloth method.

**Celery Stalks** - Rinse well, especially around bottom of stalk, discard leaves (or use thrip cloth method for leaves).

**Cherries** - A general inspection is needed to rule out obvious infestation.

**Cilantro** - Thrip cloth method.

**Collard Greens** - Thrip cloth method.

**Corn on the Cob** - Fresh/Frozen - Remove husk and rinse. If grilling then must remove husk first.

**Cucumbers** - A general inspection is needed to rule out obvious infestation.

**Dates** - If comes with reliable kosher supervision, no checking is necessary. If is not kosher supervised and has no added questionable ingredients, do an internal and external inspection for any signs of infestation.

**Dill - Fresh** - Thrip cloth method. **Dried** - See dried basil.

**Edible Flowers** - **Not recommended at this time.**

**Eggplants** - A general inspection is needed to rule out obvious infestation.

**Endive** - Thrip cloth method.

**Escarole** - Thrip cloth method.

**Fennel** - Cut along length of fennel green leaf and check for bugs inside and around the area protruding from the bulb. Discard the roots.

**Fenugreek** - See Fennel.

**Figs** - See Dates.

**Garlic** - Remove peel and rinse.

**Grapes** - Separate the large bunch into 3 or 4 smaller bunches and rinse.

**Green Beans** - A general inspection is needed to rule out obvious infestation.

**Iceberg Lettuce** - **Not pre-washed** - STAR K - Thrip cloth method. cRc - Leaves should be separated and washed in a bowl of water that contains a small amount of vegetable wash or dish-soap. Or each leaf can be washed individually under a stream of running water, no further checking is required. **Pre-washed** - Requires proper kosher supervision. Or could be washed in bowl with water and small amount of vegetable wash.



**Kale** - Thrip cloth method.

**Kohlrabi - Leaves** - Thrip cloth method.

**Lettuce** – All other lettuces can be cleaned using the thrip cloth method.

**Leeks** – Requires a thorough rinse and proper visual check, specifically inside the tube.

**Mint Leaves** - Thrip cloth method.

**Mushrooms - Button** - Rinse well. **Morel** - Not recommended at this time. **Oyster** - Not recommended at this time. **Portobello** - Rinse well and remove brown underpart (fan).

**Mustard Greens** - Thrip cloth method.

**Nori Seaweed** – Preferable to use with reliable kosher supervision. If not available then both toasted and regular are acceptable as long as there are no kosher sensitive ingredients (such as added flavors or fish extracts); a thorough visual inspection is necessary for insects and very tiny seahorses. This can be done with a light box.

**Onions** - A general inspection is needed to rule out obvious infestation.

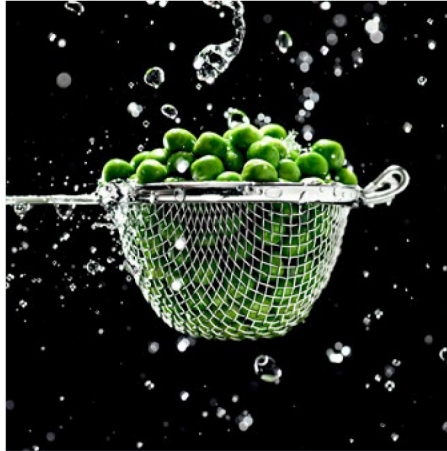
**Oregano - Fresh** - Thrip cloth method. **Dried** - See dried basil.

**Parsley - Fresh** - Thrip cloth method. **Dried** - See dried basil.

**Parsnip** - A general inspection is needed to rule out obvious infestation.

**Peas** - A general inspection is needed to rule out obvious infestation.

**Peppers** - A general inspection is needed to rule out obvious infestation.<sup>4</sup>



**Pineapple** - Must be peeled until only the yellow fruit is visible. The fruit and cutting board should be rinsed afterwards.

