



# KASHRUS KURRENTS

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## Destination Simcha: From Meat Board to Surfboard



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Forty years ago, the Lakeshore Hebrew Day School of New Orleans celebrated its 10th Anniversary Dinner in one of the premier hotels in the Vieux Carré, under the supervision of the local Orthodox rabbi. The day school then housed the New Orleans Kollel, of which I was a member. The event was so special that my Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Henoah Leibowitz ztz"l, was brought in as the guest speaker.

Before the event, we met extensively with the hotel chef, the pastry chef, and the food and beverage director to ensure that – even though the hotel was kosher certified – there would be no kashrus hiccups. When the big day arrived, I came with a crew made up of the *chevrei hakollel* to supervise the cooking for the event. Imagine our alarm when the chef showed us the “kosher” soup kettle – gleaming on the inside but encrusted with crawfish on the outside! To say it was a very long day is a gross understatement.

Decidedly, kashrus has come a long way since then. Nevertheless, kashrus challenges constantly arise with the advent of new trends, advancements in technology, and changing practices in global productions.

There are two truisms when preparing for a lifecycle event: (1) The more preplanning prior to the event, the fewer problems will be encountered; and (2) Murphy’s Law – there will always be problems! In view of these truisms, it is incumbent on *ba’alei simcha* to have as much awareness as possible about

1 If the Kiddush bakery products must be Yoshon, the *ba'al simcha* should realize that Yoshon does not just include breads, cakes and cookies. Products such as jarred gefilte fish, licorice, pretzels, noodle kugels and even potato kugels may have flour in their ingredients that must also be Yoshon. It would be a good idea to place small signs indicating which items are Yoshon.



potential kashrus pitfalls so they can avert *simcha* crises and enjoy their *simcha – b'simcha!*

In that spirit, the checklists below should help.

### Planning Simchas In Town

In-town *simchas* are special occasions. There’s no travel involved and we know most of the people in attendance. But when attending a catered event in a hall or shul – be it a Kiddush, Shalom Zachor or Sheva Brachos – guests should be aware that the *simcha* might not be under any “official” kosher certification, unless the shul is certified, the food service event has been approved by the shul, or if the shul has hired a Vaad mashgiach. If the *ba'al simcha* has hired a party planner, other challenges may arise (see sidebar, page 5).

### The Kiddush Checklist

Pre-planning your Kiddush is the best strategy to guarantee that the *simcha* will encounter a minimum of glitches.

- If the Kiddush is being held in a shul, inquire about their guidelines. Does the shul have their own Kiddush Committee?
- Will they allow you to prepare the Kiddush yourself?
- If yes, which certifications does the shul permit?
- Does the shul require that all baked goods be Pas Yisroel and/or Yoshon?<sup>1</sup>

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



## Eretz Tzvi: Halachos of Visiting Eretz Yisroel



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Eretz Yisroel is also called *Eretz Tzvi*. Chazal explain that, like the skin of a *tzvi* (a deer), which stretches beyond its natural state, the Land of Israel likewise expands to accommodate its inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> The Talmud states that anyone who walks four *amos* in Eretz Yisroel merits a place in the World to Come.<sup>2</sup> From here, some *poskim* derive that one fulfills the mitzvah merely by visiting Eretz Yisroel, even if one intends to stay for just a short while.<sup>3</sup>

Anyone planning a trip should be mindful of several pertinent *halachos*. We will review some of these below.

### Scheduling the Flight

- ▶ Do not plan to land too close to Shabbos; a flight landing on Friday morning is halachically acceptable.<sup>4</sup>
- ▶ Try to avoid leaving Israel on a fast day, as the fast will be extended and you will not be able to drink.<sup>5</sup>
- ▶ Flying during Chanuka can also be tricky as you may miss lighting. A *shaliach* (representative) may be able to light for you in your home. Discuss with your *rav* before booking.

1 *Gittin* 57a.

2 *Kesubos* 111a. See *Pnei Yehoshua (d.b. Amar R. Elazar)* for a novel explanation of how a person gets a complete *kapara* while visiting Eretz Yisroel.

3 See *MG'A* 248:15. For this reason one who is visiting may embark on a ship to Israel even on Erev Shabbos, which is normally forbidden. See “Halachic Guidelines of Kosher Cruises” at <https://www.star-k.org/articles/kashrus-kurrents/5804/halachic-guidelines-of-kosher-cruises/> by this author. See also *Halichos Shlomo, Tefillah* 23, fn16.

