

This book is dedicated to the humble, tired, invisible food worker. These are the men and women who labor in the fields, who toil in the kitchens, and who spend their days working in backrooms sight unseen. They provide us with sustenance, yet we rarely see them. We rarely give our thanks. Too often they are left out of the narrative of *kashrut* and out of the consciousness of the kosher consumer. May we rectify this oversight together.

ABOUT TORAT CHAYIM:

Torat Chayim is a rabbinical association of Orthodox rabbis committed to fostering a more pluralistic and progressive future. Its rabbinic members—men & women—work together to foster Torah-rooted progress in the Jewish community and in society at large.

The name Torat Chayim was chosen because Torah is about rootedness and Chayim is about dynamism. We want a Torah that is strongly rooted in tradition and that is also responsive to—and pushing us forward in—our time. Further, Torah is about life. It is about ethics, human dignity, and the perpetuation—and sanctification—of life. We embrace a life-affirming, dignity-affirming Torah, and work to ensure that Torah only adds to—and never detracts from—human dignity and the sanctity of life.

**Thank you so much for everything!
Wishing you all the best,**



Table of Contents

Introduction

Rabbi Dr. Shmuly Yanklowitz

ix

SECTION 1

Kashrut Dynamics

1. On the Ethics and Politics of Kosher Food Supervision <i>Rabbi Aaron Leibowitz</i>	1
2. Are You Really Eating Kosher? On Camouflage, Hypocrisy, and Hiding Behind the Kashrut Laws <i>Rabbi Dr. Nathan Lopes Cardozo</i>	10
3. Milk and Meat: The Dangerous Mixture <i>Rabbi Dr. Nathan Lopes Cardozo</i>	14

SECTION 2

Bridging Kashrut with Ethical & Spiritual Concerns

1. The Moral Underpinnings of Kashrut <i>Rabbi Dr. Shmuly Yanklowitz</i>	18
2. Eating Our Way from Holiness to Justice: Kashrut as a Bridge Between Competing Value Systems <i>Rabbi Dr. David Kasher</i>	27
3. Increasing Holiness in Life: Towards an Expanded Kashrut <i>Rabbi Dr. Irving (Yitz) Greenberg</i>	33

SECTION 3

Spirituality of Eating

1. Eating as a Sacrament: The Eating Table and the Coffin <i>Rabbi Dr. Daniel Sperber</i>	43
2. Food for Thought: Hasidic Wisdom on Spiritual Eating <i>Rabbi Dr. Ariel Evan Mayse</i>	49
3. Holy Eating in Jewish Thought and Practice <i>Rabbi Hyim Shafner</i>	66
4. Too Much of Everything is Just Enough: Eating as a Spiritual Practice in a Culture of Abundance <i>Rabbi David Jaffe</i>	78

SECTION 4**Health & Consumption**

1. Towards a Jewish Nutrition Ethic: The Theology, Law, and Ethics of Healthy Eating <i>Rabbi Daniel R. Goodman</i>	87
2. Why Are We So Hungry? Our Betrayal of Eating, Being Satisfied and Blessing and The Way Back! <i>Rabbi Daniel Landes</i>	119
3. Your Grains, Your Grape Juice, and Your Oil: Coming to Terms with Unhealthy Foods Venerated by Jewish Tradition <i>Rabbi Asher Lopatin</i>	126

SECTION 5**Worker Rights, Equality, & Hunger**

1. The Divine Image: Theological Reflections on Jewish Labor Law <i>Rabbi Dr. Ariel Evan Mayse</i>	134
2. Judaism and The Crisis of the Rural Village in the Global South <i>Rabbi Micha Odenheimer</i>	154
3. Let Them Have a Little Bread <i>Rabbi Marc Gitler</i>	167

SECTION 6**Animal Welfare**

1. תשובה בענייני צער בעלי חיים <i>Rabbi David Bigman</i>	171
2. Animal Suffering and the Rhetoric of Values and <i>Halakhah</i> <i>Rabbi Dov Linzer</i>	182
3. The Commandments Were Only Given for the Purpose of Refining People <i>Rabbi Dr. David Rosen</i>	209
4. The Case for Limiting Meat Consumption to Shabbat, Holidays, and Celebrations <i>Rabbi Aaron Potek</i>	218

