



KASHRUS KURRENTS

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No one would argue that we are living in the Age of Information, one that has greatly benefited the kashrus world. Thirty years ago, we did not have access to the information highway known as the internet because the highway was still under construction. Ferreting fact from fiction was the mainstay of our research process, one that involved finding the right people to speak to who could share their expertise so that we could create reliable kashrus standards for the *tzibur*.

In that era, our knowledge of the kashrus of beer and liquor was very much in its embryonic stage. Few, if any, beers carried reliable kosher certification. Using the information then available to us, we developed an educated kosher beer policy which stood the test of time for three decades. In 1996, the *Kashrus Kurrents* published its first beer article, "Is Something Kosher Brewing?"

But today, we are light years away from the information vacuum we were working in then and so much better positioned to do truly solid research and to track the beer making process from field to loading dock.

Here, we will begin by revisiting the beer making process and re-introduce our readers to an industry with a distinguished history going back over 500 years. We will then provide context for the recent beer policy change implemented by STAR-K and why it marks a significant milestone in our decades-long involvement in the beer and liquor industry.

THE PROCESS

Beer's ingredients – water, barley, yeast and hops – bear no resemblance to the finished product. These natural ingredients undergo a series of simple yet fascinating processes to convert them into one of the world's most popular

beverages. The four steps of beer making are *roasting, mashing/malting, brewing and fermenting*.

Roasting. This is the most vital step in the beer making process, in that it helps to determine the beer's color and flavor through adjustments to the roasting time and temperature. A longer, hotter roast produces a darker, more flavorful barley – hence a darker, more flavorful beer – while a shorter, cooler roast produces a lighter, less flavorful beer.

Mashing/Malting. In this process, the starches in the roasted grains are converted into sugars. First, the kernels are ground into a grain mixture called a *grist*. (Sometimes, with blander beers, the barley is mixed with other cereal grains – such as corn, wheat or rice – to produce the *grist*.)

Next, the *grist* is mixed with hot water to form a porridge-like mixture called a *mash*. The hot water triggers an enzymatic process that "awakens" the germ – the living part of the barley – which lies dormant until the grain is planted or comes in contact with hot water. The wetted germ secretes an enzyme that breaks down the starch in the endosperm into simple sugars.

The sweet, unfermented liquid extracted from the *mash* is called a *wort*. Hops – dried flowers from the spice-like hops plant – are added to the *wort* to create a hopped *wort*.

Brewing. Next, the hopped *wort* is heated in a copper or stainless steel kettle to impart a unique aroma and cooked flavor to the *wort*. The brewed liquid is then ready to be converted into beer through the process of fermentation.

Fermenting. This is the final step in the beer making process. During fermentation, yeast – a fungus found in nature – converts sugar into carbon dioxide and alcohol. In beer production, yeast converts the sweetened hopped *wort* into beer.

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TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT: A HALACHIC GUIDE TO SHAVING



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OF HALACHA

The Torah forbids men to use a razor to shave the *pei'as hazakein*, which are the corners or edges of the beard. There are many opinions regarding the exact location of these corners, which are not delineated in the Gemara. Therefore, to fulfill all opinions, the *Shulchan Aruch* (Y.D. 181:11) states that a G-d-fearing person should not use a razor on any area of his beard.

This prohibition is found twice in the Torah: In Vayikra 21:5, the Torah forbids *giluach* (shaving), while in Vayikra 19:27, it forbids *hashchosa* (destruction). From this, Chazal explain the prohibition as the complete removal of the hair (*hashchosa*) with an implement that is commonly used for shaving (*giluach*).

A man is therefore permitted to cut his beard with scissors, which does not completely remove the hair. He may also pluck his hair with tweezers or use depilatory cream, as these are not common methods of shaving. He is not allowed to use a razor, which is a common implement used by men to completely remove beard hair.