**Potatoes** - A general inspection is needed to rule out obvious infestation.

**Radish** - A general inspection is needed to rule out obvious infestation.

**Raspberries** – See Blackberries.

**Rice** - A general inspection is needed to rule out obvious infestation.

**Romaine Lettuce** - Thrip cloth method.

**Rosemary** - Thrip cloth method.

**Scallions (Green/Spring Onions)** – Cut root from top to bottom of bulb; examine between thin layers where they merge from the bulb. If no insects are found, the remaining scallions may be consumed after thoroughly washing. If insects are found, the entire head must be checked carefully. Remove all “leaf-miner” trails.<sup>5</sup>

**Spinach** - Thrip cloth method.

**Squash** - A general inspection is needed to rule out obvious infestation.

**Strawberries** - Cut off tops (avoid making a hole in top). In a basin of water mixed with soap (1 tablespoon of soap per 8 cups of water), soak and agitate for 2 minutes. Rub each berry under a stream of water. Repeat soaking above with new water and soap. Rinse berries and enjoy.

**Tomatoes** - A general inspection is needed to rule out obvious infestation.

**Turnip** - A general inspection is needed to rule out obvious infestation.

**Watercress** - Thrip cloth method.

## Thrip Cloth Method:

Recommended to have a large bowl, dish soap, 2 strainers, a thrip-cloth, and a light box.

1. Wash produce well. (Note: For broccoli and cauliflower, whole heads should be broken down into smaller pieces and warm water should be used to soak them.)
2. Prepare a basin with water and dish soap (a good choice would be Seventh Generation 0% fragrance) or kosher vegetable wash (do not use vinegar). The water should feel slippery.
3. Agitate the produce in the solution for 15 seconds. (Note: For broccoli and cauliflower, soak for 30 seconds BEFORE agitating.)
4. Remove the produce from the basin and shake off excess water over the basin.
5. Pour water through the thrip cloth.
6. Check the thrip cloth over a light box for any insects.
7. If insects are found, repeat steps 1-6. This can be done up to three times. If insects are still found on the third try, the produce should not be used.

## Alternate Method If No Thrip-Cloth Is Available:

1. For large leafy vegetables: Separate leaves. Soak and agitate in soapy water. Gently rub a sponge over the entirety of each side of every leaf making sure to open all folds of the leaf. Rinse both sides of each leaf under running water. No further checking is required.
2. For small leafy vegetables such as parsley, cilantro and other herbs: Follow steps 2-4 of the thrip-cloth cleaning method. One may then check the water using a clear basin in bright light very carefully for insects. (Please note that a lot of time is needed when checking the water as the insects will be harder to see when floating in water). If there are insects found in the water, the process should be repeated until no insects are found in the water. Then three samples or batches of the vegetable must be checked and if no bugs are found, the remaining produce may be used without further checking.

The cRc & the Star-K have produced videos on this procedure. The cRc video is available at: [www.crcweb.org/videos.php](http://www.crcweb.org/videos.php) . The Star-K video is available at: <https://vimeo.com/111464976> .

<sup>1</sup> The information presented is based on the research of the cRc & Star-K. When we present two possibilities of checking both are acceptable.

<sup>2</sup> Unless comes with reliable kosher supervision, e.g., Season – Marinated Artichoke Hearts

<sup>3</sup> This is subject to change depending on various agricultural conditions, please check [www.crcweb.org/fruit\\_vegetable\\_policy.php](http://www.crcweb.org/fruit_vegetable_policy.php) for updates.

<sup>4</sup> Please be aware that recently some colored peppers available locally were imported from Eretz Yisroel and need to be properly tithed before eating. See <https://goo.gl/WyXj4f> for OV guidelines for tithing Israeli produce.

<sup>5</sup> See <https://goo.gl/Sw3TKc> for picture.

## Insects to Inspect *Continued from p. 2*

needs to be removed.<sup>17</sup>

However, not all produce is created equal. *Halacha* qualifies for us three possible levels of infestation of concern. The first category is produce which is *muchzak betolaim* – that which contains insects over 50% of the time. The second category is *mi'ut hamatzui* – a significant minority of times this produce is found to be infested.<sup>18</sup> The third category is *mi'ut sheino matzui* – produce in which it is highly unlikely we will find any bugs.

