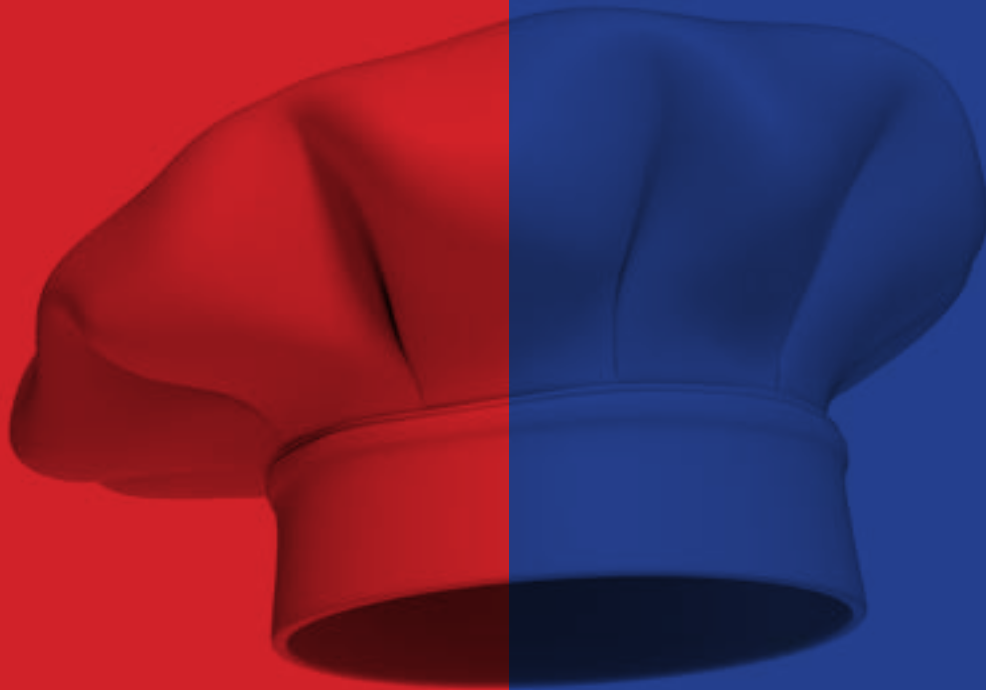


לזכות החתן הרה"ת ר' לוי יצחק הלוי
והכלה המהוללה מרת רבקה שיחיו
בייטעלמאן
לרגל נישואיהם ב' ניסן ה'תשע"ח
נדפס ע"י הוריהם
הרה"ת ר' יחיאל מיכל הלוי
וזוגתו מרת חנה שיחיו בייטעלמאן
הרה"ת ר' חיים יהודה לייב הלוי
וזוגתו מרת עטל סימא שיחיו קליין



mivtza KASHRUS

Strengthening the Foundations of Klal Yisrael

Much of the information in this article was gleaned from interviews with Mrs. Yehudis Groner, Mrs. Laya Klein, and Mrs. Shterna Zirkind from the Mivtza Kashrus Committee and Mrs. Esther Blau from the Spice and Spirit Cookbook Committee. זכות הרבים תלוי בהן.

“When contemplating the current spiritual state of *klal Yisroel*, there is a question raised in *seforim*, and even more so by many individuals: Why is it that the most recent generation has experienced such an unprecedented decline in mitzvah observance in so many communities?”

This painful and sensitive question was addressed at the surprise *farbrengen* of Tes-Zayin Tammuz, the eve of Shiva Asar B'Tammuz, 5735.

The Rebbe opened the final *sicha* on the theme of the daily *Chitas—revi*’i of Parshas Pinchas. Responding to the demand of the daughters of Tzelafchad to inherit their father’s portion in Eretz Yisroel, Hashem endorsed their request. We learn from this that the Jewish women cherished the land more than anyone else. This clearly illustrates the integral role of Jewish women in nurturing and preserving Yiddishkeit throughout history and for eternity.

