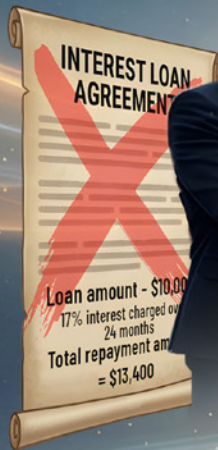


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Foreword and Divrei Brocha from Rabbi Bokow

KCSA RAV HAMACHSHIR

It is with great pleasure that we present the inaugural issue of KCSA Kosher Life Magazine. We hope this publication will serve as a helpful and informative resource for our community.

The goals and purposes of KCSA Kosher Life are:

1. to provide education and awareness on relevant halachic topics, offering both advanced discussions and accessible, inspiring articles suitable for readers from all backgrounds and levels of observance;
2. To encourage discussion and engagement between readers, the magazine, and the wider community;
3. To share insight into the work involved in developing, maintaining, and growing a kashrus organisation.

Behind every certified product is a significant effort of expertise and dedication. Through these pages we hope to give you a better understanding of that process.

We are proud of the following milestones achieved through the commitment of the KCSA team:

- A successful mehadrin-level chicken shechita offering high standards at the best prices for consumers.
- An average growth of 20 new companies per year – כן ירבו בכפלי כפליים בלי עין – הרע.
- KCSA-certified products now available in Clicks, Pick n Pay, Spar, and Checkers, with exports to Israel, Europe, and the Americas.
- Kashrus supervision across Botswana, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar, South Africa, Mozambique, Namibia, and continuing to expand.
- Ongoing collaboration with dozens of international kashrus agencies worldwide.
- Training and development of five new mashgichim and two factory inspectors.
- Regular consultation with local and international Talmidei Chachomim and Poskim.

These achievements reflect the hard work and dedication invested in maintaining reliable kashrus standards.

It is our blessing that KCSA Kosher Life Magazine becomes a regular and valued part of your home, providing useful knowledge and strengthening our community's commitment to Torah observance.



We extend our sincere thanks to the entire KCSA team, our donors, sponsors, clients, graphic designer, printers, and all the article contributors for their time, commitment, dedication, and loyalty.

With blessings for continued brocha and hatzlochah,

Wishing you all a kesiva vechasima toyvah and shana tova umetuka

Rabbi Avigdor Bokow

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RABBI DESMOND MAIZELS: A Legacy of Dignity in Kashrus in South Africa

In the world of kosher certification, where adherence to halachic standards meets the practical realities of modern manufacturing, few figures have left as enduring an impact on South African Jewry as the late Rabbi Desmond Maizels, זצ"ל. Rabbi Maizels, who served as the head of the UOS Cape Town Kashrut Department and rabbi of the Camps Bay Hebrew Congregation for nearly three decades, revolutionized the way kashrus was approached in Cape Town (CPT) and beyond. His innovative, humane model not only made kosher observance more accessible but also inspired organizations like Kosher Certified South Africa (KCSA) to adopt similar practices, ensuring that certification remains affordable, respectful, and efficient for all involved.

At the heart of Rabbi Maizels' influence was his commitment to affordability in kosher certification—a principle that KCSA has proudly emulated. Recognizing the financial burdens that rigorous inspections could impose on manufacturers, Rabbi Maizels pioneered a strategic approach to factory visits. Rather than conducting isolated inspections, he would plan routes that allowed him to visit multiple facilities in sequence, dividing the travel and operational costs across all clients along the way. This cost-sharing model dramatically reduced expenses for individual manufacturers, making kosher compliance feasible for a wider range of businesses without compromising on halachic integrity. For KCSA, this became a foundational pillar: by optimizing routes and sharing costs, we ensure that kosher certification is not a luxury but an attainable standard, fostering greater observance within the community.

Beyond the logistics, Rabbi Maizels' true genius lay in his interpersonal approach, which transformed inspections from adversarial encounters into collaborative learning experiences. Factory managers across South Africa often recounted how Rabbi Maizels conducted his visits not as a stern enforcer trying to "catch them out," but as a trusted friend guiding them toward excellence. Even when he identified a kosher infringement, his response was never punitive; instead, he framed it as a shared opportunity for growth, helping staff understand the "why" behind the rules. This gentle, educational style built lasting trust and encouraged voluntary compliance, proving that kashrus thrives on partnership rather than fear.

One particularly heartwarming aspect of Rabbi Maizels' legacy was his ability to connect with people on a personal level, transcending cultural and linguistic barriers. During inspections, he would often converse with factory staff in their native Afrikaans, putting them at such ease that they felt like family. KCSA inspectors have heard stories from quality control managers about how, on at least three separate occasions at different factories, workers affectionately referred to him as "Oom (uncle) Desmond." This endearing nickname captured the warmth and familiarity he brought to his work, turning what could have been routine checks into moments of genuine human connection.

Another poignant story illustrates Rabbi Maizels' unwavering dedication and non-judgmental spirit. The owner of a certain company shared how, every Friday morning between 5 a.m. and 6 a.m., Rabbi Maizels would personally arrive to light the fires, switch on the ovens and take challa — tasks he could have delegated to a kosher supervisor. Despite his incredibly busy

schedule, especially on Fridays leading into Shabbat, he would then sit down with the owner over a cup of coffee and a peanut butter biscuit to discuss the weekly parsha. The owner, who admitted he was not shomer Shabbat and rarely attended shul, emphasized that Rabbi Maizels never made him feel rejected or inadequate. Instead, these quiet conversations fostered a sense of love, acceptance, and connection to Judaism, drawing the owner closer to his heritage without a hint of coercion.

These anecdotes, gathered from numerous road trips and interactions within the industry, underscore why Rabbi Maizels was truly honorable. As the Talmud teaches in Pirkei Avot:

"אִיזְהוּ מְכֻבָּד, הַמְכַבֵּד אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת"

"Who is considered honorable? He who honors the creation."

Rabbi Maizels embodied this principle, treating every individual—whether a factory worker, manager, or business owner—with profound respect and dignity. His actions reminded us that true leadership in kashrus extends beyond rules and regulations; it is about uplifting others and honoring the divine spark in every person.

KCSA is immensely proud to have learned these invaluable lessons from Rabbi Maizels. By prioritizing respect and dignity in our client interactions, maintaining affordable certification through efficient models like cost-shared routes, and committing to prompt service, we honor his memory and continue his work. In a time when kashrus can sometimes feel distant or daunting, Rabbi Maizels' legacy serves as a beacon, showing that compassion and innovation can make kosher living a joyful, inclusive reality for all South Africans. May his neshama have an aliyah, and may we all strive to emulate his example.

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Becoming KCSA Kosher Certified:

A Step-by-Step Guide for Food Manufacturers and SMEs



By Velvy Bokow
KCSA Co - Director

In South Africa's vibrant food industry, kosher certification represents a valuable opportunity for manufacturers and small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs). From artisanal producers crafting biltong, olives and baobab tea in the bush and outlying rural areas, to larger operations manufacturing snacks, beverages, and pantry staples for national retail chains, achieving certification can expand market reach significantly. It appeals not only to the local Jewish community but also to health-conscious consumers and those seeking products with rigorous ingredient oversight.

Kosher Certified South Africa (KCSA), founded in 2021 under the halachic leadership of Rabbi Avigdor Bokow as Rav HaMachshir, focuses on making certification accessible and cost-effective, while maintaining high standards of compliance. The agency positions itself as a community-supported initiative that emphasises integrity, transparency, and service to both local and international markets.

This article provides a detailed, practical step-by-step guide tailored to South African food businesses. It addresses common challenges such as reliance on imported ingredients, shared production facilities, and economic pressures, offering realistic advice to help manufacturers navigate the process successfully.

Why Pursue Kosher Certification?

Kosher certification serves multiple purposes.

For the South African Jewish community, it ensures products meet halachic requirements, allowing families to shop and eat with confidence. Beyond this, the certification symbol often signals quality, traceability, and careful sourcing — attributes that attract a wider customer base. Many non-Jewish consumers choose kosher products for perceived cleanliness or compatibility with other dietary preferences.

For exporters, a reliable hechsher can facilitate entry into markets in Europe, Israel, the United States, and elsewhere, where buyers demand verified compliance. Locally, certified items may secure better shelf space in supermarkets and build brand loyalty.

Businesses that achieve certification frequently report sales growth as the kosher logo enhances consumer trust.

However, South African producers face specific hurdles:

The country imports many additives, spices, emulsifiers, and stabilisers, requiring thorough supply-chain verification. Shared production lines for meat, dairy, and parev (neutral) items are common, particularly among SMEs operating in cost-sensitive environments. Additionally, local specialties such as biltong, alcohol

(especially grape ingredient) based products, braai seasonings and even dried fruit introduce unique considerations.

Despite these challenges, certification remains achievable with proper planning and support from a reliable kosher certification agency, like KCSA.

STEP 1: Conduct a Thorough Self-Assessment

The foundation of successful certification is an honest internal review. Manufacturers should examine every aspect of their operation before approaching an agency.

1. Begin by compiling a complete list of all ingredients, including sub-ingredients and processing aids. Request detailed specifications and kosher documentation from every supplier. Pay special attention to potential issues such as animal-derived additives, grape-based components, flavour carriers (which may contain alcohol or glycerin), and colourants.

2. Next, map the entire production process. Document how meat, dairy, and parev items are handled, including cleaning procedures between runs. Shared equipment — such as mixers, ovens, or spray dryers — requires clear protocols to prevent cross-contamination. Evaluate the facility layout, storage conditions, pest control measures, and water sources.

3. Review packaging and labelling to ensure future claims will accurately reflect the product's status (e.g. **Parev, Dairy, or Meat**). Gather existing **quality documents** such as **HACCP plans or ISO certifications**, as these can streamline the process.

For many SMEs, this self-assessment reveals straightforward improvements. Switching to kosher certified suppliers can simplify certification considerably.

Businesses producing parev or dairy items often find these categories easier to certify initially, compared to meat products.

STEP 2: Application

Once the internal review is complete, contact KCSA via their website or email kosher@kcsa.org.za / koshercertifiedsouthafrica@gmail.com or WhatsApp +27 73 443 1644 / +27 83 411 3006 and submit basic company details, a description of the product range, and an overview of operations.

