


Voice OF THE VAAAD

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Senior Rabbinical Coordinator

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Elul 5777

Dear Fellow Community Members,

It is with great anticipation and excitement that I write this letter. I have recently been appointed to fill the position of Senior Rabbinic Coordinator for the Vaad Hoeir of St. Louis. For close to a century the Vaad has been a driving force in enabling the Jewish community of St. Louis to flourish. Included in the services that the Vaad provides are: Kashrus Supervision, Tomchei Shabbos, Maos Chitim, Bikur Cholim, Chevra Kadisha, Free Loan Fund, Shatnes checking and maintaining the Mikvah.

As part of my role, I hope to help spread the activities of our Vaad to the greater community, starting with the publication of this newsletter. The "Voice of the Vaad" newsletter will contain contemporary halachic articles, practical product information and local Vaad updates. I anticipate hearing your feedback and suggestions on how this publication can best fit your needs.

To continue to maintain the highest standard in kosher supervision, I will be delivering continuous classes for our most dedicated *mashgichim* in pertinent *halacha*.

I am looking forward to working together with our Rabbanim Achraim and the administration of the Vaad to serve our community.

Wishing you all a *ksivah v'chasimah tovah*,



Rabbi Yitzchak Kowalsky
Senior Rabbinical Coordinator
ykowalsky@ovkosher.org

The Bread of Repentance

There is an established custom codified in the *Shulchan Aruch*¹ that during the 10 days of repentance we should all refrain from eating *pas palter* (bread of a non-Jewish baker). This article will explain the rationale behind this custom, for those who keep it all year round and for those who keep it 10 days a year and why it is a crucial part of our *teshuvah* process.

*Chazal*² instituted for our benefit various decrees as a precaution against unnecessary socialization that could lead to intermarriage³. Some of these include: refraining from their bread, their cooking, as well as their wines, cheeses and milk. This article will focus on the prohibition of non-Jewish bread (*pas akum*) and its application to modern times.

First, we need to understand that the decree of *pas akum* has nothing to do with non-kosher ingredients⁴. Even if one can ascertain that all ingredients are kosher the bread may still be prohibited. This enactment was intended to separate us from the nations of the world. *Chazal* realized that bread is a staple of a meal, and utilized that fact to limit our ability to share a pleasant dining experience with non-Jews.

Second, we need to know that *halachically* there are different classes of bread; *pas akum*, *pas palter* and *pas yisroel*. Bread made in the private setting of a non-Jew's house is *pas akum*. Bread produced by a non-Jew in an industrial setting is *pas palter*. The reason *Chazal* made this distinction is that they realized that bread is more than a dietary convenience, it is actually *chayei-nefesh*, a vital part of one's diet⁵. Therefore, a leniency was built in to the decree. Meaning to say that although in almost all circumstances⁶ *pas akum* is prohibited, *pas palter* will be acceptable⁷. At the other extreme, *pas yisroel* refers to bread that a Jew directly baked or at least helped to bake (details of the Jew's involvement will be explained below).

Although we are using the word *pas* which commonly refers to bread, our discussion is not limited to our standard wheat loaf. All bread baked from either barley, spelt, oats or rye are included as well⁸. Also included in this prohibition are products⁹ which can be included in the category of *pas habah b'kisin*¹⁰, common examples are - cakes, cookies, crackers, certain breakfast cereals¹¹ and pretzels.

The *Shulchan Aruch*¹² lists three (possible) levels of involvement a Jew must have in the production of the bread to be classified as *pas Yisroel*: (1) If a non-Jew lit the oven but the Jew inserts the bread, (2) If a Jew lit the oven and a non-Jew does the rest of the baking, (3) If a non-Jew lit the oven and inserted the bread, and a Jew adjusts the flame (if the bread still needs to be baked).

Although we noted above that *pas palter* is acceptable, there is a discussion amongst the *poskim* as to the limit of this leniency. The *Shulchan Aruch*¹³ writes that *pas palter* is only allowed when *pas yisroel* is not available. The *Rama*¹⁴ however writes that *pas palter*

is allowed even when *pas yisroel* of the same quality and type is available. In the diaspora, the *Rama's* opinion has become common custom^{15 16}.