“Although I usually don’t publicly discuss such matters that are uniquely relevant to women, today I will do so, in light of the daily *Chitas* and the fact that we are under the influence of Yud-Beis and Yud-Gimmel Tammuz.”

The Rebbe then addressed the painfully low spiritual state of many Jewish communities and explained that this “spiritual descent” resulted from a decline in the observance of *taharas hamishpacha* and *kashrus*. Therefore, the key to restoring the spiritual health of *klal Yisroel* is in the hands of the Jewish women.

It is explained in *seforim* (and scholars of nature agree to this assertion as well) that the natural characteristics and tendencies of a person are influenced by the food he or she eats. Just as they affect the health of the body, they also affect the intellect and ways of understanding. Eating coarse and unrefined foods can limit the capacity to properly understand refined topics. Eating

refined foods facilitates clearer thought and comprehension of deeper concepts.

Ingesting non-kosher food causes one to think in a non-Torah manner. The fact that such absurd ideas—such as to consider it possible for one to convert to Judaism not in accordance with *halacha*, or that the existence of the Jewish nation is not dependent on Torah study and mitzvah observance—have been accepted by so many, is the direct result of a decline in *kashrus* observance.

Naturally, the woman of the home has the unique opportunity to influence the entire family to observe the mitzvah of *kashrus*, even if they are currently not doing so. By maintaining a kosher kitchen and preparing physically nourishing meals for the household, she also provides essential spiritual nourishment that will influence all other areas of life.¹

The Rebbe announced that the time had come to actively encourage more

women to *kasher* their kitchens, to observe *kashrus* and thereby influence their entire families to do so as well, as this will have a major impact on all of *klal Yisroel*.

“A fund has been established by a group of generous donors to help defray costs of anyone, throughout the entire world, who will switch to a kosher kitchen—*kasher* the stove and other utensils, purchase two new sets of dishes and whatever else is necessary. Half of all these expenses will be reimbursed by this special Kashrus Fund upon receipt of a letter from the local rabbi certifying that the kitchen has been *kashered* and the amount of the expenses incurred. This will, of course, be kept in utmost confidentiality.

“I call upon all communities, organizations, and societies to follow the example of these generous donors; to set up more funds to encourage as many Yidden as possible to begin observing this important mitzvah.”

The fact that such absurd ideas have been accepted by so many, is the direct result of a decline in *kashrus* observance.



A KOSHER DISPLAY IN A SUPERMARKET.

In a letter addressed to all of *anash* in Eretz Yisroel, dated 25 Tammuz, Rabbi Efraim Wolf communicated the Rebbe's message (received through the *mazkirus*) that they should influence all *frum* communities to get involved in strengthening *kashrus* and *taharas hamispacha*, "as these are not uniquely Lubavitch projects."²

The Three Mitzvos Unique to Women

It is interesting to note that the Rebbe launched the three *mivtzoim* in connection with the three mitzvos unique to women, *neshek*, *kashrus* and *taharas hamispacha*, in the year 5735—ten years from the *histalkus* of Rebbetzin Chana.

On many occasions the Rebbe would mention that an acronym of the word חנה includes these three mitzvos: חלה—*kashrus*, נדה—*taharas hamispacha*, and הדלקת נרות—Shabbos candles.

On Vov Tishrei 5745, in connection with the twentieth *yahrtzeit* of Rebbetzin Chana, the Rebbe requested that twenty new *mikvaos* be constructed, and that twenty new funds to assist people in *kashering* their kitchens and twenty new funds to encourage *neshek* be established.³

The New Mivtza Takes Off

Whereas previous *mivtzoim*, such as *tefillin*, *mezuzah*, and *neshek*, were fairly simple to organize and implement, influencing a Jew to start keeping kosher demands an entirely new level of engagement.

