

A COMMUNITY AWARENESS BULLETIN

Published By



In Conjunction With



Reviewed by: HaRav Yisroel Belsky, Shlita

Volume II, Number 1
MarCheshvan 5762

1. **The Gedolim's Directive.** Unlike the nations of the world, we are blessed to have the guidance of our Gedolim in all situations, in war and in peace, individually and collectively. Our Gedolim have guided us to say Tehillim Chapters 83, 130 and 142, daily. We must be vigilant in our recitation of these "k'pitlach", better even with kavana. Moreover, they have urged us to come to shul on time and daven each word of the entire davening, in addition to other matters.

Let us demonstrate our Emunas Chachomim by carefully following the directives of our Gedolim on a daily basis.

2. **Nine Practical Suggestions to Daven with Kavana.** In light of the Gedolim's directive, it is imperative that we consistently improve our daily Tefilos. As

Dovid Hamelech teaches us in Tehillim (147:10), "Lo begvuras hasus yechpatz..." [Hashem does not desire the mighty horse or the mighty warrior—Hashem looks to those who fear Him, those who await His chesed.]” Our wars are not won on the battlefields, but with the quality of our prayers. Here are some practical suggestions to improve the “Hakol Kol Yaakov”:

Suggestion 1: Prepare Yourself Before Davening-It's Crucial. Come early and settle down. Stop and think about what you can accomplish with your Tefilos.

Suggestion 2: Personalize Your Prayers Making Them More Relevant. Prior to davening think about what you need and how Hashem can bless you with it. Daven to Hashem to maintain your health, security, shalom

bays, and for whatever else you know He can help you with.

Suggestion 3: You Can Control Foreign Thoughts During Davening.

Hashem only requires of us that which we can accomplish. If you had an opportunity to count a stack of \$100 bills and could only keep them if your count was accurate, would you allow other plans or responsibilities to enter your mind at that time?

Suggestion 4: Recognize That You Are Standing Before Hashem.

As often as you can (preferably, at least before the end of every brocha), visualize yourself thanking the King and asking for His compassion and mercy. Rejoice that you are supplicating before the only One who can really grant your request and fulfill your needs.

Suggestion 5: Daven From a Siddur.

This includes Ashrei, Shema and Shemone Esrei. Slow down and don't slur over the name of Hashem. When we daven from a siddur, we see meanings in the words which we otherwise would not see.

Suggestion 6: Periodically Regenerate Your Davening In Some Way.

Be innovative. Change your siddur. Decide to focus on something new in davening today. Try to have kavana when saying Hashem's name. Look for nuances. Make different personal requests in the brocha Shema Koleinu or in Elokai Nitzor in the Shemone Esrei.

Suggestion 7: Daven in a Place Conducive to Having Kavana.

Don't daven in a place where people walk back and forth or near "talkers". Avoid places which are known for their talking. Try to daven in the Rav's minyan. Try to daven near a wall, and in a

Please Note:

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.

In This Issue

1. The Gedolim's Directive
2. Davening with Kavana
3. Tefilah Pointers
4. Tefillin Reminder
- Brochos Confusion*
5. -Granola Bars
6. -Rice Cakes
7. -Soy Chips
8. Kashrus Alert
9. Cool Mint Listerine Pocket Packs
10. Chocolates
- Shabbos Halachos*
11. -Chapped Lips
12. -Ices
13. -Pre-Cut Tissues
14. Cholov Yisroel-but Not Pas Yisroel
15. "Non-dairy" Creamers
16. By Popular Demand
17. Tznius: A Contemporary Question
18. Giving Advice to Others
19. Special Notes

place where you can concentrate.

Suggestion 8: Refrain From Improper Speech.

A doctor performing life-saving surgery does not use unclean equipment. Our tool for prayer, our mouth, must also be kept clean.

Suggestion 9: Keep a Record of Your Success.

“All of your deeds are written in a book.” Keep your own record of success in increased kavana. Your book in this world will positively reflect in your book in the next world.