The *Mishna Brurah*¹⁷ writes that even for those who follow the opinions that allow *pas palter*; on *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* it is considered an act of honor to only consume *pas yisroel*¹⁸.



To what extent should one keep the custom of refraining from *pas palter* during the ten days of repentance? From the simple reading of the *halacha*, it would seem that this *halacha* mimics the guidelines of the opinion of the *Shulchan Aruch*, who instructs us to keep *pas Yisroel* year-round, and that one must travel up to 4 mil (72 minutes of travel time) to obtain *pas yisroel* products¹⁹.

Some contemporary *poskim*²⁰ suggest that *pas palter* bread could still be acceptable during the *asseres yemi teshuvah* if it is subsequently toasted, since this is considered "bettering" the bread²¹. Therefore, a fully baked loaf of *pas palter* bread that is toasted before eating, would satisfy the requirement of *pas yisroel*. However, other contemporary *poskim*²² are of the opinion that since the bread is fully edible before being toasted this leniency should not be relied upon.

There is another discussion regarding young children who might be fussy eaters. Rabbi Shmuel Kamentzky *shlit" a*²³ is of the opinion that minors don't need to be trained in this custom and can continue to eat the *pas* products they are used to eating year-round. Other *poskim*²⁴ don't seem to apply this leniency *carte blanche*, and use it in cases of great necessity.

Let us now discuss why this custom is particularly important for our *teshuvah* process. As the saying goes, man is a creature of habit. Not just any habit, but especially habits that make us feel satiated and content. *Chazal* knew this adage quite well and used it to guide us towards a proper path for *teshuvah*. During that time of year when we must prove to **ourselves** that we are capable of positive change, *Chazal* provided us with the secret to successful change; to modify our behaviors with specific guided actions for specific segments of time. They chose *pas palter* as an attainable challenge to facilitate our growth²⁵. Once we prove to ourselves that we can change in one small area, then we realize that *teshuvah* is within reach in all areas of our lives. Let this be the year that we engage in positive actions to bring ourselves closer to *Hashem* and to proper *Torah* observance.

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Pas Yisroel List

OV

1. Toby's Challah House - All items
2. Elefant Pizza - All items
3. Breadsmith - only those items produced in the store
4. Kohn's - Fresh bakery items only
5. During the Aseres Yemi Teshuva select breads at Schnuck's (Ladue Crossing and Hilltown Village (Chesterfield)) will be marked as Pas Yisroel
6. During the Aseres Yemi Teshuva select cakes at Dierbergs (Brentwood Pointe, West Oak, Market Place, Four Seasons and Heritage) will be marked as Pas Yisroel

OU (select list of popular items available locally)

1. Amnon's Pizza - All varieties
2. Dr. Praeger's - Fishies, Fish Sticks, Fish Cakes, and Pizza Bagels
3. Jason - Breadcrumbs (plain, panko, flavored and coating crumbs)
4. Kedem - Cookies, Cereal bars, Tea Biscuits and Crackers
5. Kitov - All products

6. Macabee - Pizza, Pizza Bagel, Breaded Eggplant, Breaded Mushrooms, and Mozzarella Sticks

7. Manischewitz - Tam Tams, Italian Coating Crumbs, Cake Mixes, and all Matzah products

8. Lilly's - Black and White Cookies

9. Osem - All products

10. Trader Joe's - Chocolate Babka, Mango Babka, Pumpkin Spice Babka, and Half Moon Cookies

cRC (select list of popular items available locally)

1. "Enjoy Life" products are not made with the "five grains" therefore they are not considered Pas.
2. All Gluten-Free (*shehakol*) breads and rolls are not considered *pas* and do not pose any *Pas Yisroel* issues.
3. Zelda's - All products
4. North Shore Bakery - All products



OK

(select list of popular items available locally)

1. Aldi - Benton's Homestyle (Chocolate Chip Cookies, Oatmeal Raisin Cookies, Peanut Butter Cookies) Simply Nature Knock Your Sprouts Off Sprouted 7 Grain Bread (Regular and Low Sodium)

2. Matt's Cookie - Real Peanut Butter Cookies, Chocolate Chip Cookies, Cranberry Walnut Cookies, Chocolate Chip Pecan Cookies, Peanut Butter Chocolate Chip Cookie, Oatmeal Raisin Cookies, Fig Bars, Strawberry Bars, Whole Wheat Fig Bars