Shortly after the Rebbe announced the new *mivtza*, Mrs. Yehudis Groner



THE REBBE ADDRESSES NSHEI UBNOS CHABAD, 16 IYAR 5735.

V.SCHILDKRAUT VIA JEM 108691

Influence all *frum* communities to get involved in strengthening *kashrus* and *taharas hamispacha*, "as these are not uniquely Lubavitch projects."

and Mrs. Chashie Lev together with several other Crown Heights women, published pamphlets about *kashrus* and organized teams of *anash* and *bochurim* to *kasher* kitchens. (During the early stages of *mivtza kashrus*, women and girls were *kashering* kitchens as well.)

Shluchim and *anash* around the world sprang into action, and very soon thousands of homes around the world were becoming kosher. Besides the fund that the Rebbe had announced at the *farbrengen*, the Rebbe also sent token financial participation to the people running the campaigns. The women leading the campaign in Crown Heights received

a check from the Rebbe. Rabbi Akiva Schmerling, a Chabad activist in Switzerland, received 50 francs from the Rebbe towards his involvement in *mivtza kashrus* in Switzerland.

In the early 5740s, the *Mivtza Kashrus* Committee was established as an official branch of N'shei Chabad, under the directorship of Mrs. Laya Klein and Mrs. Shterna Zirkind. Advertisements were placed in various Jewish newspapers, and they fielded hundreds of requests from Jews in the tri-state area to *kasher* their homes. Every advertisement was reviewed by the Rebbe before publication.

Volunteers would meet with the families in their homes to educate



A BROCHURE PROMOTING KOSHER EATING.

them on the basics of *kashrus* and to determine the best way to *kasher* their kitchens. Teams of *anash* and *bochurim* were then dispatched to do the actual *kashering*. Everyone was offered the 50% rebate for the changeover expenses, as per the Rebbe's instruction upon launching the *mivtza*. As shluchim moved out to more places in the tri-state area, much of the *kashering* work and connections with the many families were referred to the local shluchim.

One of the earliest projects, still in operation today, is "Kosher Week." Stands are set up in supermarkets, stacked with *kashrus* information and literature. Volunteers are on hand to illustrate to Jewish shoppers how easy it is to shop for kosher food.



For many, *kashering* the kitchen became the stepping stone to greater growth in all areas of Yiddishkeit. Many families became *frum* and full fledged *anash* directly through *mivtza kashrus*!

Revolutionizing Kosher Cuisine

In addition to educating and inspiring Yidden to observe *kashrus* and facilitating the often tedious transition, the Rebbe's campaign revolutionized the landscape of kosher cuisine throughout the world. Until the early 5730s, *kashrus* was associated with old fashioned foods from the *shtetl*, or the standard tasteless kosher staples readily available on a large scale in America at the time.

The Rebbe changed this by empowering a group of N'shei Chabad to produce a world class cookbook—the first of its kind.

In early 5732, members of the Junior N'shei discussed the idea of publishing a community cookbook, similar to many synagogue sisterhoods and women's societies. Since there were many *baalei teshuvah* families joining the Crown Heights community, they decided to include

information about *hilchos kashrus*, so that it could serve as a helpful resource for women that had not been raised in *frum* homes.

A committee was organized to collect recipes and to write small articles on various areas of *kashrus*, Shabbos, and Yom Tov. The work was fairly amateur, as it was intended only for the community, but the *halacha* articles were meticulously reviewed by Rabbi Marlow.

"During the month of Kislev 5734, the draft was completed and we were ready to begin typesetting, so we submitted our work to the Rebbe," recalls Mrs. Esther Blau. "The Rebbe's response elevated the entire project to an unprecedented level."

נת' ות"ח. להחזיר. וה' יצליחן.
 ולהעיר כיון שצריך להתחרות עם ס' כיו"ב
 ותמיים (לאו דווקא - כשר) ולנצחם (שהרי
 זה נוגע לכשרות כו"כ בתים דבנ"י) צ"ל גם
 בעניינים חיצוניים מהודר ונאה, אפילו באם
 עי"ז יתוסף בהוצאות. ובטח יתבוננו בס' כאלה
 הנמצאים בשוק הנפוצים.