SECTION 7**Environmentalism, Conservation, and GMOs**

1. Ethical Eating and the Impact on our Environment <i>Rabbi Dr. Mel Gottlieb</i>	235
2. Humanity and the Tree of the Field: Conservation as a Commandment <i>Rosh Kehillah Dina Najman</i>	244
3. Divine Wisdom or Altering Creation? A Torah Perspective on GMOs <i>Rabbi Gabe Greenberg</i>	252
Conclusion <i>Rabbi Dr. Shmuly Yanklowitz</i>	266
Index	270

Introduction

The volume of essays you hold in your hands is a dynamic survey of the intersection between Judaism's concern with ethics, empathy, and the environment. Contained in these pages are rabbinic reflections on the nature of Judaism's timeless concern with upholding the integrity of *kashrut* in all its dimensions. As we all know, *kashrut*—as an organized ontological system—is focused on the Jewish laws of food consumption. The vaunted “Thou shalt not consume” and so forth. But even more so than a rigid classification of allowances and prohibitions, the notions of *kashrut* reflect the extent to which Judaism views itself as an integral component of society and faith.

Historically, the essential application of the boundaries of *kashrut* were limited given the inadequate freedom of the Jewish community in the Diaspora. Pre-modern sensitivities to the feelings of the environment, or animal consciousness, were never fully considered in the ways they are today. Such feelings are understandable considering the significant external pressure on Jewish communities throughout the world struggling to survive in environments hostile to their existence. It has only been in the postmodern era, and especially in the early years of the twenty-first century, where the proliferation of interest in food ethics, animal welfare, and the questions of whether there truly is an ethical ecology of Jewish food ways materialized. Given the increasing power, privilege, knowledge, and modern sensitivities of Jews in modern society combined with the least restrictive flow of information in human history, the need for contemporary inquiry regarding the application of *kashrut* is fundamental to Judaism's continued role as a force for progress.

Put simply, for Jews today, the most vigorous place to create intellectual synergies regarding the traditional observance and current societal moral dynamics has been the laws of *kashrut* and the Jewish values protecting the earth and the dignity for all creatures.

But what does this mean in practice? Since the turn of the millennia and the rapid advances in technology, globalized markets, and atomized politics, pressing issues have emerged in the American and Israeli Jewish communities around ethical issues related to food consumption. All of these contemporary issues, including worker rights, animal welfare, environmental protection,

among others, intersect with basic Jewish food ethics. As a people who respects the ancient laws, but also look forward to a more repaired world, our ability to heal a fractured world hinges on the vitality of applying the latent ethical proscription as described by our wisest sages. On a more personal level, since the beginning of my rabbinical career, and even during my studies, I've been fascinated by the interrelation of *kashrut* to topics that seem to go outside the direct scope of the laws. Usually, when one imagines the extent of a kosher law, one looks to a symbol on a food package: Is this permissible or is it not; this is the normative dialectic. But as I devoted more time in studying the minutia of *kashrut*, the way it balances and counterbalances base desires with refinement, satiation with respect for the worker, and freedom from overconsumption of any litany of products, the more I came to realize that this broad topic—actually, a conglomeration and amalgamation of hundreds of smaller topics brought together through a singular ethical framework—is indispensable for the development of the mind and the soul.

Furthermore, I wanted to learn more about the elasticity of *kashrut*. I wanted to look beyond symbols, procedures, and didacticism and explore the major world problems that *kashrut* can solve. Fortunately, throughout my career, I have been privileged to come into contact with thinkers more thoughtful and knowledgeable in the subject than myself. These thinkers, all of them so humble and powerful in their intellect, guided me in my journey. Yet, I knew that there was more to add to the literature of this topic. Indeed, to further the intellectual potential of this line of inquiry, I decided the time was right to call on some of the brightest Jewish minds—my colleagues—to lend their thoughts on this significant pedagogical exploration. It was these essays—from a range of academics and professionals in the field alike—which led to the creation of this book. I realized that I was not alone and that others were grappling to combine their Jewish values with their ethical food sensitivities.

