

VAAD HARABANIM
THE RABBINICAL COUNCIL
of GREATER WASHINGTON

THE BULLETIN

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Wishing you a Kesiva V'chasima Tova!





Rabbi Yosef Singer
Cong. Young Israel Ezras Israel
President

VAAD HARABANIM
THE RABBINICAL COUNCIL
of GREATER WASHINGTON

Rabbi Moshe Walter
Woodside Synagogue Ahavas Torah
Executive Director

To the Greater Washington Jewish Community:

Elul 5777

It is only fitting, at this time of reflection, to acknowledge the seminal contributions of those who have helped the Vaad provide the Greater Washington Jewish Community with its essential services: kashruth and *batei dinim* for *geirus* (conversions), for *gittin* (divorces), and for litigation. We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to our proprietors, *mashgichim*, and to the *Rabanim* of the Vaad for the dedication, *yiras shemayim*, sterling *middos*, and professionalism they bring to their respective jobs. In particular, I want to thank Rabbi Moshe Walter, our Executive Director, and Rabbi Zvi Holland, Director of Field Operations, for overseeing an organization that continues to raise the bar for its standards of *kashruth*, operational efficiency, responsivity, and consistency. Rabbi Moshe Walter also deserves high praise for producing yet another outstanding volume of the Vaad Bulletin, which is, at once, inspirational and practical in terms of implementing strategies for successful teshuva.

A notable change and significant improvement has been implemented in our *bais din* for adjudicating financial disputes. In an effort to broaden and streamline this service, the Vaad is pleased to announce the appointment of Rabbi Reuven Kasierer as the *bais din's mazkir* (secretary). Rabbi Kasierer has been handling the caseload for the past few months and has demonstrated a genuine ability to address matters before the court with courtesy, with competency, and with efficiency. (The reader is referred to a formal announcement later in this journal.) Our conversion *bais din* is a member of the Geirus Policies and Standards (GPS) network of conversion courts, has the full endorsement of the Beis Din of America, and is recognized by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. Finally, our *bais din* for divorce maintains the highest professional standards and treats all those who appear before it with dignity and respect.

This volume also includes an article from the leadership of Yad Yehuda. Although Yad Yehuda is not formally affiliated with the Vaad, it is represented in these pages because we are profoundly grateful to them for the holy *avoda* they perform on behalf of our community. I am personally aware of several individuals who, in the midst of very difficult and trying times, were able to keep "their heads above water" because of the moral and financial support they received from this wonderful organization. More importantly, those who receive its help are treated with the utmost respect and dignity.

On behalf of the Vaad Harabanim of Greater Washington, I wish a heartfelt *ksiva v'chasima tova*, for you and your families. Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Yosef Singer
President

Rabbi Eliezer Kreiser
Ezras Israel Cong.
Vice President

Rabbi Mordechai Rhine
Southeast Hebrew Cong.
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Foreword From the Director

Dear Community member,

We are pleased to present the community with issue 5.2 of The Bulletin of The Rabbinical Council of Greater Washington. Our goals in publishing this document are to share educational and inspirational articles to help add to your Yom Tov experience, coupled with updating you on the Vaad's work in our gamut of communal activities.

This edition of the Bulletin includes articles relating to three critical aspects of the Yamim Noraim experience; as stated, "*Teshuva, Tefillah, U'tzedakah maavirin es roah hagezayrah*", Repentance, Prayer and Charity remove the evil decree. The first article, by Rabbi Yosef Singer, discusses practical steps to Teshuvah; the second article, by Rabbi Levi Shemtov, discusses our unique connection with God when he is closest to us; and the third article, by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer, focuses on the power of the Shofar as a clarion call for the Jewish heart.

In the community section of the Bulletin, you will find a Kashrus update by Rabbi Zvi Holland. As Director of Field operations, Rabbi Holland is in regular communication with me, our mashgichim, and proprietors. For this issue, I asked Rabbi Holland to discuss some recent topics of communal interest on the Kashrus front of the Vaad, as well as share the expectations the Vaad has for our mashgichim.

Additionally, an important announcement regarding a significant addition to enhance our Beis Din system, as well as an important letter regarding local funeral homes can be found within these pages.

Finally, as the Yamim Noraim is a time for "*tzedakah*", we are honored to publish an article written by the leadership of Yad Yehuda of Greater Washington which describes the wide array of tzedakah activities that Yad Yehuda offers, and the variety of ways that community members can assist Yad Yehuda. The Vaad is honored to serve as a Rabbinic resource, and to support this most important tzedakah organization which works tirelessly to help the many community members in need.

Thank you to Rabbi Yosef Singer for his herculean efforts, and significant accomplishments as President of the Rabbinical Council of Greater Washington.

Thank you to Mrs. Adina Moses for the beautiful typesetting and graphic design of the Bulletin.

It is our honor and privilege to serve our beloved community, and wish you, and yours a *kesiva v'chasima tova*; a year of success, joy, and *geulah shleima*!

