

Kashrus Kurrents

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Sharp Awareness in the Kitchen

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I. DAVAR CHARIF

On one of my first visits to a food production facility, I cried. Not because I discovered a gross *kashrus* violation, *chalilah*; and not from tears of joy over the privilege to promote the availability of kosher food. My tears flowed because at one end of the enormous fruit and vegetable processing factory, the deafening machinery was slicing and packaging — onions! Despite a distance of a few hundred feet from the onion production line, my lachrymal glands were working hard to flush out sulfuric acid from my eyes. Only veteran workers were immune to the effects of the intruding irritants permeating the air.

The same property that makes slicing onions so annoying is also responsible for the pungent flavor and aroma, which have endowed them with culinary popularity for millennia. The *Chumash* (*B'midbar* 11:5) enumerates onions as one of the five vegetables the Jews were fond of eating while still enslaved in Egypt.¹ During the Middle Ages, before the discovery of the New World, onions were among the three main vegetables of European cuisine, along with beans and cabbage.² Today, onion growing and processing is a multi-billion dollar industry. This explains why the large factory I visited had an entire section dedicated to slicing and packaging pre-measured amounts of onion slices for fast-food restaurants.

Halacha also recognizes the unique pungency of onions and accords them a special status of *davar charif*, literally 'a sharp item'. Other common foods with this classification are radishes, garlic, lemons, hot peppers, spicy pickles and very salty foods.³ These items must be treated with extra caution in a kosher kitchen because, as we will see, they present potential *kashrus* pitfalls.

II. EXCEPTION TO THE RULE

Generally, the result of a *kashrus* mishap in the kitchen is mitigated when the surface of the offending utensil is clean and the contact was made below the temperature of *yad soledos bo* (at least 120°F). A *Rav* can often advise how to correct the situation with minimal losses. However, when a *davar charif* is involved, the equation changes and the repercussions are more serious.⁴

For example, if one uses a *fleishig* knife to slice an onion, even if the knife was clean from any prior residue or grease⁵ and the onion was cold, the onion will adopt a *fleishig* status. The reason for this atypical stringency is because the confluence of

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1. *Chizkuni* comments that the onions were not eaten raw, rather they were used to add flavor to cooked meat. Indeed, ancient Egyptians treated onions with sanctity; they took oaths while holding an onion, and onions were entombed together with the pharaohs.
2. www.foodreference.com/html/onions-history-of-onions.html
3. *Shach* 96:18 includes salt as a *davar charif*.
4. The *halochos* of *davar charif* are found primarily in *Yoreh De'ah*, *siman* 96, based on *Chullin* 111b – 112a.
5. The cases described in this article assume that all blades are clean. When they contain residue or grease, the *halacha* is more strict.

Paradise Lost-Revisited

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ON STAR-K HASHGACHA ASSIGNMENT

Curaçao? Where is Curaçao? Better yet, how do you pronounce Curaçao? Curaçao (cur-a-sow) is a small but beautiful island in the Caribbean Sea off the coast of Venezuela. Curaçao is one of three Leeward Islands which used to form part of the former Netherland Antilles. The Netherlands Antilles was made up of six Caribbean islands namely Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao in the south, St. Maarten, St. Eustatius and Saba in the central Caribbean region. In 1986, Aruba left the Antillean constitution to become an autonomous island nation within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. On October 10, 2010, Curaçao and Saint Maarten followed suit by also becoming autonomous island nations within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Bonaire, Saba and St. Eustatius opted to become special municipalities of the Netherlands.

Curaçao was discovered in 1499 by members of a Spanish expedition, and the island became a stopover for Spanish and Portuguese explorers. Legend has it that a number of sailors on Alonso de Ojeda's ship contracted scurvy. These hapless souls were left on Curaçao, while the ship continued on its way to South America. Upon the ship's return, the sailors were found to be alive and well, presumably cured by eating the island's fruit containing Vitamin C. The name Curaçao means 'the island of healing'. A more accepted explanation is that Curaçao is shaped like a heart, known in Portuguese as "curacao," and it was considered the 'heart' of the Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch trades.

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Paradise Lost-Revisited

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In 1634, the Dutch conquered Curaçao from Spain. On board the fleet was the first Jew to set foot on the islands; his name was Samuel Cohen. By this time, Jews who had fled The Inquisition from Spain and Portugal in the late 15th century had established a thriving and influential Sephardic Jewish community in the Netherlands. The first successful settlement of Jews on the island of Curaçao came in 1659. A group of 70 Sephardic Jews from the Portuguese congregation of Amsterdam came under a charter of the Dutch West India Company, which granted the Jews freedom of religion, free land, freedom from taxation and protection from the authorities. This group brought with them the first *Sefer Torah*, which according to tradition, is still part of the collection of *Torah* scrolls held by the Synagogue Mikve Israel, which was built in 1732. The beautiful natural harbor of Willemstad, Curaçao became a center for commerce, shipping and trade. Commercial success and the liberal attitude of the Dutch government towards the Jews allowed the Jewish community to flourish. Due to The Inquisition's expulsion of the Jewish community of Brazil in that country, Curaçao became a natural lure for *Yidden* seeking shelter, livelihood and adventure. Believe it or not, just around the same time in 1662, Curaçao became the center of a brisk slave trade, where slaves were brought from Africa and sold throughout the New World.

Mikve Israel became the oldest congregation in the Western Hemisphere, and Bet Hayim the Jewish cemetery of the Mikve Israel community, may be the oldest Jewish cemetery in the Western Hemisphere rivaling the Jewish cemetery in Kingston, Jamaica. What differentiates the two communities is the forgotten remnant of Kingston's short lived and all but forgotten Jewish community, and Bet Hayim, which holds the key to a remarkable history of a Jewish *kehilla* that actually flourished.