PSAK OF THE CHOFETZ CHAIM

The Chofetz Chaim wrote that it is forbidden to shave with the shavers that were in use in his time because they cut close to the skin like a razor.¹ Rav Elyashiv *zt"l* noted that the Chofetz Chaim would certainly forbid all modern-day shavers, as our shavers provide a closer shave than the types he had examined.²

Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski *zt"l* reportedly allowed the use of the shavers that were shown to him. But that does not necessarily mean that he would have allowed the shavers on the market today.

¹ *Likutei Halachos, Makkos, perek 3.*

² *Kovetz Tesbuvas 1:32. See also Ashrei Ha'ish Y.D. pp. 142-143*

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Cake, Fruit and Wine:

A Guide to Al Hamichya and the Other Mei'ein Shalosh



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While much is written regarding the *halachos* of *Birkas Hamazon*, there are also important *halachos* regarding the recitation of *Mei'ein Shalosh*. *Mei'ein Shalosh* is commonly referred to as *Al Hamichya* because that is the most recited version. *Mei'ein Shalosh* means “a similar abbreviated version of three,” referring to *brachos* containing snippets of three of the *brachos* of *Birkas Hamazon*, which Biblically is three blessings.¹

Few people realize that there are 238 different variations of *Mei'ein Shalosh*,² a number that has the *gematria* of the word *vayevareich* (and he blessed). The various possible combinations of foods (e.g., cake and wine, cake and fruit from Israel, etc.) add up to 17 variations. This number is multiplied by 14 possible special day combinations³ to arrive at 238. Let's examine the intricacies of the *halachos* of *Mei'ein Shalosh*.

The Three Different Mei'ein Shalosh

- *Al Hamichya* – said after eating a *shiur* of *chameishes minei dagan*⁴ (henceforth referred to as *dagan*) that has been processed⁵ into *pas haba'ah b'kisnin*⁶ (e.g., cake or cookies) or a *ma'aseh kedaira* (e.g., cooked oatmeal).
- *Al Ha'eitz* – said after eating a *shiur* of *shivas haminim* fruits.⁷ The bracha ends with the words *al ha'aretz v'al hapeiros*.
- *Al Hagefen* – said after drinking a *shiur* of wine or grape juice.

Timing and Place: When and Where to Say It

This bracha should, *l'chatchila*, be recited as soon as possible, but there are always extenuating circumstances.⁸

- One has 72 minutes⁹ from the time he last ate or while he is still sated from the cake or fruit, whichever time is later, to say *Mei'ein Shalosh*.
- If one left the location where a *mezonos* item was eaten, and then realized he forgot to say *Al Hamichya*, he should return to the original location to recite it¹⁰ (unless by the time he returns, it will be too late to say it).
- If it is impossible, difficult or not practical to return to the original location (e.g., someone ate cake in the airport and then boarded a plane), one should say *Mei'ein Shalosh* in the new location.

- If one plans on changing locations, ideally, one should have in mind that he is changing his location at the time of the *bracha rishona*.
- If one ate more cake in a different location, *Mei'ein Shalosh* can be recited in any location where a *shiur* was consumed.
- *Mei'ein Shalosh* should *l'chatchila* be recited while sitting down.¹¹ When attending a “stand-up Kiddush” on Shabbos, one should find a seat before reciting *Al Hamichya*.

Special Text for Special Days

On special days, a short statement is added before the words *ki atoh*.

- This includes *ur'retzei v'hachlitzeinu* on Shabbos, *v'zachreinu* on Rosh Hashana and Rosh Chodesh, and *v'samcheinu* during the Shalosh Regalim (including Chol Hamoed).¹²
- One who ate cake or *shivas haminim* on Yom Kippur (e.g., one whose life was in danger) should add *v'zachreinu l'tova b'Yom Hakipurim hazeh*.¹³
- If one forgot the insertion on any of the above special days, one is still *yotzei* and should not repeat the bracha. However, if he has not reached *baruch ato Hashem* at the end, he should go back and insert the correct text.