KCSA typically requires a once-off non-refundable deposit with the application to cover the preliminary review of ingredients, processes, and submitted documentation.

The application should include a completed form, full ingredient lists with supporting certificates, production schedules, facility floorplans and production diagrams.

The agency evaluates the submission to identify potential risks and advise on feasibility. This early feedback helps businesses address issues before a full inspection, saving time and resources.

STEP 3: Undergo the Initial Pre-certification Site Inspection

Following application review, trained inspectors visit the facility to conduct a full precertification site inspection. The inspection focuses on verifying ingredient status, equipment suitability,

separation of categories, and existing cleaning procedures. Spot-checks and documentation reviews form a key part of the process.

In the South African context, inspectors consider local realities such as diverse import sources, open-plan manufacturing environments, and occasional environmental factors. The visit results in a report detailing any required corrective actions, such as equipment kashering or procedural changes or in a quote and contract as the next step.

STEP 4: Quote and Contract

The applicant is provided with a contract and a quote for KCSA certification. Although KCSA licensing fees are generally an annual payment, KCSA accommodates companies with an affordable payment plan when required.

Once the contract is signed and financial arrangements are agreed upon and met the parties move to step 5.

Step 5: Draft Certificate & Certification

KCSA will draft up a KCSA kosher certificate and once checked and approved by the licensee, KCSA's Rav HaMachshir Rabbi Avigdor Bokow signs the certificate and the certificate is then sent through to the licensee.

Once certified the business may display

the KCSA symbol on packaging and promotional materials, subject to artwork approval and logo controls. This mark assures consumers of compliance.

Additional Benefits and Success Factors

KCSA is committed to introducing the newly KCSA certified companies to potential buyers and suppliers. Networking with local and international distributors, manufacturers and retailers, KCSA has successfully introduced many brands into retail spaces such as Dischem, PNP, Checkers, Spar amongst others. In addition, KCSA have substantial reach on various social media platforms. It is interesting to note that Certification often strengthens internal controls, documentation, and traceability — valuable in a regulated industry.

For the Jewish community, expanded certified options improve choice and convenience.

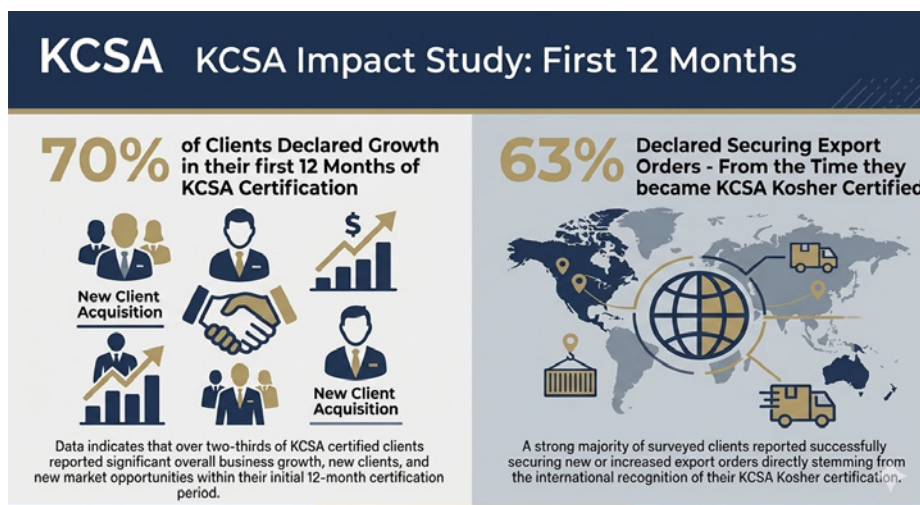
Practical tips for a successful KCSA Application:

- Engage suppliers early and request documentation of suppliers kosher certificates proactively.
- Budget realistically and view the process as a long-term investment.
- Maintain open dialogue with the certifying agency.

South African food manufacturers have demonstrated that with commitment and the right partnership, kosher certification is achievable and worthwhile. It connects religious Jewish tradition with commercial opportunity, supporting both communal needs and business growth.

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Taking the first step today can open new markets and strengthen your brand for the future.



What is Shatnez?

Shatnez is a Torah prohibition in which Jewish people are prohibited from wearing wool and linen combined as it states in Deut. 22:11 - **לֹא תִלְבַּשׁ שְׂעֵטָנָה, צִמְרֵן וּפְשִׁתִּים יַחְדָּו** - which translates as "You shall not wear Shatnez wool and linen together."

In addition there is another verse in Leviticus 19:19 - **וַיִּבְרָד כָּלֵאִים שְׂעֵטָנָה, לֹא יַעֲלֶה עָלֶיךָ**, which translates as "a garment of Kilayim Shatnez shall not come upon you."

QUESTION 1

While it is apparent that the Torah tells us that Shatnez is defined by "wool and linen together" there are questions that arise insofar as the terminology used by the Torah. What does the Torah mean when it says:

1. Wool - **צִמְרֵן**
2. Linen - **פְּשִׁתִּים**
3. Together - **יַחְדָּו**
4. Shatnez - **שְׂעֵטָנָה**
5. Shall not come upon you - **לֹא יַעֲלֶה עָלֶיךָ**

The commentaries tell us that the Torah refers to wool from a sheep, and linen from the flax plant.

For purposes of benefiting the consumer we are broadly referring to wool from a sheep and linen from the flax plant - not to be confused with mock linen or the word 'linen' in reference to bedding.

As far as the term "Shatnez - **שְׂעֵטָנָה**" is concerned, the word is derived from the three words "shua - **שׁוּעַ**, tovi - **טוּוִי**, nooz - **נוּז**" which translate as "combed, spun, woven". These are the three critical processes required to making fabric.

The raw material - in the case of wool - would be sheared and once purified would be combed and then spun into threads, and the threads then subsequently woven to make fabric for garments or blankets etc.

When the Torah refers to the prohibition of shatnez being wool and linen together - **יַחְדָּו** - there is major discussion amongst the commentaries regarding the actual wool and linen content being required to be within the same thread or within the same fabric or even within the same garment but connected by a different kind of material in between. Suffice it to say the scope of this introductory paragraph would not be adequate to comprehensively address this issue save to say that the severity of biblical and rabbinical prohibitions are of significant concern and Be'ezrat Hashem we will elucidate on this topic in more detail in another article.

The term 'Shall not come upon you - **לֹא יַעֲלֶה עָלֶיךָ** - refers to items that may be included in the prohibition of shatnez but are not wearable garments.

As a possible example, a saddle that contains wool and linen may be prohibited under certain circumstances or perhaps a plush carpet or a couch and other situations that may be part of the shatnez prohibition.

Shatnez is a prohibition that is applicable to all Jewish men women and children and further reading will discuss how does a Jewish person observe and fulfil this important commandment, where does it commonly manifest, what are the motivational reasons provided by our Torah commentators, as well as a practical guide and some local findings relevant to the South African Jewish community.



shatnezlabsa@gmail.com
Tel: 0734431644

The Rikanti says that you
can re-arrange the letters in

שְׂעֵטָנָה

to read

שָׁטָן עָז

The Satan is strong!

Reprinted with permission from Shatnez Lab SA.

For further questions re Shatnez testing please contact: shatnezlabsa@gmail.

Is There Really a Prevalence of Shatnez in South Africa?



In South Africa there is a very real shatnez presence and unfortunately many within the Jewish community are still very unawares as to the serious extent to which shatnez is found. It has been said that Shatnez is the least observed mitzva in the Jewish community. Shatnez testing is as much of a mitzva as Shabbos and kashrus and we need to create greater levels of awareness and educate our community as to the parameters of this mitzva.

As such consumers should be aware that Shatnez has been found in the following (and in other) suit and coat brands:

1. Country Road – bought at Woolworths
2. Trenery – bought at Woolworths
3. David Jones – bought at Woolworths
4. W Classic – bought at Woolworths
5. K1000 – bought in China Town
6. Gold Camel – China Town
7. Zara – bought in Zara
8. TM Lewin – bought in Rosebank
9. Hugo Boss – bought at Hugo Boss
10. Fabiani – bought at 'UNKNOWN'
11. Armani – bought at 'UNKNOWN'
12. Carducci Monatic – shatnez discovered at the House of Monatic Showroom
13. UGGs – numerous different slippers and boots were found to contain shatnez
14. Signature Brand – bought at Edgars

15. Areena Design – bought at Designer Warehouse
16. Thermocappoto Coat – bought in China town
17. Carlos Buzzati
18. Daniel Regazzo
19. Banana Republic
20. J Crew – bought at Queenspark
21. Jos A Bank – bought in USA
22. H & M – bought at H & M
23. Cherokee – bought at PnP
24. Tiger of Sweden

There are many other brands that have a history of containing shatnez that unfortunately the author did not keep records but suffice it to say just as one is halachically required to know what vegetables require checking, so too one who is particular about being Torah and Mitzva observant must know what requires shatnez testing.

In addition one has to know where to check and by whom to check. Just as one does not seriously ask medical questions to an accountant, so too, one who asks shatnez questions to someone who is not an expert in the subject of Shatnez would be making a mistake.

Only adequately trained and qualified individuals who have studied the halachos of shatnez and been tested and trained by other reputable and qualified shatnez testers should be consulted on shatnez related issues.

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Hashgachah in the Field:

Stories from 21 Years of Kosher Audits



Pinchas Goldberg

Food Technologist, Senior Rabbinic Co-Ordinator & Rabbinic Field Representative
KLBD

From 21 years of visiting factories, I've seen the good, the bad, and the ugly of food production and the food industry.

My arrival to audits has been delayed a few times, by traffic, accidents, delayed flights, bad weather, or other reasons beyond my control. I've learnt that there is no reason to be frustrated, but accept that HKBH has a plan for me, and the audit I'm about to attend.

I have so many stories I could tell, here are just a few, each one reminding me that HKBH runs the world and we are in his hands. Some stories have a lesson, while others are just funny or frustrating.

Here are a few I'd like to share with you...