In 2005, I received an e-mail from Rabbi Ariel Yeshurun, *Rav* of the much newer Orthodox Ashkenazi congregation Shaarei Tzedek, whose in-laws happen to live in Baltimore. The email stated that there was a famous liqueur company in Curaçao that was seeking kosher certification. This request seemed to be no different from those that the STAR-K receives daily. Usually when such a request arrives, depending upon the product or the location, any one of the staff will handle the process. No question about it, everyone would want to handle a request from Curaçao; however, since I am the "liquor" administrator in the STAR-K office, I got the nod. We typically send a company a data form, basically a feasibility study, to see whether or how a product can be certified. At first, the company did not respond. In 2010, Mrs. Loes van der Woude, new managing director of Senior & Company, faithfully returned the form stating that they were seeking certification of their Curaçao of Curaçao liqueur to help expand their market, as well as the marketability of their internationally acclaimed product. Liqueurs are different from liquor, beer, or wine even though they are all alcoholic beverages. Liqueurs do not require a fermentation process like wine, beer, or whiskey; they may go through a distillation process. Liqueurs do not have rigid protocol and regulations and can obtain their alcohol from many sources. Ethyl alcohol that is used in the manufacturing of liqueurs can come from natural or synthetic sources. It can be derived from grain and could present possible *chometz* issues, or it can be derived from wine and present *kashrus* issues. Liqueurs use flavoring and colorants that require reliable kosher certification. Furthermore, glycerin can be used to emulsify the ingredients and can be derived from animal, vegetable and/or synthetic sources. Unquestionably, if Senior & Company was to be kosher certified, all of their raw materials would need to bear reliable kosher certification. The quest for kosher certification began.

One key question that has to be raised with any company seeking kosher certification, especially companies that potentially use grain or grain derived

ingredients, is whether or not the ownership of the company is Jewish. Rabbi Yeshurun answered that question in his initial e-mail; the company was founded by Jews and has Jewish ownership to this day. Therefore, Senior & Company's source of alcohol had to be limited to ethyl alcohol that was not derived from a *chometz* grain source, to avoid any potential issues of *chometz sheavar alav haPesach*.¹ Fortunately, Senior & Company has always used sugar derived ethyl alcohol. Other suppliers had to be changed, and kosher letters of certification for their raw materials were requested. Finally, it was time for the initial inspection. Kosher certification is a blend of "P" and "P", Products and Process. I always say that ingredients don't tell the whole story, and in the case of Senior & Company's Curaçao of Curaçao it didn't even tell half of it.

Curaçao is an island that is replete with beauty and character inherent in its white beaches, blue water and Dutch architecture – a true vacation paradise that rivals her sister island, Aruba. Upon viewing the sunrise over the blue expanse where horizon and water met in the background, and the white beaches and water met in the foreground, while *davening neitz*,² I was overcome with the wonders of *Hashem's* creations and felt compelled to recite "*Ose maase breishis*."³ After *davening*, Mrs. Van der Woude gave me a ride from the hotel to their facility, and the audit was on.

Curaçao of Curaçao is a triple sec liqueur developed in 1886. Triple sec is an orange flavored liqueur. What sets Curaçao of Curaçao apart from all of its competitors is that it utilizes a natural orange flavor for its award winning taste. The *laraha* orange tree is a replanted Valencia orange tree brought from Spain in 1499 which did not successfully take to Curaçao's salty and sandy environs. The fruit was bitter and replanting was disappointing. However, as the apocryphal story goes, at one of the family gatherings of the Senior family, a prominent Jewish family on the island with leaders in commerce and trade, it was discovered that although the fruit of the *laraha* orange tree was bitter, to their amazement the peel was flavorful and fragrant. In short, the *laraha's* essential oils extracted from authentic *laraha* orange peels provided the basis for this amazing liqueur. Spices were added to the orange oil and, believe it or not, the same 125-year-old Copper Still is used to this day to produce Curaçao of Curaçao.

At this point, I realized that the company's name, Senior & Company, was not some Spanish made up company name; it is the family name of the founders of the company. Very nice, I thought, but so is Kodak film or Bayer aspirin. However, I would soon find out that to those of us who value "*Zechor yemos olam binu shnos dor v'dor*,"⁴ the Senior name carries far more than award winning liqueur. After carefully reviewing the kosher documentation and actually seeing the process in action, examining all the raw materials, labels and lab reports, I determined that STAR-K would be able to certify their product. I then asked if I could see Jewish Curaçao, and Mrs. van der Woude was only too happy to oblige.

It took approximately ten minutes to get to the center of town from the quaint and historic Chobolobo Country Mansion, now home of Curaçao of Curaçao. Historic colorful buildings in Dutch motif dot the downtown area. Water and walkways give downtown Willemstad a relaxed atmosphere. We parked near the town hall and took a three minute walk into a 300-year-old time warp. In front of me stood a yellow and white trimmed building where a placard with the phrase, "*Baruch Ata B'voecha*", was inscribed atop its outer portal. Going into the synagogue courtyard we walked across the way to the sanctuary where atop the archway the *pasuk*, "*Yaft Elokim l'Yefes vishkon b'oholei Shem*,"⁵ adorned the door. The letters *Yud*, *Pay* and *Tav* were enlarged, indicating the year the cornerstone was laid – in 1730! Mikve Israel has held services in this location since its dedication in 1732, making it the oldest continuously used synagogue in the Western Hemisphere. Typical of



1. *Orach Chaim* (O.C.) 448

2. Sunrise

3. O.C. 228:1

4. *Devarim* (Parshas Haazinu) 32:7

5. *Breishis* (Noach) 9:27

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Don't Drink the

Coffee?