I received it, and much thanks. Return [the originals]. May Hashem grant them success.

Since this cookbook needs to compete with other cookbooks (that

The Rebbe expected this cookbook to become a tremendous tool in transforming the kosher culinary scene on a global level. This was no longer a neighborhood project...

are not necessarily Kosher) and win—as this will have an effect on kosher observance in many Jewish households—it needs to be beautiful externally as well, even if it will increase the cost. Surely, you will consult cookbooks that are already sold in stores.

[See side bar for the rest of this lengthy response.]

“We realized that the Rebbe expected this cookbook to become a tremendous tool in transforming the kosher culinary scene on a global level. This was no longer a neighborhood project, it needed to be the very best—no matter the price!”

As the editorial team kicked into high gear to meet these high expectations, the Rebbe continued to guide them on numerous details. In

one particular instance, a potential cover design was submitted to the Rebbe. It was a depiction of a Shabbos table scene with two Shabbos candles and a plate of fish. The Rebbe responded:

נר קטן בין השניים כרגיל
אינו ניכר כלל טוב - המאכלים והאם זה
מאכל בכלל

Include a small candle between the two large ones, as usual.

One cannot tell if the food is good tasting—or if it is food at all.

The message was clear—every element of this cookbook, especially the cover art, must be of the highest caliber. Reb Michoel Muchnik was commissioned to illustrate the cover as well as many other pages, in accordance with the Rebbe’s instruction that the artist be a resident of Crown Heights, “כי כאן ציוה ה’ את הברכה.”

During Cheshvan 5736, several months after the Rebbe launched *mitvza kashrus*, the editors received the following response from the Rebbe:

אזכיר על הציון להצלחה רבה ל“קוקבוק”
במילוי תפקידו העיקרי - הגברת הכשרות בכל
מקום.

I will mention this at the tziyun for much success with the “cookbook,” [that it should] accomplish its main purpose—strengthening kashrus in every place.

The cookbook was to become an integral element of the Rebbe’s campaign to bring *kashrus* to every Jewish community and household.

In the summer of 5737, three and a half years after the Rebbe instructed the committee to produce a game-changing kosher cookbook, *The Spice and Spirit of Kosher-Jewish Cooking* was published. At the Yud-Beis Tammuz farbrengen, Rabbi Marlow presented the new cookbook to the Rebbe. The Rebbe was visibly pleased and said, “Much *hatzlacha* in *mitvza kashrus* and in all the *mitvzoim*.”

During the concluding *sicha* of the farbrengen, while mentioning *mitvza*

Instructions from the Rebbe’s First Response

The Rebbe reviewed the first eight pages of the original first draft of the cookbook in Kislev 5734. In addition to encouraging an entirely different approach to the publication, the Rebbe commented on several parts of the draft.

About the page listing the editorial and rabbinic boards:

ע”ב \ גם שמות הסטעץ צ”ל ע”ס הא”ב - כהשאר.

Page 2: All lists of names should be in alphabetical order.

The following comments are regarding the introduction about *kashrus*.

ע”ו \ קטע ד’ - שהיהודי הוא לא רק מגשמיות אלא גם מרוחניות!!

Page 6 Paragraph 4 - A Jew is not only physical but also spiritual!!

A paragraph begins with the following statement: *It is not difficult to keep kosher*. The Rebbe added:

קטע ז’ - בהתחלתו: אפילו האם הי’ קשה לקיים כשרות פשיטא שאצ”ל שום עיכוב
שהרי זה ציווי השם וכו’ עאכ”כ

Paragraph 7: *Even if it were difficult to observe kashrus, it should, of course, not deter [a Jew from observing it], since it is G-d’s command, etc. How much more so [that it is not difficult...]*

In the section dealing with the waiting time between meat and dairy it said: After eating dairy food... the most common custom is to wait one-half hour before eating meat or meat products. The Rebbe added:

ע”ח \ בתחלתו 1/2 שעה להוסיף \ ויש נוהגין שעה

Page 8: In the beginning, one half hour; Add that others have the custom of waiting one complete hour.