Who is this book for? As one should be able to discern from the contents within, this volume is not an academic book in the strictest sense. More often than not, the need for an accessible work from scholars in the field superseded the impulse to make this a purely academic book. While there are elements of classic academia within the pages, the chance to let loose these novel ideas took precedence. Thus, rather than spend time examining the minutia of *kashrut* in contemporary practice, the editorial decision was made to use this book as a springboard for an ethics-based theological treatise that should leave readers with more questions than answers. Utilizing such an approach is manifest within this book's purpose, which is to poke, prod, and explore the manifold

dimensions of *kashrut* while appraising its traditional, moral role in Jewish philosophy. The intellectual style is to embrace academic thought but present the material in an accessible and more popular style.

The path of this book is non-linear, by which I mean that we don't begin with the Torah proscriptions for *kashrut* and move on through history. Rather, this book is grouped thematically by topic that begins with exploring the dynamism of *kashrut* and ending with essays pondering the status of genetically modified organisms, conservation, and the environment. In this manner, we go from the particular to the general, first by exploring the theory behind the topic at hand, before moving to the role of the self, and finally charting the role that *kashrut* plays in the world beyond Judaism. In between are sections dedicated to animal welfare, hunger, and spirituality. A more thorough breakdown follows:

In the first section of this book, titled “*Kashrut Dynamics*” features essays that consider the political tribulations (Rabbi Aaron Leibowitz) and social potential (Rabbi Dr. Nathan Lopes Cardozo) of kosher supervision and practices. Leibowitz, currently a member of the Jerusalem City Council, and a *mashgiyah* by trade, cared so deeply for reform in the *kashrut* industry that he created his own supervision agency, Hashgaha Pratit. Dedicating years of his life to the project, his approach to this topic is deeply personal, and it shows. Rabbi Dr. Cardozo’s two contributions here, though each brief, are dense nuggets of wisdom that allow readers to break down pre-conceived norms while reorienting them for deeper assessment of the epistemological function of certain normative traits of *kashrut*. Why should one separate the eating of milk and meat together, besides the obvious reason we are told to? Even more so, does the label on a package of kosher food truly mean it’s kosher?

The second section, titled “*Bridging Kashrut with Ethical & Spiritual Concerns*,” directly follows the lines of thinking introduced in the first section while expanding the definitions of what ethics and justice mean in a modern context. My lone contribution to this edition is included in the section and, indeed, it provides the spark that I hope readers will pick up throughout the course of the book: What really is the moral underpinning of *kashrut*? But even more so, how we do learn these values and incorporate them into daily life? The other essays in this section both explore the values of holiness and the expansion of *kashrut*’s ethical principles in all we do (Rabbi Dr. Yitz Greenberg) and how these ancient ethics influence applications of justice in the modern world (Rabbi Dr. David Kasher).

The locus of the third section of the book spirituality, particularly the spirituality of eating (this thought lends the section its title). Eating, to the mundane mind, seems banal and base: We have to eat to live, so what does this have to do with spirituality? As it turns out, the vein of thought that explores interconnectedness between eating and Jewish spirituality runs deep throughout the tradition, especially Hasidic hermeneutics of blessings and ritual. And to be sure, to explore the intrinsic holiness of something as ordinary as a table (as Rabbi Dr. Daniel Sperber does) allows readers to begin imagining that there are more avenues to spirituality than through rote expression of following the laws of *kashrut*. Elsewhere, this section focuses on the damages of overconsumption (Rabbi Dr. Ariel Evan Mayse and Rabbi David Jaffe) as well as the religio-historical intent of eating with the spiritual self in mind (Rabbi Hyim Shafner).

Moving on, the fourth section examines the health aspects of *kashrut*, while dispelling the inexplicable notion that a kosher diet is somehow healthier than other diets. Opening the section is a powerful call of an ethic guided by Jewish theology and law (Rabbi Daniel Goodman), followed by a more personal essay into the challenges of staying healthy while adhering to *kashrut*. Furthermore, the assumption that restrictions of a kosher diet may have health benefits is challenged; at the least, it is certainly inconclusive that a kosher diet is inherently healthier than any other diet. And as Rabbi Lopatin points out in his contribution, a normative *kashrut*-observant diet is saddled with ritual foods high in carbohydrates, fats, and sugar. Related to the issue of nutrition is the tragic dyad of hunger and obesity. In a fascinating juxtaposition, readers are presented with a stark analysis moral conflict of societies that fetishize food and overeat while millions of people suffer from food deprivation (Rabbi Daniel Landes).