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"I'll have an iced Grande White Chocolate Raspberry Chip Frappuccino® with non-fat whipped cream..." If the aforementioned expression is something you find yourself saying (and understanding) on a regular basis, then pay close attention to what we are about to tell you. If you have no idea what a Grande or a Frappuccino® is, consider yourself lucky – and penny-wise – as the above Grande Frappuccino® (large, high-calorie Starbucks drink *be'laz*) will set you back almost \$5.00! For the Starbucks aficionados out there, first the bad news.

Full-service Starbucks stores offer non-kosher breakfast items, like bacon and turkey sandwiches. While this is not a revelation, the extent to which this affects the *kashrus* of Starbucks coffees may surprise you. These *treif* meats are served on ceramic dishes. The dirty dishes are washed in a three-compartment sink, along with the brew baskets used to make the coffee and the small metal milk pitchers used to steam milk for lattes. It is this clean-up procedure that has soured many *kashrus* agencies on Starbucks coffee. While leniencies exist to allow the coffee in spite of the clean-up issues, Rabbi Moshe Heinemann, *shlita*, Rabbinic Administrator of the STAR-K, has decided against using them.

Based on this information, the STAR-K does not recommend regular or decaf coffee and lattes from any full-service Starbucks stores. While espressos are still permitted, since the equipment used in making these is cleaned separately, the STAR-K advises that you request disposable cups for making the espresso "shot" – as the normal procedure uses a shot glass that is washed with the non-kosher dishes.

But take heart, for all is not lost. Firstly, the above is true only at full-service Starbucks stores that serve *treif* sandwiches and the like. However, at the smaller Starbucks kiosks, typically located in airports and train stations, sandwiches are usually not offered. The good news is that the coffee making equipment at these establishments remains free of *treif* blis (non-kosher absorption), and you are permitted to drink the coffee there.

Not only that, but Rabbi Heinemann *paskens* that when someone is traveling he is considered to be in a *b'dieved* situation and would be

permitted to drink the Starbucks coffee.¹ The same would apply to coffee served on airplanes or at gas stations. See our accompanying chart for a detailed overview for the what, when, and how to best indulge your Starbucks habit *al pi halacha*.

And there is even more good news. Based on our research, 7-11 and Royal Farms coffee in stores within the Jewish community of Baltimore remains safe for the kosher consumer.

So overall, the news is not all bad. While you may need to forgo your daily caffeine fix at your local neighborhood shop, alternatives do exist and you won't be left saying, "Coffee, coffee everywhere but not a drop to drink."

STARBUCKS

We recommend one avoid buying drinks that are made with equipment that may have been washed with *treif* at full service Starbucks stores that serve *treif* meat items. (Starbucks kiosks do not serve meat.) We, therefore, recommend the following:

Beverage	Acceptable any Starbucks	Acceptable when Traveling* or from Kiosks (that don't serve meat items)
Americano Use disposable cup. Avoid using the "shot" glass	✓	✓
Bottled Starbucks drinks with a KD	✓	✓
Cappuccinos	✗	✓
Coffee and decaf, Regular Brewed - plain	✗	✓
Coffee and decaf, Regular Brewed - with flavored syrups (flavored syrups require a reliable hechsher on the container)	✗	✓
Espresso Use disposable cup. Avoid using the "shot" glass	✓	✓
Frappuccinos made in the store	✗	✗
Latte, Hot	✗	✓
Latte, Iced Use disposable cup.	✓	✓
Tea, Loose with hechsher Use disposable cup	✓	✓
Tea, Bag with hechsher Use disposable cup	✓	✓

*Traveling means when you are away from your hometown (this creates a situation of *shn* as *nadchak* = no other

¹ This psak is based on the Yad Ephraim, Y.D. 122-6, D'H' Shelo'. He quotes a responsa from the Nodah Be'Yehudah who discusses a question regarding the Starbucks of his time – the ubiquitous coffee house. It seems that even in 18th-century Prague, Jews had a thing for coffee. The question in this case revolved around the permissibility of using the coffee house mugs (no paper cups in those days) that were used for non-*cholov* Yisroel milk. The *Nodah Beyehudim* rules that one should refrain from using these coffee house mugs under normal circumstances. But if one is traveling and has no alternative, this constitutes a *b'dieved* situation and he may drink the coffee in these mugs.

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buildings in Curaçao, that get pummeled from salt and water, Mikve Israel was fully renovated in the 1970s to its original grandeur.⁶

In a cordoned off area in the synagogue courtyard, one can see the remains of the old *mikva*. In another wing, a museum displaying Judaica of the Curaçao *kehilla* was on display. The most prized possession was a *Sefer Torah*, brought from the Netherlands dating back to the 1300s. It is delicate and fragile and would presumably disintegrate at one's touch. The *Torah's atzei chaim* were housed in a wood frame so that the *Torah* could be read upright in the Sefardic tradition. Special prized pieces such as ornate silver *Torah* crowns, the candelabra which was lit for *Kol Nidre*, and the elevated mahogany *bris* chairs complete with a pull-out shelf for the *mohel's* equipment, send one's memories flying. There really was *Yiddishkeit* in Curaçao!