Rabbi Moshe Walter

Director, Vaad Harabanim
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Thinking Positively

A Practical Step Towards Successful Teshuva

Rabbi Yosef Singer

Young Israel Ezras Israel of Potomac

My dear and esteemed colleague, Rabbi Moshe Walter, asked me to write a short article describing “Practical Steps to Teshuvah”, a truly daunting assignment. After all, the great mussar classics such as *Orchos Tzadikim*, *Sharei Teshuva*, and *Mesilas Yesharim*, essentially provide that guidance. How can I be so presumptuous to even engage this topic? Obviously, I can’t. Therefore, this humble essay would more appropriately be entitled “a thing or two that seems to work to help me grow”. And though there are indeed many practical steps to teshuva, because of limitations of time and space, I will confine this essay to a discussion of one of them.

The *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, Chapter 128, The *Dinim* of *Chodesh even Elul*¹ notes that the word “*Elul*”, spelled *aleph lamed vov lamed* is *roshei teivos*, an acronym, for three different verses in Tanach: (1) “*umal Hashem es Ivavcho v’es Ivav zarecho*” i.e. “Hashem will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants” (Devorim 30:6); (2) “*Ani l’dodi v’dodi li*” i.e. “I am for my beloved and my beloved is for me” (Shir Hashirim (6:3)); and (3) “*Ish Pre’ei hu umatanos l’evyonim*”, i.e. Each man [gives *shaloch manos*] to his friend and gifts to the poor”. The *Kitzur* points out that the associated *pesukim* speak to the issues of *Teshuva*, *Tefillah*, and *Tzedekah* respectively which, “remove the evil decree” and thus represent eminently productive activities with which to be engaged during this month. However, the *Yareach l’Moadim* asks a question concerning this beautiful *drosha*. What is *Ish Pre’ei hu* – the Rabbinic mitzvah of *shaloch manos* – doing in this *Yomim Noraim drosha*? Rav Ulshin presents answers one of which forms the basis of the practical step presented forthwith.

Recently, a highly motivated young man who had been learning the *Shaarie Teshuva* asked me the following *shayla*. “In Chapter 9 of the *Shaar Aleph*, Rabbeinu Yonah writes, “It is (appropriate) for all those who are engaged in repentance to keep a written record of those areas in which they have gone astray and of those *mitzvos* in the fulfillment of which they have fallen short and to review these memoranda daily”. Rabbi, should I review this list on Shabbos?” I answered that it was not appropriate to review such a list on Shabbos because it would likely detract from the experience of joy and pleasure associated with that holy day. Moreover, **if one is to make a list of one’s failures and shortcomings, one must also make a list of one’s accomplishments and strengths**. There are several important reasons for having two such lists if teshuva is to be successful.

In *Parshas Vayeitzei*, the Torah introduces Yaakov Avinu’s famous vision at *Har haMoriah*. “And he dreamt, and behold! A ladder was set earthward (*mutzav artzah*) and its top reached heavenward (*magia hashemima*) [Breishis 28:12]” In *Malchus Shlomo*, Rabbi Shlomo Twerski zt”l, the Hornesteipler Rebbe, points out that the metaphor of Jacob’s ladder represents a person’s spiritual growth. If so, it is certainly understandable that the ladder reached heavenward - but did not reach heaven itself – because spiritual ascension has no

upper limit. Our *avodah* is to constantly strive upwards. The difficulty here is with the description of the bottom of the ladder. Why did the Torah say it pointed “earthward” instead of simply stating it “rested on the ground”? Rabbi Twerski answers the force that enables a person to climb a ladder is provided by the feet and legs. This means that for a person to reach lofty spiritual heights, one must clearly and objectively recognize and address one’s lowest parts, that is, his weaknesses and vulnerabilities. If one is aware of the position of one’s feet, i.e. has a true understanding of his *matzav*, then growth and upward movement is possible. Thus looking down is also an *avodah* that has no end.

Sadly, many people are genuinely afraid of seeing themselves honestly for fear of emotional implosion. This precludes an objective self-assessment with the tragic result that we become stuck on the same rung repeating mistakes and engaged in unhealthy and frustrating behavior patterns. Perhaps, if we were to take the time to record our accomplishments and take note of our positive attributes, we may possess with Hashem’s help, the emotional strength and courage to address our limitations and unlock our true potential. In addition, by focusing on our strengths, we identify the capabilities we need to address, circumvent, transcend, and/or compensate for our limitations. Reb Yerucham Levovitz zt”l, the great *mashgiach ruchani* of the Meir Yeshiva, used to say “Woe to the person who is unaware of his faults, for he does not know what he has to correct. However, double woe to the person who does not recognize his virtues, for he does even recognize the tools he needs to use for his work”.