Special Concluding Brachos on Fruits and Wine from Eretz Yisroel

▶ *Al ha'aretz v'al paiose'ha* – is said in the last sentence and in the final bracha after one ate a *shiur* from the *shivas haminim* fruits that were actually grown in Eretz Yisroel.¹⁴ This is true even if one drinks the wine in *chutz la'aretz*.

▶ *Al ha'aretz v'al pri gafnah* – is said in the final sentence and in the final bracha after one drank wine made from grapes grown in Eretz Yisroel.¹⁵

Shiurim: How Much Is the Right Amount and How Quickly Must They Be Consumed

The *shiur* that one must eat to say *Mei'ein Shalosh* is a *kezayis* (of cake or *shivas haminim* fruit) *b'kedei achilas pras*. The *kezayis* should preferably be eaten within a two-minute span. If this is difficult, it should be eaten within four minutes.

1 Although a fourth bracha was added by Chazal, the *Mei'ein Shalosh* term remained.

2 This number is for *chutz la'aretz* and does not include a *choleh* on Yom Kippur. See *The Intriguing World of Jewish Time* (Israel Bookshop Publications, 2022) by this author, p. 188.

3 The longest *Mei'ein Shalosh* is when one eats cake and *shivas haminim* and drinks wine on Shabbos Rosh Chodesh or on Shemini Atzeres that occurs on Shabbos.

4 Wheat, barley, spelt, rye or oats. Exact *shiurim* are addressed later in this article.

5 *Tosfos* (*Brachos* 37a, *Hakoses*) is in doubt regarding what the correct *bracha achrona* is for unprocessed *dagan* whose *bracha rishona* is *Ha'adama* (e.g., a raw stalk of wheat or Kashi Go Original cereal). S.A. O.C. 208:4 says it is therefore ideal to eat such items only after bread.

6 For a detailed article on this topic, see “*Pas Habah B'kisnin: Pas or Pas Nisht?*” by Rabbi Tzvi Rosen at <https://www.star-k.org/articles/kashrus-kurrents/1188/pas-habah-bkisnin/>.

7 Olives, dates, grapes, figs or pomegranates.

8 The *halachos* of *Birkas Hamazon* following the consumption of bread and the *halachos* of *Borei Nefashos* following *non-Birkas Hamazon* and *non-Mei'ein Shalosh* foods (i.e., all other foods) are beyond the scope of our discussion, however many *halachos* are similar (e.g., with respect to amounts).

9 S.A. O.C. 184:5. See *Kaf Hachaim* (O.C. 184:29) who says when eating a small amount of fruit (his example is one apple which would require a *Borei Nefashos*) one should recite a *bracha achrona* within 30 minutes. The same is true if one ate a small amount of *mezonos* (that is at least a *kezayis*, e.g., two cookies or a piece of cake).

10 See S.A. O.C. 178:5. However, for *shivas haminim* and wine, one does not have to return (see *M.B.* 184:12, based on the view of the Gra). For a detailed discussion see “*Meshane Makom Meshane Bracha*” by Rabbi Nissan Dov Miller, <https://www.star-k.org/articles/kashrus-kurrents/5799/meshane-makom-meshane-bracha/>.

11 S.A. O.C. 183:10. *M.B.* 183:35 notes that certainly *Al Hamichya* should *l'chatchila* be recited sitting down. See *Yabia Omer* 1:11 who expands this to other *Mei'ein Shalosh*.

12 On Chanuka and Purim nothing extra is added.

13 *Shemiras Shabbos Kehilchasah* 39:31.

14 S.A. O.C. 208:10. When in doubt where it was grown, say *v'Al Hapeiros*. (*M.B.* 208:53). If one ate a *shiur* of *shivas haminim* fruits from Eretz Yisroel and also fruits from *chutz la'aretz*, say *v'Al Peiroseha* (*Piskei Teshuvos* O.C. 208:15).

15 See *Shaarei Teshuva* (O.C. 208:14). However, cake made from flour grown in Eretz Yisroel is still *Al Hamichya* like *chutz la'aretz* (*Har Tzvi* 1:108).