And now for the telling moment. In the museum, the *kehilla* recreated the *matzevos* of the *parnasim hachashuvim'* of the *kehilla*. It was done as a tribute to those who gave of themselves to see that *Yiddishkeit* was able to grow and flourish. The replication served a twofold purpose. First, it served to honor



those forbearers whose names live on in Curaçao – names such as Maduro, Moreno, and de Cresto – whose progeny carry their famous surnames. Unfortunately, these replications are the only living memorials we have of those past generations. This became evident as I visited the Bet Chaim cemetery. Tragically, the chemical fumes of the Shell oil refinery built right next to the cemetery have effectively erased the writing from all the *matzevos*, and with it, the stories that those stones conveyed. Amongst the memories that were preserved was of one *parnas* who passed away in 1693. His name was Yitzchak Chaim Senior, the founder of the Senior family dynasty. In 1674, he saw the first Sefardic *Chacham*, Curaçao's first *Morah D'asra Horav* Josiao Pardo, and in the same year saw the building of the first official building of Mikve Israel. Yitzchak Chaim Senior and those like him – Mordechai de Cresto, Yaakov Alvarez Correa, Avraham

Daniel Moreno and Aharon Levi Maduro – were refugees who escaped religious persecution and established *Yiddishkeit* in a strange new world. I am sure that R' Yitzchak Chaim Senior would be pleased to know that the work of his descendants proudly bears a STAR-K *hechsher*, and that thousands of *brochos* can now be uttered over the handiwork of his descendants. *Y'hei Zichro Baruch*.

⁶ In 1961, Mikve Israel combined with Temple Emanuel, a Reform temple, to become Mikve Israel-Emanuel. Shaarei Tzedek is the only Orthodox congregation in Curaçao

⁷ Prominent members



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the sharpness of the onion, together with the concentrated pressure from the knife blade (*duchka d'sakinah*), imparts the absorbed meat taste from inside the knife into the onion.⁶

How much of the onion became 'fleishig'? The *Rema*⁷ rules that due to its sharpness, the entire onion becomes saturated with meat flavor and none of it may be used with dairy. He concedes that, *b'dieved*, if the onion was inadvertently added to a dairy soup, we may assume that the meat taste penetrated only a *k'dei netilah*, approximately one inch around where the cut was made. Therefore, the soup would be permitted if it contains sixty times the volume of that area of the onion.⁸

The stringencies applied to a *davar charif* entail other *halachic* anomalies. The *Talmud*⁹ teaches that an absorbed taste inside a utensil becomes stale if it remains dormant for more than 24 hours (*eino ben-yomo*). Subsequently, that taste will no longer prohibit a food that it enters. This is based on the principle of *nosein ta'am lifgam*, that an adverse infusion of taste cannot create a prohibition. For example, if a pot was used to cook meat and more than 24 hours later it was accidentally¹⁰ used to cook milk, the milk is permitted. However, this rule is suspended for a *davar charif*.¹¹ The sharpness of the food rejuvenates any stale taste (whether meat, milk, or non-kosher) embedded in the walls of a utensil, and can have an effect even after 24 hours have elapsed.¹²

Underscoring this entire matter is the assumption that *davar charif* defies yet another standard rule of *kashrus*, known by its acronym *nat-bar-nat*.¹³ The *Talmud*¹⁴ describes a case where hot meat was served on a plate, rendering the plate *fleishig*. Steaming fish was then served on that same plate. The *halacha* states that the hot fish is only able to extract a minimal amount of meat taste from the plate, and one is still permitted to eat that fish together with cheese or milk.¹⁵ Nevertheless, when a *davar charif* extracts a meat taste from a knife, its sharpness causes the full potency to be absorbed; consequently, it may not be consumed together with a milk product.

III. FURTHER APPLICATIONS

A cold taste transfer may occur with any utensil that applies concentrated pressure, not just a knife as in our previous example. For instance, if the prongs of a *milchig* fork are inserted into a spicy pickle, the pickle would then be considered dairy and could not be added to a meat sandwich. Food processor or blender blades are also examples of *duchka d'sakinah*.

Furthermore, *davar charif* is not limited to imparting tastes into food; it can also impart a taste into a utensil. One scenario would be when a mixture of meat and sharp spices is being chopped with a blade. The sharpness of the spices combined with the pressure of the blade will cause the meat taste to become absorbed into the chopper.¹⁶

This stringency is also relevant to cutting boards. The *Chochmas Odom*¹⁷ discusses cutting a piece of salty herring (a *davar charif*) on a non-kosher plate. He states that the combination of the sharp taste and the pressure from the blade will draw absorbed *issur* out from the plate and impart it into the fish. Similarly, *Rav Shlomo Kluger*¹⁸ writes that if an onion was cut with a *fleishig* knife on top of a *milchig* plate, both the onion and the knife will absorb a combination of meat and milk tastes, thus rendering them both non-kosher.¹⁹

Overnight Onions



The *Talmud*¹ teaches that one puts himself in a serious danger from *ruach ra'ah* if he eats onions, garlic cloves, or eggs that were left peeled overnight. The danger exists even if they are wrapped in a cloth or enclosed in some other way. To block the *ruach ra'ah*, some of the peel – even a minute amount – must remain attached. It is enough to just leave the hairy strands on top of the onion.²

*Kaf HaChaim*³ observes that people do not refrain from eating salads or other dishes that contain peeled onions and garlic, even though the salads were left overnight. He suggests that the concern applies only when these items are alone, but not when they are mixed with other ingredients.⁴ *Divrei Yatziv*⁵ says it is sufficient to just sprinkle enough salt to impart a salty taste; likewise, an onion sautéed in oil is not a problem.