The Late Arrival and the Non-Certified Delivery

I once arrived late at a factory, only to see a delivery vehicle arrive at the same time as I did. The arriving truck brought the same item they made, but from a company not certified! Had I arrived at the audit at the originally planned time, I would never have

known about this delivery. I questioned them on how their factory is managed. They explained that when they couldn't fill orders, they would buy from a competitor to meet the demand. The GM was fired later that day!



The Early Morning Milking and the Cannulated Cows

Once I had to be at a cholov Yisroel milking at 4am to speak to the mashgiach, and to see how he ran the operations at a farm. I overslept and arrived close to 6am. The sun was already up by the time I arrived and I could see what was happening on the farm without the need for artificial lighting. I noticed a disk-shaped 'thing' on the left side of many of the cows. After much investigation and discussions, it turned out that some of the cows at this farm had a surgery of their large stomach, making them a treifa. The disk or 'thing' I'd seen on the left side of the cows was a **cannulation** (flexible tube inserted into a bodily cavity, vein, or artery to administer fluids, medications, nutrition, or blood products, or to drain fluids). Because the mashgiach was seated on the right side of the cows when they entered the milking parlour, he never noticed these disks on the side of the cows. From that day on, we had to ensure the milk from the treif cows was not used or sold as kosher milk.

The Wrong Notes and the Chocolate Question

One very busy day I had a few audits booked one after the other. I had prepared what to discuss for each audit, and had notes of what to expect and concerns I had. I completed the audit at 1 factory, and had reviewed their products, ingredients, processes and equipment. For anonymity sake, we'll say they made chocolate. I had made notes from the audit and was satisfied with renewing their hechsher. As I was in a hurry to travel to the next factory for the day, I didn't have time to save and name the files of my report, but just left them open on my computer.

Later that day I arrived at the next factory (not a chocolate manufacturer) and commenced the audit. Here again I had prepared the points I knew I needed to discuss and was reviewing their products, ingredients, processes and equipment. I discussed a whole range of points based on my notes and was proceeding well. In error I mistakenly looked at the notes from the previous factory and asked "where is 'the chocolate production room', relative to the rest of their processes".



They replied that they had planned to stop the production of chocolate and had hoped I would not question them about it, as they knew it was a kashrus concern. As the question left my mouth I realised I had looked at the notes of the 'wrong' factory, but as this was information we didn't know previously, and now had to

deal with products and processes that contaminated the rest of the factory. I realised immediately that HKBH had planted the question in my head, and what appeared to be asked in error was actually a good thing I enquired about!

The Winter Flight, Bird Strike and Diversion

Flying in winter is not much fun, especially when there are storms, and the pilot can't land. On a trip to a particularly snowy part of the world, as we approached the airport, the pilot announced that there was heavy fog and he wasn't certain we'd be able to land. We circled the airport 3 times, and then made an attempt at landing. Moments before landing he lifted off again. This attempt at landing happened again and all the passengers were anxious. After the 2nd failed attempt at landing the pilot told us we're diverting to another airport nearby with better weather. As we landed, we heard a thud, but the plane came to a stop at the end of the runway.

We sat on the plane for about half an hour. We thought we were just going to wait until the weather cleared before the pilot told us that the thud was a bird strike and we'd lost an engine. The pilot told us there is no point staying on the plane and everyone should go sit in the warm airport building and wait for another plane to collect us.

Unfortunately, we landed in an airport that didn't have passport control, and flying from a foreign country we could not leave the building. Everyone was frustrated, but I took it in my stride, I knew HKBH had a plan for me. Of course my arrival at my meeting was later than planned, and not surprising to me at all, I discovered things during the audit I would not have known about had I arrived 5 hours earlier. I was once again reminded that HKBH runs the world.

The Munich Airport Luggage Mix-Up

On a recent trip in Europe, I had meetings in different cities each day of the week, and had a lot of flying and driving between audits. On the Sunday night I flew to Milan, Monday night to Naples, Tuesday night was to Munich, then Wednesday night to Amsterdam before heading home on the Thursday night. Traveling is tiring and can be frustrating and stressful if there are any bumps in the road.

The night I landed in Munich was very late and I was exhausted. As I walked between the plane and the baggage collection area, I met a few Yidden and tried to make a maariv minyan so I could say kaddish – unfortunately we only found 7 men and maariv was aborted. As I walked away from the crowd I remembered that I had checked-in a suitcase and better hurry before my suitcase disappears. I ran to the baggage claim area so I could head to my hotel and get some much needed sleep before starting again the next day.

There was a list of flights that had recently landed and I went to look for my bag. Unfortunately I'd forgotten where I flew from, and went to the carousel for the flight from Milan. I watched the same suitcases go round and round, only to wonder where mine was.

After a short while I noticed that luggage from a different flight was added to the carousel and my bag wasn't coming. I then noticed that the airline was different to the one I'd flown on, and the penny-dropped, and I realised that I was in the wrong place.

I eventually found the correct carousel – of course it was at the far end of the airport, and BH, my bag was still doing hakofes round and round the otherwise empty carousel.

Through airports and audits, both laughter and stress,

Each journey a lesson, a test to impress.

The plans may go sideways, the weather may churn,

But HKBH guides my footsteps at every turn.

From factories bustling to cows in the field,

The secrets of kitchens are slowly revealed.

With patience and humour, I travel each mile,

Trusting HKBH, finding purpose in trial.

So here's to the stories, the mishaps and finds,

The wisdom gained gently as life redefines.

For the path is uncertain, but one truth remains—

In HKBH's hands, every moment sustains.

In the end, every audit reminds me that Kashrus is far more than supervision – it is witnessing, again and again, how HKBH guides every detail, turning our work into a daily encounter with His hashgachah.



The Molecular Mitzvah: Navigating the Halachic Frontier of Cultured Meat - By Rav Pinchas Padwa



Rabbi Pinchas Padwa is a leading Orthodox rabbi and internationally respected kashrut authority. Born in London into the prominent Padwa rabbinic dynasty, Rav Padwa was active in kashrus in Zurich and Amsterdam, served as head of Belz Kashrus in Israel for ten years, and held senior roles with the Rabbinical Council of Europe (RCE). Rav Padwa currently serves as Chief Rabbi and Av Beit Din of Antwerp's Shomrei Hadat community.

In the quiet laboratories of food-tech startups, a revolution is simmering. Scientists are no longer scanning green pastures for the next generation of protein; instead, they peer through microscopes and into petri dishes. Cultured (lab-grown) meat has stepped out of science fiction and into the realm of looming commercial reality.

For the observant Jewish community, this technological leap unfurls a complex tapestry of ancient halachic questions: Can meat that never walked on four legs be kosher? Is it truly meat, or does it belong to a new pareve category? Let us explore the halachic architecture that may permit and define this futuristic food.

The Biological Blueprint: From Stem Cell to Steak

The process begins with stem cells – the “primary roots” (שורשים ראשונים) from which every living creature is formed. These are typically harvested from the muscle tissue of a living animal, such as the neck muscle of a cow. Endowed with remarkable power, these cells self-replicate and differentiate into muscle fibres, fat, and bone.

A single microscopic cell – roughly one-thousandth of a millimetre in size – is placed into a precisely calibrated growth medium: a shimmering cocktail of oils, salts, seaweed extracts, and vitamins designed to echo the nourishing profile of blood. Nestled in an incubator warmed to the gentle temperature of a cow’s womb, these cells divide and multiply by the millions, weaving themselves into tissue indistinguishable in taste, texture, and structure from traditional meat. By fine-tuning the medium and substrate, the cells are guided to sculpt muscle, fat, or even bone, mirroring the miraculous work of a mother’s womb.

During a visit to one of these factories, in discussion with the professors leading the trials, I learned that cultured meat began as a sideline to the primary goal of producing functioning human organs for transplants. Meat for human consumption emerged as a lucrative parallel pursuit.

The central halachic tension lies in the source: if the original cell derives from a living animal (אֵכָר מִן הַחַי) - ever min ha-chai) or a non-kosher animal, does that forbidden status carry over to the millions of “descendant” cells that reach the dinner plate?

The Invisibility Principle: What the Eye Cannot See

A compelling argument for permissibility rests on the microscopic nature of the starting material. A foundational halachic tenet teaches that the Torah does not govern what remains invisible to the naked eye (אֵין לְדֵיין אֵלָא מִה שְׁעִינִי רֹאוֹת). A single stem cell, undetectable without a microscope, lacks halachic “existence” as food and therefore cannot be classified as kosher or non-kosher.

This mirrors the Gemara’s discussion of cheese production (Chullin 116b). While using the stomach lining of a non-kosher carcass to curdle milk is forbidden, employing only the non-edible stomach contents [פִּירְשָׁא בַעֲלָמָא] -is permitted. The actual curdling is performed by invisible enzymes and bacteria; since these microscopic agents are not visible, halacha focuses on the visible medium.

Similarly, the invisible stem cell – not “food” in any conventional sense – does not transmit the source animal’s forbidden status to the final cultured meat.

The Chemical Reset: From Food to Dust

Before growth, the stem cells must be isolated from the original tissue using harsh chemicals and enzymes that dissolve the muscle fibres into a liquid. Halacha declares that a forbidden substance loses its prohibition once rendered unfit for human consumption – all the more so if it is unfit even for a dog - [נִפְסַל מֵאֲכִילָת] - כֶּלֶב], nifsal me’achilat kelev, It becomes “dust of the earth” (עִפְרָא דְעֵלְמָא).

As the Chavat Da’at explains, even if this “dust” is later transformed into a delicious food product, the original prohibition does not reattach. The isolation process thus forges a new creation, severed from prior restrictions.

The Agricultural Paradigm: Seeds and Generations

Jewish law has long addressed growth through agricultural precedents. The Mishnah (Terumot 9:6) discusses a seed that disintegrates in the ground ("Zaro Kala"). When the seed visibly breaks down — as with wheat — the new plant does not inherit the halachic status of the original (e.g., terumah). Though invisible "stem cells" of the seed remain in the soil, the apparent disintegration creates a new entity.

Analogously, the meat stem cell, placed in the "soil" of the growth medium, effectively disintegrates its prior identity and gives rise to an entirely new biological mass.