A *kezayis* is the volume of 0.95 fl. oz. (28 ml which is slightly less than 1 fl. oz.).¹⁶ For beverages (i.e., wine or grape juice), the *shiur* is a *reviis* (3.8 fl. oz.) in the amount of time it takes to drink a *reviis* (i.e., a 30-second span¹⁷).

If one eats a *kezayis* of a *dagan* product, the *bracha achrona* may be *Al Hamichya* even if the actual *dagan* content consumed is less than a *kezayis*.¹⁸ This is true if the *non-dagan* ingredients (e.g., sugar) are added to enhance the flavor of the oat and/or wheat flour (i.e., they are *tavlin* enhancers) and they are combined into a single entity.¹⁹

Taking Gluten-Free Blends Into Account

If a cake is made from potato starch (e.g., for Pesach) or from other gluten-free blends (e.g., with tapioca or almond flour), the *bracha achrona* is *Borei Nefashos*.²⁰ If there is at least 51% *dagan*, one recites *Al Hamichya* after consuming a *kezayis* of cake *b'kedei achilas pras*.²¹

If *dagan* is less than half of the bread, one must calculate the percentage of *dagan* within the different "flours" to determine whether *Al Hamichya* is recited. If, for example, one eats cake that contains 35% oat flour, 25% tapioca flour, 25% millet flour and 15% almond flour,²² the *bracha* is *Mezonos* but one would need to eat three *kezaisim* (i.e., to reach a *kezayis* of oat flour) *b'kedei achilas pras* to recite *Al Hamichya*, since the food is only 1/3 *dagan*.

Combining Different Types of Foods: What's the Bracha?

If one eats other fruits (e.g., apples) and a *shiur* of *shivas haminim* (e.g., dates), one should only recite *Al Hapeiros* (this would include apples that normally require a *Borei Nefashos*).²³ If one drinks a *reviis*²⁴ of wine or grape juice and has in mind other beverages, or if they are in front of him, one does not need to recite an additional *bracha rishona* (i.e., *Shehakol*) or *bracha achrona*²⁵ (i.e., *Borei Nefashos*) on the other

beverages; they are covered by the *Borei Pri Hagafen* and *Al Hagefen*.

If one eats two items that each have a *shiur* and require a different *Mei'ein Shalosh* (e.g., cake and grapes²⁶ or figs and wine), one should include both in one *bracha*. The order within the *Mei'ein Shalosh* is identical to *kedima*²⁷ by *bracha rishona*: First *dagan*, then wine, then *shivas haminim*. This means the order is *Al Hamichya*, *Al Hagefen* and then *Al Ha'eitz*. For example, after eating cake and grapes, one recites *Al Hamichya v'Al Hakalkala v'Al Haeitz v'Al Pri Ha'eitz*. Separating them *l'chatchila* into two *brachos* would be a *bracha she'eina tzricha* (an unnecessary additional *bracha*). However, if for example, one ate cake and drank wine and only recited *Al Hamichya*, *bedi'eved* one must go back and recite the entire *Al Hagefen*.²⁸

Did You Forget? Or Can't Remember? Or Made a Mistake?

Here are some possible scenarios. If you:

- are not sure whether you recited *Mei'ein Shalosh*, you should not say it.²⁹
- recited *Birkas Hamazon* instead of *Al Hamichya*, you are *yotzei*.³⁰
- recited *Al Hamichya* after eating bread, instead of *Birkas Hamazon*, there is a *machlokes haposkim* as to whether you are *yotzei*.³¹
- recited *Borei Nefashos* instead of *Mei'ein Shalosh*, you are not *yotzei* (and vice-versa).³²
- ate a *kezayis* of cake and also drank wine but are not sure if a *shiur* of wine was drunk, you may add *Al Hagefen*.³³

If you need further guidance regarding any of these halachos, reach out to your rav.