Today, major *kashrus* agencies certify processed foods such as onion/garlic powder, peeled garlic, pasteurized/frozen egg products, and even buckets of hard-boiled eggs. They utilize the ruling of *Rav Moshe Feinstein*, *zt"l*⁶, who held that the danger described by the *Talmud* does not exist when produced in a large scale industrial setting. STAR-K policy is that restaurants and caterers are similar to a home setting and do not rely on this leniency.

6. One opinion in *Tosafos* (*Chullin* 8b, in the name of *Rivan*) holds that concentrated pressure from a clean knife can create an absorption even into a cold non-*davar charif*. The *halacha* does not follow this view. Nevertheless, *Poskim* record a commendable *minhag* to always use a dedicated *pareve* knife when slicing bread. (*Aruch HaShulchan* 89:16, citing *Pri Chadash*)

7. Y.D. 96:1

8. Alternatively, if a *k'dei netilah* around the area of the cut was removed prior to the addition of the onion to the dairy soup, the soup is permitted even without *shishim*. (*Badei HaShulchan* 96:32)

9. *Avodah Zarah* 67b

10. There is a specific Rabbinic enactment against doing this on purpose, *Avodah Zarah* 76a.

11. *Rema* Y.D. 96:3, *Shach* #3. Also one opinion in the *Mechaber* 96:1. *Pischei Teshuva* 95:4 discusses if this is Biblical or Rabbinical in nature.

12. See Y.D. 103:6. Even in the absence of *duchka d'sakinah*, this property of *davar charif* still pertains. For example, borscht with high vinegar content is considered sharp. Therefore, if it was cooked in a meat (or milk, or non-kosher) pot, even if the pot was unused for 24 hours, the borscht is *fleishig* based on the principle of rejuvenating taste. See later note #34.

13. *Nosein Ta'am Bar Nosein Ta'am*

14. *Chullin* 111b

15. This leniency has many limitations. For instance, it only applies when the initial absorption is intrinsically permitted (*heteira*), such as a kosher meat taste. But if the taste absorbed in the plate is non-kosher, it will carry over to all further hot foods, rendering them all prohibited.

16. See *Badei HaShulchan*: *Tziyonim* 96:155.

17. Y.D. 56:2

18. *Tiv Ta'am V'Daas* 3:215. See also *Kitzur* of *Rav Pfeifer* 8:2:7.

19. A dissenting opinion is found in '*Sefer Yehoshua*', by *Rav Heshel Bavad*, *P'sokim* 122. See also *sefer 'Davar Charif'* by *Rav Dinkel* (1:13, note 57), who quotes *Rav Elyashiv* as ruling leniently in a *b'dieved* situation. In the event a *davar charif* is cut on a non-*pareve* surface, a *moreh hora'ah* should be consulted.

1. *Niddah* 17a. It is prohibited for a person to submit himself to a dangerous situation. See *Rambam*, *Hilchos Rotze'ach u'Shmiras HaNefesh*, chapter 11; *Shulchan Aruch* Y.D. 116. The *Talmud* (*Chullin* 10a) remarks that dangers to health are dealt with more severely than prohibitions.

2. *Semak* (4:171) countenances the practice of some people to ward off *ruach ra'ah* by replacing the garlic peel even after it was once removed. *Divrei Yatziv* (Y.D. 31:14, the Klausenberger Rebbe) says that this is not the accepted *minhag*.

3. Y.D. 116:92, quoting *Zivchei Tzedek* 116:61.

4. Alternatively, he invokes the position of *Maharshal* (*Yam Shel Shlomo: Kol HaBasar* 12) who maintains that the *ruach ra'ah* of Talmudic times is not prevalent nowadays. This is similar to the statement of *Tosafos* (*Yoma* 77b), that certain types of *ruach ra'ah* no longer exist in parts of the world. (See also *Magen Avraham* 173) These *halachos* are omitted from *Shulchan Aruch* (see *Shevet HaLevi* 6:115:5 who sees this as a justification for leniency), but the consensus among *Poskim* is that this is not sufficient evidence to allow one to place himself in a potentially dangerous situation. (See *Chofetz Chaim*, *Likutei Halachos*, *Niddah ad loc.*)

5. Y.D. 31:14

6. *Iggros Moshe*, Y.D. 3:20



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For all the above reasons, it is prudent for a kosher kitchen to maintain a *pareve* knife and cutting board for cutting a *davar charif*, in order to avoid inevitable mix-ups.

IV. HOW FLEISHIG IS IT?

If someone eats an onion that became *fleishig* through a cold taste transfer from a knife, is he then required to wait six hours (or whatever his custom is) before consuming dairy? *Poskim* say the answer is no.²⁰ Although the onion is considered to be *fleishig*, to the extent that it may not be eaten with milk, no waiting time is necessary before eating dairy food.

The reverse situation is a matter of dispute. Some *Poskim*²¹ do not allow consuming an onion that was cut with a *milchig* knife within six hours of eating meat. Other *Poskim* permit this.²²

V. HOW FAR DOES IT TRAVEL?

To what extent does an absorbed taste travel when transported through the medium of a *davar charif*? Consider a case where an onion was sliced with a *fleishig* knife and then chopped inside a *pareve* food processor. The *Magen Avraham*²³ rules that since the onion is a *davar charif* and contains a full absorption of meat taste, it will render the blades of the food processor 'fleishig'. Taking this further, if these blades were then used to chop a second onion, that onion would also become 'fleishig' and may not be eaten with dairy. If a third onion was cut with a *milchig* knife and chopped in the same food processor, the blades have now absorbed *basar v'chalav* and may not be used until they are *kashered*.

