

Vaad News & Views



Volume 9, Issue 2

Kislev 5764/December 2003

TALK OF THE TOWN

Joined Sheva Brochos for daughters of
Rav Yechiel Mayer Katz שליט"א &
Rav Wolf Ber Lerner שליט"א

We wish to extend our heartfelt Mazel Tov to our esteemed Rabbis, Rabbi Katz, the Zibo Dayan and Rabbi Lerner, the Belzer Dayan upon the marriage of their daughters. We wish them and their families much nachas and further simchas. Upon the culmination of the shivas yemai hamishta, the Vaad Ha'ir had the honor of hosting a Sheva Brochas for the families of Rabbi Katz and Rabbi Lerner. The Sheva Brochos which took place on the Vaad premises, was attended by the close members of their families, as well as members of the Vaad Praesidium and staff members. The Simcha was graced by the presence of Rabbi Niznik, Rav Harashi and Rabbi Neuman the Pupa Rav, as well as all the members of the Vaad Harabonim. Yuda Leib Pal, the chairman of the evening, spoke about the dedication of Rabbi Katz and Rabbi Lerner who have given so unstintingly of their time and energy to the Vaad and the Beth Din of Montreal. Offering words of thanks, the Zibo Dayan expressed his feelings of comradery and the wonderful atmosphere with the Vaad Harabonim whilst working for the benefit of all sectors of the Montreal Jewish population. The evening ended with a surprise entertainer arriving from New York, the well known badchan Rabbi Yankel Miller, keeping the guests in stitches with his antics and humorous stories.

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Rabbi Saul Emanuel

Vaad Ha'ir

The Vaad recently had the pleasure of hosting Rabbi Shlomo Miller of Toronto at it's weekly Vaad Harabonim meeting, where various procedures pertaining to Kashrus and Bais Din matters were discussed. Having Rabbi Shlomo Miller, the Rosh Hakollel of Toronto in our midst, gave us Chizuk and inspriation to continue our work well into the future. The infrastructure and Achdus (unity) of the Vaad impressed the Rosh Hakollel and we certainly hope to continue strengthening ourselves in this direction in the future. With Chanukah on our doorstep, and the mitzvah of lighting the menorah upon us, we unite in our quest to strengthen our own internal light, the light of Torah. Let us revitalize ourselves and light up the drop of oil within us with the intent of making it an everlasting light, one that will have an effect for many generations to come.

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גם זו לטובה

GUM-ZO L'TOVAH

Ta'anis 21a

תענית ע"א כ"א

By

Rabbi Zushe Yosef Blech

As we enter the coldest months of the year, many of us appreciate the support of the hot beverages that have almost become ritual in our daily lives. It is interesting to note that although the drinking of hot beverages in Western societies first became popular after the discovery of the New World, both coffee and tea were products of the Old. Coffee is thought to have originated in Kefa, Ethiopia, and subsequently transplanted to Arabia for commercial production (hence the term “Arabica” beans). Tea has been enjoyed in China for over four thousands years (the name “China” originated from “*Chai*” – or “tea” – and not from the porcelain in which it is brewed, for which China is also famous). [The other hot beverage that became popular in Europe, namely hot cocoa, was indeed a product of the New World.] It was the explosion of international trade at the time of exploration that heralded the introduction of these libations into Western culture. The popularity of these drinks was fraught with broad social and historical implications, as well as raising a number of interesting *Halachic* issues that will be the subject of this article.

The first *Halachic* question relating to tea and coffee concerned the rule of *Bishul Akum*, the prohibition against eating certain foods that had been cooked by a non-Jew. Since coffee is prepared by cooking, some had argued that it should be subject to the restrictions of *Bishul Akum*. This was an especially cogent argument since, when first introduced, coffee was considered emolument of the rich, and the status of an important food” is a criteria for invoking the rule of *Bishul Akum*. The *P'ri Chadash*, however, resolves this matter by pointing out that coffee is merely flavored water, and has the *Halachic* status of water as regards *Bishul Akum*. He bases this approach on the

Tosefas (*Avodah Zarah* 31b), who rule that beer is not subject to concerns of *Bishul Akum* for that very reason, as demonstrated by the fact that we make a *B'rachah* of *she'Hakol* on it. Indeed, the term “brew” means to “boil”, and is thus used to refer to the preparation of both coffee and beer. [Beer is prepared by first *brewing* the grain to extract the sugar, which is then fermented.] Water is considered exempt from *Bishul Akum* concerns because it may be consumed without cooking. The *Talmud* notes, however, that an *Adam Cha'shuv* – an important person – should avoid drinking water that had been cooked by a non-Jew (*Mo'ed Ka'tan* 12b), and some therefore avoid drinking coffee cooked by a nonJew

for
this
reason.