The Synergy of Creation: The "Two Causes" Rule

Central to the discussion is the principle of Zeh Vezeh Gorem - זה וזה גורם. The Rema (Yoreh De'ah 87:11) rules that when a product results from both a forbidden and a permitted cause, the final product is permitted. Just as cheese curdled with a mixture of kosher and non-kosher rennet remains kosher — because the effect cannot be attributed solely to the forbidden element — cultured meat benefits from the same leniency.

The final steak is not the product of the stem cell alone; it equally arises from the kosher growth medium (proteins, fats, and nutrients). Without this artificial, man-made "fuel," no meat would form. This deliberate synergy with a permitted primary cause supports permissibility and distinguishes the process from ordinary agricultural growth.

The Placenta Alternative

A cleaner halachic option is sourcing stem cells from the placenta (שליא), expelled as waste after a calf's birth. The Gemara (Chullin 113b) describes it as "mere waste"

(פירשא בעלמא). Authorities such as the Shach and Or HaChaim maintain that the placenta of even a non-kosher animal is not treated as full meat; its derivatives do not transmit prohibitions because it is naturally deficient (פגום). This route neatly bypasses many אבר מן החי ever min ha-chai concerns.

Philosophical Roots: The "Koa'ch Hayuli"

Deeper insight comes from the Ramban's concept of Koa'ch Hayuli (כח היולי) — the primordial, formless potential. Stem cells embody this subtle foundation: they are not finished meat but the potent "potential" for meat. As the Chazon Ish viewed microscopic organisms as arising from a primordial force rather than prohibited creatures, stem cells represent a pre-form substance. The resulting product is therefore a new creation, not a mere derivative.

Conclusion

Through microscopic invisibility, chemical degradation, agricultural parallels, dual causation, and philosophical foundations, halacha supplies a robust framework for viewing cultured meat as potentially permissible — and even pareve. This technology could produce meat without shechita (slaughter), addressing ethical and environmental concerns simultaneously. Yet many aspects of halacha remain unaddressed, including Maris Ayin, the impact on shechita, and the risk of this new lab grown meat getting mixed up with real meat. For these reasons of great halachic gravitas, I cannot reach a full conclusion, as this remains a developing subject that may yet see many twists and changes before lab-grown steaks reach our plates.

In conclusion, this article aims to stimulate discussion and raise awareness of key halachic considerations. Ultimately, any decision to permit or prohibit so momentous a matter requires wide rabbinic approval led by Gedolei HaDor.



KOSHER JOKES

The Menu: A man walks into a kosher steakhouse and asks, "Do you have cheeseburgers?" The waiter replies, "Yes, but the cheese is fake, the meat is real, and your guilt will be 100% authentic."

The Emergency: "Rabbi, my dog ate a non-kosher bone!" Rabbi: "Is the dog Jewish?"

The Insect Check: Why did the lettuce go to court? It wanted to prove it had no bugs in its system.

The Travel Kit: Packing for a vacation requires two suitcases for clothes and four suitcases for toaster ovens, tin foil, and tape. **The Double Standard:** "I keep two sets of dishes," the man said. "One for meat, one for dairy, and a third set for when my mother-in-law tests my knowledge."

The Dream: I had a nightmare last night that a piece of cheese fell into my chicken soup. I woke up screaming, "Where is the blowtorch?!"

The Prohibition of Usury (Ribbis) - By Rabbi Dovid Van Gelder



Rabbi Dovid Van Gelder is an ordained Rabbi, qualified Dayan and practicing attorney in Israel who is actively involved in providing practical halachic guidance on a multitude of topics ranging from Ribbis and contracts to marriage and Shabbat, while sharing accessible insights and responsa through online communities. Rabbi van Gelder can be reached via email: Adv.vanGelder@gmail.com

The prohibition of usury (Ribbis) is firmly rooted in the Torah and constitutes one of the central financial restrictions in Jewish law. The Torah explicitly forbids the charging or payment of interest between Jews stating: "If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, do not act toward them as a creditor; exact no interest from them" (Exodus 22:24), "You shall not give him your money upon interest, nor give him your food for increase" (Leviticus 25:37), and further, "You shall not lend upon interest to your brother—interest of money, interest of food, interest of anything that is lent upon interest" (Deuteronomy 23:20).

While each verse carries distinct legal implications, their repetition underscores the severity and centrality of the prohibition. These provisions establish a broad and categorical prohibition on deriving profit from loans¹ between Jews². Indeed, the gravity of the transgression is reflected in its unique treatment within halachic (Jewish law) literature³. Rabbinic authorities⁴ further expanded the scope of the prohibition, extending it to indirect benefits and constructing a comprehensive legal framework governing

financial conduct.

Classical rabbinic sources emphasize the theological dimension of this prohibition. It has been stated that one who deliberately engages in Ribbis undermines fundamental principles of faith⁵, whereas one who carefully avoids it—particularly under financial pressure—is accorded significant merit⁶. The Maharal of Prague (Rabbi Yehuda Loew) characterizes Ribbis and charity as opposing poles of financial behavior: the former reflecting exploitation, the latter embodying ethical responsibility⁷. Observance of these laws thus serves as a measure of an individual's religious and moral orientation⁸.

Historically, the prohibition was interpreted broadly, encompassing nearly all forms of returns on loans. As economic systems developed—especially in medieval Europe and later in modern economies—this restriction posed practical challenges for commerce, credit, and investment. The increasing complexity of financial life necessitated a structured mechanism that would enable economic activity without violating halachic constraints.

FOOT NOTES:

1. Loan – A loan is when money is given to one party in exchange for repayment of the loan principal, plus interest (Investopedia.com definition). This is parallel to the biblical definition of a "pure loan". Indeed, the biblical prohibition is only transgressed when two conditions are met: (1) the interest is paid on a "pure loan" and (2) the interest is fixed at the time of the initial loan.

2. While there is no biblical prohibition of Ribbis when one of the parties is a Gentile, however, the Rabbinical authorities strongly frowned upon Ribbis even when one of the parties is a gentile, and generally forbade the practice when alternatives were available. See further Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 159/1 and Sifsei Cohen (Shach) there 159/2 in the name of the Tur.

3. The punishment is like the crime, since interest is forever compounding until the principle is paid in full, so too the punishment is for compounding

with the principle never being since a person can no longer repent for the sin. According to midrashic sources, there are people who deal with interest who will not revive in the messianic times since their sin continues to compound. See further Yalkut Shimoni Yechezkel 375, Shemos Rabbah 31/6.

4. Rabbinical restrictions were instituted primarily in situations where the debt stems from something other than a "pure loan", such as from a business transaction, damages caused etc. or where the interest being paid was not agreed ahead of time. These situations are very similar either in result (looks like interest paid) or process (looks like debt/monetary loan) to the biblical prohibition, and therefore people unfamiliar with the intricate rules of Ribbis are liable to inadvertently transgress the biblical transgression. Hence, the rabbinical restrictions were instituted.

5. See the Tur and R. Yosef Karo in their introduction to the laws of Ribbis Yoreh De'ah 160

that a person who actively engages in Ribbis transactions denies the very power and existence of Hashem. In the Exodus from Egypt story, Hashem differentiated between the first-born of all sources, whether Egyptian or Jew, first born from any relationship known and unknown, yet this person thinks and behaves in manner that denies that Hashem can differentiate between forbidden and permitted forms of financial behaviors by charging interest.

6. See for example, Tehillim chapter 15 Verse 5 and the commentators there, for example the Radak who explains such a person will merit a high and ever improving place in heaven (his reward is "interest payment" on the good deed that he did). Rashi there explains that this is an antidote for poverty, and even if temporarily that person has a difficult time in business, he is guaranteed to succeed once more.

7. See Maharal of Prague Netivot Olam, Netiv Ha-Zedakah chapter 6. See there further where

In contemporary settings, interest is a fundamental component of routine financial transactions. Banking systems, mortgage financing, consumer credit, and corporate lending all rely on interest-based structures. Even arrangements that appear neutral—such as late payment penalties, linkage differentials, or price adjustments for deferred payment—may fall within the halachic definition of Ribbis. Consequently, strict application of the prohibition would significantly hinder participation in modern financial systems.

To address this tension, halachic authorities developed the Heter Iska contract (היתר עסקא), a legal mechanism that recharacterizes a prohibited loan transaction as a permissible business arrangement. Rather than a lender-borrower relationship, the parties enter into a form of joint venture or partnership. In its classic formulation, the party providing capital (the “investor”) entrusts funds to the other party (the “managing agent” or “entrepreneur”) for a profit-generating activity. Profits are shared according to a predetermined ratio, and the investor formally assumes the risk of loss.

The Heter Iska typically divides the capital into two components⁹: one portion is treated as an investment (“Iska” – Literally

translated business deal), entitling the investor to a share in profits and exposing them, in principle, to losses; the other portion is structured as a deposit or custodial loan, subject to (unconditional and full) repayment.

To ensure commercial certainty, Heter Iska agreements incorporate detailed evidentiary and procedural provisions. Commonly, the managing party must meet stringent standards of proof – often requiring two valid witnesses or equivalent formal evidence – to substantiate any claimed losses. In practice, the agreement allows the manager to discharge this burden by paying a predetermined sum, in exchange for which the investor waives evidentiary rights and accounting requirements¹⁰, while renouncing potential claims to higher profits. While this arrangement produces an economic result analogous to interest, it remains halachically permissible due to its formal risk-sharing framework¹¹.

Over time, several forms of Heter Iska have developed, reflecting different commercial needs. The classical or “full” Heter Iska contract applies to specific transactions or ventures¹². A “general” Heter Iska, widely adopted by financial and corporate institutions, extends the structure to all dealings between the parties, typically



through standard contractual clauses¹³.

A Heter Iska clause¹⁴ may apply only to certain components of a transaction, particularly where mixed arrangements exist. Additionally, simplified or standardized forms have been created for consumer use, including for mortgages and savings accounts, reducing complexity while maintaining halachic validity.