Even *HaOzer* disagrees and holds that *b'dieved*, when the food processor was used for a second onion, we may assume that the meat taste from the first onion did not compromise the *pareve* status of the blades.²⁴ Contemporary *poskim* follow this leniency when necessary.²⁵ However, *Even HaOzer* himself concedes that ideally the blades should be *kashered* prior to using them for *pareve* items.

VI. FISH AND ONIONS

Based on a statement in the *Talmud*,²⁶ widespread practice is to avoid cooking or eating fish together with meat (including fowl) due to concern that this may cause illness. May one add onions that were sliced with a *fleishig* knife to a dish of fish?

This question relates to another issue: May one cook fish in a pot that was previously used to cook meat? Since actual meat is not being combined with the fish (only meat taste expelled from the walls of the pot), there should be no problem provided the pot is clean from any meat residue.²⁷ However, many follow an ancient

custom recorded in the *Tur* (13th-14th century) to be strict and use a dedicated fish pot. It is reasonable to suggest that one's conduct regarding the meat pot should determine how to treat a *davar charif* that was cut with a meat knife. Some suggest that even those who are lenient with regard to the pot should be strict with regard to adding a *davar charif*.²⁸

VII. ARE ONIONS ALWAYS SHARP?

All onions are not created equal. There are many varieties, each with its own characteristics.

Red onions are milder; among yellow and white onions, the *Vidalia*, Spanish, Bermuda, Walla Walla, and White Crystal Wax are less bitter. The degree of pungency is also a product of other factors, such as growing and storage environments.²⁹ Are they all classified as *davar charif*, or are there some exceptions?

The *Shulchan Aruch* does not differentiate between different varieties of onions. Later *poskim* acknowledge scenarios when they are not considered *charif*. *Pischei Teshuva*³⁰ notes that while onions are still small, they are mild and have not yet attained the status of a *davar charif*; therefore, he is lenient if the knife was not a *ben-yomo*. *Kaf HaChaim*³¹ emphasizes that this leniency is limited to onions that are immature, but varieties of onions that are naturally small are certainly considered *charif*.³²

Another factor is that onions and other *devarim charifim* often lose their sharp quality after some processing. This fact is readily supported by observing an onion fried in oil, baked into a *kugel*, or cooked in a soup. Homemakers with sensitive eyes know that peeling and chilling an onion before cutting it will also dull its sharpness.³³ Based on the item and the method of cooking, a competent *Posek* can determine at what point a *davar charif* is no longer considered sharp.³⁴

A more general leniency to this entire topic is found in the *Beis Meir* (glosses to Y.D. 96:3). As mentioned above, a *davar charif* supersedes the usual *dinim* of *eino ben-yomo* and *nat-bar-nat*. The *Beis Meir* proposes that these stringencies are compounded only in the case of a *tznon*, radish, the sharp item mentioned explicitly in the *Talmud*. However, one may be lenient with regard to other seemingly sharp vegetables provided that there is doubt as to whether or not the blade absorbed meat or dairy within the previous 24 hours. Some *Poskim* will utilize this ruling in the event a mistake occurs.³⁵

More than separating the meat from the milk, keeping a kosher home requires vigilance for issues that pertain to a *davar charif*. This discussion should encourage us to maintain 'sharpness' in the kitchen, and enable us to properly present the issues to a *Posek* should any problems arise.



20. Based on Rabbi Akiva Eiger, glosses to Y.D. 89, on *Shach* number 19.

21. *P'ri Megadim*, O.C. 494, A.A. 6. This is especially so if the knife was known to be a *ben yomo*.

22. *Darkei Teshuva* 86:42; *Kitzur of Rav Pfeifer* 8:2:7 says this is the *minhag*. This position holds that it is no different than eating food cooked in a *ben-yomo milchig* pot within 6 hours of eating meat which *Rav Aharon Kotler* told *Rav Heinemann* is permitted.

23. *Magen Avraham* (451:31); *Chochmas Odom* (49:10) concurs with this position.

24. *Even HaOzer*, glosses to Y.D. 96:4. He reasons that although a *davar charif* has the capacity to **draw out** the full taste absorbed inside a utensil (thereby mitigating the leniency of *nat-bar-nat*), it is unable to **impart** a full taste into a second utensil. Thus, the blades will remain *pareve*. *Chavav Da'as* 96:6 concurs.

25. See *Badei HaShulchan* 96:56.

26. *Pesachim* 76b, *Shulchan Aruch* Y.D. 116:2

27. Even if the pot would be a *ben yomo*, the meat taste emitted would not generate a *sakanah*. See *Taz* Y.D. 95:3.

28. *Sefer 'Davar Charif'* (15:6), records in the name of *Rav Chaim Kanievsky* that in the house of his father, the *Steipler Gaon*, they cut the onions for fish with a dedicated knife. Unlike a pot, a *davar charif* absorbs a full taste and is an exception to the rule of *nat-bar-nat*.

29. See <http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/alt-ag/onions.htm>.

30. Y.D. 96:3

31. *Ibid*.

32. *Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank, Mikra'ei Kodesh, Pesach*, 1:80:3, suggests that some varieties of onions are not *charif* at all.

33. See *Pischei Teshuva* 96:4 who brings that *Chazal* themselves used empirical methods to determine the *halachos* of *davar charif*. See also *Badei HaShulchan* 96:46.

34. Thus, if an onion that is fried in a non-*ben yomo fleishig* pan becomes hot (*yad soledos bo*) before losing its sharpness, the stale meat absorption will be rejuvenated and the onion is now *fleishig*. But if the onion lost its sharpness prior to becoming hot then it can still be deemed *pareve*.