The *He'ter* of the *P'ri Cha'dash* did not end the question of drinking coffee in *coffee houses*, however. When coffee was first introduced, coffee houses served as the social centers of the rich and famous, venues of social ferment and frivolity. Even if coffee were not subject to the *technical* disability of *Bishul Akum*, *Halachic* authorities of the time nevertheless regarded a coffee house as a *Mo'shav Lay'tzim* – a center of scoffers and idleness – posing the same concern of improper social interaction that was the basis of the rule of *Bishul Akum*. As such, many authorities strongly discouraged drinking coffee in such places (see *Chochmas Adam* 66:14). Today, however, popular coffee houses are designed for the serious coffee drinker, who generally looks askance at frivolity or anything else that may detract from that ultimate coffee experience.

Today, the *Halachic* issues related to coffee are a

function of its *Kashrus* and not its social status. All coffee is made by roasting green coffee beans of several varieties of tropical evergreen called *Coffea*. After roasting, the bean is ground and steeped in boiling water allowing the flavor (and caffeine) to be infused into the water. *Instant* coffee is produced by taking this coffee-infused water, concentrating it, and drying it into a powder. This powder, produced through spray drying or freeze-drying, is a highly concentrated form of the coffee infusion, and can be reconstituted and diluted to make regular strength coffee. [In some cases, the concentrated coffee is left in liquid form to be then added to hot water, similar to our use of *tea (es)sence* on *Shabbos*.] *Kashrus* issues relating to such coffee revolve around the equipment and chemicals used in their production, as well as additional flavors that may be added.

Generally, equipment used to roast coffee beans is not used for anything but coffee (or other products that pose a general *Kashrus* concern, see below). As such, *unflavored* roasted beans may be purchased without a special *Hashgacha*. The flavor in *flavored* coffee beans (e.g., hazelnut, vanilla, chocolate, cream, etc., etc., etc.) is added to the beans after they are roasted (roasting flavored beans would cause the flavors to evaporate from the bean). The flavors used in such products are extracts of flavor source that are absorbed into the coffee bean, not pieces of hazelnut, vanilla bean, chocolate, or milk itself. As such, many dairy-type flavors, such as “Irish Cream”, may indeed be *Pareve*. [These should not be confused with “coffee flavored products” that may indeed contain dairy ingredients, see below.] All flavored coffees, however, require a reliable *Hashgacha*.

Decaffeinated coffee is produced by soaking the green beans in a solvent that removes virtually all of the caffeine, after which the beans are dried and subsequently roasted. Chemicals used for this process include methylene chloride, ethyl acetate, super critical carbon dioxide, and carbonated water. The key to these processes is the use of a solvent that will remove the caffeine from the bean – but not the flavor! [A new process, called the Swiss Water Process, uses pure water to extract the caffeine in a manner that allows the flavor to remain in the bean.] While the decaffeinate process poses no significant concerns for year-round

Kashrus, one of these chemicals – ethyl acetate – may be *Chometz*. As such, some authorities insist on a *Hashgacha* for all roasted coffee for *Pesach*, since both regular and decaffeinated beans are typically roasted on the same equipment. Others, however, are less concerned about this matter, and note that most ethyl acetate poses no such concerns, and is also an inedible chemical.

A more significant *Pesach* concern, however, stems from the use of coffee *extenders*. Historically, when coffee became very expensive, manufacturers had added less flavorful, but more economical, vegetation to their product, including chicory and grain that, when roasted with coffee, produced an acceptable product. While chicory poses no *Kashrus* concern for *Pesach*, roasted grains would be considered *Chometz* and, although the use of such additives would be indicated on the product label, they are also roasted in the same equipment as regular coffee. While grain extenders are not commonly used, it is important to ensure that coffee used on *Pesach* is not produced in facilities that make such products.

