



THE HAKHEL COMMUNITY AWARENESS BULLETIN

Reviewed by HaRav Yisroel Belsky, Shlita

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The purpose of this Bulletin is to alert the public regarding timely issues which raise serious shailos, so that the informed person can ask his Rav the right questions. This Bulletin is not intended to provide the answers to these issues. It is intended to heighten each member of our community's awareness of important shailos in our community, **and to receive his own p'sak on each of these issues.**

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1. **Domestic Help** Domestic help on a daily, and in some cases “live-in” basis, has become much more prevalent in our community. HaRav Yitzchok Isbee z'tl dealt with the halachic issues involved with non-Jewish (and, lehavdil, non-religious Jewish) help in a monumental shiur he gave more than six years ago. Tapes of the shiur are available by contacting 718-252-5274.

Among the major issues are:

- Bishul Akum—stovetops, microwaves, food preparation
- Kashrus—Mixups in the kitchen
- Misapplications of the halachos of “Yotzeh V'Nichnas”
- What constitutes Yichud with boys or male adults
- Laws of Stam Yainom
- Shabbos food preparation and Shabbos activities
- Tzinus and appropriate dress code for the hired help

The issues involved cannot simply be answered with the statements “She knows better than to turn on the stove (or oven)”, “I don't let her bring her own food into the house” or “She only works for frum people.” Of course, every household situation is different, but a Rav must be consulted to determine how you can avoid the various issurim d'oraysa and d'rabbonon—and still keep your house neat and clean.

2. **Summer Issues**. With the approach of summer and warmer weather, it is important to maintain Kedushas Yisroel, which may be threatened by lower social standards existing during the summer months. Care should be given to the following matters:

- Proper dress in accordance with halacha, i.e. sleeve-length, covering of the knees (even when seated) and the neck
- Removing all slits in dresses
- Not permitting our Bnos Yisroel to wear tightly-fitting clothing
- Avoiding clothing which draws attention to the wearer
- Proper covering of a married woman's head, ensuring that the hair is covered l'halacha

Hakhel and Project VITAL recently provided a kinus on these issues. Tapes of the kinus are available by calling (718) 252-5274.

Additionally, care must be taken about the more lax atmosphere existing during the summer, such as fraternizing and lightheadedness by couples in mixed settings, for example in bungalow colonies or in vacation areas.

Additional care must be exercised in **vacation areas** where behavior and dress of the general populace are not in accordance with halacha. An appropriate second thought should be given to visiting those areas or vacation spots which will be visited by our immodest neighbors, despite the availability of "glatt kosher food", "cholor Yisroel", or a daily minyan.

Let us work together now, to preserve Kavod Shomayim by remembering the importance of tzinus during the summer months, as well as the rest of the year.

3. **Waiters at Restaurants and Catering Halls.** Restaurants and caterers with Hashgachos we rely on are permitting waitresses to serve while wearing clothing which does not meet any standards of tznius, or appropriate dress. Aside from subjecting the frum family to this unnecessary impropriety, there are halachic questions of making brachos (or saying Divrei Torah) in full view of immodest dress, or under the reasonable apprehension that one may view it at any moment. When making a simcha, please ask the caterer or restaurant owner to utilize male waiters for men, female waitresses for women, and appropriately-dressed persons in all situations.

4. **Making the Vort a Complete Simcha.** A Vort is certainly a time of great joy. Guests come from near and far to participate and share in the ebullience. The Ba'alei Simcha prepare in advance to ensure that the Simcha is as near to perfect as possible. Care must be taken to prepare in advance to ensure that the men and women sharing and participating in the Simcha are not placed together in uncomfortable situations of crowded living and dining rooms, blocked or narrow passageways and jostling and unnecessary contact at food tables. In that way, the Simcha will truly be enhanced by imbuing it with the presence of Kedushas Yisroel.

5. **Kosher Parmesan Cheese.** The highly-respected Kashrus Information Center (KIC) of Brooklyn recently published the following alert to consumers:

"Kosher Parmesan Cheese which has been aged more than six months is halachically considered to be **hard cheese (Gevina Kashah)**. According to the Halacha, it has the same status of requiring a waiting period, as the waiting period required from eating meat to eating dairy. Each person should observe the waiting time according to their custom. Kosher Parmesan Cheese can be purchased in any supermarket or grocery store in various forms – solid, shredded or powdered. It is used in **Dairy Restaurants** and **Pizza Shops** as **cheese toppings for pizza, in baked ziti, eggplant parmesan, pesto** and in various **salads**. We hope that this awareness will help the kosher consumer act and observe accordingly."

Please consult with your Rav for further guidance.

6. **Potato Thins.** A heimishe food manufacturer has recently produced a potato cracker under the trade name "Potato Thins" in which dried potatoes is listed as the first ingredient and wheat flour is listed as the third ingredient. We have made inquiry of the Rav HaMachshir, who informed us that although wheat flour is listed as one of the major ingredients, it is used for binding purposes only, and that in his opinion the appropriate bracha is *shehakol*. If you are unsure of the proper brocha, ask your Rav or the kashrus agency supervising the product. There are answers to all our questions. We must ask our Rabbonim.

7. **Liver.** There are a number of stores in our area which sell raw liver in packaging containing a label stating that the liver has been “soaked and salted”. This label is a serious *meichshol*, as liver may only be kashered through broiling over an open flame. Consumers are cautioned that eating livers which have only been soaked and salted, without broiling them first, constitutes an *issur d’orasya*. We should urge the butchers that we patronize to clearly place a notification regarding the need to broil before use on the liver they sell. Additionally, when purchasing liver which has already been broiled, make certain that the broiling was not merely superficial. If the broiled liver purchased seems somewhat raw inside, consult with your Rav for a *p’sak halacha*.