4 Rav Moshe Heinemann *shlit”a*.

5 See “A Guide to Time-Related *Halachos* When Flying” by Rabbi Dovid Heber at <https://www.star-k.org/articles/kashrus-kurrents/5144/time-related-halachos/>.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

# Eretz Tzvi:

## Halachos of Visiting Eretz Yisroel

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

- ▶ Remember to order a kosher meal.<sup>6</sup>
- ▶ Be mindful not to transgress *daber davar* on Shabbos or Yom Tov if talking about your upcoming trip. You may say, “I’m going to Israel.”<sup>7</sup> But don’t specify the mode of transport – for instance, by saying, “I’m taking the El Al flight to Israel” – or discuss fares.<sup>8</sup>
- ▶ Make no assumptions and be careful with claims of kosher status when booking an Airbnb – even in Israel.<sup>9</sup>

### Davening En Route: When, Where, What

One should keep in mind the times for davening, where and when to daven, and other time-related mitzvos.

**Tefilas Haderech** – should be recited on the way to the airport or while taxiing on the runway, as appropriate.<sup>10</sup>

What if you stop over in Europe and then board another flight the next morning, does the tefillah need to be repeated? According to Rav Moshe Heinemann *shlit”a*, *Tefilas Haderech* is not recited the second day after travelling all night. But to satisfy all opinions, he advises one to insert *Tefilas Haderech* in *Shomei’ah Tefilah* in *Shemoneh Esrei*,<sup>11</sup> or to recite it without Hashem’s name in the *bracha* at the end.<sup>12</sup>

**Shacharis** – Many travelers taking a night flight fail to realize that the proper time for Shacharis might be as little as two hours after takeoff, and so they daven too late – after the *sof zman tefillah*. In addition, the allowable span for Shacharis is short, as little as two hours. The davening times may not be obvious if one is looking out the window.<sup>13</sup> Consult online charts for correct times (see sidebar next page). Note that the proper direction to daven on a flight to Israel is towards the front of the plane, even though it is not strictly due east.<sup>14</sup>

**Birchas Hagomel** – should be recited after landing, at the first possible Torah reading, (and after the return trip as well).<sup>15</sup>

### When in Israel...

**Tearing Kriah** – When visiting the Kosel, one tears *kriah* over the Churban, ripping clothing which cover the heart.<sup>16</sup> There is discussion among *poskim* if the custom is to tear just one garment (jacket or shirt) or all the garments (jacket and shirt).<sup>17</sup> To avoid this issue, one may take off a jacket before seeing the Kosel, rip *kriah* on his shirt upon seeing the Kosel, then put the jacket back on without the need to tear *kriah* on it.<sup>18</sup> A sweater, coat, *tzitzis*, or undershirt are not torn. Since one cannot bring scissors past security, one should start the *kriah* at home so that he will be able to tear at the Kosel.<sup>19</sup>

**Mizrach** – In the U.S., we face east – toward *Mizrach* – when we daven, which is facing *Yerushalayim*.<sup>20</sup> But in Israel, we face in whichever direction points us to *Yerushalayim*. Thus, in Teveria (which is in the north) we face south, while in Beersheva (which is in the south) we face north.

**Zmanim** – Be mindful that *zmanim* in Israel are different than your hometown (obviously, this is true wherever you travel).

For example, the earliest *sof zman tefilah* of the year in Brooklyn is 9:56 a.m. In Jerusalem it can be as early as 9:32 a.m. If you were to daven, for example, at a 9 a.m. minyan on Shabbos, you would likely miss *zman tefilah*.

There are various opinions about when to consider it nightfall in the U.S. for *Krias Shema*. A common opinion, based on *Igros Moshe*, is 50 minutes after sunset. However, in Israel, it gets darker faster, so nightfall arrives sooner. Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv *zt”l* is quoted as saying that 30 minutes is sufficient; some hold as little as 20-25 minutes.

For *melacha* on Motzei Shabbos in the U.S., there are various customs – 72, 60, 50 or 42 minutes. In Israel, many people keep less than that, and one should consult with his *rav* as to the proper time.<sup>21</sup>

**Additions in Tefilah** – In Israel, one begins to say *V’sen Tal Umattar* in *Shmoneh Esrei* on 7 Cheshvan, which is much earlier than we do here in the U.S. (December 4).<sup>22</sup> According to Rav Heinemann, one

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6 On El Al, STAR-K recommends Mehadrin/Regal Meals. On United out of Newark, when you order kosher, fresh Fresko meals certified by STAR-K and Tartikov (R’ Yechiel Babad) are served. Fresko sandwiches and salads are also available for sale in some terminals in New York-area airports. Check for kashrus symbols.