מכאן ולהבא - לא קראתי, כמוכן.

ועוד ועיקר - חלק הדינים צ”ל מוגה עכ”פ ע”י שניים.

Obviously, I did not read further than this page. The main thing is—the dinim must be reviewed by at least two people.



THE ORIGINAL COVER OF "THE SPICE AND SPIRIT" COOKBOOK. INSET: THE FIRST DRAFT OF THE COVER OF "THE SPICE AND SPIRIT" COOKBOOK SUBMITTED TO THE REBBE. THE ORIGINAL COVER, CHANGED PER THE REBBE'S INSTRUCTIONS.

kashrus, the Rebbe made special mention of the brand new cookbook. "Especially in light of the fact that on the *yom hageulah* a beautiful book was published and released—which in addition to recipes includes important information regarding *kashrus*..."⁴

Keeping the Momentum

The Spice and Spirit became an instant sensation. Thousands of copies were purchased in a short time and it received rave reviews from food columnists and critics in prominent newspapers. Most of the reviews emphasized the value of the cookbook

as a kosher primer, available to professionals and amateurs alike.

The feedback received from shluchim indicated that the cookbook had opened many doors for them and made *kashrus* fashionable in homes and social circles previously unreachable. *Bochurim* going on Merkos Shlichus were instructed by Rabbi Hodakov to take samples with them and they received more orders for the cookbook than for any other Kehos publication.

The women of the cookbook committee also received guidance from Rabbi Hodakov about their radio

A Call from Russia

Mrs. Esther Blau relates:

Early one morning, my husband was out of town and my home phone was ringing incessantly. I kept on answering the phone, but I could not communicate with the caller since he was speaking in Russian. I urgently called my Russian speaking secretary and it turned out that the call was from behind the Iron Curtain! A Jew was in trouble and the caller desperately wanted to relay the news to the Rebbe and request a *bracha* on his behalf. The only Jewish book the caller had from the United States was *The Spice and Spirit* cookbook, and he called the number hoping to find a way to reach the Rebbe.

I ran to 770 to communicate this important message to the Rebbe's *mazkirus* immediately.

interviews. "Regardless of what they ask you, have in mind what you need to say and make sure to say it." Mrs. Cyrel Deitch was instrumental in cultivating friendships with celebrity chefs, cookbook authors, publishers and book collectors, some of whom participated in a special evening in Crown Heights in honor of the cookbook and came to the Rebbe for dollars.

"I urgently called my Russian speaking secretary and it turned out that the call was from behind the Iron Curtain!"



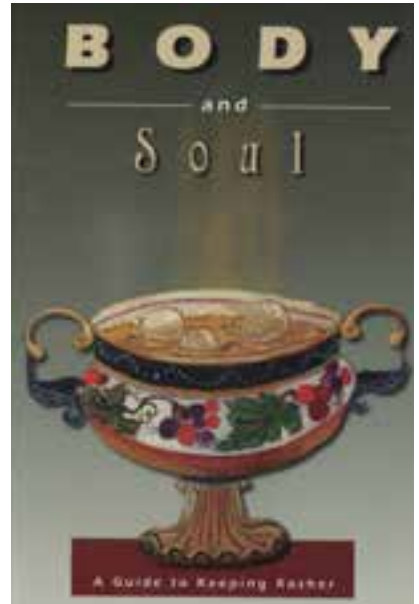
The quality of the cookbook was on such a level that the Rebbe wanted it entered into international competitions:

להתעניין ע"ד ירידי הספרים שבאה"ק
 אשכנז וכו' להציג שם הספר ושיכניסהו
 להתחרות הנערכת שם וכו'

*Look into book fairs in Eretz
 Yisroel and Germany, etc. To present
 the book there and to enter it into the
 competitions, etc.*

In 5741, the cookbook committee published a kosher for Pesach cookbook. Between the years 5737 and 5750, the regular cookbook and the Pesach cookbook sold 95,000 copies combined!