3. **Tefilah Pointers.**

a. There is one brocha in Shemone Esrei where we ask for Hashem’s help using the word “be’meheyra” – speedily – three times in one brocha. Which brocha is it? Once you find it, in light of current events, we urge you especially to have kavana when saying the word be’meheyra each time in this brocha. This will B’EH be a great z’chus for all of K’lal Yisroel.

b. The Gemara in Shabbos (32A) states that we should daven to stay healthy, because greater z’chus is required to be healed from sickness than is required to stay healthy and not get sick in the first place. Where in the brocha of Ref’ainu do we beseech Hashem to keep us well?

4. **Tefillin Reminder.** When making the brocha of “L’honeach Tefillin” one must have in mind not only the Tefillin Shel Yad – but also the Tefillin Shel Rosh, as the brocha relates to both batei Tefillin (*Mishna Berurah* 25:31).

NOTE: We heard a Rav remark “I recently davened Shachris with a minyan where the mispallilim were so uninspired that you literally could not tell whether they were putting on their Tefillin or taking them off.” Each of us can avoid this unfortunate scenario by remembering the specific kavanos that the *Shulchan Aruch* (Orach Chayim 25:5; and *Mishna Berurah* seif katan 15) requires us to have when putting on Tefillin. We urge you to review, think about and remember these kavonos.

5. **Brochos Confusion I-Granola Bars.** Granola, or roasted kernels of grain, may be manufactured into different products by various processes. As a result, special care must be taken as to the appropriate brocha rishona and brocha achrona. The final opinion of the sefer *V’zos HaBrocha* (Rav Aleksander Mandelbaum, Shlita) and the sefer *The Halachos of Brochos* (Rav Pinchos Bodner, Shlita) is that the appropriate brocha rishona on **Granola Bars** is borei pri ha’adoma (only if the whole grains adhere to each other as a result of the cooking process, would the appropriate brocha be borei minei mezonos). As for the brocha achrona, the sefer *The Halachos of Brochos* states, “There is, however, uncertainty among the Rishonim, as to which brocha achrona is most appropriate for roasted grain products. The *Shulchan Aruch* suggests, therefore, that a yorei shomayim should try to avoid having to make a brocha achrona on such products either by only eating them during the course of a bread meal or by eating less than a k’zayis within k’dei achilas praas.” We urge you to ask your Rav for a final p’sak on the brocha achrona.

6. **Brochos Confusion II-Rice Cakes.** There is a great machlokes of our contemporary poskim as to the appropriate brocha rishona for rice cakes. The sefer *V’zos HaBrocha* concludes that the appropriate brocha is borei pri ha’adoma. This is also the conclusion of *The Halachos of Brochos*. On the other hand, the sefer *The Laws of B’rachos* (Rav Binyomin Forst, Shlita) concludes that the

appropriate brocha rishona is borei minei mezonos. Rav Dovid Feinstein, Shlita, poskens that the appropriate brocha is borei minei mezonos. According to all opinions, the appropriate brocha achrona is, of course, borei nefashos.

7. **Brochos Confusion III-Soy Chips.** Soy chips is a new snack product which has soy flour and rice pieces as its main ingredients. The appropriate brocha rishona on soy chips will depend on whether the rice pieces constitutes a *rov*, or majority, of the product. We inquired of the Rav HaMachshir of one “heimishe” soy chip product who advised us that he believed that soy (and not rice pieces) was the *rov* in that particular product, and that, accordingly, the appropriate brocha rishona was shehakol and not mezonos. The appropriate brocha achrona is, of course, borei nefashos.

8. **Kashrus Alert.** The Kashrus Information Service of Brooklyn has recently issued the following Kashrus Alert:

“Due to the very hot weather this past summer, there is a very serious problem with infestation of grain products. A number of various brands of products have been found to be infested.

“After consultation with Rabbonim Machshirim and Kashrus organizations, we strongly advise that prior to using any grain products such as pastas, noodles, bow ties, macaronis, farfel, orzo, barley, matzah meal, and rice etc., a thorough check should be made for the presence of any foreign matter such as worms, insects and larvae.

“This applies to both the commercial and the consumer products.”