Instant coffee may pose other concerns for both year-round *Kashrus* and *Pesach* use. Although not common in North America, some Mexican and overseas manufacturers produce milk and dairy coffee blends on spray-drying and agglomeration equipment that is used for plain unflavored coffee. [Equipment used to produce freeze dried coffee does not seem to be the subject of such a concern.] As such, it may be wise to avoid any instant coffee without verifying its *Kosher* status. Regarding *Pesach*, the issue is even murkier. Although it may be illegal to add maltodextrin to instant coffee without declaring it, it seems that many manufacturers are engaged in this practice. Maltodextrin, which may be either *Chometz* or *Kitniyos*, is used in the processing of instant coffee to aid in its agglomeration (the formation of clumps of powder that dissolve more easily than do the fine powders produced by spray drying), and also serves to “round out” some of the bitter flavors in the product. As such, the use of *any* spray dried instant coffee should be subject to a reliable *Passover* certification.

Coffee products, such as powdered coffee blends and bottled liquid coffee beverages, contain many non-cof-

fee ingredients that require a *Hashgacha* (such as monoglycerides and flavors). “Non-dairy” coffee products typically contain sodium caseinate, which is milk protein, and all such products – even when bearing a reliable Kosher certification – must be considered dairy. The same concern extends to “non-dairy” coffee creamers (both liquid and powders), many of which contain true dairy components.

The Kosher traveling coffee drinker must also be aware of other *Kashrus* considerations relating to the accoutrements of the habit. Artificial sweetener powders often contain lactose (milk sugar) as an inactive ingredient that comprises over 90% of the powder in the packet! While manufacturers of such products in North America use Pareve maltodextrin for this purpose, most of the product manufactured in the rest of the world indeed uses lactose that is (at best) dairy and (at worst) possibly not Kosher. Clearly, a coffee must be carefully nurtured both at home and away.

Our discussion of coffee would not be complete, however, without mention of a uniquely flavored coffee, known as “Kopi Luwak”. This gourmet coffee is made from the partially digested beans collected from the feces of the luwak, a marsupial that lives on the plantations of Java, Sumatra and Sulawesi. It seems that the digestive juices of this creature create a special chocolaty flavor in the coffee, the *Kashrus* of which is certainly something worth pondering.

The *Talmud* (*Shabbos* 119b) notes that *Rav Chanina* required that a person prepare a meal at the conclusion of *Shabbos*, even if he wants to eat only a small amount. He notes that hot food and drink at this meal are “*Melugma*” – “healing”. Although many would agree that a hot cup of coffee is certain refreshing, an explanation of its healing properties may be found in the words of *Shu”t Hillel Omer* (198), quoting the explanation of *Rav Meshulem Zushe zt”l*. He notes that the first letters of *Chamin b’Motzoei Shabbos Melugma* are the same as those used in the words of “*uMechabesh*

New Companies under the

A1-FISH has moved premises. Their new location is 4699 Van Horne, Montreal, Qc. H3W 1H8. Tel: 514-735-4208.

BOULANGERIE GONDOLE INC. – produces Pareve mini croissants which are Pas Yisroel. They are located at 510-520 Hodge, Ville St. Laurent. H4N 2A4. Tel: 514-748-7660.

LA MAISON DU GOUT – produces Baklava which is Pas Yisroel. They are located at 138 Merizzi Street, Ville St. Laurent. H4T 1S4. Tel: 450-687-9613.

LEV TOV RESIDENCE is a new residence for seniors. They are located at 6900 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, Qc. H4B 1P9. Tel: 514-489-4448.

SHIJIAZHANG ZHENJI BREW COMPANY LTD. – produces Soy Sauce. They are located at No 245 CangAn Road, Shijiazhuang, Hebei, China 050051. Tel: 86-311-381-0234.

USINE DE CONGELATION DE NEWPORT INC. – packs frozen blueberries. They are located at 5 Route Germain, Newport, Qc. G0C 2A0. Tel: 418-777-2339.

Q. I recently bought a product bearing the Pareve designation, then noticed the words natural cheese flavor on the ingredients label. If a natural ingredient contains cheese, why isn't it dairy?

A. Food technology has evolved to the point that flavor companies can simulate the taste of an item without any trace of that item actually present in the product. In the flavor industry, both natural and artificial sources are used to simulate flavors. Pareve natural cheese flavor is derived naturally from a vegetable source.. It is therefore natural yet also pareve, containing no cheese. The same holds for natural chicken flavor that is certi-

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