Finally, taking stock of one’s strengths and achievements, can engender in a G-d fearing person, a strong sense of gratitude toward Hashem and with it a profound feeling of love for Him. These feelings, however, will only be awakened in someone who is capable of feeling gratitude toward his fellow man. Chazal tell us that anyone who is ungrateful for the good that people do for him will ultimately be ungrateful for the good that Hashem does for him as well. Conversely, Rav Ulshen writes, that someone who *is* capable of gratitude to his fellow man will, in turn, come to be grateful to Hashem. So now we can answer the question of what is *Ish Pre’eiHu*, the Rabbinic mitzvah of *shaloch manos*, doing in our Elul *drosha*. The mitzvah of *shalach manos* engenders appreciation in both its giver and recipient. If we feel a strong sense of gratitude to one another, then we will be capable of feeling gratitude to Hashem – especially when we take the time to take stock of all the good things in our lives, including the *kochos* that He has given us and the circumstances in which those *kochos* have found expression into concrete achievements. As our appreciation and love for Hashem grows, we want to be closer to Him and remove any *mechitzos* that inhibit that closeness. In other words, we wish to *teshuva* out of love for Him. Chazal teaches loving Hashem may be the most effective *teshuva* strategy of all because one who performs *teshuva* from love, changes his deliberate *aveiros* into *zechuyos*.

To summarize, when we make our list of shortcomings and failures, we must also make a list of our strengths and achievements. That will give us the emotional strength and wherewithal to address these shortcomings. It will also engender a great love for Hashem, which very well may be the most effective strategy for a favorable judgement. May we all be blessed with a good sweet year.

The King in the Field, Calling for You

Rabbi Levi Shemtov

The SHUL of the Nation's Capital
Chabad Lubavitch Center, Washington, DC

As we approach the Yamim No'raim (Days of Awe), commonly called the High Holidays, we pass through a special period known as the Month of Elul.

The Alter Rebbe, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (founder of the Chabad movement) teaches how during this special period G-d is likened to a “king in the field”, accessible and showing a positive countenance to all. When the king is in his royal abode, access is restricted and the distance great. When the king wanders among his people, however, he is more approachable and the people feel closer to him. Then when he heads back to his palace, the chance for the easier access and contact is over.

G-d himself takes a similar “stroll” among his “people” who are “in the field”. During the Hebrew month of Elul, we say extra prayers, do extra mitzvot, and begin to hear the sounds of the shofar, or ram's horn, calling us to do Teshuva. The term Teshuva is often, even if somewhat inaccurately, referred to as repentance. More precise might be to call it “return”, as it is formed from the Hebrew word “shav” which means to return, and the word teshuva is comprised of “tashuv hey”, translated as “return to Ha(shem)”. The term return is also more fitting as it implies a journey back to a place where one was before and now belongs. Repentance implies - even if slightly - a sharper focus on wrongs and shortcomings, as if we are primarily bad and need to become good, as opposed to primarily good but lost and needing to return home - the latter a much more positive and personally empowering perspective.

So, G-d allows us to get closer to him than usual in these days. He is likened to the king that is in the field for that time. One might try to imagine more immediately a public figure who allows greater access when they campaign or visit their constituency, then returns to their more rarified office.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of sacred memory, explores this further and explains that the “King in the Field” underscores the special spiritual nature and opportunity of the month of Elul. During the rest of the year, a worker in the field leaves the field, their work, after six days each week to celebrate Shabbat, the cessation of work and a transcendent, spiritual time. During Elul, however, the “king”, a reflection of that extra spiritual awareness, is “in the field” - and infuses even our mundane life during the weekdays with an aspect of the heightened spirituality normally reserved and attainable only on the “holier” days. In other words, that connection normally more restricted is now so much more accessible (think free wi-fi) *even in the course of our mundane matters.*

The main symbol of the Days of Awe, and the month of Elul, is the shofar (ram's horn), possibly best

understood through its strong significance and practical use. Any sound which is heard from the shofar is acceptable according to Jewish law. A shofar must be complete, from a kosher animal, and not cracked through to the surface in its length, so the sound is purely from the wide end of the shofar. Additionally, the original sound itself must be heard, not an echo nor through any other device (for example, a microphone). This pure sound, which originates from the narrow tip of the shofar from which it is blown to the wider end where it is heard, also signifies the phrase of “*Min Hameitzar Karasi Kah, Anani Bamerchav Kah*”.¹ “From distress I called you, G-d, with abounding relief You (G-d) answered me.” A meaningful and heartfelt cry originating from deep within the innards of the person reflects the pure sound of the pressed or narrowed soul - distress, the narrow tip of the Shofar, feeling a sense of awe and need to connect with something much broader or greater than the self. The prayer for relief expresses itself and yearns to have it answered in abundance - symbolized by the wide end, or receptacle aspect, of the Shofar.

Now, when the customary sounding of the shofar during the days of Elul comes to a close and Rosh Hashana arrives, we blow the shofar “for real” and fulfill the biblical mandate to do so. The text of the attendant prayer blesses G-d who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to “hear the voice of the shofar”. Interesting. The mitzvah is not to “blow” or “sound” the shofar, but to “hear” its sound.

How do we need to hear it?