7 Since there are theoretically permissible ways to travel that don’t involve *melacha*. See footnote 10 in “The Guide to Proper Speech on Shabbos” by Rabbi Heber, at <https://www.star-k.org/articles/kashrus-kurrents/6012/guide-to-proper-speech/>.

8 See SSK 29:62.

9 See “Navigating the Ins and Outs of Renting an Airbnb” by this author, at <https://www.star-k.org/articles/kashrus-kurrents/13344/renting-an-airbnb/>.

10 Ideally we avoid saying *Tefilas Haderech* while in the air, since the air is not a “*derech*.”

11 During Shacharis in the morning, before boarding the second flight.

12 The same applies if you travel non-stop and then travel from the airport to another city in Israel.

13 Especially on a Boeing Dreamliner, where the windows are artificially darkened.

14 This direction is northeast followed by southeast, as the plane travels on the Great Circle Route. (See article mentioned in footnote 5 for an explanation of the Great Circle Route.) Rav Heinemann holds that northeast is the way to face even when on the ground in the U.S., as it is the shortest route to *Yerushalayim*.

15 *Minchas Yitzchak* 2:47. However, some hold not to recite *Hagomel* after a flight (Rav Ruderman, Rosh Yeshiva Ner Yisroel, and the Brisker Rav, quoted in *Kinyan Torah* 1:16:3). It is generally not customary for women to recite *Hagomel*, see *M.B.* 219:3.

16 See “Tearing *Kriah* at the Kosel” by Rabbi Mordechai Frankel at <https://www.star-k.org/articles/kashrus-kurrents/541/tearing-kriah/> for detailed *halachos*.

17 See *S.A.* 561:4 and *Minchas Shlomo* 1:73.

18 Rav Heinemann.

19 If you forgot, ask at the checkpoint or in a store in the Old City if they have anything sharp to help you do *kriah*. The *Yalkut Yosef Hilchos Beis Hakneses* admonishes visitors to behave respectfully at the Kosel as befitting its *kedusha*, and to refrain from eating, drinking or discussing *devarim beteilim* (unserious topics).

20 See footnote 14 for Rav Heinemann’s opinion.

21 The Chazon Ish is quoted as having held 45-50 minutes. (*S.S.K.* 58:2).

22 December 5 when it precedes a civil leap year.



who travels to Israel after 7 Cheshvan but before December 4 should say it in the *bracha* of *Shomei'ah Tefilah* once he arrives in Israel, and then upon his return revert to not saying it, until December 4.<sup>23</sup>

The *nusach* after eating fruit grown in Israel from the *Shevah Minim* is *v'al peiroseha*, or *v'al pri gafna* for wine and grape juice. This applies while outside of Israel as well.

**Parshios Read on Shabbos** – Sometimes the *parshios* read on Shabbos in Israel and outside Israel are out of sync. This happens with *parshios* that are read following the eighth day of Pesach or the second day of Shavuot that occurs on Shabbos. There are various *minhagim* as to how to address this.<sup>24</sup>

**Kashrus** – Navigating the kosher situation in Israel is much more complicated than in the U.S. Often, kosher certifications in Israel are not up to the standards required by Orthodox communities in the States. Even knowing which agency certifies a restaurant can be a challenge, as agencies do not maintain the information online, unlike in the U.S. Before eating out or committing to a hotel booking, contact a person knowledgeable about kashrus in Israel.<sup>25</sup>

Kashrus in Israel also involves the halachos of *Terumos*, *Maasros*, *Orlah* and *Shemita*, which apply to produce grown in Eretz Yisroel. If you buy produce with a good kosher certification, there should be no issues. But if the produce bears a certification that is not to your level, or if you go berry- or grape-picking, you are the one tasked with the separations and will need to become informed about the *halachos*.<sup>26</sup> During and following a *Shemita* year one needs to be especially careful with *Shemita* produce.

**Two-Day Yom Tov** – While Israelis observe only one day of Yom Tov (except for Rosh Hashana), the general consensus is that visitors keep two days.<sup>27</sup>

23 See also *Yom Tov Sheini K'hilchaso* 10:7.

24 The next time this will occur is Shavuot 5786/2026.

25 ZNT Kosher (zntkosher@gmail.com) maintains a service to help answer questions for visitors. See also their list of commonly accepted *hechsbeirim* at tinyurl.com/ZNTkosher.

