



# Kashrut Principles as taught by Rav Zalman Nechemia Goldberg zt”l

Last week, on *Rosh Chodesh Elul*, *Am Yisrael* lost a Torah giant, my *Rebbe* and teacher, *Hagaon Harav Zalman Nechemia Goldberg zt”l*. During his lifetime, the Rav gave tens of thousands of in-depth *shiurim* across the religious sectors. He was blessed with an incredible mind and capacity for Torah knowledge. In a single day, the Rav would deliver up to twenty Torah classes, on twenty different topics without any preparation whatsoever. His humility was beyond compare, always distancing himself from any form of honor or recognition.

The current article presents the teachings of Rav Zalman Nechemia on the topic of “nullification” as it relates to kashrut.

Kashrut organizations are faced with the challenge of guaranteeing the highest standards of kashrut in factories, restaurants, and in private kitchens. The goal is to prevent as many mistakes as possible. Even though there is room at times to be lenient, a stricter approach prevents many mistakes from being made.

Rav Zalman Nechemia explains the basis for the use of stringency using various halachic concepts.

The halachic principle of “nullification” applies in kashrut when a non-kosher food falls into a mixture of kosher food. The non-kosher food is nullified as there is a majority of sixty times more kosher substance than non-kosher food.

Would it be halachically permissible to intentionally nullify food? For example, would it be permissible to toss a small drop of pork fat into a pot of kosher soup knowing that it will be nullified? The Gemara (*Beitza* 4:B) and *Shulchan Aruch* (YD 89:5-6) explicitly prohibit this intentional action.

Rav Zalman Nechemia brings the halachic concept of “*Davar Sheyesh Lo Matirin*” (see *Nedarim* 57:B, *Shulchan Aruch* YD 92) in order to explain the logic behind this prohibition of intentional nullification. “*Davar Sheyesh Lo Matirin*” refers to a case in which a prohibited food falls into a mixture of kosher food. The non-kosher



food holds a unique status in which it will become kosher in the future. An example of such (although disputed), relates to *chametz* on Pesach. If a piece of bread falls into a kosher *l'pesach* dish, even though there is sixty times more kosher *l'pesach* food, the *chametz* is not nullified as it will be permissible right after Pesach.

Rav Zalman Nechemia explains that the halacha regarding “*Davar Sheyesh lo Matirin*” and the prohibition to intentionally nullify non-kosher food are related. If our sages rule against relying on

nullification of a kosher *l'pesach* mixture containing *chametz* as it will become permissible after the *chag*, then surely it is prohibited to intentionally nullify food by purposely mixing in a prohibited substance.

Rav Zalman Nechemia explains that nullification is not ideal but rather an ex post facto tool. Nullification was meant to be applied in a situation where a mistake has been made. The Torah never intended the concept of nullification to be used as a loophole.

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Rav Zalman Nechemia expands the aforementioned concept through the halacha of “*kavua*” (permanence). *Kavua* refers to the prohibition of nullification as it relates to an important or permanent mixture. The Gemara (*Ketuvot* 15:A) brings the example of a town in which meat is sold in ten different stores, nine kosher stores and one non-kosher store. An individual purchased meat in a store, yet he forgot from which store the meat had been purchased. One may assume that the meat would be permissible on the grounds of nullification. However, the Gemara (*Ibid*) states that the meat is prohibited based on the fact that it may not be kosher. The reasoning for this ruling is that the stores are permanent (*kavua*) and nullification therefore does not apply.

Rav Zalman Nechemia addresses the logic behind *Kavua*. He explains that if it were permissible on the basis of nullification to purchase from any permanent store, then a person could hypothetically enter any store to purchase meat without checking kashrut certification. This would falsely be relying on the fact that the majority of the stores were kosher. The Rav emphasizes that nullification is not used an ideal tool, but rather only in a case of need.

The Rav explains that our sages were teaching about the need to have foresight in order to prevent halachic complications. The underlying halachic principles are applied through strict policies in our factories, restaurants and private kitchens. The OU makes extreme effort to enforce policies that maintain the highest worldwide standards of kashrut.

On a personal note:

While I was a *talmid* in Yeshivat Ohr Eztion, I had the immense honor and privilege of driving Rav Zalman Nechemia Goldberg to his weekly *shiurim*. The Rav’s vast scope of Torah knowledge left a deep impression on me and on all those who merited to learn from him. The Rav was a source of inspiration, teaching Torah to anyone who wished to listen. His dedication and love of Torah impacted the lives of thousands of *talmidim*. May his legacy of Torah study continue to inspire *Am Yisrael* for generations to come. ■



Top:  
Rav Goldberg at  
my son,  
Yosef Simcha's  
Bris, 2014

Left:  
Me attending  
Rav Goldberg's  
*shiur*, 2012

## Kashrut Questions in Israel?

Call or Whatsapp Rabbi Friedman at  
050-200-4432