Well, if you refer back to the receiving of the Torah at Sinai, we learn of the sound of the Shofar which “did not stop”.² In other words, the sound of that Shofar did not bounce off anything or create any echo. Anyone who’s ever been to one of those august marble buildings in our capital knows how sound can really bounce around. On the other hand, if you’ve been to a sound recording studio, you might notice the opposite, with all the foam panels, there to absorb sound and help create the clearest sound for recording or transmission.

When sound is absorbed it doesn’t just bounce around.

Our aim, therefore, when we hear the sound of the shofar, is to make sure we not only physically “hear” it, but internalize it, and don’t just let it bounce away, less than totally perceived by us.

As we prepare for Rosh Hashana, the New Year which brings with it a new chance and a renewed life, let us take just an extra moment to reflect on the “King of all kings”, who is now “in the field”, in our everyday lives, smiling at us and eager to see us try to get closer, and prepare ourselves for the sounding of the shofar. Perhaps even more importantly, let us prepare for and focus on the “hearing” of the shofar, internalizing its call and answering it appropriately, allowing it to permeate the depths of our soul and energize our lives and that of those around us as a result. We thus yearn for and bring closer the time when we will hear the ultimate call of the shofar, as our prophet promised, “And it will be that day when the great(est) shofar (of all) will be sounded”³, bringing with it the most awesome revelation since Sinai and heralding our final and ultimate redemption, with the coming of Moshiach.

1 1 Psalms 118:5

2 Deuteronomy 5:19

3 Isaiah 27:3

The Shofar

A Clarion Call For The Jewish Heart

Rabbi Yehoshua Singer

Am HaTorah Congregation

Immediately upon completing the first set of *kolos* - *Shofar* blasts on Rosh Hashana - we recite the Passuk from Tehillim 89 “*Ashrei ha’am yod’ei se’ru’ah*” – ”Praiseworthy is the nation who knows the sound of the *Shofar*”. Rav Yoshiya in the *Medrash* on *Parshas Emor*, *Parsha 29 §4*, addresses the obvious question: What unique rights do we hold to the sound of the *Shofar*? The nations of the world can blow all sorts of trumpets and horns. Surely, they are capable of mastering the sound of the *Shofar*, as well. Why does *Dovid Hamelech* take note of and praise our knowledge the sound of the *Shofar*?

Rav Yoshiya explains that *Dovid Hamelech* is not referring to the sound of the *Shofar*, rather he is referring to how we use the *Shofar*. Says Rav Yoshiya, our great fortune is that through the sound of the *Shofar* we persuade Hashem to rise from the Throne of Judgement and sit on the Throne of Mercy, be filled with mercy for us, and turn our judgements to merciful decrees. The *Eitz Yosef* explains further that the secret of the power of the *Shofar* lies in our response. When we hear the sound of the *Shofar* we focus on repentance, a deep reverence for our Creator and an acceptance of the yoke of His Kingdom, as well as all other meanings within the *Shofar*. It is when we hear the clarion call of the *Shofar* and turn our hearts, thoughts, and passions to G-d, devoting ourselves as His nation, that He in turn devotes Himself to us, as it were, and moves to the Throne of Mercy.

It would seem, however, that Rav Yoshiya has not answered our initial question. Why is our ability to understand the meaning of the *Shofar*'s call any more unique than the talent to play it? Surely, the nations of the world, should they care to know, would be able to understand and utilize the power of the *Shofar*'s sound. We still must ask, what characteristic is within our nation which *Dovid Hamelech* finds so unique and worthy of praise?

Perhaps the true meaning of this *Medrash* can be found in the words of Rav Yoshiya. Rav Yoshiya says “*she’hein makeerin l’fatos es Bor’an*” - “that they **recognize** to persuade their Creator”. It would appear Rav Yoshiya is telling us that the secret of the Jew does not lie in our knowledge, but rather in an innate recognition of the meaning of the *Shofar*. When a Jew hears the *Shofar*'s call, something stirs within their soul. Deeply rooted within the psyche of each and every one of us is the awareness of a glorious heritage and noble spiritual calling. Embedded in our spiritual DNA is the understanding that life has a higher purpose, and that the Creator and Master of the Universe, knows me and is judging me on Rosh Hashana. When we hear the call of the *Shofar* (a ram's horn reminding us of the ultimate sacrifice of *Akeidas Yitzchok* – the Binding of Isaac) we innately recognize its meaning, and respond to its call.

This message can be seen in the words of the *Eitz Yosef*, as well. The *Eitz Yosef* explains “*she’mechavanim bah lit’shuvah*” – “that we intend for repentance through it”. It is this characteristic of our nation which *Dovid Hamelech* praises – whoever we are, and wherever life has taken us, when we hear the sound of the *Sho-*

far, we are stirred. Our essence and identity is one of nobility and spiritual greatness. This cannot be lost. When a Jew hears the sound of the *Shofar*, a Jew innately recognizes it's call, and for that moment begins to focus on repentance. How praiseworthy indeed is the nation so deeply connected with our Creator, that we innately hear the call to return to Him.