26 See <https://www.star-k.org/articles/kashrus-kurrents/kashrus-kurrents-2006/1160/terumos-and-maasros/> by Rav Heinemann for guidelines in doing this mitzvah. A few points about the process: (a) After redeeming *Maaser Sheini* onto a coin, the coin should be destroyed; it cannot be used or given to *tzedakah*. (b) If separating produce picked from the field, you should also say the special *brachos* on this mitzvah before saying the regular text. If separating in Israel as a stringency, or when buying Israeli produce in the U.S., do so without a *bracha* because it is possible that *maaser* had already been taken. (c) If the value of the *Maaser Sheini* is less than a *peruta*, you need to use a *peruta chamura*. (d) If you want to take *Maaser Sheini* in Israel without worrying about the coins, you can join Rav Shaul Reicheberg's group, Keren HaMaasros, at <https://bhl.org.il/en/join-keren-hamaasros/>.

27 M.B. 491:13.

28 See "Maintaining *Kedushas Kehuna* on Land, Air and Sea" by Rabbi Mordechai Frankel at <https://www.star-k.org/articles/kashrus-kurrents/14870/maintaining-kedushas-kehuna/>.

29 See tinyurl.com/KohanimAdvisory. Other resources are Vaad Mishmeres Kohanim of Lakewood, lakewoodkohanim@gmail.org, 732-523-5020, and Hakohanim.org.

30 *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 202:14 writes that there are some unlearned kohanim who visit graves of *tzadikim* and say that *tzadikim* have no *tumah* (based on *Tosafos Kesuvos* 103b and other sources), but this is a mistake and they must be stopped. See *Gesher Hachaim* 29:12. Hakohanim.org lists places where kohanim can and cannot go. The website is referenced here for informational purposes only and kohanim should consult with their own *rav*.

## Kohanim<sup>28</sup>

Kohanim must abide by restrictions to preserve their *kedusha* with regard to the flights they may take and the places they can go in Eretz Yisrael. Non-stop flights to Eretz Yisroel may carry a *meis* (a corpse) on board for burial there. A kohen may not travel on such a flight. Certain flights almost definitely have *meisim* (e.g., certain El Al flights from JFK) while some almost definitely do not have (e.g., flights to European cities.) Some flights pass over Jewish cemeteries (e.g., flights from Budapest.) The details are constantly changing, and kohanim need to check ahead of time. With Rav Heinemann's encouragement, a general guide for kohanim was recently prepared that addresses some of these issues.<sup>29</sup>

Some areas in Israel are problematic for kohanim. For instance, walking or biking in Gan Sacher near the Knesset in Jerusalem might lead one right into (or under trees overhanging) a cemetery that is adjacent to it. Kohanim may not visit *kivrei tzadikim*; it is even forbidden for them to stand outside if under an overhanging tree or roof.<sup>30</sup>

*Nesiah tova!* ☆



Kohanim alert at Hadassah Ein Kerem Hospital in Jerusalem.

*This article was written l'zecher nishmas Yechezkel Isur ben Yaakov Moshe, Chezi Goldberg Hy"d, the author's brother-in-law, killed by a suicide bomber on bus #19 in Jerusalem, 6 Shvat 5764 (January 29, 2004). The author has visited the family many times since then, and most of the ideas here are based on those visits.*

## Suggested Packing List

- ❑ Extra food in your carry-on in case there is an issue with your kosher meal. It is worth pointing out that while halacha states that one may not leave food under a bed, a seat on an airplane is not considered a bed, even though people use it for sleeping.<sup>1</sup>
- ❑ Charts printed from Air.MyZmanim.org or ChaiTables.com for davening times.<sup>2</sup>
- ❑ A shirt<sup>3</sup> to tear *kriah* at the Kosel. It can be one you don't wear anymore.
- ❑ Special *pesukim* to be said during tearing *kriah*.

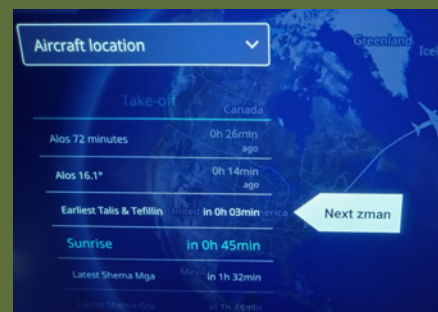


Fig. 1: Zmanim on EL AL screen

1 Rav Moshe Shternbuch, *Teshuvos V'hanhagos* 1:8, 2:316.

2 See the article quoted in footnote 5 above for guidance in using these sites. *Zmanim* in the air are determined by the *zmanim* on the ground at the location over which the airplane is flying. On a typical flight, this could be about a half-hour difference from what a passenger might see out his window (e.g., the rising or setting of the sun). El Al usually has *zmanim* (and other Torah content) available on the inflight screen, which are pegged to the airplane's actual location (see Fig. 1).