In the *zechus* of reciting this *bracha* properly, may we merit the blessings that we request in *Mei'ein Shalosh*, including that Hashem rebuild Yerushalayim speedily in our days and bring us there to rejoice in its rebuilding. ☆

16 For a further discussion on these *shiurim*, see footnotes 6 and 7 in "For Good Measure" by this author at <https://www.star-k.org/articles/kashrus-kurrents/14004/baking-with-gluten-free-blends-etc/>

17 *Sefer Shmatza d'Moshe* 472:4 in the name of Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l.

18 See M.B. 208:48 who says this is how "nobagin ha'olam..." See *Igros Moshe* O.C. 1:71 for a different opinion.

19 For example, if one ate exactly a *kezayis* of cake, the "minbag ha'olam" is to recite *Al Hamichya* because the sugar and salt are combined to enhance the flour used to bake the cake. In other words, these *non-chameishes minei dagan* ingredients are *tavlin* to the flour. For a further discussion, see *Maamar Mordechai* O.C. 208:15. Regarding whether air pockets are *mitztaref* (count towards the *shiur*), see M.B. 210:1 and 486:3. *Shoneh Halachos* 486:4 says in the name of the Chazon Ish (*Taharos/Uktzin* 3:7) that one can be *mitztaref* the airspace if the item is soft and "spongy" (e.g., bread or cake). Regarding counting other flours in gluten-free products, see "For Good Measure" noted in footnote 16.

20 The *bracha rishona* is *Shehakol*. However, if the primary ingredient is rice, the *bracha rishona* is *Mezonos*, but the *bracha achrona* is still *Borei Nefashos*.

21 See M.B. 453:14 which states if there is a majority of *dagan*, the food is considered to be completely *dagan*.

22 Percentages are by volume of the flour content (i.e., the water is not part of the calculation). See S.A. 208:9 and M.B. for other details regarding the *bracha achrona* for such mixtures.

23 S.A. O.C. 208:13.

24 See S.A. O.C. 174:2. If one drank less than a *reviis*, see *Biur Halacha* 174:2, d.h. "Yayin."

25 S.A. O.C. 208:16.

26 However, if one ate a half *kezayis* of cake and a half *kezayis* of a *Borei Nefashos* product, the *bracha achrona* is *Borei Nefashos*. Food and beverages do not combine to reach a *shiur*, so if someone ate a half *kezayis* of cake and drank a half *reviis* of grape juice, no *bracha achrona* is recited.

27 *Kedima* refers to the prioritization of which *bracha rishona* is recited first.

28 *Har Tzvi* 1:105. This assumes he did not have in mind to include wine in his first *bracha*.

29 Ideally, eat another *kezayis* of cake and recite *Al Hamichya*. The same applies to other foods.

30 M.B. 208:75.

31 See *Sefer Shgiyos Mi Yavin* 24:22. Ideally, eat another *kezayis* of bread and recite *Birkas Hamazon*.

32 *Ibid.*, 26:11-14.

33 See M.B. 208:82. If he is certain he drank less than a *shiur* of wine, according to Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l he should not add *Al Hagefen* (*Shemiras Shabbos Kehilchasah* 54:71). For another opinion, see *Igros Moshe* O.C. 1:109. For a detailed discussion, see *Sefer V'zos Habracha*, p. 48.

WHAT IS BREWING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Though there are literally thousands of yeasts, the two most frequently used for fermenting are *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, which produces *ales*, and *Saccharomyces uvarum*, which produces *lager*. Other ales and lagers can be light or dark, strong or weak, more flavorful or bland, depending on the temperature, ingredients and brewing methods.

THE BEER MAKING CRAFT

While beer making has been practiced for centuries, over time it became elevated into an art form. Today, dozens of varieties of beer, each with a full spectrum of flavors and colors, have been developed. How do the beer meisters do it? By varying beer's natural ingredients – grains, hops and yeast – and by modifying the roasting and brewing methods, they are able to create new, flavorful varieties.

As has always been in the case – no less in our world of new technologies – the keys to successful brewing are consistency and uniformity. In recent decades, scientific discoveries have facilitated these objectives, enabling beer meisters to significantly enhance the simple centuries-old processes of beer making. But new is not always better. Technological research has demonstrated that while additives and processing aids can help deliver a consistent and uniform product, they do not necessarily create a beer with more character.