The fifth and sixth sections of the book conjoin topics that concern the hidden dimensions of *kashrut*: labor law (Mayse) and how it affects small farmers in poor, rural villages in the Global South (Rabbi Micha Odenheimer), the welfare of animals raised for slaughter (Rabbi David Bigman, Rabbi Dov Linzer, and Rabbi Dr. David Rosen), limiting consumption of meat (Potek), and the emotional response of hunger and how to remedy it worldwide (Rabbi Marc Gitler).

The final section looks at *kashrut* through the tripartite lens of the environment (Gottlieb), nature conservation in Jewish thought (Rosh Kehillah Dina Najman), and the permissibility of genetically modified crops (Rabbi Gabriel Greenberg).

Make no mistake, the essays contained in this volume are rich in detail and offer new paradigms for issues of *kashrut* that have swirled in the ether for generations. In the following pages, readers will have the unique opportunity to delve into the minds of some of the brightest Modern Orthodox thinkers of this generation. Almost all contributors to this book are rabbinic members of Torat Chayim, the Progressive Orthodox rabbinical association. I'm grateful to the group and to each member for their inspiration and support. Each contribution in this volume is a unique addition to Orthodox discourse and to the broader discourse of Jewish food ethics. The mix of tones and voices present here, from extended academic discourses, short, sermonic pieces, Hebrew responsa, and forward-thinking explications of *halakhah* coalesce into a singularly pluralistic and diverse tome. I'm humbled and excited to see such an extraordinary caliber of thinkers and leaders contribute to a work which will be a valuable resource for decades to come.

Indeed, I believe this volume will serve as an invaluable guide for those committed to *kashrut*, for those committed to Jewish food ethics, and for those thinking about the intersection between tradition and progress, law and values, and ritual and ethics. It's a first, and necessary, leap.

Shmuly Yanklowitz
Scottsdale, Arizona
April 2018

Section 1 Kashrut Dynamics

CHAPTER 1

On the Ethics and Politics of Kosher Food Supervision

Rabbi Aaron Leibowitz

Hours before candle lighting, our *mashgiah* (kosher supervisor) gets a phone call from one of our locations. The hummus joint near the Shuk in Jerusalem has a problem. They just realized that they can't soak the chickpeas, the main ingredient in hummus, properly before a holiday immediately followed by Shabbat. (For reference, soaking chickpeas is fine for twenty-four hours, but forty-eight hours will ruin the beans.) How will they have beans for cooking hummus right after Shabbat for their Saturday night business? Thank God we managed to find a solution, but the remarkable thing was that they called at all, knowing full well we would have no way of catching them coming in on a holiday to put up the beans. To us, this was a success story. The gratification we feel when our strict supervision catches a possible breach in our standards is great, but the knowledge that we have nurtured a commitment to high standards on the part of the client is true vindication.

In 2013, I set out to create the most ethical and professional kosher supervision agency in Israel. It has been a fascinating journey, revealing multiple layers of politics, social dynamics, and ethical issues. In this chapter, I uncover some of these dynamics while also exploring their complexities.

We will see that Jewish law regarding trust, *ne'emanut*, is an intricate system that sets out to define objective categories regarding people's character. When they are applied in a modern and diverse Jewish society they can seem out of place and challenge solidarity and unity. Politics complicate things even further, in the diaspora on a communal level, but especially in Israel where the law of the land comes into play.

Trust: It's Complicated.

When a customer asks if a restaurant is kosher, there are many interests at play. On the simplest of levels, we can assume two primary motives: The business owner wants to make a sale, and the customer wants a reliable answer. The kosher-supervision industry ostensibly comes to serve as an objective third party in order to address the gap between these interests.

But what is the interest of the supervisory agency itself? Clearly any time they remove their supervision from a client they lose business. On the other hand, their product has value to the extent that it can deliver reliable standards to the end user, the kosher consumer. Clearly these conflicting interests should require an honest agency to closely manage its own ethical standards. Let us also look at the consumer's motives. Is it possible that the public may not want reliable supervision as much as they want many kosher places to eat? To what extent is consumer behavior generally considered and careful in the face of the complexities of commercial *kashrut*? Studies show that when the public is faced with complex decisions herd mentality tends to take over. Might that not be the case in regard to *hashgaha* (kosher supervision)?