35. Albeit, the *Darkei Teshuva* (96:62) cites the *Mishmeres Shalom* who is hesitant to apply the leniency of the *Beis Meir*, except in the exact circumstances that he was discussing, i.e. where an onion was cut with a *milchig* knife that is assumed to be an *eino ben-yomo*. This is opposed to a *fleishig* knife, which is more likely to have been used for hot food.



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STAR-K Awards Grant to Baltimore Community Kollel's Chananya Backer Memorial Fund



BY MARGIE PENSKE

STAR-K Certification's claim that Kosher is "not just about milk and meat" has recently extended to funding a program that is one of the few of its kind in the nation. Known for its proactive local benevolent efforts, which have a ripple effect across the greater Jewish community, STAR-K has recently awarded a very considerable grant to the Chananya Backer Memorial Fund of the Baltimore Community Kollel. The program (started by Rabbi Aryeh Zigdon) is a teen outreach effort memorializing a 16-year-old Baltimorean, who tragically died three summers ago from injuries sustained in a car crash; his *levaya* was held on *Tisha B'Av*, 5768.

The Chananya Backer Memorial Fund award comes on the heels of the March culmination of an initial one-year *Shidduch* Incentive Program that STAR-K renewed annually for five years. That program was an

attempt to help remedy the Baltimore singles situation, typical of Orthodox communities throughout the U.S.; it paid out \$367,000 to those who successfully arranged *shidduchim* for 152 *kallahs*. Prior to this, STAR-K awarded numerous grants to a number of non-profit Baltimore-based organizations, including a large one for the *kashrus* library in the *Etz Chaim* Center in Baltimore and a very substantial award towards the purchase of ambulances, as well as training and certification classes, to *Hatzalah* of Baltimore. In addition, STAR-K is a major contributor to the *Vaad Harabbonim* of Baltimore in funding the city's *beis din*.

"As a not-for-profit organization, STAR-K Certification has had the good fortune and luxury of being able to devote itself to projects which do not generate any revenue, but are nevertheless of vital interest to the world of kosher consumers," explains

STAR-K President Avrom Pollak. "The Chananya Backer Memorial Fund is our latest initiative in a string of worthy community causes and institutions that we are honored to help support."

The Chananya Backer Memorial Fund, an innovative mentoring program run by Rabbi Aryeh Zigdon stressing *Torah* and *avoda* ideals, has been strongly endorsed by the *Vaad Harabbonim* of Baltimore. It perpetuates the memory of a very sweet and precious young man, whose untimely death has brought a greater communal awareness to the complex challenges facing our youth.

One of its programs provides young men—many of whom have returned home from a year spent learning in Israel—the opportunity to learn and work in the summer. It fills the time gap before their return to *yeshiva* with a stimulating schedule, occupying them from the time they wake in the morning until they go to sleep at night. The program averts the many potential spiritual challenges these young men face throughout the summer months.

The summer program allows young men the opportunity to seek employment in



Insights from the Institute

SHAILOS FROM THE INSTITUTE OF HALACHAH



RABBI MORDECHAI FRANKEL
DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE OF HALACHAH

Q: Can a Kohain enter the Maryland Science Center, located in downtown Baltimore?

A: A male Kohain is not allowed to be in a location which would render him *tamei meis*.¹ If a Kohain completely disregards the *halachos* regarding *tumas meis*, he no longer receives the first *aliyah* to the Torah and may not *duchen*.² A person becomes *tamei meis* by touching or moving a *meis* (corpse), by being located directly above or under a *meis*, or by being under the same *ohel* (covered area) as a *meis*.³ A Kohain's wife may enter an *ohel* containing a *meis*, even if she is pregnant.⁴

A *meis* is usually placed in a casket or other container. Even if the container completely encloses the *meis*, a Kohain cannot be under the same *ohel* as the container if any of the following conditions are met: (i) There is less than a *tefach* (approximately 10 cm) of airspace between the top of the *meis* and the roof of the container,⁵ (ii) the container is *mekabel tumah*,⁶ or (iii) the *meis* is going to permanently remain in that casket.⁷ However, if the container is not *mekabel tumah*, and there is more than a *tefach* of airspace between its roof and the *meis*, and the *meis* is not going to permanently remain there, then the *tumah* will not spread beyond the container.

Most buildings consist of a number of rooms which are under one common *ohel*. *Tumas ohel* will spread from one room to the next if there is an opening of at least one square *tefach* between the rooms.⁸ A closed door will prevent *tumah* from spreading from one room to the next, if there is no hole or gap of one square *tefach*.⁹ Although metal hinges generally are *mekabel tumah*, door hinges which are made to be attached to a building are not *mekabel tumah*.¹⁰ However, museums generally do not have closed doors between the rooms, so that there is no barrier to stop *tumah* from spreading throughout the building.