How do these revelations impact the kashrus status of this generically kosher beverage? Are there any additives that may compromise the kashrus of beer?

PROCESSING AIDS

In all, over 59 chemicals, many requiring reliable kosher certification, are legally permitted to be used as beer additives. Here are some of them:

- *Hydrogen peroxide* or other *alkalis* – can be used to accelerate malt germination.
- *Natural enzymes* (such as papain or bromelain) or *industrial enzymes* (such as amyloglucosidase or *Aspergillus niger*) – can supplement an enzyme-deficient mash to help break the starches into sugars and facilitate brewing.
- *Hops extracts* – can be added for flavor.
- *Tannins* – can assist in the removal of unwanted protein to deliver a clearer, brighter beer.
- *Natural and synthetic clarifiers*, such as *isinglass finings*¹ (prepared from ground tropical fish), *gelatin*, or *silica gel* – remove dark particles from the beer after brewing, to give the final product a crystal-clear appearance. A clarifier only acts as a filter and is not present in the final beverage.
- *Caramel color* – may be added for coloring.
- *Extra carbon dioxide* – may be added for carbonation.
- *Alginates* – may be added for head retention.

FLAVORINGS

Traditional beers do not have added flavorings. Cherry and other fruit flavorings and spices are used to make flavored products and by law must be labeled “flavored beers.” Such products definitely require kosher certification.

¹ Gelatin and isinglass clarifiers are not used in domestic beers. Isinglass finings is a traditional British beer clarifier that has been used for centuries in the United Kingdom. It is fascinating to note that over two hundred years ago, the great halachic authority, the Nodah b'Yehudah, permitted the use of the isinglass clarifier (Y.D., *Teshuva* 26).

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE WORLD OF BEER

Two developments have emerged in contemporary brewing: *non-alcoholic beer* and *micro-breweries*.

► **NON-ALCOHOLIC BEER:** The production of non-alcoholic beer is similar to regular beer but with an additional step: After the wort is fermented, the alcohol is distilled off through boiling or other distilling techniques. The result is non-alcoholic beer.

► **MICRO-BREWERIES:** These produce beer on a far smaller scale than the giant breweries. Usually, a smaller operation is more cause for concern.

A micro-brewery is typically more devoted to “natural” beer making than its larger counterparts. They are often strict adherents to traditional, additive-free brewing methods. This tradition – “*Bavarian Reinheitsgebot*” – dictates that beer can be made with only barley, yeast, water and hops.

THE KOSHER BEER CONSUMER SHOULD BE AWARE THAT THERE ARE NOW OVER ONE THOUSAND VARIETIES OF RELIABLY KOSHER CERTIFIED BEERS.

A METAMORPHOSIS IN KASHRUS: FROM ACCEPTABLE TO CERTIFIED

In the world of science, a *metamorphosis* refers to a remarkable biological process of transformation. A familiar example of this process is the transformation of an aquatic tadpole into a terrestrial (or semi-aquatic) adult frog. The world of kosher food certification may not be as dramatic but is no less amazing.

In the formative years of food processing, when certification of products was in its infancy, a consumer either did without or scanned the ingredient panel on the label (if it even had one) hoping to rule out any glaring treif items such as lard. Barring any objectionable ingredient appearing in the listing, the consumer would then deem the item fit to eat. In hindsight, this was a regrettable practice, but it was the status quo of kashrus in “the olden days.”

The metamorphosis of the world of kashrus began with the establishment of trusted kosher certification agencies, whose role was to certify products through a deep understanding of ingredients and processes and by establishing kashrus parameters in both the field and the office. What emerged was the advent of a small but growing group of reliably certified kosher products which provided the conscientious consumer with kosher options that did not rely on assumptions based on reading ingredient panels.

