

DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN

Executive Director, OU Israel



I have penned quite a number of articles detailing how grateful we must be to OU Kashrut which provides 30 percent of the annual OU Israel budget. As if the global footprint of OU Kashrut isn't enough, beyond ensuring that the 1.3 million OU-certified products uphold its gold standard of Kashrut, OU Kashrut directly supports the fortification of Am Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael.

My readers know that too often I come across OU Kashrut employees who are unaware of their direct impact in OU Israel's success, and I therefore look for opportunities to convey the HaKarat HaTov I feel for the Rabbanim, Mashgichim, Rabbinical Coordinators (RCs) and Rabbinical Field Representatives (RFRs) who power OU Kashrut. This past week the OU Israel team had the honor of attending the OU Kashrut Conference in Tarrytown, New York, and I found a unique opportunity to convey my gratitude on a much larger scale, as I addressed the hundreds of conference attendees.

Of note, the conference began on the heels of a NCSY Summer Staff Training weekend that finished just hours before the Kashrut Conference kicked off. My team and I were very excited to hear about the many summer programs coming to Israel this summer, with notably higher participants than we've seen in recent years. The OU Israel team is gearing up to welcome the throngs of students roaming the streets of Eretz Yisrael in

just a few weeks!

At the Kashrut conference, the OU Israel team included Rabbi Yissacher Dov Krakowski, Rabbi Ezra Friedman and Rabbi Matti Cohen. While this was my first Kashrut Conference, I felt very much at home given OU Israel's ongoing work with OU Kashrut CEO Rabbi Menachem Genack, COO Rabbi Moshe Elefant among many other RCs. With OU Kashrut representation from employees hailing from South America, China, Israel, locations across North America and Europe, and more, it was incredible to witness a gathering of people who dedicate themselves to ensuring Kosher food for Jews around the globe. The event allowed OU Mashgichim to connect with one another, learn from each other and discuss the Kashrut challenges of today - much of which Covid created.

To give you an idea of the kinds of challenges discussed, OU Mashgichim have been certifying products since 1923 and uphold standards that are unparalleled. At this point, OU Kashrut is a well oiled machine that has run its services like clockwork for decades, supporting Mashgichim with internal databases and resources that allow for fully transparent supervision of Kashrut. But Covid threw a lot of unforeseen challenges into the mix and OU Kashrut had to adapt quickly and develop new resources to support RFRs wherever they were in the world, finding the safest way to conduct scheduled and surprise Kashrut visits to certified locations, and even check products virtually.

The OU Israel team works hand in hand with Mashgichim around the world on areas spanning import, export and everything in between. We were therefore asked to conduct a session to discuss the challenges and unique opportunities that Kashrut in Israel presents. But before we began I felt it important to begin with HaKarat HaTov for the efforts of OU Kashrut that support many of the initiatives we run at OU Israel.

In our mission to build a foundation for the Jewish future for Am Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael, it can be easy to take for granted the obvious impact of our efforts. I'd go as far as to say that the OU Israel team is somewhat spoiled because we have been Zoche to gain a tremendous amount of Sipuk from our programs. We've attended Smachot of every kind. We have seen children who found comfort and stability at The Zula build healthy families of their own. Olim who stay connected to their roots and values and create fulfilling lives in Israel. Women who attend our L'Ayla Women's learning initiative and find communal strength. Olim who have benefitted from The Gustave and Carol Jacobs Center for Kashrut Education. But none of this would be possible without OU Kashrut's support, and the support of our private donors.

Through OU Kashrut, Mashgichim, RCs

and RFRs are directly helping us save lives of our youth, and inspire Am Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael. I remain grateful for the opportunity my team had this week to give OU Kashrut employees a taste of the kinds of programs

we run as a result of their efforts. For those of us living in Eretz Yisrael, supporting stores and restaurants that carry OU Kashrut allows OU Israel to continue on its mission of inspiring the next generation of Am Yisrael across the country. Please do what you can to support OU Kashrut establishments and to convince others to become OU establishments.

Take a moment to thank store owners and buyers for supporting a Kashrut organization that reinvests its revenue into Am Yisrael.

I left the RFR Conference with a renewed sense of purpose and mission, and landed in

Israel just in time to attend a Yachad Family Shabbaton, which I will tell you about B'ezrat HaShem next week!

Looking forward to seeing you all at the Yom Yerushalayim Tfillah Chagigit at 7:30am on the Tayelet.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Rabbi Avi Berman
Executive Director, OU Israel
aberman@ouisrael.org