3 Or jacket. See discussion under "Tearing *Kriah*," above.

# Destination Simcha:



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

- Can you purchase boxed bakery goods from the supermarket, or must the baked goods come from a Shomer Shabbos bakery?<sup>2</sup>
- If rolls are served, are they truly Mezonos rolls, or real bread?<sup>3</sup>
- Is there a washing station?
- If the Kiddush is dairy, do the dairy products have to be Cholov Yisroel or will Cholov Stam products fit the bill?
- Is there adequate division between the fish - herring, gefilte fish, salmon, sushi - and meat - cholent, turkey salad, deli, chopped liver?
- What is the shul's policy regarding prepared food brought into the shul from a take-out store?
- Does the store need to be under *hashgacha* and, if so, which *hashgachos* would be acceptable?
- Is someone responsible for checking that the items coming into the shul have a reliable kosher *hechsher* and are properly sealed?<sup>4</sup>
- What is the shul's policy regarding home-baked items?<sup>5</sup>
- If potato chips and pretzels are being purchased, do they have to be Bishul Yisroel and/or Pas Yisroel?<sup>6</sup>
- If the Kiddush is *milchig*, should candies be Cholov Yisroel?
- Does the shul allow candies coated with resinous glaze?
- What is the shul's policy concerning wines and liquor? Do all wines need to be *mevushal*? Do all the liqueurs have reliable kosher supervision?

Cholent and other hot items are dealt with in the Sheva Brachos section below.

## The Shalom Zachor Checklist

Mazel Tov! It's a boy, and he was born on Friday morning. Everyone is rushing and hurrying to get the Shalom Zachor ready. Quick – get the beer and the *arbis* (chickpeas)! But hold on:

- Do you realize that both flavored and non-alcoholic beers need reliable kosher certification?<sup>7</sup>
- If your guests only use Yoshon products, are you aware that beer (which is produced from malted barley) might be Chodosh?
- Are you aware that canned chickpeas are one of the leading items likely to be produced in a facility that also produces canned meat products, and so they need a reliable *hechsher*?

- Are you aware that meat and fish boards require *two simanim* if delivered?<sup>8</sup>

## The Sheva Brachos Checklist

Shabbos Sheva Brachos can be a grand undertaking. As the cost of having a caterer has become prohibitive for some, *ba'alei simcha* often opt to cater the event themselves and buy prepared foods from reliably certified food vendors. In the trade, when food is purchased from a caterer or a take-out store, it is referred to as a *food service event* versus a fully catered *simcha*. It is critical that you, as the *ba'al simcha*, clearly understand what your responsibilities are in this situation.

- Are you aware that it is your responsibility to check *all* food items as they enter your home or social hall to determine if the products have proper kosher identification?<sup>9</sup>
- Do you realize that you must ensure that the kashrus status of the food *continues*? That you are responsible for ensuring that a Shomer Shabbos watches the meat, chicken and fish items to avoid a problem of *basar she'nisaleim min ha'ayin*?<sup>10</sup>
- Are there *aino Yehudim* or non-observant help cooking the meal before Shabbos?<sup>11</sup>
- If so, were all fires turned on by a Shomer Shabbos to avoid problems of *bishul akum* (food cooked by an *aino Yehudi*)?<sup>12</sup>
- Are the oven controls or knobs properly covered and are there blechs covering the burners of a gas or non-glass stove top?<sup>13</sup>
- Does the shul allow *Chazara* (returning cooked food to the fire)?<sup>14</sup>
- Have you checked to make sure that you are using institutional water urns that do not introduce fresh water into the tank?
- Have you turned on all water urns before Shabbos?
- Have you made tea essence before Shabbos?<sup>15</sup>
- Have you opened all sugar packets, sealed food containers and bottles with threaded caps before Shabbos?
- Have you checked salads and vegetables before Shabbos to make sure they are free of *tolayim* (insects)?
- Are you aware of potential issues with *Borer* (separating the bad from the good), especially when checking vegetables for *tolayim* on Shabbos?<sup>16</sup>
- Have you checked all bakery items for their Pas Yisroel and Yoshon status?

2 Be aware that cakes are often decorated with pictures or lettering that may not be cut on Shabbos.

3 Rav Moshe Heinemann *sblit'a* requires that to be considered Mezonos, the roll should be as sweet as a cinnamon bun.

4 Meat and fish items require two *simanim* (seals) when they leave the store, while cheese, dairy, and bakery goods require only one.

5 There are home bakers who bake beautiful *simcha* cakes. Does the shul's policy require kosher supervision for these cakes?