Rav Yoshiya's message is ever so important as we approach the *Yomim Noraim* – Days of Awe. As we begin to review this past year and introspect it is so easy to begin to feel inadequate. We can easily be discouraged as we think of all that we have done wrong, and the myriad ways in which we could and should do better. We begin to feel incapable of ever reaching the lofty heights of spiritual achievement.

Yet, Rav Yoshiya is teaching us that spiritual greatness is not something we have to find and earn. It is not a gift awarded only to a fortunate few. Rather, spiritual greatness is at the core of every Jew. It is our identity. It is who we are. We do not need to become someone we are not. Rather, we need simply to listen to the call of the *Shofar* and look within ourselves. We need simply to find the yearning and striving within, nurture it and strengthen it. This is the work of the *Yomim Noraim* and this is the gift of the *Mitzvah* of *Shofar*. It is a chance to recognize that spark within, to strengthen ourselves, and realize the nobility and greatness that has been ours since our inception.

May we all merit to heed the call of the *Shofar*, to respond to the stirrings within, and to reach the true greatness and nobility that is our heritage, and thereby merit a year of blessing, health and all good things. K'siva v'chasima tova.

Capitol-K Kosher Update

Rabbi Zvi Holland

Capitol K Director of Field Operations

Peiros Eretz Yisroel in Diaspora Food Service Establishments

While we are fortunate to partake of the harvests of *Eretz Yisroel* that have been grown according to the *Torah's* agricultural *mitzvos*, there are formidable obstacles that must be overcome in order to consume this produce in a *halachically* prescribed fashion. Over the past few years, there has been a seasonal proliferation of produce from Israel in the U.S. which without properly addressing *Terumos U'Maaseros* and *Shemita* issues are effectively, not kosher.

The challenges involved in keeping track of periodic deliveries of produce from Israel, as well as the implementation of proper procedures for removing *Terumos U'Maaseros*, are not unique to these shores. Any visitor to Israel knows that virtually every produce shop in Israel bears a *hechsher* attesting to the proper handling of this *mitzvah* on a daily basis.

In the USA, in general the challenge of having to deal with the issues involved with *Terumos & Maaseros* is compounded by the fact that certain products are available only sporadically throughout the year. During six out of the seven *Shmitta* years, *Terumos U'Maaseros* may be separated. Furthermore, all vegetables and fruits that are grown during *Shmitta* are forbidden to be exported and even if exported, they require special handling with the utmost of care. In foodservice and industrial settings the standard of the kosher industry is not to allow Israeli produce at all, due to the aforementioned challenges involved in successfully handling such produce successfully according to Halacha. This, despite our deepest desire to be supportive of *Yishuv Eretz Yisroel*. On an individual basis some Rabbis take this approach as well, due to the general lack of expertise in these areas common in our communities while others make efforts to educate their *Kehillos* in the intricacies of *Hafrashas Terumos U'Maaseros*.

We are therefore quite pleased to announce that one Israeli company has made a commitment to address these issues for all of their exported product and effective immediately, DOROT FARMS CARROTS, a product of Israel, is approved this season under the certification of *Rav Yosef Efrati* and does not require *hafrashas teruma u'maaseros*. No additional symbol is required on the bags. This approval will need to be renewed yearly and will not apply during the *Shmitta* (Sabbatical) year.

PLEASE NOTE:

This applies ONLY to DOROT FARMS CARROTS. Those who choose to assume the personal responsibility of separating *Teruma U'Maaseros* on other products are advised to seek guidance and instruction in this regard from their *rabbonim*. Consumers are advised to exercise extreme caution when identifying the source country when purchasing carrots, peppers and herbs (chives are most common) which are now commonly imported from Israel.

Shmitta Wine - Alert

Community members are advised that there is a small amount of 2015 Israeli wine on the market. An established *Vaad* policy, in consonance with nationally accepted *kashrus* standards, is not to use these wines

due to various *halachic* considerations. These wines are easily identifiable, as they display the “2015” vintage on the label, but not a symbol from a U.S.-based national *kashrus* agency. *Vaad*-certified establishments will not use or carry these wines at all.

Proper Sealing of Delivered Kosher Meals

Community members are advised to remember that *Vaad*-prepared meals, or food that is delivered or dropped off, must display a seal or marking identifying its kosher status. Once this seal is broken, the *Vaad* no longer assumes responsibility for the *kashrus* of that food unless a *Vaad mashgiach* is present and a *Vaad hashgacha* card is displayed (usually near the washing station). Please note that all prepared foods that are delivered require at least one *siman* of *kashrus*, and items containing meat and fish will also bear a second *Vaad* seal.

Capitol K Vegetable Checking Policies

In all facilities where vegetables that are prone to infestation are prepared and served ready to eat, the Capitol K requires that a *mashgiach* perform a *bedika* of those vegetables prior to them being served, per the requirement of *Shulchan Aruch Y.D. 84*.