We have received some additional information from a very experienced Rav HaMachshir. The infestation is currently most prevalent in pearl barley, matzah meal, orzo and rice. At this time, one should place grain products either into a clear bowl of water or examine carefully with your hands on a white plate. Additionally, it is a good practice to check the water when cooking the above products. Of course, all such products should be stored in a cool, dry place.

****NOTE:** Please do not rely upon this Bulletin for all of your Kashrus Alerts and updates. There is much more to be aware of. The offices of *Kashrus Magazine* maintains an updated list of Kashrus Alerts, Mislabelings and other important updated kashrus information, which is also included in each issue of its magazine. Its phone number is 718-336-8544.

9. **Cool Mint Listerine Pocket Packs.** This new product, which is being sold in stores and distributed as a promotion by dentists, has a number of ingredients which require hashgacha. There is currently no hashgacha on this product.

10. **Chocolates.** It is important to realize that many chocolate manufacturers kasher their milk chocolate machines using liquid chocolate (and not water) in order to make pareve chocolates. Not everyone agrees that this kashering method is appropriate. Additionally, someone who is allergic to milk should be wary of eating such pareve chocolates. There is at least one “heimishe” chocolate brand which distributes pareve chocolates only produced on machinery exclusively used for pareve.

Note: There has been a recent proliferation in the kinds, sizes and shapes of kosher chocolates. Some chocolates contain raisins, others contain peanuts, and yet others house almonds, coconut or the like. Some chocolates are still even plain!¹ What brocha or brochos does one make on a chocolate served at a simcha or at someone's home if you do not know what is inside? This may be a good topic for a shiur.

11. **Shabbos Halachos-Chapped Lips.** During the winter months, many suffer from dry or chapped lips. Although there is now a kosher lip balm on the market which can be utilized on weekdays, please note that it is prohibited to use any lip balm on Shabbos because the rubbing of the balm stick onto the lip constitutes the melacha of memachek. Additionally, special care must be taken not to bite the skin off the lips on Shabbos. In fact, according to *The Shabbos Home* (Rav Simcha Bunim Cohen, Shlita), biting skin off the lips "does fall under the Biblical prohibition [of gozez] since this skin is normally removed by biting."

Note: With regard to lipstick itself, we note that from a kashrus perspective, lipsticks require proper kashrus certification. On Shabbos, once again, use of lipsticks would be prohibited because of memachek.

12. **Shabbos Halachos-Ices.** According to *The Shabbos Home*, in order to avoid the prohibition of koreah: "One should not cut open the top of 'freeze-pop' ices on Shabbos. These ices should be opened before Shabbos, or should be cut open lengthwise on Shabbos and the ices removed. It is forbidden to cut open containers of ices that are made of molded plastic."

13. **Shabbos Halachos-Pre-Cut Tissues.** For a long time, people have been using fan-folded, pre-cut Shabbos toilet paper. Many shuls, yeshivos and private homes have even installed Shabbos toilet paper dispensers to hold this type of paper. Recently, however, it has come to our attention that some brands of pre-cut toilet paper are not fully pre-cut. Instead, there is a small attachment from one piece of paper to the next. Separating or disconnecting the individual pieces is prohibited because of mechatech. Please check that your Shabbos toilet paper (both at home and where you daven) is properly pre-cut. If it is not, change to a brand that is and notify your Shomer Shabbos grocery store to carry only the fully pre-cut brand. Additionally, you should notify the person responsible for purchasing supplies for your local shul/yeshiva.

Note: Some facial tissues are also manufactured in a manner which results in many of the tissues in a box being attached, at least partially, to the tissue underneath. Accordingly, you should check your tissue box (or at least the brand of tissue) before Shabbos.

14. **Cholov Yisroel-but Not Pas Yisroel.** We are aware of at least one ice cream cake product which is labeled "Cholov Yisroel", the cake part of which is not pas Yisroel (for those who are *medakdek* on pas Yisroel). There is no statement on the label on whether it is or is not pas Yisroel. We must be very careful not to make any assumptions if we are to be successful consumers of kosher products.

15. **"Non-dairy" Creamers.** There are some creamers on the market with reliable hashgochos labeled "non-dairy" that are really milchig. Make sure to check that the coffee creamer you are using with your fleishig meals is really pareve.