When we understand that there are not singular motivating factors we must ask; how does one assess ethical character and trustworthiness in the face of personal and perhaps conflicting interests?

Halakhah Trustworthiness

The *halakhah* sources make clear that there is a judgement call involved in assessing one's trustworthiness. Note that Maimonides posits that our assumptions in regard to someone's reliability change in regard to time and place:

At the time when *Eretz Yisrael* was entirely Jewish, one could buy wine from every person and have no suspicion, whereas outside of Israel one could only buy from someone held to be Kosher. But in our day, no matter where one is, one may only buy wine from a person held to be kosher.¹

The *Shulhan Arukh*, from the Sephardic tradition, and the Rema's notations, from the Ashkenazic tradition, discuss what is required for reliability and

¹ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Ma'achalot Asurot*, 11:25.

how our assumptions may shift when we are discussing a private person versus a merchant:

When one is suspect in eating [a certain] forbidden food, whether forbidden by Torah or rabbinic law, they may not be relied on regarding [the *kashrut* of] that same food.²

And some say that even from a person who is not suspect but is not held to be kosher either it is forbidden to buy wine or the other things that are liable of prohibition. But if one is a guest by such a person, one may eat by him.³

The *halakhah* recognizes that a reputation of honesty has value for a merchant, and this consideration can enhance our willingness to rely on a merchant's word under certain circumstances:

One may buy pomegranate wine which is sold for medicinal purposes from the merchant, even if it is not from the barrel, even though it is more valuable than wine, because [people] are strict about it [for its medicinal properties], [the merchant] will not damage his own reputation. (And so with anything one buys from a professional, he will not damage his reputation).⁴

We should note that this *halakhah* is only applied when the fraud can be discovered, like in the case of grape wine being passed as pomegranate wine. This becomes a primary source for kosher supervision based periodic inspection. The fact that the business values its reputation, coupled with the fact that cheaters may be caught, can generate a reasonable assumption of trust. The ability to make a dynamic assessment of trustworthiness finds a radical application in a unique responsa of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein of blessed memory. He was asked about elderly parents who were living with their non-observant children in the former Soviet Union. The question was whether the elderly and infirm eat their grown children's food if their son or daughter tells them it has been properly prepared to be kosher. He commented:

I proposed that there is room to be lenient for many people. If the father knows and trusts his daughter or his daughter-in-law, and believes that she

2 Rabbi Yosef Karo, *Shulhan Arukh, Yorah De'ah* 119:1.

3 Rema, *ibid.*

4 Rabbi Yosef Karo, *Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah* 114:5.

will not try to mislead him and give him something forbidden, because he knows her nature with total clarity and she has proved herself many times that she does not try to mislead him, for she does want to cause him grief or because she is by nature honest, then he can rely on her and eat anything she cooks for him that she says is kosher meat, cooked in the pots and dishes that she uses only for him.⁵

So the *halakhah* recognizes that an assessment of context and circumstance is appropriate when coming to determine trustworthiness. Rabbi Feinstein, for instance, issues his ruling specifically for the infirm behind the iron curtain, and instructs that it is specifically for those difficult circumstances. At the same time, he is willing to issue this ruling within the *halakhah* discourse, indicating that in his view there is a dynamic standard.

Kashrut and Modern Jewish Diversity

As we saw in the last source, the social dynamics around trust in *kashrut* are especially sensitive because they live in the space between different sectors of the Jewish People, those who keep kosher and those who do not. Taken at face value we could assume that the primary goal of kosher supervision is to address this gap. The simplest case of this would be a non-Orthodox business catering to the Orthodox consumer. The *halakhah*, as presented above, clearly states that one may not trust someone who does not keep kosher regarding *kashrut*. At the same time, this seems to set us up for a disturbing equation.

Can we honestly conduct ourselves as if one who is observant is more honest than one who is not? It goes without saying that this is not the reality and yet that is how this standard could appear. Is this rule ethically sound? Should we be concerned with the problematic message it may send?