Vaad Mashgichim must be specially trained and approved for vegetable checking to serve in this capacity. The *Vaad* expends much effort and energy in ensuring that there are adequately trained *mashgichim* who can supply the community with vegetables that have been checked according to the highest industry standard.

The *Vaad's* policies mirror those of all major *kashrus* organizations and local *Vaadim* that require thorough washing of all vegetables prior to *bedika*. These policies are written and available to the *mashgichim* and proprietors as a point of reference for any questions that may arise.

The *bedika* itself is carried out using the worldwide industry accepted standard of “*shmatte*” or thrip cloth method, pioneered by *Rav Moshe Vaye, shlit”a*, in Israel. All consumers, locals and visitors from around the world may rest assured that their vegetables have been properly washed and checked.

The Diverse Role of a Mashgiach

A Capitol K *mashgiach* may retain many different roles. Below is a basic list of things for which our *mashgichim* may be responsible.

The *mashgiach* shall:

1. Remain in the Restaurant/Commissary during the entire day and may not be sent away from the Restaurant/Commissary on errands, unless specially approved by the *Vaad*.
2. Turn on all stoves, ovens, hot plates and all other heating or cooking appliances or equipment used in the cooking or heating of food by the Merchant; and in no event shall the *Mashgiach* allow any workers or persons to turn on any stove, oven, cooking appliance or equipment for the heating or cooking of food without prior approval by the *Vaad*.
3. Approve and, if required by *Vaad*, sign the receipts or invoices for all foods, beverages, ingredients and food products, as well as all utensils introduced or brought onto the premises for use by the Merchant.
4. Prevent introduction into the premises of any food products, ingredients and beverages which have not been previously approved by the *Vaad*.

5. Segregate all newly acquired utensils to assure that the Rabbinic Administrator or his designee can supervise *tevilah* or *kashering* prior to their use by the Merchant.
6. Check that all products delivered to the Commissary have proper markings or other indices (*plumbas*, etc...) indicating their source, as well as the Rabbinic authority which certified the product. The *plumba* or seal is to remain affixed until such time as the product is prepared for cooking.
8. Assure that ovens have been lit by the *Mashgiach*.
9. Check the daily work schedule in the Commissary/Restaurant to be fully aware of all food being prepared by the Merchant in the Facilities for use therein or for delivery outside of the Commissary/restaurant each day.
10. Check all vegetables and fruit thoroughly for any insects in accordance with *Vaad* guidelines.
11. Assure that all food (including, but not limited to, all meat, liver, chicken, bread, and rolls) that is prepared in the Facilities and is to be stored, refrigerated or delivered to any premises outside of the Facilities, including the boxes or other containers in which the food is stored or packaged, are properly marked to indicate their nature, source and the fact that they were prepared under the supervision of the Council.
12. Supervise preparation and approve all food service orders for delivery by the Merchant.
13. Supervise preparation and approve all foods prepared by the Merchant or for any affairs scheduled to be held at the Facilities or for delivery elsewhere; and, if for delivery elsewhere, supervise the loading of the food onto the trucks used by the Merchant or hotels and any delivery of kosher food outside the premises.
14. Seal all delivery trucks of the Merchant, if needed, before they depart the Facilities for delivery of food to any premises outside of the Facilities, unless individual containers inside delivery vehicle are sealed.
15. Assures that all food prepared for *Shabbos* affairs has been fully cooked before it is dispatched for delivery.
16. All wine must be *Mevushal* and approved by the *Vaad*.
17. Knives and all appliances with sharp cutting edges requiring periodic sharpening must be sharpened on premises under the supervision of the *Mashgiach* and will not be given out to any sharpening service, unless approved by the *Vaad*. These appliances, as well as all other equipment, utensils, appliances, dishes, etc. used by the Merchant must be retained in the facilities.



Rabbi Yosef Singer
 Cong. Young Israel Ezras Israel
 President

VAAD HARABANIM
 THE RABBINICAL COUNCIL
 of GREATER WASHINGTON

Rabbi Moshe Walter
 Woodside Synagogue Ahavas Torah
 Executive Director

Greetings:

Elul, 5777
 August, 2017

The halachically correct manner to address a dispute between two Jews is for them to bring the matter to a *bais din* (rabbinic court), as opposed to a secular court. Historically, the communal *bais din* has been a critical component of any vibrant and established Jewish community. To that end, the Vaad Harabanim of Greater Washington has, for decades, provided a *bais din* litigation service to the Greater Washington Jewish Community. In an effort to both broaden and streamline this service, the Vaad is pleased to announce the appointment of Rabbi Reuven Kasierer as the *bais din's mazkir* (secretary). Rabbi Kasierer has been handling the caseload for the past few months and has demonstrated a genuine ability to address matters before the court with courtesy, with competency, and with efficiency. His contributions have already made a positive impact on the *bais din's* operations.