Over time, the need for a comprehensive *kashrus* handbook, separate from the cookbook, became apparent. In 5749, in a special partnership with the Mivtza Kashrus



MITZTA KASHRUS/CHABA.DORG

“BODY AND SOUL” PAMPHLET.

Committee, the various halachic instructions scattered throughout the cookbook were reorganized in an orderly fashion and published in a book titled *Body and Soul*.

Every successive printing of *The Spice and Spirit* sold out quickly and the cookbook committee members, Mrs. Esther Blau, Mrs. Cyrel Deitch, and Mrs. Cherna Light, together with the original committee, realized it was time to update their bestseller. Recipes were revised, new recipes were added, and the halachic instructions were rewritten and reviewed as well. In addition to other design changes, a distinct purple cover was chosen, from which it has since taken its most famous moniker, “The Purple Cookbook.”

The Rebbe continued to encourage the committee and give *brachos* for the success of the new edition. Mrs. Blau recounts that “the Rebbe was very anxious about the new cookbook’s release. I remember when Rabbi Nissen Mindel, one of the Rebbe’s secretaries, came out of the Rebbe’s room, saying that the Rebbe asked about the cookbook’s status. There were many other times as well; it

Reviews

The great publicity that “The Purple Cookbook” received from elite reviews contributed greatly to *kashrus* awareness. This is also evident from the Rebbe’s response to the committee regarding a certain press release.

1) כמדומה (קרוב לודאי) שבעצמו ראיתי עוד כו"כ מאמר מכ"ע ע"ד הס' (2) חסרים מכ"כ בעלי שם והשפעה - כמובן כוונתי לנשים ואנשים שבודאי היו כותבים באם היו פונים אליהם. והרי זה נוגע להפצת הכשרות בפועל וק"ל

I believe (almost positive) that I myself read many more news articles about the book.

It is missing many more famous and influential [names]—Obviously my intention is about women and men who would certainly write a review if they were asked to do so. This is crucial to publicizing practical observance of kashrus. This is easily understood.

was clear that the Rebbe wanted it published as soon as possible.

“The Rebbe also ensured that the original cookbook remained in print until the new cookbook was published. Clearly, the Rebbe felt it was an integral element of modern-day *kashrus* and should not be unavailable

for purchase for even a short amount of time.”

In honor of Chof-Beis Shvat 5750 “The Purple Cookbook” was published, and it remains the world’s most trusted kosher cookbook for over forty years since its debut on the kosher culinary scene.

Preparation for the Geulah

The laws of *kashering* utensils (which is the essence of keeping a kosher kitchen) were taught to *Bnei Yisroel* after the battle with Midyan just prior to entering Eretz Yisroel. Chassidus explains that the 42 journeys the Yidden traveled on in the desert are reflected in our long journey through *galus*. Just as *kashrus* was the final preparation for inheriting Eretz Yisroel, strengthening *kashrus* observance throughout *klal Yisroel* will serve as the final push for the *geulah shleima!*¹⁵ **T**

1. The Rebbe also explained the impact of the decline in the observance of *taharas hamishpacha* and how this mitzvah is naturally dependent on the women of the home. *Mivtza Taharas Hamishpacha* was launched during this farbrengen as well. See Likkutei Sichos vol. 13, p. 259.

2. Yemei Temimim vol 6, p. 419.

3. Toras Menachem 5745 vol. 1, p. 108.

4. Sichos Kodesh 5737 vol. 2, p. 227.

5. Likkutei Sichos vol. 13, p. 295