3. Green's Bakery - All products

Kof K (select list of popular items available locally)

1. Streit's - All products
2. Toffuti Cuties - All varieties
3. Gabila's Knishes - All varieties

Ahavas Chesed Society

The Ahavas Chesed Society, one of the many branches of the Vaad Hoer is responsible for arranging proper *taharos* for the deceased of our community. This precious *mitzvah* is the ultimate representation of an altruistic *chesed*. The Torah teaches us that man is created in the image of Hashem and thus possesses sanctity, pride and value. To disrespect a human body is therefore not only considered an offense against man, but a *chilul Hashem* (desecration of Hashem's name) as well. The body that housed a *neshama* is sanctified by Judaism, it is a gift from Hashem and that sanctity adheres to the body even after the *neshama* has left. The *neshama* benefits from the *tahara* as it is a source of merit and solace for it as it enters the next world.

Throughout the millennia dedicated members of a *chevra kadisha* (society of holy work) have been charged with the extraordinary opportunity to properly prepare one for their final resting place. The members must be *Shabbos* observers, of high moral character and be well versed with the laws and customs that are the responsibility of the position they occupy. Over twenty members of our community have availed themselves to be on call for this *mitzvah*. In our community particularly the need is great for volunteers as some of our local cemeteries require a proper *taharah* before burial. According to Mrs. Penina Glassman (current president of the society) approximately twenty *taharos* a month are performed locally.



Men and women from our community who wish to join the *chevra kadisha* are first interviewed to discuss the details involved. After

which, proper training is arranged to acclimate the volunteer. The basic procedure of a *taharah* involves, thoroughly washing the body and dressing it in the *tachrichim* (burial shrouds). During the *taharah*, utmost care is given to maintain proper dignity of the deceased. Various *tefilos* are recited throughout the procedure as well to provide merit for the departed one's soul. Typically a minimum of three members are involved in each *tahara*.

Although one who is involved in *taharos* can receive compensation for their time (typical time is one hour), it has become the custom in our community to redirect all monies received for *taharos* to help support our local organizations. Each individual who performs a *taharah* is given a "credit" which over the year accumulates in an escrow account and then is distributed to the local charity of their choice. Additional

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Mikvah Yomin Tovim Hours

The Millstone Mikvah will be open with an attendant the following hours for men to use during the Yomim Tovim.

Erev Rosh Hashana

Wednesday, September 20
8:00am – 5:00pm sharp

Erev Yom Kippur

Friday, September 29
6:30 am – 4:00 pm sharp

Erev Succos and Hoshana Rabba

Wednesdays, 10/4 and 10/11
10:30 am – 4:30 pm



Kelim Mikvah

During office hours the Kelim mikvah is available via entrance through 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 the Kelim mikvah may not be accessed after 4 pm and in the summer not after 7 pm.

Schedule of Men's Use of Shabbos Mikvah (Y.I.) During the Yomim Tovim

Shabbos, 9/16 – Monday, 9/18	Available
Tuesday, 9/19 – Friday, 9/22	Not Available
Shabbos, 9/23 – Thursday, 9/28	Available
Friday, 9/29 – Shabbos, 9/30	Not Available
Sunday, 10/1 – Monday, 10/2	Available
Tuesday, 10/3 – Friday, 10/6	Not Available
Shabbos, 10/7 – Monday, 10/9	Available
Tuesday, 10/10 – Friday, 10/13	Not Available
Shabbos, 10/14	Available

Regular schedule resumes Shabbos, October 14th.

The Bread of Repentance *Continued from p. 2*

As in all areas of practical halacha the reader is advised to consult their Rav for final psak.