16. **By Popular Demand.** The following item appeared in Volume I, Number 1 of our Bulletin. We have been asked to reprint it:

"Kosher" Liquors. Have you ever noticed and wondered why there is such a lack of disclosure on a liquor bottle as compared to a food item? All you see is that it is a product of Scotland (or Russia) ...and not much else. According to a recognized kashrus expert in this field, the liquor industry is shrouded in mystery because of the strong lobbying efforts that the industry has at its disposal. Because many of the finer single malt scotches are aged in casks previously used for different types of wines, several popular single malt liquors are not recommended by kashrus experts. This is not to say that such products are not kosher. It is merely to state that halachic issues are involved which require inquiry. Additionally, all *liqueurs* require hashgacha because of problematic ingredients, such as wine, flavorings, or even non-kosher glycerin.

Among those single malt scotches NOT RECOMMENDED are Glenfiddich, Glenmorangie (those aged in port wood casks), The McCallen and Balvini Double Barrel. Some of the very popular *liqueurs* that are NOT RECOMMENDED are Southern Comfort, Kahlua (not bearing the OU), Bailey's Irish Cream and Meyer's Spiced Rum. Additionally, liquors NOT RECOMMENDED to the Kosher consumer include Canadian Club Classic and -flavored vodka. Call your kashrus agency or speak to your Rav before buying shnapps for your next simcha.

17. **Tznius: A Contemporary Question.** Does the current style, which requires women to wear a fashionable hat over a fashionable sheitel enhance tznius--or does it have the opposite effect? If you are unsure, ask your Rav.

18. **Giving Advice to Others.** The following is a little-known Halacha, which is excerpted from a publication of the Choshen Mishpat Kollel (Passaic, New Jersey):

Advising Someone Not to Shop at a Certain Store or Use a Certain Professional

If Reuvain tells Shimon that he is definitively planning on buying a given product at a specific store, or that he is planning on using a particular professional for a service, it is not permissible for Shimon to tell Reuvain anything that would now steer him away from buying at that store or using that professional.² Even though Shimon has good intentions and is trying to save Reuvain money or hassles by sending him elsewhere, he has no right to do so. He may not cause a "loss" to the storeowner or professional in order to benefit Reuvain. Shimon's *mitzvah* of "*ViAhavta lireacha kamocho*" should and does apply as much to the storeowner as it does to Reuvain.³ There are, however, certain exceptions to this rule.

Exceptions – Cases Where it is Permissible to Guide Someone to a Different Merchant

- If the storeowner is grossly overcharging for his wares. If a store charges 16% or more over what the going rate is for a given item, the store owner is in violation of the *halacha* of "*ona'ah*."⁴ In such a case, one is permitted to inform a prospective buyer at that store that he can find the item he is looking for at a cheaper price elsewhere. Similarly, if the seller uses false weights or measures, it is obligatory to tell someone not to shop there.⁵
- If the prospective buyer is a relative to the one offering advice. In such a case, the *poskim* cite the law of "*mibasarcha al tis'aleim*,"⁶ one may not "hide" from helping his own flesh and

blood. Based on this, the responsibility to help one's relatives overrides the loss caused to the merchant.⁷ Some *poskim* even include close friends of the one giving the advice in this category as well.⁸

- If the potential buyer asks for advice. In this case, it is clear from the fact that he is seeking guidance that he has not completely made up his mind to shop in a particular store or use a particular professional. Therefore, when advising him to spend his money elsewhere, one is not causing a loss of profit that was *surely* going to be coming to the storeowner or professional.⁹

In all of these cases, however, the one offering advice must be sure not to say anything negative regarding the store or professional in question – that would still be a violation of *Loshon Hara*.¹⁰ Rather, he should merely advise the buyer that it might be in his best interest to shop elsewhere.

Extending These Ideas to Other Areas

The *Chazon Ish*, in his work “*Emunah U’Bitachon*,” writes that knowledge of *halacha* must be a prerequisite to the learning of *Mussar*.¹¹ A principal tenet of *mussar* and ethical behavior is to constantly be on the lookout for those who are being hurt or oppressed and to do whatever possible to come to their aid. In most every situation between two people, there is a *rodeif* – the aggressor – and a *nirdaf* – the “victim.” Although we must always seek to help the *nirdaf*, we must know the *halachos* that pertain to every situation to be able to properly identify who is, in fact, the *rodeif* and who is the *nirdaf*. Misdirected compassion or assistance can at times actually be a violation of *halacha*.