Each type operates on the same foundational principle: transforming a fixed obligation into a conditional profit-sharing arrangement. The differences lie primarily in scope, documentation, and the level of detail in evidentiary provisions. In institutional contexts, the agreements are often drafted to cover a wide range of financial activities, whereas in private transactions they may be tailored more narrowly.

In modern practice, Heter Iska is widely implemented, particularly in Israel and in Jewish communities worldwide. In Israel, Heter Iska is widely used by banks and

he explains that interest is usually paid willingly by both the lender and borrower to facilitate the loan, and paying interest has “legitimate” financial logic as its basis and is in the “best interest” of both parties. Therefore, the only reason to abstain from the prohibition of Ribbis is to follow the will of Hashem [notwithstanding one’s own personal interest].

8. The peak of charity given is when no one is aware of it, i.e. it is between the giver and Hashem only. Usury is often transgressed in a hidden manner, commonly by cloaking it in legitimate business behavior or in the name of a gentile.

9. There are two basic variations of how the components are structured either a 50/50 structure or initially a full business investment until a certain profit rate is achieved at which point the monies transform from an investment to a full loan. Each variation has legal ramifications & should be chosen appropriately to the specific circumstances.

10. Were the evidentiary requirements not waived, the manager would be obligated to partake in a formal swearing ceremony whilst holding a Torah Scroll that he did not mishandle or act in negligence in any manner whatsoever. This ceremony is of strong significance with spiritual ramifications for the person, and therefore most people would avoid the obligation of this “strict swearing ceremony” at all costs. The money paid for the waiver is considered money paid to avoid the ceremony not paying interest.

11. While rabbinical authorities continue to debate the exact boundaries of acceptable genuine risk-sharing versus legal fiction, the mechanism has gained broad acceptance in the orthodox practice.

12. This is the ideal form, where the Heter Iska contract is the full legal contract between the parties.

13. This form is a “one sided” declaration by

the party that all contracts completed with them are according to the principles set forth in the Heter Iska. This is the most common form for businesses in Israel. However, unless the parties agree in writing between them that the Heter Iska overrides the contractual language actually used, this remains controversial both from a Jewish law perspective and from a civil law perspective. Banks and businesses that have general Heter Iska also have the option to sign a Heter Iska addendum to the main contract which preferable from the Jewish law perspective.

14. This is generally a clause referring to a Heter Iska governing the contract. This is problematic from a legal perspective, as the courts in Israel, US, UK and others do not always view the clause overriding the remainder main body of the contract. Especially since the terms used in the contract are generally defined in an exacting manner, and often in contradiction to (some degree or another) to the Heter Iska terminology. Therefore, an explanatory, terminology, and an

The Prohibition of Usury (Ribbis)

financial institutions, often incorporated into standard account agreements. Israeli banks routinely incorporate a general Heter Iska into their contractual frameworks, enabling observant clients to engage in standard financial activities without violating halacha. Businesses may rely on Heter Iska for financing arrangements, and private individuals may use it in loan agreements to avoid Ribbis concerns.

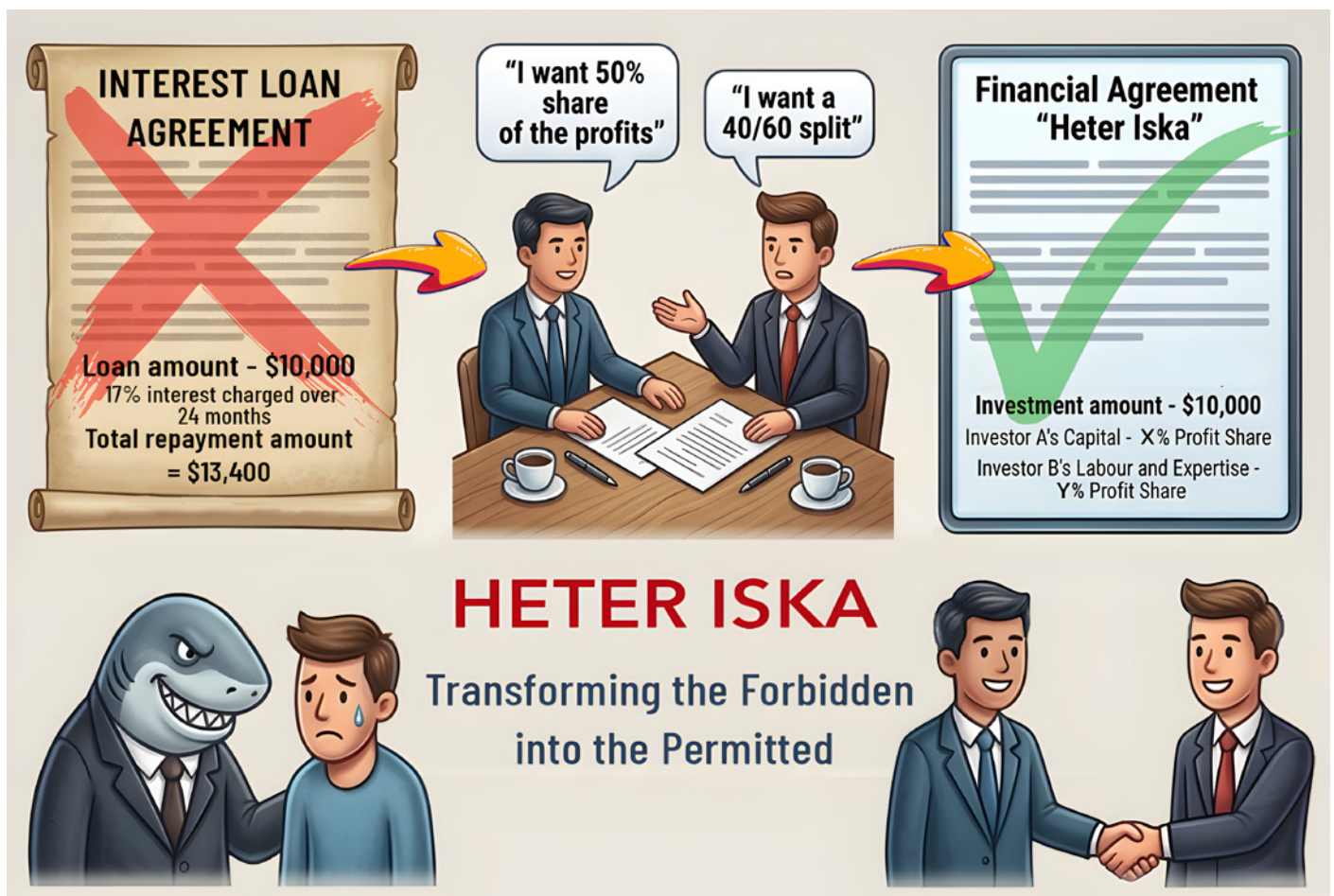
Regulatory authorities have acknowledged such arrangements as valid from a regulatory perspective, provided they comply with general contract law principles, mandatory banking rules, consumer protection standards etc. Israeli courts have also recognized Heter Iska agreements as binding contracts

under civil law. Israeli courts have tended to interpret Heter Iska arrangements according to their combined religious and economic context, giving effect to the parties' intentions while applying standard principles of contract interpretation to their formal structure.

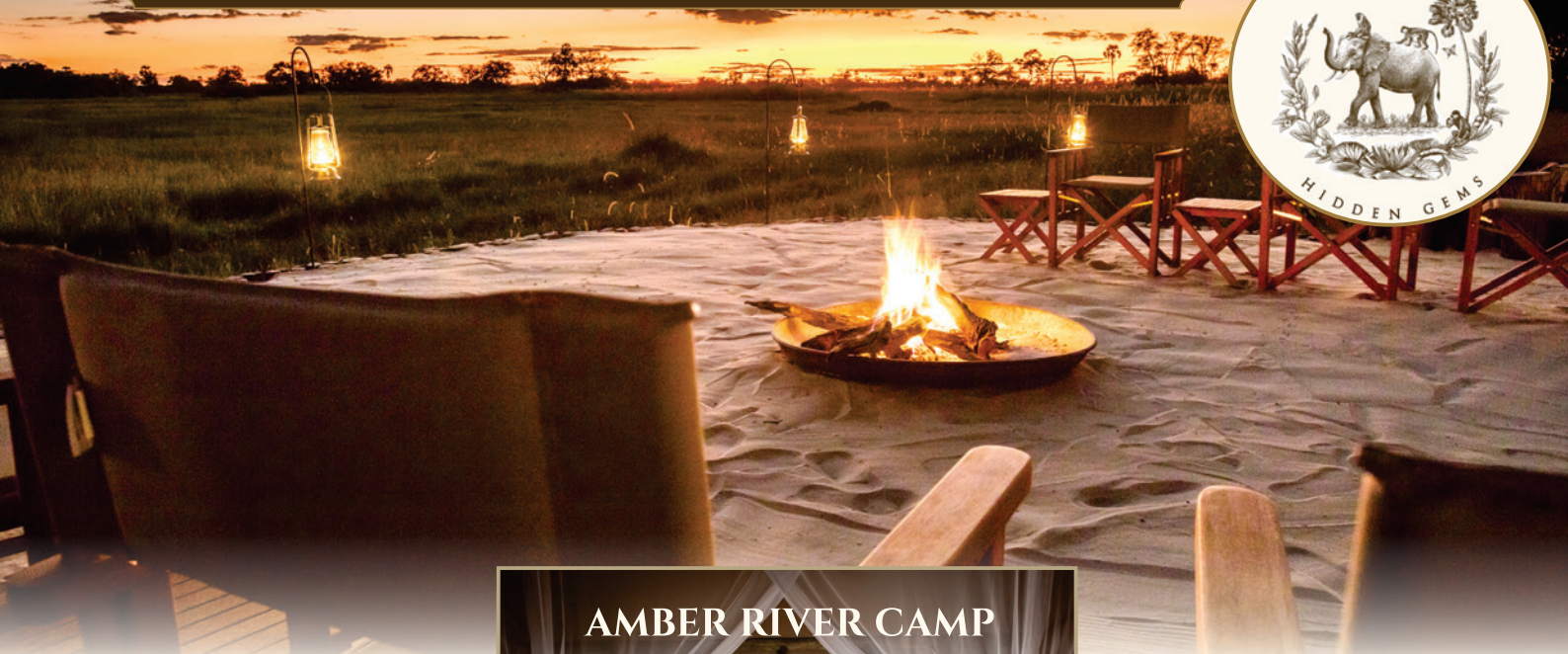
Beyond its technical legal function, Heter Iska reflects a broader phenomenon within Jewish law: the capacity to adapt traditional norms to evolving economic realities through creative legal interpretation. It demonstrates how formal legal structures can be employed to preserve adherence to foundational religious principles while enabling participation in contemporary financial systems. At the same time, it raises important jurisprudential questions

about the relationship between form and substance in law, particularly where legal constructs are designed to achieve outcomes that closely resemble prohibited arrangements.