It goes without saying that any produce which fits into the first category may not be consumed without an adequate inspection. Examples of this include broccoli, cauliflower and any open leaf lettuces (i.e. Romaine and Spinach). The particular item will determine which method of cleaning is suitable. For example, the method to clean broccoli florets of insects will not be the same method to clean blueberries.

Produce which falls into the second category also requires a sufficient inspection, although this check is Rabbinically mandated.<sup>19</sup> Again, one must be mindful that each item needs to be cleaned in a manner suited to remove its bugs.

All that falls into the last category is presumed to be clean and is not *halachically* require to be inspected. There are some produce items which we have yet to develop an adequate method to properly cleanse them of insects. These include brussel sprouts and artichoke hearts. Therefore, they cannot be recommended at this time.<sup>20</sup>

One must keep in mind as well that fruits or vegetables that

at one time fall into a specific category do not necessarily remain there forever. Various factors, including country of origin<sup>21</sup>, ability to properly clean them, agricultural developments, and immunity to pesticides, may change the level of infestation in any given product. The *halachos* don't change, rather the conditions which set the stage for our vigilance with these *halachos* need to be constantly updated.

On *Shabbos* there is a prohibition of *borer* (selecting). This includes washing produce that is subject to infestation of small insects.<sup>22</sup> The proper procedure for removing small

insects is to cut away and discard part of the leaf together with the insect. Items which are not subject to infestation (i.e. apples), are permitted to wash as long as the intention is solely for cleanliness.<sup>23</sup> However, one may check produce visually and use it if it is found to be bug-free.<sup>24</sup>

The *Gemara*<sup>25</sup> tells us that the merit of not consuming insects was enough of a reason for us to merit a redemption from our slavery in Egypt. The *Mesilas Yesharim*<sup>26</sup> writes that the consumption of insects<sup>27</sup> results in *tuma* – spiritual contamination – to one's heart. It

therefore causes the holiness of *Hashem* to distance itself from the person and causes one to lack a proper truthful understanding of Torah. May our carefulness in the severe prohibition of consuming insects bring us closer to *Hashem* and proper Torah observance.

**For a detailed list of common produce items and their *halachic* status please see the *OV*<sup>28</sup> – Fruit & Vegetable List.**



1 <https://www.fda.gov/food/guidanceregulation/guidancedocumentsregulatoryinformation/sanitationtransportation/ucm056174.htm>

2 Vayikra 11:41-44, Makkos 16b, Rambam – Laws of Forbidden Foods Chapter 2 Paragraph 23

3 See Bedikas HaMazon Part 2 Chapter 1

4 Chochmas Adam Chapter 38

5 See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane>

6 Shmos 16:20

7 This also answers a question some pose: how can we prohibit specific types of produce due to infestation, didn't Hashem create them for our benefit?

8 See Chulin 67b

9 See further examples in Bedikas HaMazon Part 1 Chapter 3.

10 Aruch Hashulchan YD 84:36

11 The Star-K produced an info-graphic which details the common insects. It is available at: <https://goo.gl/Sw3TKc>.

12 Makkos 17b

13 Rashi is Shevous 21b explains that it is considered a *dvar choshuv*

14 Aruch HaShulchan YD 100:2

15 YD Siman 100

16 See Aruch HaShulchan (YD 100:3) who brings an opinion that it could be *batel* in 960x greater than it, however he concludes that we do not follow that opinion.

17 This raises another question if one can buy produce which may be infested and puree it to ensure that none of the insects are whole anymore. See *Minchas Shlomo* Volume 2 Chapter 61:2.

18 The accepted percentage is over 10% of the time, see *Mishkinos Yaakov* Chapter 17 and *Minchas Shlomo* Volume 2 Chapter 61. The Star-K (<https://star-k.org/articles/kashrus-kurrents/587/keeping-bugs-in-check-insect-infestation-revisited/>) and the OU (<https://oukasher.org/passover/articles/what-could-be-hiding-in-my-romaine/>) accept this percent as well.

19 See *Shach* YD 84:28 with *Pri Migadim*. This is based on the same principles we follow for checking the lungs of an animal after it is slaughtered.