Slowly but surely, the kosher consumer was becoming an educated kosher consumer, fully aware of the potential pitfalls of ingredients and processes. As the few certified products grew into many, and the many grew into a plethora, over time, making assumptions about products has become practically unthinkable. Who would buy a candy bar today without looking for the *hechsher*? How many of us can relate to that feeling of



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confidence – and *relief* – when shopping for a particular food item – be it a pastry, energy bar, cookie, potato chip, hot sauce, salad dressing, bagel, cream cheese or lox – and finding the kosher symbol prominently displayed on the label? The *hechsher* has become an indispensable part of the kosher shopping experience.

But not entirely, yet. Until very recently, consumers have continued to rely on an “acceptability” standard on certain products – beers chief among them – instead of seeking out brands that are reliably kosher certified. The kosher beer consumer should be aware that there are now *over one thousand varieties* of reliably kosher certified conventional and flavored beers with *no compromise* in terms of their quality or availability.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Kashrus does not vibrate in place; it moves on. As my father *a”h* used to say, “I want to go up in *kedusha*.” What we took for granted as kosher “acceptable” has morphed into a new, higher, kashrus standard: that of kosher “certified.” Based on the new realities on liquor store shelves, STAR-K has set a certified kosher

beer standard for its establishments and food service events. While kashrus agencies do not have the right to dictate or establish the kashrus standard for individual consumers, it does assert the right to establish standards which meet the requirements and dictates of the agency’s *rav hamchisir*, whether it be for Cholor Yisroel, Yoshon, Pas Yisroel or Bishul Beit Yosef. Certified beer is no different.

The STAR-K certified beer policy is a milestone which represents a true metamorphosis in the evolution of kosher certification. It demonstrates how far the world of kashrus has come from the days when consumers relied on guesswork when going shopping, to now when we turn to our mashgichim who work intimately alongside industry professionals to validate every step of the production process. It is a phenomenal credit to the world of kosher certification that we have reached this milestone. *L’chaim!* ☆

STAR-K reminds readers of the importance of consuming alcohol responsibly and in a “kosher” manner.

HANDLING WITH CARE: BONEH IN THE KITCHEN



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STAR-K KASHRUS ADMINISTRATOR

Boneh, the *melacha* of building, is not just for the lumberyard. It also has many applications in the kitchen. Cheesemaking and churning butter are *boneh*.¹ Shaping egg salad and smoothing chopped liver can be *boneh* as well.² It can even apply to household appliances: according to some *poskim*, attaching a magnet to a refrigerator on Shabbos with the intention of leaving it there long-term is prohibited because of *boneh*.³

Recently, STAR-K certified a line of Gaggenau ovens without handles. Instead, they open electronically at the push of a button. In Sabbath Mode, this feature is deactivated and the door must be opened without mechanical assistance. The manufacturer offers a detachable handle to make opening the oven easier.

If these handles snap or suction into place, they should not be attached on Shabbos, as a semi-permanent attachment may violate the prohibition of *boneh*. (They should also not be removed on Shabbos due to the prohibition of *sosair*, demolishing). This is a greater concern than the question of magnets, since the handle is intended to function as part of the appliance. An owner of such an oven should attach the handle before Shabbos begins.

1 *Mishnah Berurah* 319:63: Gathering pieces together and forming them into a single object is like building.

2 *Shmiras Shabbos Kehilchasa* 11:11.

3 *Shmiras Shabbos Kehilchasa* 16:24 and 23:46.

TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT: A HALACHIC GUIDE TO SHAVING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

A shaver which leaves some beard stubble and does not result in a clean-cut face is permitted. However, many *poskim* would forbid the use of modern-day shavers which do not leave any stubble.³

PSAK OF RAV MOSHE FEINSTEIN

Rav Moshe Feinstein *zt"l* allowed the use of certain modern-day shavers. He explained that the primary difference between a razor and scissors is the method of cutting. Scissors cut by trapping hair between two blades. The sharp blade does not cut the hair unless that hair is held in place by the other blade of the scissors. This is in contrast to a razor, which cuts the hair with one sharp blade.