In conclusion, Heter Iska represents a sophisticated legal solution to the tension between a strict biblical prohibition and the realities of modern finance. By reframing the transaction as a partnership rather than a loan, it preserves compliance with halachic requirements while enabling full participation in contemporary economic life. Its widespread adoption in Israel and beyond underscores both its practical utility and its enduring relevance as a legal tool.



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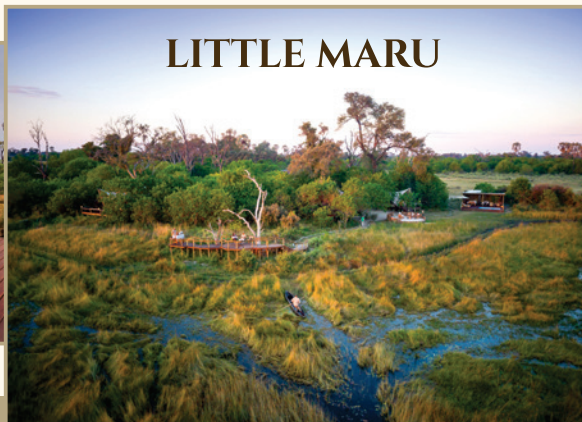
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Who Answers for It?

A reader's guide to asking and receiving halachic rulings

- By Rav Baruch Rubanowitz



Rav Baruch Rubanowitz lives in Eretz Yisroel and has been engaged in halochah for decades in a range of roles. He serves as the Rav of Kehillat Kol Rina, a Carlebach-style shul in Nachlaot known for its song, warmth, and dedicated work with prospective converts and those who have already joined the Jewish people.

He is a posek on a wide range of halachic matters, including business and medical ethics; a dayan on a beis din adjudicating commercial disputes; a recognized authority in eiruvim, kashrus, gittin, and kesuvos; and a qualified shochet, sofer stam, and practicing mohel. He officiates at weddings.

For a fuller treatment of the questions raised here, see his essay, *Aseh Lecho Rav* - available by request at: rav@ravbaruch.com or +972-58-500-4182.

Suppose a rabbi has certified a product as kosher, and months later you discover that the supervision was unreliable — the product was, in fact, treif. Whose problem is that?

A common answer runs: the rabbi gave the hechsher, so the responsibility sits on his shoulders; he answers for it in the next world while you, the consumer, walked away clean. This is wrong. If the food was treif, you ate non-kosher food, and the transgression attaches to *you*. Culpability varies with circumstance, but the underlying principle holds: a rabbinic ruling does not, in itself, transfer responsibility. You remain responsible for the choices you make on the strength of it — including the choice of *whom* to ask.

Ask, Don't Guess

When a question of Jewish law arises and you don't know the answer, two intuitions present themselves. The first is to figure it out yourself. The second is to default to the strict interpretation, on the theory that erring on the side of caution can't hurt. Both are wrong.

The Torah, according to Rav Sa'adyah Gaon as understood by Rav Yeruchom Fishel Perla, counts among its 613 commandments the duty to bring difficult halachic questions to a qualified scholar. The verse that directs a lower court to consult the supreme court in Jerusalem applies broadly: every individual must bring his hard cases to a competent rabbi. The law must be clarified, not guessed.

The second intuition — when in doubt, be strict — fails for a related reason. Rav Chaim Volozhin, commenting on the Mishnah's directive *aseh lecho Rav v'histalek min hasofek* — “find yourself a teacher and remove yourself from doubt” — explains why defaulting to stringency cannot replace knowledge: **a stringency is**

sometimes itself a leniency, and a leniency sometimes itself a stringency. Consider: a man wants to be punctilious in tithing and separates fifteen percent of his produce instead of ten. The extra five percent now contains its own untithed portion mixed in with what was supposed to be valid tithe. His “stringency” has produced a forbidden mixture.

A famous parable. A man without a rabbi let his dog determine the kosher status of his meat. The Torah teaches that non-kosher meat is to be thrown to the dog — so, the man reasoned, if the dog ate it, the meat was non-kosher; if the dog rejected it, it was kosher. His wife pointed out the obvious: the dog was an inexhaustible “stringent decisor,” consuming everything in sight. The dog was no rabbi.

Choosing the Right Person

If the obligation is to ask rather than guess, then *whom* to ask becomes a question of the first order. Several principles emerge.

The rabbi must be a living person. Posing a question by sliding a slip of paper into a sacred book, or traveling to a grave to wait for an answer, is not a legitimate halachic method. The same caution applies to artificial intelligence: AI may suggest sources, but it carries no authority and is not entitled to your reliance.

He must actually know the law. Not every dynamic preacher is a halachic decisor. A community needs preachers, teachers, and inspirers, but a stirring sermon does not certify a man to issue rulings. Even serving as the rabbi of your synagogue does not by itself mean he is qualified to answer halachic questions of substance.

Beyond his learning, he must possess several personal qualities:

Integrity — he must rule what he believes to be true, neither pandering to congregants who prefer leniencies nor flattering those who crave stringencies.

Patience — he must hear the full question, since a single detail can shift the law entirely. A kashrus question may turn on whether the issue concerns the food itself or only the utensils, on whether the prohibition is biblical or rabbinic; the rabbi may need to ask follow-up questions himself before he can rule.

Common sense and a working knowledge of the world we live in — the hardest quality to verify objectively, but its absence may be fatal. A rabbi with deep halachic knowledge may have little grasp of what a modern food production line looks like or what a business owner contends with day to day. His judgement of human behavior life decisions may seem off to you. A ruling that ignores such realities is less a psak than a paper exercise; the asker must exercise his own judgment here.

Reverence of Heaven — the verse teaches that “Hashem’s secret is to those who fear and revere Him.”

Humility — Jewish law follows the school of Hillel not because Shammai’s disciples were arrogant, but because Hillel’s were humbler, and humility makes one likelier to perceive the truth.

A Rabbi Who Knows You

Halachic rulings, properly issued, take account of the person standing before the rabbi. The Talmud itself builds gradations into the law: what we openly instruct may differ from what we privately permit, which may differ again from what we merely refrain from protesting when others do it.

The Rashbo, in a responsum to a yeshivoh head in Toledo, makes the principle explicit: *“It is impossible to treat all men by a single measure.”* He cites King David, who turned a blind eye to certain offenders during

the consolidation of his reign. A wise man overlooks at the proper moment. Silence at proper times, the Rashbo writes, is itself a fence, protecting the Torah long-term.

The Rashbo is not relaxing the law. He is teaching how the law lives in the hands of one who understands his people.

A rabbi who knows the asker — his background and circumstances, whether he is wired for obsessive scrupulosity or for rebellion that flares under too sharp a hand, whether he carries some personal handicap that makes ordinary observance unusually heavy — is in a position to apply the law in a way an unfamiliar rabbi cannot.

He can identify which positions among the authorities are best suited to this asker at this moment. He can map a path of growth. He can decide when to press, when to encourage, when — in the Rashbo’s words — to overlook.

This is one of the deeper meanings of aseh lecho Rav. Not merely: find someone qualified to issue rulings. Rather: find someone qualified who knows you. For this reason, it is worth seeking out a rabbi whose load of students is not so heavy that he can no longer attend to individuals.

To Speak the Truth

Just as the asker may not retreat into reflexive stringency, neither may the rabbi. “Just as it is forbidden to permit the forbidden,” writes the Shach in his rules of halachic decision-making, “so it is forbidden to forbid the permitted.” Rabbis must therefore label what they are doing. When a ruling is strict because of doubt rather than clear prohibition, the rabbi must say so. When he permits under pressing circumstances, he must say so explicitly. Rulings in either direction must be honest about their basis.

When the Rabbi Errs

If the rabbi rules wrongly, his ruling has no force — the foundation of the

misconception that opens this article. The fallacy appears in subtler forms.

Reuven once complained that whenever he worked during the intermediate days of festivals he saw no blessing from his earnings. Shimon offered a solution: “Call Rabbi X. He invariably permits. Once you have his permission in hand, the responsibility for any wrongdoing shifts to him. You’ll see blessing from your wages.”

This is absurd. No ruling — least of all an erroneous one — can convert a forbidden act into a permitted one. A “permission” issued in error is not a permission. The act remains what it was, and so does its consequence.

The Asker’s Duty of Disclosure

The corollary cuts both ways. A ruling issued on partial information is a ruling on a question the rabbi was never actually asked; it has no validity. Two practical rules follow.

You must disclose every relevant detail.

Without disclosure, the ruling is empty in principle, and on serious questions — family matters, business, complex kashrus situations — the damage of an empty ruling can be considerable.

You cannot exploit this in reverse. A clever asker might be tempted to withhold a detail, see what Rabbi A would say, and — if dissatisfied — bring a fuller account to Rabbi B. The maneuver is dishonest. It stays formally within bounds, but it violates a cardinal rule of asking halachic questions: do not take surveys and choose the answer you prefer.

The Double Obligation

The asker must seek a true scholar, choose carefully, disclose fully, and refrain from imposing his own stringencies in place of actual rulings. The rabbi must master his sources, know the prevailing custom, speak the truth even when it is unpopular, label stringency as stringency and leniency as leniency, and rule with the gravity of one who knows he stands in a chain stretching back to Sinai. When both halves are honored, the law lives.