20 Certain companies market these items with reliable *hashgachos* and they are acceptable to use. This is because they are grown in such a way (i.e. greenhouse) that ensures there is no insect infestation.

21 With the ever-expanding global market and the relative ease of import/export today, the country of origin of many products changes frequently.

22 *Shulchan Aruch* OC 319:8, *Shmiras Shabbos Khilchasa* 3:21

23 *Igros Moshe* OC 1:125

24 *Shmiras Shabbos Khilchasa* 3:36

25 *Babba Metzia* 61b

26 Chapter 11

27 And other forbidden foods

28 The *OV* list is a compilation of information gleaned from the *cRc* and *Star-K* lists.

## Taharath Israel St. Louis Mikvah Association *Continued from p. 1*

individuals taking responsibility for the continued upkeep and beautification of the *mikvah*, the needs of the *mikvah* will not be met. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein zt"l<sup>1</sup> strongly encouraged the building of a Mikvah at a high aesthetic and highest hygienic standards to encourage Mikvah use by the widest circle of individuals. Mrs. Talia Schuss realized this need in mid-2017 when she approached Rabbi Zvi Zuravin, executive director of the Vaad Hoer. She noted the lack of modernization of services and beautification that the *mikvah* needed. Her remarks were duly noted. Efforts have already begun to help update the appointment system. She spearheaded an effort for individuals to get involved in rejuvenating the St. Louis Mikvah Association.

In November of 2017 she brought together a group of local women to discuss what can be done. They all realized the future of our Jewish community is dependent on the proper running of the *mikvah*. Mrs. Sarah Glickfield has assumed

the role of the president of the association, Mr. Sam Freedman has accepted the role of treasurer, along with Mrs. Lynda Cohen, Mrs. Judith Frankiel, Mrs. Talia Schuss and Mrs. Baila Shulman as board members. They have formed sub-committees to oversee the beautification, short-term and long-term development ideas and general education for *mikvah* practices. This author has been amazed with the eagerness so many young individuals from within our community have joined this vital cause. The Voice of The Vaad will continue to publish updates of *mikvah* enhancements.

The stability and viability of our needed *mikvaot* are in our hands. Please visit the new website at [www.stlmikvah.org](http://www.stlmikvah.org) where you can donate. For more information or to join in helping this necessary cause please email [stlouismikvah@gmail.com](mailto:stlouismikvah@gmail.com).

<sup>1</sup> It is recognized by the IRS as a tax-deductible donation.  
<sup>2</sup> Rama CM 163:3(end)  
<sup>3</sup> Igros Moshe YD 2:90

## Halacha Corner

**Question:** I had a lunch meeting together with two colleagues. I had a bagel with cream cheese and my friend's both had meat sandwiches<sup>1</sup>. Are we allowed to make a zimun for birchas hamazon?

**Answer:** Yes. In this case however it is preferable for the one who had cheese to lead the zimun. The rationale for this halacha is that since the one who consumed dairy would be able to partake of his friend's meat sandwiches<sup>2</sup> they are considered one group. However, the Mishneh Brurah<sup>3</sup> writes if one of the people who consumed meat is a Kohen<sup>4</sup>, he should lead the zimun to fulfill the mitzvah of honoring Kohanim.

**Question:** I recently came across carrots being sold not in their typical orange hue. Specifically, I have noticed purple carrots being marketed as the "original carrot." Do these carrots require a hechsher?

**Answer:** No. Contrary to popular belief these carrots do not contain added coloring. Rather they are as natural as our typical orange variety. There is even published data attesting to nutritional benefit of what we think is the "new carrot."<sup>5</sup> Although be careful what you cook them with as they bleed and share their vibrant color with whatever they come in contact with.



## 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.

<sup>1</sup> I ate on a placemat to fulfill the halacha of keeping a distinction on the table where both dairy and meat are being served (Shulchan Aruch YD 88:2)

<sup>2</sup> If he sufficiently cleans his hands and rinses his mouth, see Shulchan Aruch YD 89:2

<sup>3</sup> Shaar Hatzaiun 196:12

<sup>4</sup> And the fellow who ate dairy is not

<sup>5</sup> Published in the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry - <http://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/jf000595h>.