- 1 OC 603:1
- 2 Meseches Avodah Zarah 35b
- 3 Even with a non-Jew who doesn't have children the decree is still in place; Rama YD 112:1 cf Shach ibid:4
- 4 Chochmas Adam - 65:1
- 5 Ibid 65:2
- 6 See Shulchan Aruch YD 112:8
- 7 Chazal realized that bread from a baker will not necessarily lead to unnecessary socialization.
- 8 Rice bread or other forms of non-grains bread do not fall under this prohibition (however they might fall into the category of *bishul akum* – see Shulchan Aruch YD 112:1 and Chelkas Binyamin seif katan 12).
- 9 Kaf HaChaim YD 112:35, see Darchei Teshuva 112:54 for dissenting views
- 10 For full definition of this term see Shulchan Aruch OC 168:7-8
- 11 Although many cereals don't have bread like qualities and will not fall into a category of *pas*, the *poskim* discuss if Cheerios should be considered *pas palter*. Rabbi Yisroel Belsky zt"l (Halachically Speaking Vol. 4 Issue 2) concludes that since Cheerios has the appearance of bread one should refrain from eating them during the *aseros yemi teshuva*. However Rabbi Yaakov Forcheimer *shlit"o* (Kovetz Halachos – Yomim Noraim 22:2) writes that since Cheerios are not really baked they are not included in the *pas* category and would be permitted during the *aseros yemi teshuva*.
- 12 YD 112:9
- 13 YD 112:2
- 14 Ibid
- 15 Shu"t Igros Moshe YD 2:33. With the advent of modern industrial bakeries, the *poskim* have discussed an even greater leniency than existed in years past. Rabbi Ephraim Greenblatt zt"l (Shu"t Rivvos Ephraim 5:596) quotes Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l as being of the opinion that since our modern-day factories have more mass production than in the times of Chazal, there is even more room to permit *pas palter* year-round. See Shu"t Shevet Halevi (6:108:6) who quotes the Chazon Ish as arguing with this logic.
- 16 Although the Aruch Hashulchan (YD 112:17) writes that his community is careful to keep *pas yisroel* year-round, in the Kaf HaChaim (YD 112:30-31) he writes the exact opposite, that in most cities the custom is to allow *pas palter*. This is ironic that the Aruch HaShulchan an Ashkenazi posek siding with the stricter approach of the Shulchan Aruch and a Sephardi posek the Kaf HaChaim siding with the more lenient approach of the Rema. (As typically the Sephardim follow Shulchan Aruch and Ashkenazim follow the Rema)
- 17 Siman 242:6
- 18 There is a *machlokes* among contemporary *poskim* if this stringency needs to be carried over as well to non-real bread items i.e. cookies, cakes and crackers. Rabbi Yisroel Belsky zt"l (Halachically Speaking Vol 4 Issue 14) is quoted as saying "Although many people like eating Stella Dora cookies because it is a good snack, pareve, and a great treat for Shabbos afternoon when one is fleishig, this should be avoided on Shabbos since they are *pas akum*." Rabbi Doniel Neustadt *shlit"o* (personal email to this author, dated February 19, 2014) wrote "... some *poskim* hold that factory and company items are even better than *pas palter* and are always *mutar*, so while generally we are *machmir* in that regard, for this *chumra* we can be lenient."
- 19 Mishna Brurah 603:1
- 20 Shu"t Teshuvos V'Hanagos 1:444, Rabbi Yisroel Belsky zt"l (OU Halacha Yomis - October 6, 2016)
- 21 According to this view, toasting would satisfy option #3 listed above to qualify for *pas yisroel*.
- 22 Ohel Yaakov YD 112:62:81 at length
- 23 Kovetz Halachos – Yomim Noraim 22:3
- 24 Ohel Yaakov YD 112:18:28
- 25 See Sifsei Chaim - Moadim Chelek Aleph pg. 60-61

Ahavas Chesed Society *Continued from p. 3*

monies that come in for *taharos* are designated for the *Ahavas Chesed – Gmach* – free loan fund, available for members of our community. This development of earmarking monies received for *taharos* for other *mitzvah* purposes is truly a remarkable attribute of our society. As the *Gemara* (Succah 49b) teaches us that greater is an act of *chesed* than an act *tzedakah* for numerous reasons including; *tzedakah* can only be given to the living while *chesed* can be done for the living and the departed. One who performs a *taharah* in our community fulfills an act of *tzedakah* and *chesed*.

Many people are hesitant to sign up to be involved in this great *mitzvah*, nonetheless the need is as great as ever. Although it takes time to get used to involving one's self in such *avodas hakodesh* the eternal reward for the performance of this *mitzvah* coupled with the additional *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* will serve as a tremendous *zechus* for one's family. For more information on how to join the *chevra kadisha* please contact **Mrs. Korey Fredman (coordinator for the chevra kadisha) at 314-518-9812.**