With the office of the *mazkir* in place, the process by which an individual can bring a claim against another party is straightforward. The first step is for that person to contact Rabbi Kasierer (contact information provided below) and provide a brief explanation of the claim to him. Rabbi Kasierer will then contact the other party to ascertain his/her willingness to attend a *bais din* hearing. If both parties are agreeable, he will then assemble a panel of three rabbis to act as the *bais din* for that hearing. The Vaad endeavors to ensure that there is no sense of bias or discomfort between either party or the members of the *bais din*. As such, we avoid using those rabbis who have or have had a significant connection or history with either party. We are fortunate to have a large pool of competent rabbis in the community, from whom to draw, to sit on the *bais din*. We very much appreciate contributions of these *rabanim* who generously give of their time to provide this holy service. In this regard, we are pleased to give special recognition to Rabbi Yitzhak Grossman of the Greater Washington Community Kollel and Rabbi Eliyahu Reingold of the Yeshiva of Greater Washington. Above all, Rabbi Dovid Rosenbaum is deserving of our gratitude for his selfless dedication toward making the *bais din* viable.

The parties need not have *halachic* expertise. All they are asked to do is to relate, to the *bais din*, the facts of the case and their perspectives on it to the best of their abilities. They are provided with a written description of the *bais din* policies and processes so that they know what to expect. Though certain cases may involve multiple hearings, many times only one hearing is needed to gather all pertinent information. Next, the rabbis of the *bais din* meet, reach a decision, and submit that decision in writing to both parties.

Rabbi Kasierer can be reached at 301-770-0078, ext. 704 or at rkasierer@capitolk.org. May the merit of dealing with disputes appropriately bring the ultimate redemption.

Rabbi Yosef Singer
 President, Rabbinical Council of Greater Washington

Rabbi Eliezer Kreiser
 Ezras Israel Cong.
 Vice President

Rabbi Mordechai Rhine
 Southeast Hebrew Cong.
 Treasurer

Rabbi Yehoshua Singer
 Am HaTorah Cong.
 Secretary

13217 New Hampshire Avenue, Suite 10142, Silver Spring, MD 20914

Phone: 301---770---0078

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Elul 5777

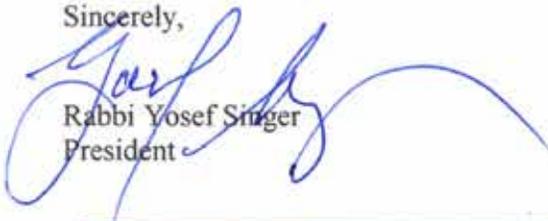
To the Greater Washington Jewish Community:

For sixteen years Torchinsky Hebrew Funeral Home has been the only funeral home ever endorsed by the Rabbinical Council of Greater Washington. After recently receiving inquiries from other establishments, the RCW took the opportunity to review its standards for endorsement. After extensive internal discussion the RCW has decided that it will not continue to offer funeral home endorsements. The situation in 2001 allowed the RCW to offer endorsement. Today, granting endorsement -- or any meaningful form of approval -- would require closer supervision than is practical.

This decision is in no way prompted by any action of Ms. Torchinsky or her funeral home. The RCW remains satisfied with THFH's adherence to our guidelines and with Ms. Torchinsky's efforts at furthering proper funeral procedures in the Greater Washington Jewish community. The RCW appreciates the service THFH has provided to members of our congregations over the years, and looks forward to continuing to work together in meeting the community's needs.

Any further questions regarding funeral practices can be forwarded to one's personal rabbi or the Rabbinical Council of Greater Washington, 301-770-0078, ext. 2.

Sincerely,



Rabbi Yosef Singer
President

Rabbi Eliezer Kreiser
Ezras Israel Cong.
Vice President

Rabbi Mordechai Rhine
Southeast Hebrew Cong.
Treasurer

Rabbi Yehoshua Singer
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Yad Yehuda of Greater Washington

Yad Yehuda of Greater Washington is a 501c3 nonprofit organization which provides an array of financial assistance programs throughout all the Greater Washington Jewish communities. Programs such as Tomchei Shabbos, the Capital Kosher Pantry, and emergency financial relief help ease some of the strain on our friends and neighbors who are experiencing financial difficulties. It is only because of the continued generosity of donors and volunteers like yourself that Yad Yehuda is able to fulfill its crucial mission in our community.

Yad Yehuda was able to assist nearly 500 individuals in 2016, providing in excess of \$400,000 in aid, while preserving the dignity and confidentiality of all its recipients and stretching each tzedakah dollar to achieve the maximum possible benefits.

Originally known as the Yehuda Mond Foundation, the organization changed its name to Yad Yehuda of Greater Washington to reflect its increased role in providing critical assistance to members of the Washington Jewish community. As the DC area Jewish community population has grown, so too have the financial needs with which our families struggle. Yad Yehuda is called upon every day to assist those who are struggling to keep up with basic living expenses.

Most Yad Yehuda recipients are people just like you and me. Many have families, have college degrees and work hard. It is very likely that someone you know, perhaps one of your friends, community acquaintances or relatives is getting help from Yad Yehuda right now.