Rav Moshe held that any shaver which works with a scissors-action is permissible. He chose not to put this *heter* in writing, and there is some debate as to what exactly he allowed. Rav Moshe Heinemann *sblit"l* was present when Rav Moshe Feinstein tested shavers that were brought to him and has first-hand knowledge of Rav Moshe's ruling. Based on that experience, Rav Heinemann *paskens* as noted below.

TYPES OF ELECTRIC SHAVERS

There are three types of shavers currently on the market: linear micro-foil, rotary and OneBlade.



TESTING AND DULLING A ROTARY SHAVER

You can conduct a test to check if the blades of your rotary shaver are razor sharp. Turn off the shaver and open up the shaver head. Remove the three discs which hold the blades. Each of the three discs has about ten blades arranged around the perimeter, for a total of approximately thirty blades.

Pull out a beard hair and hold it taut. Press the hair against the cutting edge of one of the blades and see if you can cut it without applying pressure.⁴ If you can, the blade is razor sharp and needs to be dulled slightly before use.

If the shaver blades are razor sharp, or if you opt to skip the test, you should slightly dull the blades. To do so, scrape the cutting edge of each of the blades against a piece of metal (such as a coin). Scratching each blade just a couple of times is sufficient to dull it.⁵ Rav Heinemann feels that there is no need to remove the lift-and-cut mechanism. ☆

³ See *Shevet HaLevi* 4:96 and 10:136; *Minchas Yitzchok* 4:113; *Minchas Shlomo* 2:97, para. 6; *Halichos Shlomo - Tefillah* p. 11; *Teshuvos Ve'hanhagos* 1:459; *Chelkas Yaakov O.C.* 103:2, and *Y.D.* 90; *Emes le'Yaakov Y.D.* 181; *Yabiah Omer* vol. 9 *Y.D.* 10.

⁴ For a demonstration on how to check electric shavers, see <https://vimeo.com/1174893880> and <https://vimeo.com/1174900284>.

⁵ For a demonstration on how to dull a shaver, see <https://vimeo.com/1174903781>.



1. LINEAR MICRO-FOIL SHAVER

(e.g., Braun shavers)

Rav Heinemann *paskens* that all such shavers work with a scissors action. Higher end models have two foils, with a flat trimmer situated in between them. All such models on the market as of this writing (2026) work with a scissors action.

Halacha: *Approved.* These are all included within Rav Moshe's *heter*.



2. ROTARY SHAVER

(e.g., Philips Norelco shavers)

These shavers have three circular rotating heads.

Halacha: *Depends.* Not all rotary shavers are included within Rav Moshe's *heter*.

Whether or not a particular rotary shaver is included within the *heter* depends on the sharpness of the cutting blades in the rotary head. If the blades are sharp enough that they would be classified as a razor and not as scissors, those blades would not be included in the *heter* and would need to be slightly dulled before using the shaver. (See sidebar for how to do this.)

If the blades are not that sharp, they would be included in the *heter*.



3. ONEBLADE SHAVER

It is hard to determine whether the OneBlade is razor sharp, as one needs to break the shaver head in order to extract the blade.

Rav Heinemann broke open a few of these shavers and felt they did not have uniform sharpness. Due to these contradictory results, Rabbi Heinemann has said that each OneBlade would need to be tested individually to determine whether it is razor sharp. As testing a OneBlade would render it unusable, there is no practical way to do so. Even if we could determine that a OneBlade is razor sharp, that does not necessarily mean that it is forbidden. A razor sharp blade is forbidden only if it cuts close to the skin.

Halacha: *Not recommended.* Rav Heinemann *paskens* that it is *mutar* to use a OneBlade if the blade leaves hair long enough that the stubble can be felt when moving one's hand over the surface of the skin in the direction of the grain of the hair. It is not sufficient that the stubble can be felt when moving one's hand against the direction of the grain of the hair.

Tests with the OneBlade regarding whether stubble can be felt when moving one's hand in the direction of the grain of the hair were inconclusive. As a result of this uncertainty, Rav Heinemann *paskens* that the OneBlade shaver should not be used.



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