6 Someone needs to be responsible for opening all unopened cans, bags, boxes and bottles before Shabbos.

7 Do not assume that a flavored alcoholic beverage is just a little lemon juice mixed in the beer. Further, those flavors can come from Eretz Yisroel; and glycerin is often used as a blending agent in flavored beverages. Regular beer and ales are generally acceptable. Be mindful that beer companies are increasingly choosing to bottle their brews in cans. If you don't open cans on Shabbos, better to purchase these in bottles.

8 See also footnote 4.

9 When the caterer delivers the food items, or when the food items are picked up from the store or commissary, the food must be properly sealed – especially meat and fish. Once the seals are broken, the *hashgacha's* responsibility ends.

10 This problem arises when *aino Yehudim* are hired to prepare the meal and are not supervised at the venue.

11 All foods should be cooked at least 1/3 of the way before the onset of Shabbos.

12 Fires are frequently turned on and off during cooking. Since the *ba'al simcha* will be preoccupied and unable to properly supervise the food preparations, he should designate someone to be responsible for igniting all heating equipment.

13 The *melacha* of *Shebiya* forbids one to leave uncooked food before Shabbos on a cooking surface on which the fire may be adjusted to hasten or improve the cooking. To prevent this, the fire and controls should be covered with a blech. See also footnote 12.

14 There are strict guidelines that must be followed when returning cooked items to the oven. These apply even if the stovetop is covered with a blech, and even if the food that one wants to put onto the blech is fully cooked and still hot. It is very important to review the laws of *Chazara* with your *rav* to avoid any problems on Shabbos.

15 Rav Heinemann requires the essence to remain on a blech to retain its warmth.

16 Often salads, platters and trifles are made on Shabbos and involve cutting and separating peels, pits and seeds from the fruits or vegetables. Separating these items incorrectly may cause one to violate the *melacha*. These laws can become quite complicated. It is advisable to check with one's *rav* to review these rules.

# From Meat Board to Surfboard



- Have you ensured that all wines and liqueurs bear the proper *hechsheirim*?
- Are the wines and grape juice *mevushal* in the event you hired waitstaff who are either *aino Yehudim* or non-Shomer Shabbos yidden?
- Are you aware that you are responsible for the kashrus of all chinaware, flatware, serving utensils, heating equipment and display pieces?<sup>17</sup>

## Navigating a Destination Event

*B'chasdei Hashem*, the *mishpachos* of Klal Yisroel have seen unprecedented growth in both size and affluence. Home dining rooms can't always accommodate extended families, and shul social halls don't hold a candle to points unknown. So, what do wandering Jews do best? Wander to large Airbnb homes – in Orlando, Scottsdale, Cancun or to points beyond.<sup>18</sup> Some well-heeled travelers even bring their own personal chef to cater the occasion. For now, we will focus on the additional kosher culinary challenges one faces when taking a Shabbos or *simcha* “on location.”

## The Destination Simcha Checklist

- Do all the kosher products meet with your (or your guests') kashrus standards?<sup>19</sup>
- Are the available kosher bakery goods pareve, Pas Yisroel, and yoshon, if these are required by you or your guests?
- If you are serving dairy, are Cholov Yisroel products available?
- What do you do about dishes?<sup>20</sup>
- If you hire a personal chef, who will be responsible to see that Bishul Yisroel, *basar she'nisaleim min ha'ayin*, and *bedikas tolayim* for vegetables and fruits are met?
- Can the stove, oven and sink be kashered and, if so, who will take care of the kashering?
- Are countertops kasherable or do they need to be covered? Do you have the necessary covers to do this?
- Are the appliances Shabbos-compliant?<sup>21</sup>

Pre-planning the trip and event details – from *forshpize* to dessert – whether you do it yourself or have a party planner who is up to the challenge (see sidebar), will ensure that your *simcha* is really *b'simcha* and the occasion truly memorable. ☆

17 Questions regarding their prior use should be addressed ahead of time.

18 See “Navigating the Ins and Outs of Renting an Airbnb” by Rabbi Zvi Goldberg at <https://www.star-k.org/articles/seasonal/13344/navigating-the-ins-and-outs-of-renting-an-airbnb/>.

19 E.g., Yoshon, Pas Yisroel, Bishul Yisroel, Glatt and Chalak Beit Yosef.

20 In some areas, kosher dishes and cookware are available for rent.

21 Shabbos-compliant appliances have become increasingly more difficult to find as technology advances and appliances have become more sophisticated. All too often, STAR-K gets calls from panicked destination travelers who are stymied by appliances requiring a Shabbos Mode to deactivate lights, icons, or 12-hour shutoffs, and have not the slightest idea what to do. Prepare accordingly.

