

# Voice OF THE VAAAD

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BIKUR CHOLIM



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## STAENBERG FAMILY MIKVAH

### On the Millstone Campus

In the year following the miraculous events of the Chanukah story, the Talmud teaches us, the Sages established the holiday as days of “Hallel and Hoda’ah”, for the offering of praise and thanks to Hashem. Which makes these days a very appropriate time for our community to offer our heartfelt ‘praise and thanks’ to the extraordinary group of dedicated and talented volunteers who selflessly invested inordinate amounts of time and energy to make possible, the long awaited renovation and restoration of the Staenberg Family Mikvah on the Millstone Campus.

The passionate commitment of the Mikvah board and committee members, and their yeomen efforts for a period of over a year, from the initial planning and fundraising to the detailed and complex management from start to finish of this significant undertaking, is an impressive example of our community’s commitment to this sacred Mitzvah.

The heart-and-soul, dedicated *Mesirat Nefesh* of these individuals is truly exemplary. Thanks to their efforts, our community can rejoice in the knowledge that we have a Mikvah that not only meets the highest Hallachic standards under the oversight of the Vaad Hoer’s Rabbanim

Achraim, but one that is absolutely exquisite in its aesthetic appearance and offers its patrons a spiritually uplifting experience in a milieu that is at once dignified, discreet and comfortable.

Among the many community members who have volunteered their time and efforts to this noble project under the leadership of Taharath Israel President, **Mrs. Sara Glickfield** are: **Lynda Cohen, Ruth Schachter-Cohen, Shirley Franklin, Aliza Freilich, Judith Frankiel, Sam Freedman, Tonia Levison, Michal Pudles, Rene Price, Talia Schuss, Baila Shulman, Trudy Sudin** and **Lisa Tager**.

Our community owes them a deep debt of gratitude.

The funding of this project was made possible by the Staenberg Family Foundation, the angels from Mikvah USA, and by the many individuals, locally and from out-of-town, who have generously supported this initiative, above and beyond the call of duty.

Wishing you a *Freilichen Chanukah*.

Rabbi Zvi Zuravin  
Executive Director

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# A MILKY THOUGHT



The Rema<sup>1</sup> quotes a *minhag* to eat dairy products on *Chanukah*. He cites as a source for this custom the incident in which *Yehudis* the daughter of *Yochanan Kohen Gadol* fed one of the enemy leaders an abundance of milk products, which ultimately led to his demise. As a remembrance to this aspect of the *Chanukah* miracle of defeating “the many in the hands of the few,” we have a dairy meal on *Chanukah*. The only other *Yom Tov* in which we find the custom of having milk products is *Shavuos*.<sup>2</sup> We previously discussed reasons for eating dairy on *Shavuos*.<sup>3</sup> In this article, we will endeavor to suggest another reason behind this *Chanukah* custom and try to connect the dairy customs of *Chanukah* and *Shavuos*.

The *Mishnah*<sup>4</sup> states that one may bring *Bikkurim* – the first fruits<sup>5</sup> brought to the *Kohanim* in the *Beis HaMikdash*, beginning from *Shavuos* until *Chanukah*.<sup>6</sup> The fact that the mitzvah begins from *Shavuos* is found in the *Torah*<sup>7</sup> which states, “And the Festival of the Harvest, of the first fruits of your work...” However, the end date of *Chanukah* is puzzling. Why did the *Chachamim* choose *Chanukah* as the final time for bringing of the *Bikkurim*?<sup>8</sup> Why are these two *Yomim Tovim* bookends for the mitzvah of *Bikkurim*?

The *Torah* uses unique wording to convey the prohibition of consuming milk and meat together. The *Torah* does not state the injunction directly. Rather in three distinct places<sup>9</sup> the *Torah* hints to it by stating “You shall not cook a kid in its mothers’ milk,” from which the *Gemara*<sup>10</sup> expounds the details for this prohibition. Deepening the enigma of this *Torah* verse, the first two times it appears it is coupled with the mitzvah of bringing *Bikkurim*! What is the connection between bringing *Bikkurim* and not mixing milk and meat?

What do the *Bikkurim* symbolize? The *Sefer HaChinuch*<sup>11</sup> explains the root of the mitzvah. We need to recognize that *Hashem* is the source of everything in our lives. A person may spend his time and effort toiling in the field and feel a great sense of accomplishment when his trees bear fruit. Precisely at this juncture, when a person might be feeling a bit pompous, the *Torah* commands us to separate the first fruits and bring them to the *Beis HaMikdash*. The message is to teach us the fundamental truth that *Hashem* is the source of the outcome, not the efforts that we invested.