Vegan Products and Kosher Certification

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Introduction

In recent years, the dietary landscapes of veganism and kosher observance have increasingly overlapped, leading to a growing interest in products that satisfy both sets of dietary laws. This convergence addresses a niche but expanding market of consumers looking to adhere to ethical, health, and religious dietary standards simultaneously. This blog explores the intersection of veganism and kosher standards, illuminating the Kosher certification processes, challenges, and consumer demand for products that are both vegan and kosher certified.

Understanding Veganism

Veganism is more than a diet; it is a lifestyle choice that excludes all forms of animal products and by-products, from food to clothing. This choice is often motivated by a variety of factors including ethical concerns about animal welfare, environmental considerations, and health benefits. Ethically, vegans oppose the exploitation of animals, and environmentally, they aim to reduce their carbon footprint since animal farming is a high emitter of greenhouse gases. Health-wise, a plant-based diet is frequently touted for its benefits in reducing the risk of chronic diseases, promoting a heart-

healthy lifestyle, and supporting weight management.

Basics of Kosher Certification

Kosher certification signifies that a product complies with a set of biblical dietary laws known as kashrut. These laws determine which foods are fit for consumption by observant Jews and include regulations such as the prohibition of certain animals as food, the separation of meat and dairy products, and specific slaughter methods. Kosher certification, therefore, involves rigorous inspections and ongoing supervision to ensure compliance with these standards. The certification process is handled by various agencies worldwide, each requiring strict adherence to these dietary laws to grant their seal of approval.

Common Grounds between Vegan and Kosher Standards

The intersection of vegan and kosher diets reveals significant commonalities, particularly in the avoidance of certain animal products. For vegans, abstaining from all animal products inherently satisfies many kosher restrictions, particularly the laws concerning the mixing of meat and dairy and the prohibition of non-kosher animals. However, kosher certification goes beyond the mere absence of meat or dairy and includes considerations such as the use of certain additives and the kosher status of equipment used in food processing.

Certification Process for Vegan Kosher Products

Certifying a product as both vegan and kosher involves a dual scrutiny process that ensures the product meets the strict criteria set forth by both dietary regulations. This process typically begins

with a thorough review of all ingredients to confirm their vegan source and kosher status. Following this, the manufacturing processes are examined to ensure that there is no cross-contamination with non-vegan or non-kosher substances. This dual certification can be more complex than either certification alone, demanding a higher level of transparency and documentation from manufacturers.

Challenges in Vegan Kosher Certification

The certification of vegan kosher products presents unique challenges, particularly in ensuring that all aspects of production adhere to both dietary laws. One common issue is the presence of wine or grape juice, which is often used in food products but must be specifically kosher to be permissible. Similarly, while plant-based, the enzymes and cultures used in products such as vegan cheeses or yoghourts must be derived from kosher-certified sources. These complexities require manufacturers to be vigilant and certification agencies to conduct meticulous inspections and continuous monitoring.

Ingredients Watchlist in Vegan Kosher Products

When certifying vegan kosher products, particular attention must be paid to ingredients that could compromise either dietary law. Ingredients such as gelatine substitutes, commonly used in vegan products, must be sourced from kosher-certified plants. Additionally, emulsifiers, stabilisers, and colouring agents must also be scrutinised for both their kosher and vegan integrity. This often requires a deep dive into the supply chain to verify the origin and processing methods of each component used in the manufacturing of these products.

Consumer Demand for Vegan Kosher Products

The demand for products that are both vegan and kosher certified is driven by a niche but growing demographic that values ethical consumption and religious observance. This market segment includes not only those who follow both diets but also consumers who perceive these certifications as markers of quality and safety. As awareness of animal welfare and dietary health continues to rise, so does the consumer appetite for products that meet these stringent standards, creating opportunities for manufacturers to tap into this conscientious consumer base.

Labelling and Marketing of Vegan Kosher Products

Effective labelling and marketing are crucial for the success of vegan kosher products. Products that carry both certifications must clearly display these on their packaging to communicate their compliance to consumers who specifically look for these labels when shopping. Marketing efforts should focus on educating consumers about the benefits and standards of vegan kosher certification, highlighting the ethical and dietary rigour that these products represent. Clear, transparent labelling not only aids consumers in making informed choices but also builds trust in the brands that uphold these values.

Role of Certification Agencies

Certification agencies play a pivotal role in bridging vegan and kosher standards. These bodies are tasked with developing and enforcing guidelines that meet the requirements of both diets, often working in collaboration to ensure their standards are mutually recognised and respected. The role of these agencies is not only regulatory but also educational, as they provide crucial information and resources

to manufacturers and consumers alike about the specifics of vegan and kosher compliance.

Future Trends in Vegan Kosher Products

The market for vegan kosher products is poised for growth, driven by advances in food technology and a shift in consumer preferences towards more ethical and sustainable eating habits. Innovations in food science, such as the development of plant-based proteins and dairy alternatives, are making it easier for manufacturers to produce products that are both vegan and kosher without compromising on taste or texture. As more consumers opt for diets that reflect their ethical and religious values, the demand for vegan kosher products is likely to increase, leading to greater variety and availability in the market.

Conclusion

The synergy between vegan and kosher certifications exemplifies a comprehensive approach to dietary observance, combining ethical considerations with religious law. As consumer interest in ethical and religiously compliant products continues to grow, understanding the intricacies of vegan kosher certification becomes increasingly important. This understanding not only supports those who adhere to these diets but also promotes a broader move towards more mindful and sustainable consumption practices.

Contact us for more information.

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KOSHER JOKES

High-Tech Kashrus: The Smart Home: I programmed my smart kitchen to lock the dairy cabinets if the meat oven was turned on within the last six hours.

The AI Rabbi: I asked an AI chatbot if my soup was kosher. It gave me three different opinions, argued with itself, and then asked me for a donation to its synagogue.

The Hotel Kettle: You know you keep kosher when you check into a luxury hotel and the first thing you do is inspect the coffee maker like a forensic scientist looking for trace elements of soup.

The Corporate Lunch: At the office lunch, everyone is eating catering while I sit in the corner, joyfully unwrapping three layers of aluminum foil like it's a birthday present.

From a Treif Chicken Bone to a Closed Mikva:

Personal Memories with Rav Chanoch Padwa ל"צ

- By Shloma Zelig Kinn



Rabbi Shloma Zelig Kinn was born in London and raised in the UK. He studied at Yeshivas Ohalei Torah and Tomchei Temimim of Chabad-Lubavitch, and completed his rabbinical qualifications at the Rabbinical College Of Canada. He further specialised in semicha and the intricate halachos of mikvaos. Drawing on his construction expertise, he previously advised Dayan Suchard of the UOS on South African mikvaos and continues to provide international consultation on mikvaos worldwide. A Lubavitcher chossid, he currently resides in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Looking back on my youth in London's Kedassia community, two particular incidents stand out vividly in my memory. Both involved my late father, Rabbi Betzalel Kinn ל"צ, and the revered Av Beis Din, Rav Chanoch Padwa ל"צ. These events taught me profound lessons about halachic vigilance, practical compassion, and the wisdom passed down from gedolei Torah from previous generations.

The Bone and the Pinholes - Shabbos 1977

I was a 14-year-old boy in 1977. That

particular Friday night, our home was bustling with more than twenty family members and guests gathered around the Shabbos table. The atmosphere was warm and joyful, filled with divrei Torah, zemiros, and the comforting smells of traditional Shabbos food that my mother had prepared with care.

The chicken soup course was served, and everything seemed normal. My father, Rabbi Betzalel Kinn ל"צ, followed his regular custom of eating the chicken directly from the soup. He would chew the bones thoroughly and suck out the marrow. Suddenly, he froze. Without any explanation, he spat out the contents of his mouth, rose from the table, and walked over to the netilas yadayim basin to rinse his mouth. He then took the suspicious bone into the kitchen, placed it carefully in a plastic bag, and returned to his seat. He continued the meal as though nothing unusual had happened.

The silence that followed was heavy. My mother, the Rebbetzin, and several guests looked aghast and shocked, but no one said a word during the holy Shabbos meal. Only after Havdala on Motzei Shabbos, once Shabbos had ended, did my father address the matter. He was heavily involved in communal affairs that evening, so he instructed me to take the sealed bone on my bicycle and bring it to the home of Rav Chanoch Padwa ל"צ after Rabbeinu Tam.

I rode through the quiet London streets and arrived at the Rav's house. His Rebbetzin kindly welcomed me and showed me into the dining room. With some nervousness, I presented the bone to Rav Chanoch Padwa ל"צ and asked, "What does the Rov think of this bone?"

Rav Chanoch Padwa ל"צ took the bone and examined it with great care. Within moments, he identified the minute pinholes. "This is a sign of tuberculosis in the chicken," he said gravely, "and it renders it a treif chicken." He mentioned that as a young dayan in training back in the alter heim, he had seen this only once before.

Rav Chanoch Padwa ל"צ emphasized a point that many people do not know: had my father Rabbi Betzalel Kinn ל"צ not been in the habit of chewing the bones and eating the marrow, this serious issue would almost certainly have gone completely unnoticed.

I then asked about the status of our utensils, especially the ceramic (cheres) plates. Rav Chanoch Padwa ל"צ inquired thoughtfully whether our family could afford to replace all the crockery. When I explained that we were not people of means, he ruled with both halachic precision and genuine compassion. Anything that could be properly kashered should be kashered, and the crockery could be thoroughly washed and reused.

Before I left, Rav Chanoch Padwa ל"צ instructed me to tell my father to show the bone to other rabbis – not merely to ask a shailoh, but so they could see with their own eyes what tuberculosis looks like in a chicken. Notably, only the elderly rabbis who had served as rabbonim in the alter heim immediately recognised this type of disease.

My father, Rabbi Betzalel Kinn ל"צ, faithfully carried out the directive. The bone was shown to many rabbonim across London and Manchester, and inquiries were even sent to poskim in the United

States. It became a quiet but important teaching moment for the community.

The Discovery At the Men's Mikva - Early 1980s

A few years later, in the early 1980s, I myself was involved in another significant event. I was doing maintenance work at a men's mikva under the instruction of Reb Avrohom Solinsky (יבלח"ט) – regrouting tiles and performing general upkeep. During the inspection, I noticed loose tiles and water seeping from the walls in an abnormal way.