## The Perils of Partnering with a Party Planner



RABBI SHOLOM TENDLER,  
STAR-K KASHRUS ADMINISTRATOR

For many people, juggling and coordinating all the details involved in planning a *simcha* – from booking the hall, arranging the décor, designing the invitations, planning the menu, ordering the food, to running random errands – is simply ... overwhelming. Enter the party planner. This increasingly popular option has been gaining traction over the last few years, but not without its perils.

Party planners offer concierge services to help alleviate much of the stress involved in planning a *simcha*. They are typically more affordable than a full-service caterer who is under *hashgacha*. Party planners work within your budget to offer any number of services at different tiers: they may handle the décor and design but may leave it to you to bring in your own food, or they can coordinate everything from “soup to nuts.” This is when the problems start.

Unlike with a caterer who is certified by a *hashgacha* and who will provide assurance that the entire event is under the *hashgacha's* auspices, party planners operate in a kashrus grey zone in which each side thinks the other one “knows” or is “taking care of it.” This grey area can quickly turn into a kashrus minefield.

STAR-K has heard countless stories of kashrus debacles that were the direct outcome of this type of miscommunication. We know of events at which treif food was served, *non-mevushal* wines were poured, and items were cooked by an *aino Yehudi* on Shabbos! These were not, unfortunately, rare occurrences.

If you choose to hire a party planner, you must understand that full responsibility for the kashrus of the event rests entirely on *your* shoulders. You must clearly communicate your expectations regarding kashrus to the party planner and put in place a process to ensure that the kashrus of the event is upheld and not compromised in any way. Ideally, you should consider hiring a *mashgiach* to work alongside the party planner – a small investment in *menuchas hanefesh* to guarantee that your *simcha* is 100% kosher. Mazel tov! ☆



# The Mitzvah of Pidyon Haben: A Brief Overview



**RABBI MORDECHAI FRANKEL**  
DIRECTOR, STAR-K INSTITUTE OF HALACHA

**M**azel tov, you are the new parents of a baby boy! If the baby is the *bechor* of his mother – meaning that he is his *mother's* first child – he will need to be redeemed by a kohen. The Torah tells us that Hashem slew every firstborn male in Mitzrayim, passing over the houses of the Bnei Yisrael. As a result, firstborn males acquired a measure of *kedusha* and must be redeemed by a kohen. The halachos of *pidyon haben* are somewhat complex and you may not have the time to familiarize yourself with them. Here, then, is a brief primer according to Ashkenazi custom.<sup>1</sup>

## When Is a Pidyon Not Required?

- If the baby is not his mother's first child, even if he is his father's first child
- If the father is a kohen or levi, or if the mother is the daughter of a kohen or levi<sup>2</sup>
- If the baby was born through a cesarean delivery<sup>3</sup>
- If forceps were used in the delivery of the baby – a *rav* should be consulted
- If the mother had previously miscarried before the *bechor* was born – a *pidyon* may or may not be needed. It depends on how advanced the pregnancy was before the miscarriage. If the fetus was more than three months old, the subsequent baby does not need a *pidyon*. If the fetus was definitely less than forty days old, the subsequent baby does need a *pidyon*. If the fetus was between forty days and three months old, a *rav* should be consulted.
- If an *aino yehudi* gives birth to a firstborn who subsequently converts, that *ger* does not need a *pidyon*

## When Should the Pidyon Be Performed?

- The *pidyon* is performed on the thirty-first day after birth, with the day of birth being Day One of the count. Sefardim generally do the *pidyon* at night, whereas Ashkenazim wait till the following day. Thus, if the baby is born on Sunday afternoon, one hour before sunset, that Sunday is Day One. The following Sundays are Days Eight, Fifteen, Twenty-Two and Twenty-Nine. The Monday after that is Day Thirty. The *pidyon* will be performed on Tuesday during the daytime, generally in the afternoon.<sup>4</sup>
- If the baby is born during *bein hashmashos*, the following day will be Day One.
- The *pidyon* is not performed on Shabbos or Yom Tov. If the thirty-first day is Shabbos or Yom Tov, the *pidyon* should be performed on the first weekday that follows.
- If the *pidyon* occurs on a fast day, it is customary to perform the *pidyon* on that day and eat the *seudah* immediately after the fast.
- If a baby was born more than a month before the due date, a *rav* should be consulted as to when to perform the *pidyon*.

- If a father was not *podeh* his son, the son is obligated to be *podeh* himself after he becomes Bar Mitzvah and has *simanim* of an adult.

## Paying the Kohen

For the *pidyon*, the father should give the kohen approximately one hundred grams (3.53 oz.) of silver. The American Silver Eagle coin contains one troy ounce of silver, which roughly equals 31 grams of silver. Four coins would be sufficient for *pidyon*, although five are often used.