Meat is a unique food item in that it is permitted for us to consume, but only after undergoing numerous steps to proclaim it as kosher. Furthermore, the *Gemara*<sup>12</sup> says in the name of *Rebbi* that an *am haaeretz* is prohibited from eating meat, as it says in the *possuk*<sup>13</sup>, “This is the *Torah* of the beast and of the fowl.” He explains, anyone who engages in *Torah* study is permitted to eat the meat of animals and fowl, while those who do not engage in *Torah* study are prohibited.

The halacha does not follow *Rebbi*’s statement, and any Jew is permitted to eat kosher meat without reservation. Still, how are we to understand *Rebbi*’s statement and our overall approach to the consumption of meat?

The *Ben Yehoyada*<sup>14</sup> offers numerous explanations for *Rebbi*’s statement that an *am haaeretz* cannot eat meat. He states in the name of the *Arizal* as follows: When a Jew eats food, his job is to elevate that item from something which is completely *gashmi* – of a physical existence, to something *ruchni* – of a spiritual existence. Typically, this is done when one recites the specific *bracha* necessary before partaking of the food item. When it comes to meat however, more is needed. Meat from a kabbalistic

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perspective has more spiritual impurities which need a higher level of spiritual cleansing in order to make it completely fit.<sup>15</sup> In the times of the *Beis HaMikdash* this was accomplished by offering the animal as a *korban* on the *mizbeach*. The meat would then be eaten<sup>16</sup> in a refined spiritual state. Although today we cannot elevate an animal by bringing it on the *mizbeach*, one who is of a high spiritual nature will only partake of meat at a *seudas mitzvah* or at a *Yom Tov* meal.

Milk does not have the same kabbalistic restrictions, even though it is sourced from the same living being. Milk is the first food a baby is fed. It represents the kindness and compassion<sup>17</sup> needed to raise a child from infancy. Furthermore, milk represents<sup>18</sup> a peaceful existence in a physical world that is fraught with challenge.

By prohibiting us from eating meat and milk together, the *Torah* is warning us not to mix items that need more spiritual remedies with those items that are naturally more spiritually refined. This is a lesson of *basar b'chalav* and is true in many other aspects of our lives.

Since the *Torah* specifically links this prohibition to the *mitzva* of *Bikkurim*, we can take this idea further. As noted, the *Sefer HaChinuch* teaches that the message of *Bikkurim* is to remind us of *Hashem's* guiding hand in all aspects of our lives. The taxing physical labor necessary to develop fruit trees represents our laborious spiritual cleansing necessary to attain lofty levels. This is our “meat,” i.e., the spiritual mountains we need to climb, in our *gashmi* - physical world, filled with spiritual challenges and pitfalls. The end result of satisfaction when one emerges victorious from such a battle is akin to enjoying a steak dinner.<sup>19</sup> This however is not necessarily the daily battle one faces.

The “milk” characterizes our more regular and mundane interactions with the world around us. The continuous opportunity of choosing to live with an awareness of *Hashem* and using this awareness to constantly grow and develop, much as a newborn relies on its mothers’ milk to develop properly. This regularity helps us realize that there is really only One source that satisfies all our daily needs.

Two times of the year we remind ourselves of this milky message. The first is the *Yom Tov* when we celebrate the giving of the *Torah*, *Shavuot*. At that time, we received our guide to daily living with 613 opportunities to come closer to *Hashem* in this physical world. This concept is reiterated again on *Chanukah* when we celebrate a great military victory. While it's true that the military battle of *Chanukah* might be more akin to a “meat” celebration as is the case in other *Yomim Tovim*, I think there is a specific reason to commemorate with dairy. *Chanukah* took place during the second *Beis HaMikdash* period. It was at a time when *Klal Yisroel* could

have avoided assimilation with the *Yevanim* if they would have observed this milky message<sup>20</sup>. When we keep *Hashem* fresh in our minds and realize He is directing all of our daily interactions, we have an easier time dismissing foreign influences. Therefore, once we were victorious over the *Yevanim*, chased them from the *Beis HaMikdash* and returned to a life of spiritual pursuits, it is only fitting that we commemorate the event with a dairy meal. It is not enough to connect to *Hashem* only through very challenging times. We need continuous daily reminders to impress upon ourselves that only by strengthening our relationship with our Creator will we see success in our daily encounters.