Here is a typical day of calls at Yad Yehuda:

A medical emergency has hit a family earning a good salary. The huge medical bills have sent the family finances in a tailspin.

A single parent is too embarrassed to ask for help after a divorce, but is willing to consider receiving advice on government assistance programs and would be willing to come to the Capital Kosher Pantry with a private appointment.

After months of a deteriorating situation, a young mother suddenly realizes that she can't afford even \$20 worth of groceries to get her family through the week.

Tomchei Shabbos

The Tomchei Shabbos of Greater Washington was Yad Yehuda's first program, beginning in 2007. Tomchei Shabbos assists local families and individuals in financial distress, so that they can purchase much needed food for Shabbos and Yom Tov.

When a family is unable to meet their regular Shabbos expenses, their congregational Rabbi will approach Yad Yehuda to request assistance. Rabbi Moshe Arzouan, the Program Director of the Tomchei Shabbos

program, will meet with the Rabbi to assess the degree of need. Shalom Kosher scrip cards, already widely used in the community, are then issued monthly by Yad Yehuda and can be used for the purchase of Shabbos and Yom Tov food without potential stigma. In addition to the distribution of Shalom Kosher scrip, recipients have the option to receive freshly baked challahs, donated by Rosendorff's Bakery, which are distributed to recipient homes every erev Shabbos and erev Yom Tov. The family's Rabbi remains as the family's liaison to Yad Yehuda during the entire period of assistance.

In 2016, an equivalent of over 25,000 Shabbos and Yom Tov meals were provided to recipients through the Tomchei Shabbos program.

Capital Kosher Pantry

The Capital Kosher Pantry, located at 1910 University Blvd, West, is the Washington DC region's only kosher food pantry. In a newly refurbished facility, the Pantry offers a high quality, private shopping experience. The Pantry helps dozens of families in the Greater Washington Jewish community to fill their shelves with a wide variety of nutritious packaged kosher food products free of charge and with dignity. Many, if not all, of these families would otherwise go hungry. Recipients visit the Pantry at designated hours or by private appointment.

As an authorized distributor for the Capital Area Food Bank, the Pantry is restocked every week with carefully selected kosher products available to Yad Yehuda at low cost from the Capital Area Food Bank.

The Pantry inventory is also richly supplemented from community wide food drives in local Shuls and businesses. The Pantry now also has a publicly accessible non-perishable food drop-off storage bin at the entrance of the Pantry. All of the food collected from the community is delivered, sorted and shelved at the Pantry each week by dedicated Yad Yehuda volunteers of all ages.

Emergency Financial Relief

When a family financial crisis strikes and bills need to be paid, Yad Yehuda moves quickly to provide assistance to try to keep the situation under control.

First, a financial assistance application (available on the Yad Yehuda website) is completed. The application is received and evaluated with utmost confidentiality. Short term and long term goals are set to provide relief. In the short term, financial assistance can include mortgage or utility assistance, advice about government program assistance or receiving professional assistance from one or more of Yad Yehuda's professional services volunteers.

In the longer term, assistance could be in the form of job training or establishment of loans.

Yad Yehuda often collaborates with a number of other local assistance programs including the Franco Foundation, Bikur Cholim, Keren HaChesed, the Jewish Social Services Agency and the Hebrew Free Loan Society. The key to successful outcomes is Yad Yehuda's commitment to searching for a customized solution for every family.

Yad Yehuda is run solely by volunteers and there are many ways to make a unique volunteer contribution. In addition to volunteers who help to run the Capital Kosher Pantry, Yad Yehuda is building a network of

professionals who are willing to volunteer their expert services at no cost. Volunteer experts already include financial planners, handymen, lawyers, medical professionals, mental health professionals, social workers and many more.

Our Sages tell us that tzedakah and chesed begin within one's own community. Your donation of professional expertise, time, food and money helps save our families. Please let us know how you would like to help by contacting the Yad Yehuda office.

To learn more about Yad Yehuda of Greater Washington, please visit our website at www.yadyehuda.org.



VAAD HARABANIM
THE RABBINICAL COUNCIL
of GREATER WASHINGTON



Vaad Harabanim of Greater Washington
The Rabbinical Council of Greater Washington

Rabbi Yosef Singer, *President*

Rabbi Moshe Walter, *Director*

www.capitolk.org

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The Vaad Harabanim of Greater Washington is an organization of Orthodox rabbis that provides the Greater Washington Jewish community with critical services such as *kashrus* supervision, a *beis din* for the administration of Jewish divorce, a *beis din* for arbitration of financial disputes, and a *beis din* for conversion. In addition, the Vaad, also known as the Rabbinical Council, acts as a rabbinic resource, and supports vital communal service organizations, such as the *Chevrah Kadisha*, *Bikur Cholim*, *Yad Yehuda* and the *Mikvah Emunah Society*. Members of the Vaad Harabanim are dedicated to serving the broader Jewish community in whatever way possible and appreciate the opportunity to do so.