We have also seen that business interests effect one's status regarding trustworthiness. A store owner is more suspect than a private home, and a pharmacist is more trusted due to the professional stake in their reputation. What happens when kosher supervision itself becomes a business? Is the fact that the agency represents *halakhah* and *kashrut* enough to guarantee that it employs and is run by people of character? The early *halakhah* sources were concerned with honesty in the face of financial interest despite the fact that they addressing a wholly observant community well before the enlightenment and secular Judaism.

⁵ Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, *Igrot Moshe, Yoreh De'ah 1, Siman 54*.

Despite the fact that an agency may represent the religious morality surrounding *kashrut*, can we be sure there is a moral commitment to honesty and truth to mitigate any personal or organizational interest? When money is involved may we not require some form of supervision over the supervisors?

Political Interests

Here we must also consider the political dynamics present in modern *kashrut*. In many communities, there is a *kashrut* committee which brings together local rabbis to oversee the local *kashrut* standards. This committee can quickly come to hold a monopoly on the local supervision industry. There are different ethical opinions regarding monopolies, both in *halakhah* and in general ethics. At the same time, monopolies often breed corrupt practices at the expense of the public. A local *Vaad* (rabbinic committee) may block competition in order to maintain community standards. At the same time, this move is also in their financial interest. Conflict of interest is a basic consideration in the determination of *ne'emanut* (trustworthiness) and may be a consideration in regard to the *Vaad* itself. Competition between reliable agencies would likely incentivize local *hashgaha* providers to be more transparent, fairly priced, service oriented, and even reliable.

In Israel, these dynamics are even more problematic as there is a single national monopoly. The “Law to Prevent Fraud in Kashrut” passed in 1983 prohibits any business from using the word “kosher” without governmental certification. The Chief Rabbinate of Israel and its local councils are the only authorized agency permitted to provide supervision and certification in Israel. Those private agencies that do exist are only permitted to provide additional supervision to more severe standards for the ultra-Orthodox community, and only to businesses that have the *Rabbanut* certification as well. The monopoly of the Chief Rabbinate has bred severe corruption, due to lack of oversight, transparency, and competition. A recent report by the state comptroller found the *Rabbanut* guilty of false reporting, cronyism, weak standards, and other questionable practices.⁶

This law is also part of a larger controversy regarding the monopoly that the Chief Rabbinate has on all religious services including marriage and divorce. As I write these words, battles rage in the Knesset over a law that would give them a monopoly on conversion as well, placing even alternative orthodox

⁶ Justice Joseph Shapira, Israel State Comptroller report, 67b 2017.

conversions outside the law. I believe that the political and capital gains of the ultra-Orthodox-controlled Chief Rabbinate themselves create a conflict of interest, allowing them to maintain a substandard level of supervision in the name of what they see as a greater good. In order to suggest practical methods for maintaining higher ethical standards we need to go back and consider the underlying issues involving *hashgaha*.

Core Concerns Regarding the Reliability in *Kashrut*

The core concerns present in supervision seem to come down to three primary issues:

1. Is there the requisite knowledge for maintaining *kashrut*? We have all heard statements to the tune of: It's only cut up vegetables and a dressing, what could *not* be kosher? Or, of course it is obvious to anyone who maintains strict standards that the salad may not be kosher, due to tithes, infestation, wine vinegar, and a number of additional issues. Modern industrial *kashrut*, with its myriad compounds and ingredients, makes this even more sensitive.
2. Does the person I seek to trust care about *kashrut* as much as I do? We all know that a waiter would never lie about a peanut to someone with an allergy, because they themselves know it to be true and deadly. Might not one who does not believe in *kashrut* fudge the truth, in the case of a mistake in the kitchen for instance? If one does not believe it to be important perhaps they will think 'what they don't know won't kill them?'
3. The business interest is of significant concern to the *halakhah*, as we have explained. This extends to other foreign interests as well. Is there a way for us to address all the concerns that lie behind the *halakhah*, within the framework of *halakhah*, while creating a more socially-positive dynamic?

