

DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN

Executive Director, OU Israel



Celebrating a 100 year anniversary is a special occasion. Whether it be a grand cake with 100 candles lit, a long guest list, photographers, speeches and balloons, the occasion will not go unnoticed. Last week, I attended OU's Kinus Mashgichim Conference, during which we celebrated 100 years of OU Kosher.

The OU Israel Kashrut team, including Rabbi Yissocher Dov Krakowski, Rabbi Ezra Friedman, Rabbi Yonatan Korach and Rabbi Yisrael Breish, flew to New Jersey to participate in the annual Kinus Mashgichim conference which took place at the Hilton Meadowlands. This year's conference went far beyond simply celebrating the accomplishments of OU Kosher over the past century. Rather, the conference gathered 150 *Rabbanim* from around the world who support and sustain OU Kosher

initiatives, to learn about new areas of food production and sharpen our skills across a variety of areas in *kashrut*.

Rabbinical Field Representatives (RFRs) and Rabbinical Coordinators (RCs) joined the conference from Israel, Australia, Europe, Asia, the Persian Gulf and across the United States to share their experiences and learn from one another. The event kicked off with speeches from Rabbi Menachem Genack (CEO, OU Kosher), Rabbi Moshe Elefant, (COO, OU Kosher) and Dr. Josh Penn, who reflected on the achieve-



ments of OU Kosher to date and reiterated the ways in which OU Kosher continues to provide the highest level of Kosher certification in the world, with transparency as a core value.

OU Kosher was founded in 1923,

certifying its first batch of products to be marketed nationally with several varieties of Heinz vegetarian baked beans in 1927. Today, OU Kosher remains the largest and most widely recognized Kosher certifying agency, with 970 *mashgichim* and managers, supervising more than 1.3 million products produced at 14,000 facilities in 106 countries, servicing more than 6,000 companies and providing a database for tracking 2.4 million ingredients used in

The OU Israel Family sends heartfelt condolences to the family of
Mrs. Chana Homnick a'h
on her passing

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

foods that are OU certified.

I found this year's event particularly meaningful due to the time period we are in. As we count the *omer* in commemoration of the 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva who died as a result of the way they treated one another, I was touched by the level of respect each *rav* showed for the other. When difficult questions were posed to specific rabbis they would not hesitate to refer the question to someone they felt had more experience with that particular issue, often responding, "Don't ask me, ask rabbi ___, he is the real *mumcheh* (expert) in this area."

With a century of experience under OU Kosher's belt, its RFRs and RCs have become well versed in areas across food production and work tirelessly to keep up with the latest advancements. These experts are available to *Am Yisrael* around the world, bringing unique areas of specialty to their work. To give you an idea, I connected

Aliya LaKever on the 7th Yahrzeit of
**Rabbi Yaakov Yechiel
Mechel (Mel) Heftler** *zt"l*

will take place b'ezrat Hashem on
Sunday, Rosh Chodesh Sivan (May 21)
at 9:30am in Eretz Hachayim Cemetery,
Beit Shemesh Gush 1, Chelka 7

Transportation from Beit Tovei Ha'ir
(Malchei Yisrael 36) at 8:25am promptly

Following the Aliya laKever -
Siyum & light dairy meal at the home of the
Ovadiah Family. Rechov Hashalosh 4/34
(7th floor) Beit Shemesh

Kindly Register by Thursday, May 18
at: 02-6414684, 050-2192535

The family



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with the world-renowned Rabbi Avraham Juravel who specializes in kosher ingredients, Rabbi Daniel Sharatt who specializes in the certification of leafy vegetables in Controlled Environment Agriculture. I particularly enjoyed the one-on-one *chavruta* learning during which we delved into the *mareh mekomot* of various issues relating to *Kashrut* today, such as hydroponic-grown vegetables and new technologies facilitating food production.

During my speech I highlighted the fact that beyond supporting, maintaining and advancing OU's high standards of *Kashrut* around the world, the efforts of OU *mashgichim* also enable the needs of *Klal Yisrael* to be met. With proceeds of OU Kosher invested into its existing programs such as strengthening Jewish identity across college campuses with JLIC, Yachad, NCSY, *klitat aliyah*, publishing Torah Tidbits and Jewish Action magazines, and creating programs for teens at risk.

Although at first I expected to see more marketing efforts around OU Kosher's 100-year milestone, it was evident that OU Kosher's leadership continues to remain focused on building upon what previous generations of OU *mashgichim* accomplished. With no time to waste on lauding our accomplishments, the conference focused participants on the task at hand - servicing the global *tzibur*.

When I heard my good friend Yoni Kempinsky, a reporter for Arutz 7, was in town, I jumped at the opportunity and invited him

to see the Kinus Mashgichim for himself. He too was blown away by what he saw, and quickly penned an article about the

experience he had. You can read his article via this link: <https://www.inn.co.il/news/600129>

When all was said and done, despite the slices of cake offered and being featured in Jewish magazine, the OU Kinus Mashgichim conference

took place virtually under the radar. Photographers, music, and a full press box were nowhere to be found. Instead, a group of 150 individuals dedicated to meeting the *Kashrut* needs of *Am Yisrael* around the world gathered to learn from one another and prepare for the challenges ahead. I truly felt privileged to spend a few days with people whom I consider to be giants in the *Kashrut* field.

If you would like to learn more about OU Kosher and its history, you can find a beautiful feature in Jewish Action. Pick up your copy at OU Israel or read online via this link: <https://jewishaction.com/cover-story/celebrating-100-years-of-ou-kosher/>

I look forward to seeing everyone on Friday morning, May 19, for OU Israel's *Yom Yerushalayim Tefila Chagigit* taking place at the Tayelet, Haas Promenade in Armon Hanatziv.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring *Shabbat*,



Rabbi Avi Berman
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