

Dear Congregants,

We, the undersigned Rabbanim, have decided to address, within our respective communities, **a serious breach of kashrus protocol**, of which almost everyone is unaware.

None of us would think of buying or eating food unless a person or kashrus agency we trust testifies it is up to our standards. But most people do not realize that the **majority of catered affairs** are not in this category. We trust the ba'al simcha, and we see so many Rabbanim and friends eating, so we eat, too. But neither we, nor they, realize that in most cases, **there is nobody supervising the food at this affair, and no kashrus agency is taking responsibility for it!**

DID YOU KNOW THAT:

- Almost all kashrus agencies, including most of the best mehadrin agencies, give hashgacha only on the food preparation in the caterer's own kitchen, unless special arrangements have been made.
- With very few exceptions, kashrus agencies do not send a mashgiach, and do not take responsibility for food served at an off-site affair, unless special arrangements have been made.
- This applies to affairs of all sizes, from a wedding to a bris (but see note below).

WHAT IS WRONG WITH THIS?

- We are not permitted to eat food unless someone whom we trust tells us that he knows it is kosher.
- Food of unknown standards, from outside the certified kitchen, could be served, especially if something goes wrong with the food that was brought (remember, no kashrus agency is watching).
- The kosher integrity of the caterer's food could be lost by improper sealing and supervision en route.
- The warming and on-site preparations could significantly lower the level of kashrus.
- The serving plates and utensils could be rented, or belong to the catering hall, and could possibly have been used, even within the last 24 hours, for affairs of significantly lower kashrus standards.
- The wine could be improperly served.

The good news is that there is a painless solution to this problem! Kashrus agencies are able and willing to **send a mashgiach to supervise an affair and issue a kashrus certificate for that affair, which can then be conspicuously displayed**. The charge for this service is relatively nominal. All that has to happen is for the ba'al simcha to call the agency and request it. (If for some unexpected reason, the caterer's kashrus agency cannot provide this certification, please consult with your rabbi. Unfortunately, experience has shown that privately hired mashgichim are often unable to provide the same level of kashrus security as a mashgiach sent by the caterer's kashrus agency.)




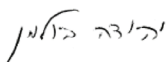
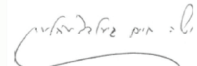
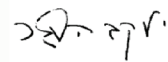
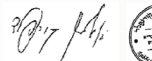
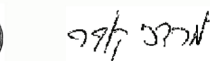
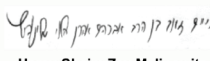
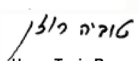
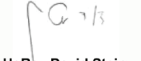
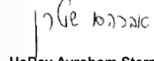
We are not saying that all or even most affairs that do not have such a certificate are actually serving forbidden food. But we are saying most emphatically that the time has come for consumers to become more "kashrus-savvy", and **refrain from eating at any catered affair where the kashrus agency of the caterer** (or a private mashgiach approved by the Rav) has not taken formal responsibility for the kashrus of that affair, and where a certificate for the affair is not displayed.

TO SHOW HOW IMPORTANT AND SERIOUS WE THINK THIS ISSUE IS, WE HAVE, COLLECTIVELY, DECIDED THAT:

- We will, bli neder, not eat at any catered simcha unless these arrangements have been made and the proper certificate is displayed.
- We also expect that none of our congregants will eat at these affairs if there is no certificate indicating that these arrangements have been made.
- Note: We are not discussing small, neighborhood affairs served and catered by trusted members of our own communities. Regarding all such affairs, each community should follow the guidance of its Rav.

We hope that our publicizing of this issue, and its easy solution, will lead to a swift repair of this breach, and to raising kashrus awareness and standards within our communities.

With Torah Blessings,

| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|--|--|
|  HaRav Yehuda Baum K'hal Eyun Tefila Sanhedria |  HaRav Yitzchak Berkovits Minyan Avreichim Sanhedria Murchevet |  HaRav Nachum Borowski Beis Medrash Halichos Yerushalayim Har Nof |  HaRav Yehudah Bulman Beis Midrash Nachliel Neve Yaakov |  HaRav Moïshe Chayim Geldzahaler Beis Medrash Beis Shlomo Har Nof |  HaRav Yaakov Haber Kehillas Shivtei Yeshurun Ramat Beit Shemesh |
|  HaRav Elimelech Kornfeld Kehillas HaGra Ramat Beit Shemesh |  HaRav Mordechai Kuber Beis Medrash Nachalas Zvi-Ohel Avraham Telz-Stone |  Harav Chaim Zev Malinowitz Beis Tefillah Yonah Avrohom Ramat Beit Shemesh |  Harav Tuvia Rosen Chanichei Hayeshivos Achuzat Yearim Telz-Stone |  HaRav David Stein Beit Chatam Rechovot |  HaRav Avrohom Stern Kehillas Ohel-Torah Beitart Illit |