From Fraud Busting to Trust Building

Behind the complicated concerns we have brought to fore there is one simple question of profound social import: Can I trust you? From an idealistic perspective, if we seek to move towards a more utopian society, we would hope to be increasing the instances where we may answer yes. An expert in *kashrut* supervision once characterized to me his core responsibility as catching their clients

when they lie. It is hard to argue with this logical conclusion. Yet, I would ask if we may recast the ultimate goal of *kashrut* supervision as one of building trust through inspection, transparency, and constructive communication? While the inspection is *halakhically* required, and provides the bedrock of reliable supervision, how might we recruit the partnership of the business in maintaining strict standards?

Bestowing trust need not imply that I trust you with my life, we need not all be lifeguards or surgeons. Trust can be broad or narrow, and employing mechanisms that build and maintain trust is not the same as no trust. The awareness that no party is perfectly trustworthy shifts our attention to systems that are designed to enable trust, indeed, to build trust.

By enhancing and reinforcing trust we create a stronger civil society. Ethics and trust have a reciprocal relationship, to the extent that I perceive that there are people of character before me, committed to the highest ethical standards, to that extent I am willing to trust. This also works in the other direction, by building an effective framework that maintains transparency, and healthy communication, we reinforce the ethical commitments to truth. It is important to see that the core value at stake is that of truth. Once we see this we can begin to appreciate that there is a shared value being protected here, a value that is important to those who do not keep kosher as well. This insight allows us all to get on the same side.

Building the concept of kosher supervision around trust building and social solidarity can also create a profound shift in the attitude of the business owner. The *kashrut* agency becomes an ally in building social capital, something considered a valuable asset in modern business.

Power Dynamics vs. Professionalism and Communication

Kashrut supervision must aspire to the highest levels of professionalism and professional communication. The agency must view itself as a resource for the business and the consumer. The agency brings the requisite knowledge, the *halakhah* care, and the professional know-how in creating full transparency. Removal of certification due to non-compliance is not a threat, rather it is in service of truth, in service of the social capitol which the agency serves. Here *kashrut* is not only protecting the *halakhah* standard and the consumer, it is serving the interests of all the businesses being supervised. This orientation can change the entire tenor of the relationship, recruiting the good will of the business who views the agency as an important ally.

In Israel, the legal monopoly and its enforcement paradigm have cast *hashgaha* as a power dynamic. Training courses for supervisors teach that it is important to create a crisis early in the relationship, bringing a business to a halt, and showing them who is boss. The lack of uniform standards, and the lack of professional practices and standards breed resentment and suspicion. Quickly, the client learns that his role in the relationship is to not get caught. The quality of the trust that the business has in the *kashrut* agency is damaged, and the relationship is no longer about truth, it is adversarial, not reciprocal. The poor reputation of the Chief Rabbinate in Israel does not help.

Communication skills for staff become a crucial component in this work, especially due to the intense sort of interactions that can occur. Whenever a critical conversation around a breach of standards occurs there is a tremendous amount of fear present. The business owner is concerned for his business and livelihood and is often personally invested and protective of his realm, and the *mashgiah* (kosher supervisor) is carrying the significant responsibility towards the community, the agency, and of course towards heaven. This often deteriorates into a power dynamic, full of threats and anger, undermining whatever trust has been built. Clear ethical boundaries, with synchronized expectations, and professional communication become a major skill set. Being able to use nonviolent language, maintain uncompromised red lines and standards, and communicate clearly the needs of the agency, are of utmost importance.

Even more so, *kashrut* agencies must aspire to the highest ethical practices and standards. Supervisors must not be permitted to receive gifts of food from clients. Businesses should be handled by multiple supervisors. All prices and standards should be advertised and transparent. All fiscal transactions should be conducted by the agency, not the supervisors, indeed it should be prohibited for the supervisor to collect funds. Regular and formal feedback should be solicited from all clients regarding the *mashgihim*, and any complaints should be addressed seriously and objectively. All agencies should subject themselves to external reviews. *Mashgihim* must be trained in communication skills and this should be a significant metric in measuring their success.

In addition, competition should be encouraged. This will place higher demand on the public as the need to educate themselves regarding which agencies are reliable become ever more vital to daily living. Encouraging informed consumerism is something that strengthens civil society and will also improve

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Приобрести книгу можно

в интернет-магазине

«Электронный универс»

e-Univers.ru