Solinsky went to fetch Rav Chanoch Padwa ל"צ, while I remained at the site. Rav Chanoch Padwa ל"צ soon arrived, accompanied by Dayan Shulem Friedman and Rabbi Meir Posen, a widely respected authority on the construction and halachos of mikvaos.

I demonstrated the problem to them directly. I dried the surface in front of the rabbis and then pressed a fresh, dry cloth against the tiles. When I handed them the now-wet cloth, the issue was clear. Rav Chanoch Padwa ל"צ instructed me to open up the walls, remove the tiles and the

first layer of bricks, and call him back for further inspection. In the meantime, the mikva was to be closed immediately – no one was permitted to use it.

When Rav Chanoch Padwa ל"צ returned and saw the cavity filled with water together with the biodegraded asphalt that had originally served as waterproofing, the conclusion was unavoidable. The mikva's structural and halachic integrity had been compromised beyond repair. With a heavy heart, he ruled that the mikva must be closed permanently. It was never reopened. In time, the building was sold and transformed into the London Vishnitz Chayim Meirim Cheider, where it now echoes with the sounds of children learning Torah.

Addendum

I remember taking a piece of the asphalt from the mikva. My father of blessed memory, Rabbi Betzalel Kinn ל"צ, who was extremely knowledgeable in scientific matters, conducted extensive research on the material. As a result of this episode and the subsequent research, to my knowledge this material was never used again as a waterproofing medium in the construction of mikvaos in the United Kingdom.



These two episodes, though different in nature, left a lasting impact on me. They illustrated the sharpness of Rav Chanoch Padwa ל"צ's halachic insight, his sensitivity to the financial realities of ordinary families, and the depth of knowledge passed down from gedolei Torah from previous generations. They also highlighted my father Rabbi Betzalel Kinn ל"צ's personal meticulousness and sense of responsibility. In both cases, potential problems were addressed with seriousness, discretion, and care.

May the memory of Rav Chanoch Padwa ל"צ, and my father Rabbi Betzalel Kinn ל"צ, serve as a blessing and an inspiration for proper observance and leadership in Klal Yisrael.



HAVE KOSHER QUESTIONS? WE'RE HERE TO HELP!



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KCSA Certified Companies Directory

COMPANY NAME	CATEGORY / TYPE OF PRODUCT	REGION	WEBSITE
AMANTECO	Raw almonds	Western cape	https://amanteco.com/
AMINO MANUFACTURING SA	Aminos	Kwa Zulu Natal	https://amino.de/en/
AVANTI	Coffee beans and grinds	Gauteng	www.avanticoffee.co.za
AVOLANDS	Avocado products	Kwa Zulu Natal	https://avolands.co.za/
BAOBAB	Baobab powder	Mozambique	
BEE BRU	Honey products	Gauteng	https://www.beebru.co.za/
BITEK	Detergents	Gauteng	https://bitek.co.za/
BLUE SKIES FRESH PRODUCE BLUE SA (Pty) Ltd	Juice	Mpumalanga	https://www.blueskies.com/
BON OILS	Essential & cosmetic oils	Kwa Zulu Natal	https://www.bonoils.co.za/
CAPE ROOIBOS	Rooibos tea	Western Cape	https://caperooibostea.co.za/
DELTA FOOD INGREDIENTS	Rice sugar other	Western Cape	
DIRECT FARM CONNECTION	Chilli products	Kwa Zulu Natal	https://directfarmconnection.co.za/
EMPIRESTATE TRADING	Nuts dried fruit candies	Gauteng & W. Cape	www.empiresa.co.za
FERREIRA FRESH	Fresh fruit and veg	Gauteng	https://ferreirafresh.co.za/
FROZEN BRANDS	Frozen fruit and frozen veg	Kwa Zulu Natal	https://frozenbrands.co.za/
GOLDEN FRY	Vegetable oil	Gauteng	https://goldenfryoil.co.za/
GOOD EARTH FOODS	Spices grains herbs	Western cape	https://goodearth.com.mt/
GOODFRUIT	Macadamia raw	Mpumalnaga	https://goodfruit.co.za/
HERBS A-PLENTY	Herbs and essential oils	Western Cape	https://www.herbs-aplenty.com/
HOFF HOUSE OF FLAVOURS AND FRAGRANCES	Flavours fragrances colours	Gauteng	www.hoff.co.za
KEIMOE'S BAKERY	Granola	Northern Cape	
KHUVUKA MAX	Macadamia raw	Mpumalnaga	https://khuvuka.co.za/
LECHEF	Garlic ginger chilli	Gauteng	https://www.lechef.co.za/
LEVUBU DRIED FRUIT	Dried fruit	Limpopo	https://www.facebook.com/Levubudried/
LFC MILLING	Maize flour	Free State	https://lfc.co.za/
LOWVELD NUTS	Macadamia raw	Mpumalnaga	https://lowveldnuts.co.za/
LWANI FOODS TZANEEN	Sauces paste	Limpopo	https://www.tamatisoso.co.za/
MACRIDGE	Macadamia products	Limpopo	https://macridge.co.za/
MANNABREW	Mesquite products	Western Cape	https://mannabrew.co.za/
MONATEA	Cold brewed ice tea	Western Cape	https://drinkmonatea.com/
MOSTRA DI CAFE	Coffee beans and grinds	Gauteng	mostradicafe.co.za
NUTARIA	Nuts dried fruit	Gauteng	https://nutaria.co.za/
NUTCRACKER PROCESSORS	Macadamia raw and oil	Kwa Zulu Natal	https://nutcrackers.co.za/
NUTROCHEM	Detergents, chemicals, other	Mpumalnaga	https://www.nutrochem.co.za/

KCSA Certified Companies Directory

COMPANY NAME	CATEGORY / TYPE OF PRODUCT	REGION	WEBSITE
OLIVES SA	Olives and olive oil	Northern Cape	https://olivessa.co.za/
OLYFBERG	Olives olive oil tapenade	Western Cape	https://olyfberg.com/
ORANGVILLE TRADING	Citrus concentrate and oil	Zimbabwe	
OVERBERG HONEY	Honey products	Western Cape	https://www.overberghoney.co.za/
PARCEVAL	Essential oils pharmaceuticals	Western Cape	https://parceval.co.za/
PERMACASHEW	Raw cashews	Macia, Mozambiq.	https://permanuts.com/en/permacashews
PUMPKIN PATCHERY	Fresh fruit and veg	Western Cape	https://www.pumpkinpatchfoods.com/
PURIFLOW	Water and sparkling water	Gauteng	https://puriflow.co.za/
RE GROUND NUTS	Peanuts	Free State	https://www.regroundnuts.co.za/
ROASTED & RAW	Dried fruit, nuts, snacks, choc candy	Western Cape	https://roastedandraw.co.za/
ROBERTSON ALMOND COMP. - T/A AMANDEL AFRIKA	Raw almonds	Western Cape	https://www.amandel.co.za/
ROYAL MACADAMIA	Macadamia products	Limpopo	https://royalmacadamia.co.za/
SA PEANUTS	Peanuts raw	Northern Cape	https://www.sapeanuts.co.za/
SAVOUR SOLUTIONS	Preservative products	Kwa Zulu Natal	https://savoursolutions.com/
SHEMUEL FLOUR MILLS	Wheat flour	Kwa Zulu Natal	https://www.shemuel.co.za/
SKY FOOD COLOURS AND OLEORESINS	Colors flavours	Gauteng	https://www.skyfoodcolours.com/
SOLENIS DIVERSEY	Cleaning detergents	Gauteng	https://www.solenis.com/en/
SOUTHERN OILS MOOIREESBERG	Oils	Western Cape	https://www.soill.co.za/
STACOR	Chemicals	Kwa Zulu Natal	https://stacor.co.za/
STRAVALER	Sugar, cocoa, other	Gauteng & W. Cap.	https://stravalier.co.za/
SWEETFIELD HONEY	Honey products	Free State	https://sweetfieldheuning.wordpress.com/
SWISS GOURMET	Raw pecans	Northern Cape	https://swissgourmet.com/
TABLE MOUNTAIN WATER	Water and sparkling water	Western Cape	https://tablemountainwater.co.za
TERRA MADRE	Cold press juices and spices	Western Cape	https://terramadre.co.za/
THE ALMOND GIRL	Olive oil & almonds	Western Cape	https://thealmondgirl.co.za/
THE SUGAR CRYSTAL COMPANY	Rock candy & sugar crystal products	Western Cape	https://sugarcystal.co.za/
THEPA POPCORN	Popcorn seeds	Free State	https://thepapopcorn.co.za/
TRANS OCEAN LIQUID TECHN.	Packaging	Western Cape	
TRUTH COFFEE	Coffee - beans grinds capsules	Western Cape	https://za.truth.coffee/
VDB AFRICA	Flour fortification	Kwa Zulu Natal	https://vdbafrica.com/
VITA 24	Vitamin & flavoured infused waters	Gauteng	https://vita24.co/
W SPICE X	Spices grains herbs	Gauteng	https://www.wspicex.com/

KCSA STATS

The average number of inspections per factory is 2.43 inspections per year.

KCSA - KOSHER CERTIFIED SOUTH AFRICA: KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

01

MANUFACTURERS & PRODUCTS



OVERVIEW

74 Certified manufacturers across Southern Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

Over **2000** certified products

51863 km Traveled for kashrus purposes within a 12 months period.

02

EXPORT SUCCESS



INTERNATIONAL REACH

63% of Clients successfully exporting their products overseas.

03

TEAM & EXPERTS



OUR TEAM & NETWORK

8 Staff members

10 International kashrut expert consultants.

12 Leading international kashrut agencies in ongoing consultation.

04

SUPERVISED EVENTS



EVENTS & DESTINATIONS

Over 50 supervised events in 2025 for villas, hotels & lodges across:

Namibia, Kruger National Park, Madagascar, Cape Town, Victoria Falls, Zambia, Okavango Delta, Seychelles, Kenya and others.

05

OPERATIONS



RESOURCES & ACTIVITY

7 Mashgichim and inspectors trained in the last 12 months.

5 Chicken shechita runs.

1 Beef and lamb shechita run.

Disclaimer: Stats accurate as at end of August 2026.



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