The U.S. Mint has produced other Silver Dollar coin designs which are only 40% silver. If old coins or silver molds are used, it should be verified that they contain the required amount of silver.

## Qualifications of a Kohen

There are kohanim who have a family tree and can trace their kohen status back many generations. There is a benefit to using such a kohen for the *pidyon*, but it is not necessary. The kohen should ideally be G-d fearing and knowledgeable in Torah. The kohen may not be a *cholol* (the product of certain forbidden relationships). One may not use a kohen who publicly desecrates Shabbos or who does not keep the mitzvos unique to kohanim.<sup>5</sup>

## The Pidyon Ceremony

It is customary to have a minyan of men present at the *pidyon* and to have a *seudas mitzvah*. Those present should first wash their hands and eat bread. The *pidyon* is then performed when the meal begins.

There is a widespread custom to place the baby on a silver tray. Women place jewelry on the tray around the baby, and the father carries the tray to the kohen. Customarily, the kohen sits and the father stands. The kohen should have a cup of wine in front of him, unless the *pidyon* occurs on a fast day.

The father and the kohen recite the text of the *pidyon* as printed in siddurim. The father should take care to finish saying the brachos before handing the money to the kohen. The kohen concludes the ceremony by making a *bracha* on the cup of wine.

It is customary to distribute garlic cloves and sugar cubes at a *pidyon* which the participants take home and use to season food for their families. Although the origin is unclear, it is said that eating from the *seudah* of a *pidyon* is equivalent to fasting eighty-four fasts.

## More Questions...

What happens if the father is no longer alive? What if he is alive but absent? What if he is not Jewish? These and many more questions are beyond the scope of this brief article.<sup>6</sup>

When your baby grows up, may you have the *zechus* to learn these *halachos* in depth together with him *b'chavrusah*. ☆

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of Sephardi customs, refer to *Sefer Yalkut Yosef: Sovah Semachot*, Vol. 2, by Rabbi Yitzchak Yosef (Jerusalem: Machon Chazon Ovadia, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> If the father is a kohen or the mother is a *bas kohen*, and the baby is the product of a forbidden relationship, a *rav* should be consulted.

<sup>3</sup> The next boy born will not need a *pidyon* even if he had a natural birth.

<sup>4</sup> Regarding the earliest possible time for *pidyon*, see *Teshuvos Kesav Sofer Y.D.* 151 and *Shaarei Zmanim siman* 16.

<sup>5</sup> See "Maintaining *Kedushas Kehuna* on Land, Air and Sea" by this author at <https://www.star-k.org/articles/kashrus-kurrents/14870/maintaining-kedushas-kehuna/> for an overview of some of these mitzvos.

<sup>6</sup> For a comprehensive treatment of *hilchos pidyon haben*, see *Pidyon Haben Kehilchoso*, 8th edition, by Rabbi Gedalia Oberlander (Monsey: Merkaz Halacha, 2018).



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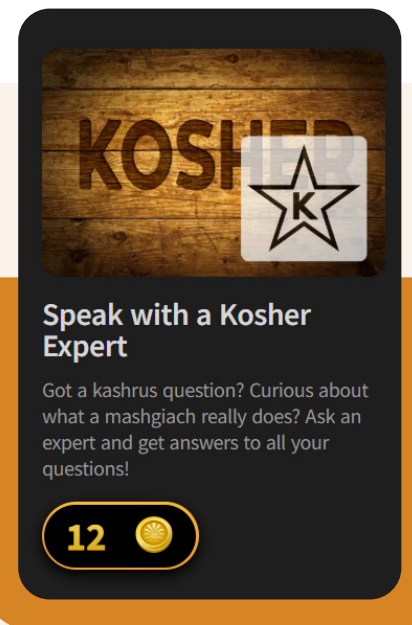
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To support this worthwhile objective, STAR-K has joined with Torah Live as a rewards partner. Children earn points (“*dinarim*”) through their participation, and when their Dinar Bank has sufficient “funds,” they can spend their *dinarim* in “The Impact Store.”

Prizes include a demonstration from a *sofer*; a letter in a Sefer Torah; and a session with a STAR-K rabbi to review a kashrus topic of their choice. Sample topics selected by participants who chose STAR-K included, “why foods need a *hechsher*?” and “how do you make kosher candy?”

Torah Live is now available at no charge on EL AL flight screens.

To subscribe with special pricing, visit [torahlive.com/stark](http://torahlive.com/stark)



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A non-profit agency representing the kosher consumer in promoting kashrus through education, research and supervision

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