19. SPECIAL NOTES:

a. **Asef Lecha Rav.** It is important that a person be consistent and not “shop around” for a p’sak with which he/she agrees. We note that there are halachos regarding asking for “second opinions” in p’sak. See the Rema in *Yorah Deah* 242:31.

b. **Dangerous Noise Levels at Simchas.** In our last issue, we referenced the topic of damaging noise levels at simchas. In the interim, a major piece was published on this topic in *The Jewish Observer* (Elul 5761 issue). Accordingly, we refer you there for more information on this very important topic.

c. **Back Issues.** We received a very positive response to our first three Bulletins and we thank all those who have given us *chizuk* in this matter. If you would like a copy of any of our previous three Bulletins please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for each Bulletin requested to Hakhel, 1327 East 26th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11210.

d. **5762 Gemach List.** Hakhel’s 5762 Flatbush/Boro-Park Gemach List, containing over 150 Gemachs of all kinds (simcha, clothing, baby needs, kallah needs, services, money and others) is now available. For a free copy, mail a self-addressed, stamped envelope to our address above.

e. **Changing the Way We Daven.** The nationwide Commission on K’dushas Bais Hak’nesses of Agudath Israel of America, together with Project Awareness and Hakhel have recently embarked on a major nationwide effort to “Change the Way You Daven.” Two masterful series of shiurim which provide essential hashkofos of tefilla and practical ways to improve tefilla, have thus far been produced -- a three-part series by Rabbi H. Kleinman Shlita (call 718-252-5274 for copies) and a five-part series by Rabbi P. Jung Shlita (call 845-426-1999 for copies). If you would like additional information or materials, or would like to volunteer for this important Project, fax your request to 718-252-3646.

f. **Block Tehillim Groups.** The Aneinu organization provides a version of *Sefer Tehilim* which can be divided up so that the entire Sefer is said by a group in 15 minutes to one-half hour. There are now hundreds of women’s Tehillim groups who meet weekly (typically on their block) to say all of *Sefer Tehilim* together! If you would like to start a group in your local area, call 718-253-5497.

* * *

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 writing to Hakhel at the address above. The Hakhel Bulletin will B’EH appear periodically, as necessary. Thank you.

If you would like to sponsor
future Issues of the
Community Awareness Bulletin,
please call

718-253-5497

FOOTNOTES:

1. Although the appropriate brocha rishona on chocolate itself would seem to be a borei pri hoetz, it is known that the Minhag HaOlam is to make a shehakol.
2. Based on *Chofetz Chaim Hilchos Rechilus* 9, 10 in the *hagah*. Also *Mishpatei HaTorah* by Dayan Tzvi Spitz vol. 3, 8.
3. See *Mishpatei HaTorah* *ibid.* *Chelkas Binyamin* (on *Chafetz Chaim*) *Rechilus* 9, s.k. 19 and *Sefer Zera Chaim* (also on *Chafetz Chaim*) 9, 2.
4. *Choshen Mishpat* 227, 1-2.
5. *Mishpatei HaTorah* *ibid.* Also *Chofetz Chaim Hilchos Rechilus*. There may be other instances when it is permissible to tell others regarding inferior products or workmanship. A *Shailoh* must be asked to make sure.
6. *Yeshayah* 58, 7.
7. See note 4.
8. *Zera Chaim* *ibid.* Based on *Rashi* in *Yevamos* 63a s.v. *Az Tikra*.
9. See note 4.
10. *Chofetz Chaim* 10, 2 and 14. Anytime the desired result (i.e. getting the buyer to shop elsewhere) can be achieved without speaking actual *Loshon Hara*, one must do or say whatever they can to avoid speaking *Loshon Hara*.
11. Chapter 3, 1. See also *Ohr HaChaim al HaTorah* beginning of *Parashas Bichukosai* (*Vayikra* 26, 3 #6).