8. **Kiddush on the Grass.** Before eating or drinking on the grass at a bungalow colony on Shabbos, ask your Rav for halachic guidelines or parameters relating to spills on the grass, moving tables and chairs on the ground, erecting lounge umbrellas and utilizing hammocks on Shabbos.

9. **Shatnes Problems.** According to the International Association of Professional Shatnes Laboratories (PSL)—the umbrella organization of 33 Shatnes Laboratories worldwide, consumers should be alerted as to shatnes problems with the following specialized items and have them checked:

- All clothing containing wool, linen or “other fibers”
- Garments containing “linen look” fabrics – especially in women’s and children’s clothing
- Ties made in Spain or those containing wool or linen
- Men’s and women’s hats and caps made of fabric
- Oven mitts with many colored threads in the quilted lining
- Sewing fabrics and trimmings sold off of the roll (many are found mislabeled)
- Non-wool lined coats and jackets

Important Note: A high incidence of shatnes has been reported in imported women’s and children’s clothing. Garments from European countries (especially Italy and Germany) are of most concern. In many cases, the label does not accurately or completely disclose the complete fiber content of the garment. Additionally, in many instances, shatnes may be present in decorative trimmings, embroidery and designs of garments. Qualified testers from PSL are available for house calls. You may call 1-800-SHATNES for charges and schedules, or for a directory of PSL Shatnes Laboratories worldwide.

10. **Building and Maintaining an Eruv – Points to Remember.**

The following points on building and maintaining an *Eruv* were contributed by Rabbi Yosef Gavriel Bechhofer, Author of *The Contemporary Eruv: Eruvin in Modern Metropolitan Areas* (Feldheim Publishers, 1998). This list of points to remember is only meant to serve as a reminder of common issues and areas of concern that arise with respect to both building and maintaining an *Eruv*. It is no substitute, however, for on-the-site visits by a Rav conversant with *Hilchos Eruvin*, or, if visits are not feasible, consultations by phone (better yet: fax, and with photographs!). To stress this necessity, Rabbi Bechhofer is providing his phone number: 773-267-6963 - if you don’t have access to a *Rav* or if your *Rav* is not available, then you may call him with your questions.

A. Neighbors:

If your *Eruv* includes your non-Jewish or *Mechallel Shabbos* neighbor’s or your municipality’s property, you may have to undertake additional procedures - specifically, *sechiras reshus*, renting rights to the area in question, from your neighbor or township.

B. Construction of Eruv:

- (1) If you build an enclosure based on *tzuras ha’pesach* (“doorway”) - two upright poles and a wire on top, you must always insure that the wire is directly over the poles that support it. A *tzuras ha’pesach min ha’tzad* - on the side of the upright poles - is not valid.
- (2) If you are using pre-existing wire across the top of utility poles, you need not make any further halachic changes. This is usually not the case. The wires are often on the side of the utility poles, meaning that you must build your own uprights beneath those wires. You should try to build them all the way up to the cross-wire.

- (3) Most *Poskim* allow a certain degree of sag to the wire between the poles. The more minimal the sag, however, the better. Most *Poskim*, however, disallow any “zig-zagging” - i.e., when at rest, the wire must run due straight from pole to pole, and remain within the diameters of the pole.
- (4) The poles or uprights you use should not be within an enclosure, nor separated by fences in between the poles. For example, you should avoid placing an Eruv pole in an enclosed backyard. (Often, in those cases, you can use the fence itself as part of the *Eruv*.)
- (5) While an *Eruv* has to be a continuous enclosure, when using fences (as opposed to poles and wires) there are greater leniencies in terms of gaps. These *halachos* are complex, and you should consult a *Rav*. Most *Poskim*, however, consider a gate in a yard fence to be a proper halachic enclosure even when a regular-sized gate door is left open.

C. Maintenance and Notification of Problem in Eruv on Shabbos:

An *Eruv* is, customarily, inspected weekly. If there is an area of the *Eruv* that is stable, such as a brick wall, you can space your timing of inspections of those areas a bit further apart.

If you notice that an *Eruv* is down after *Shabbos* has begun, the accepted practice is not to notify others of this problem, unless the community is very small and you are sure you can get to everybody and they will accept your information as accurate (if they do not know the *Eruv* is down and carry nonetheless, they are *patur* because they are “*mis’asek*”).

D. Conclusion:

As we noted before, this brief review is meant to serve as a reminder of common issues and areas of concern regarding an *Eruv*, and is no substitute for consultation(s) with a *Rav* conversant with *Hilchos Eruvin*. Therefore, do not rely on this obviously short review to create an Eruv. There are several works both in Hebrew and in English on *Eruvin*: Get a hold of one and read it through. Then, do not hesitate to ask questions!

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Note: **We received a very positive response to our first Bulletin and we thank all those who have given us chizuk in this matter.** If you would like a copy of our first Bulletin issued this past Spring, which contained discussions about important halachic issues such as Peiros Shvi’is being sold in local stores, Emigrant Savings Bank and the Ribis Problem, Electric Shavers and how to make them halachically permissible, Shatnes checking done directly through clothing merchants, and infestation of summer fruits, please fax a request to Hakhel at (212) 661-6606 or mail a request to Hakhel, 1327 East 26th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11210

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Do you know about something important you would like to make your community aware of? Is there something you would like to help your community with? Let us know by faxing to Hakhel at the number above. The Hakhel Bulletin will B’EH appear periodically, as necessary. Thank you.