The *halachos* of *tumas ohel* apply if the following parts of a *meis* are present: A *kezayis* (approximately 1 oz.) of flesh, even if the flesh has dried out;¹¹ a quarter *kav* (a little more than 10 oz.) of bones;¹² the majority of a skeleton;¹³ a complete spinal column with the vertebrae;¹⁴ a complete skull;¹⁵ a *reviis* (approximately 3 oz.) of blood which was removed after *misah*.¹⁶ The *halachos* also apply to a Kohain who is under the same *ohel* as a limb, whether from a *meis* or severed from a live person, if the limb is complete with bones, tendons and flesh.¹⁷

The *halachos* of *tumas ohel* apply to any Jewish *meis*, even that of a *mummar* (apostate).¹⁸ There are different opinions as to whether or not these *halachos* apply to a non-Jewish *meis*. The *Rambam paskens* that the *halachos* of *tumas ohel* do not apply,¹⁹ whereas *Tosafos paskens* that they do.²⁰ Although the majority of *Rishonim* concur with the *Rambam*,²¹ the *Shulchan Aruch* states that it is proper for a Kohain to avoid this.²² The *Rema* and other *poskim* concur that a Kohain should be stringent.²³

It is quite common for a museum to display parts of a *meis* to which the *halachos* of *tumas ohel* apply. This is especially true regarding museums that cover areas of natural history, anthropology, zoology, Egyptology, or those that have exhibits on the human body.²⁴ *Tumah* from this item will spread throughout the *ohel*, unless all of the following are true: (i) The item is fully enclosed in a display case which has no opening the size of a *tefach*; (ii) There is more than a *tefach* between the item and the top of the display case; (iii) No component of the display case is able to be *mekabel tumah*;²⁵ and (iv) The museum does not plan to leave the item in the display case permanently.²⁶ As it is difficult to ensure that all these conditions are met, a Kohain should avoid entering a museum which contains any item which could act as a source of *tumas meis*.

Even if it has been ascertained that a particular museum does not display any such item, there is still the possibility that a Kohain may be precluded from entering the museum. This is because many museums have on-site storage and research areas, which contain thousands of items that are not on display and are not in display cases. If any of these items is a source of *tumas meis*, the *tumah* will spread from the storage area to the display area of the museum if they are under the same *ohel* and there is an open door or window between them. Rabbi Heinemann, *shlit"u*, feels that a curator who has knowledge of all the items in the museum collection can be believed if he states that there are no human remains present.²⁷ However, not all curators are knowledgeable regarding all the items in the collection, and the operators at the museum answering the phone are typically not fully knowledgeable of all the items in the collection.²⁸

The Maryland Science Center does have human body parts on display. On the second floor of the building there is an exhibit entitled "Cells: The Universe Inside Us", in which various body parts such as lungs and bones are displayed in order to explain the inner workings of the cells in the human body. This was confirmed by Ms. Brenda Lewis, Director of Exhibits at the Maryland Science Center, who informed me that there are "actual body parts on display including lungs, a plastinated brain, and a bone displaying the effects of osteoporosis." For this reason, a Kohain should not visit this museum.

דע שרוב החומר ומראה מקומות לקוחים מספר 'מדרכי הבהנים' לר' מרדכי שמחה מלנציק שליט"א, שבאר כל ענין זה בטוב טעם ודעת. כל הציונים לרמב"ם סתם הם להלי טומאת מת. וכל הציונים לשו"ע נו"כ סתם הם לחלק יורה דעה.
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STAR-K Awards Grant to Chananya Backer Memorial Fund

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

a "kosher" atmosphere. It was initiated three summers ago, with only five boys; approximately 45 young men will participate this summer. The morning starts off with *davening*, followed by two hours of learning; local *kollel* men are partnered one-to-two or one-to-three to learn with the boys, giving potentially lasting friendships the chance to evolve. After learning, an afternoon of construction follows. Groups of approximately five boys are dispatched with a foreman to different construction sites to perform various jobs for which they

have been trained, including demolition work, painting, building decks and a variety of other building tasks. An evening of fun is planned for each night; members of the community host the group for a barbeque followed by swimming or other recreational activities. The program gives its participants a sense of accomplishment as they begin earning a salary, allowing many of them to earn enough money to purchase a return ticket to *Eretz Yisroel* or have spending money for the coming year while in *yeshiva*. It also provides them with an opportunity

to learn a marketable skill for the future. The summer program culminates with an out-of-town trip, further reinforcing the camaraderie between the young men and their mentors.

"We are very grateful to the STAR-K for partnering with us in this very important program," says Bonnie Pollak, Director of Operations. "This generous grant enables us to maximize the number of boys we can work with this summer, ensuring that their summer will be productive both in learning and working in a safe environment."



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Attendees of STAR-K'S recent *Hakaras HaTov* dinner acknowledging local area foodservice *mashgichim* and *mashgichos* (not pictured).

Women's Mashgicha Conference Planned for Fall 2011

STAR-K's first *Mashgicha* Enrichment Program, held in November, 2009, attracted veteran *mashgichos* from around the U.S. and as far away as Israel. It was so successful that STAR-K is planning its second all-women conference to be held November 14-15, 2011. The two-day program will be held at its Baltimore headquarters and is open to a limited number of women who are currently employed as *mashgichos* worldwide. The curriculum will include *kashrus* procedures, insect checking, and visits to local food service establishments.

For further information on the STAR-K Women's *Mashgicha* Conference, or to register, please email star-k@star-k.org or contact Rabbi Zvi Goldberg (410) 484-4110, extension 219.

STAR-K Eruv-inar

STAR-K is hosting its inaugural "eruv-inar," a webinar for eruv checkers and *rabbonim hamachshirim* worldwide, featuring Rabbi Moshe Heinemann, *shlita*, discussing *hilchos eruv*. The webinar will highlight *eruv shaylos* through the use of pictures of *eruvim* that have been submitted to the STAR-K. Listeners will have the opportunity to ask questions during the *shiur*. The webinar will be held Wednesday, September 7th at 8:00 pm EST. Pre-registration is required.

Please forward your name, the capacity in which you serve, and the location of the *eruv* to eruv@star-k.org. Please also forward pictures (along with a note detailing the question) to the same address. There is a 10 megabyte limit for attachments, so you may have to break up the pictures into several emails. For questions, please contact Rabbi Zvi Goldberg at 410-484-4110 ext. 219.



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