1 Rema OC 670:2 Mishneh Brurah 670:10

2 Rema OC 494:3

3 See Voice of The Vaad – Issue #4 - <https://ovkosher.org/voice-of-the-vaad-4/>

4 Bikkurim 1:6

5 Only of the 7 species

6 See Rambam Hilchos Bikkurim 2:6 for details of this halacha

7 Shemos 23:16

8 See the explanation of Rav Ovadiah M'Bartenura on the Mishnah.

9 Shemos 23:19, Shemos 34:26, Devarim 14:21

10 Chullin 115b

11 Mitzvah 91

12 Pesachim 49b

13 Vayikra 11:46

14 Pesachim 49b and Sanhedrin 59b

15 See further in Kuntres Eis HaOchel from Rav Tzadok HaKohen #6 & #7

16 Depending on the type of *korban* the meat was either all consumed on the *mizbeach* or by the *kohanim* or by the one bringing it, or some combination of these three.

17 See commentary of the Alshich – Bereshis 49:12

18 See Malbim – Bereshis 49:12

19 See Rambam in Hilchos Yom Tov 6:18, that meat brings one happiness; see also Shulchan Aruch HaRav OC 242:2

20 See commentary of Bach (OC 670) who explains that the *Kohanim* is the *Beis HaMikdash* were not performing the *avodah* with alacrity, this influenced the energy of the whole nation.

# FROM THE VAAD INBOX



**Question:** I read your informative article<sup>1</sup> about doughnuts on Chanukah and decided that this is a custom I need to keep, even though I am currently on a diet. I have decided to limit myself and only have my Chanukah doughnuts on Shabbos Chanukah. I was wondering if you could address the following two concerns that I thought of. Firstly, I would like to squeeze the excess oil from the doughnuts before I consume them. Is there any halachic concern of squeezing oil from doughnuts like there is in squeezing fruits on Shabbos? Secondly, I would like to have my donuts warm on Shabbos. Am I allowed to warm up my jelly donuts on Shabbos?

**Answer:** It is permissible to squeeze doughnuts to extract their excess oils on Shabbos. The Shulchan Aruch<sup>2</sup> explains this

is permissible as long as one does not need the oil from the doughnuts for any other use<sup>3</sup>. The reason this is different than squeezing a fruit on Shabbos is that the liquid being extruded is not natural to the product<sup>4</sup>.

Regarding your second question about warming the doughnuts on Shabbos, it would be permissible with the following guidelines. First, the doughnut cannot be put directly on the fire. Second, there must be a *blech* on top of the fire. Third, they cannot be put directly on the *blech* in the area directly over the fire. Thus, the doughnuts can be warmed up by placing them either on top of a pot that is over the fire, or on a zone of the *blech* that is not *yad soledes bo*<sup>5</sup>. Enjoy!

1 See <https://ovkosher.org/voice-of-the-vaad-10/>

2 OC 320:7 see Mishneh Brurah #25

3 See Mishneh Brurah *ibid* for ways it is permissible even if one needs the extracted oils.

4 See Aruch HaShulchan OC 320:19

5 See Halichos Shlomo – Chanuka Chapter 17 – Dvar Halacha 15 where Rav SZ Auerbach zt”l explains further why there is no concern here with bishul of the jelly contained within the doughnut.

## BIKUR CHOLIM SOCIETY

The Bikur Cholim Society has been providing for local and visiting families non-stop throughout the past year.

We would like to thank all those who have volunteered their time, professional services and to assist with the meals that were made and delivered.

Recently a generous donation was made in memory of Mrs. Leah Trevino ob”m which provided a new sofa and window blinds. It was coordinated by friends of the family who were always inspired by her dedication to Hashem.

The maintaining of the Ohel Michoel & Rina house and additional



apartments in the community for our brethren in need, has ongoing costs. Please consider making a donation to ensure we can continue to help all those who depend on us. This past year we were able to assist tens of families who have turned to us for help.

Tax deductible donations can be made on the web at: [www.bcstlweb.com](http://www.bcstlweb.com). Or checks can be made out to “Vaad Hoeir” memo – Bikur Cholim and mailed to 4 Millstone Campus Drive St. Louis, MO 63146.

**For more information please contact Rabbi Kowalsky at 314-690-1674.**

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