

our Community

CHANUKAH 2020

DEMYSTIFYING KOSHER CERTIFICATION

What's behind the  symbol on so many of your favourite foods

The Jewish Transformation

In the Decarie Boulevard offices of the JCC, quiet transformations take place

6 Questions for Rabbi Mani Diena

 Ontario inspector

Lighting with Dedication

An Understanding of the Different Practices Concerning Recital of Haneiros Hallalu



Jewish Community
Council of Montreal

Conseil de la Communauté
Juive de Montréal

ועד חצירה דמונטריאל



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SIX QUESTIONS FOR
RABBI MANI DIENA

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WE ARE STRIVING TO SERVE YOU BETTER

Should you have any suggestions, questions or ideas, or if you'd like to see an article written on a certain subject, email kalman@jccmontreal.org. We'd love to hear from you!

Editor: Kalman Emanuel



Message

FROM THE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

Over the past few months, the entire world has experienced a pandemic of unknown proportions. This began before Pesach and continued through Shavuot and Succos (Jewish Holidays). We had to adjust to the new norms of davening with less people, not attending gatherings, having less guests and so many more unfortunate readjustments.

As a nation, we have always overcome life challenges and tests sent in our direction. We have passed all of them. Not only that, but we have grown from them and learned how to cope with many situations. It has been an extremely difficult journey. Many people lost their loved ones and many have not fully recovered from this sickness.

With Chanukah on our doorstep, we are reminded that light is literally at the end of the tunnel. In the darkness of days, in a natural environment, when a small jug of oil would have lasted a few short hours, the miracle of Chanukah proved that anything can happen in the blink of an eye.

Now is the time, more than ever, that we come together as a nation, community, and family, to face our challenges and grow from them. Every single one of us needs to rekindle our Emunah (belief and faith) and strive to do better. Nothing is unachievable. When the spark is lit, the fire grows.

We start Chanukah with only one light added every day, growing each day until we reach the eighth light, representing the permanent miracle. During Covid-19, change is also slow. However it is happening and we will return to normal, emerging much stronger. We strive to do the right thing and to undertake more Mitzvot in the servitude of Hashem.

Let us take this opportunity to grow from the pandemic by sustaining a positive attitude and realize that whatever happens in our lives comes from the One Above. Hashem loves us and wants us to improve in our Middos.

As we say each morning "Ohr chadash al tzion ta'ir" "May a new light shine on Zion". Now more than ever we pray that this new light should appear immediately, leading to Simcha, joyous occasions, complete health, return to normalcy and may we celebrate together with the coming of Mashiach.

Yours Sincerely,

Rabbi Saul Emanuel
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Canada's Kosher Certifier

What WE DO



KOSHER SERVICES

Ⓜ is the symbol of kosher quality that consumers rely on. We work with a vast range of food manufacturers and producers as well as restaurants and other venues.



GITTIN (JEWISH DIVORCE)

Under Jewish law, couples who separate and then civilly divorce are not permitted to remarry until they receive a Get (writ). The Jewish divorce procedure is performed in accordance with the relevant Halachic rules governing our divorce system.



BETH DIN

The Beth Din of Montréal, a panel of three Rabbis and Rabbinical judges with an in-depth knowledge of Jewish law, resolves disputes between members of the community. Services are offered in French, English, Hebrew and Yiddish.



CONVERSION

The JCC guides and assists potential converts on their journey to becoming an integral part of the Jewish community by offering a comprehensive program of both academic studies and mentoring by dedicated volunteers which will help them to integrate into the greater Jewish community.



DINEI TORAH

The Beth Din of Montréal adjudicates on issues such as commercial disputes related to partnerships, corporate disputes and employment disputes, as well as contracts, inheritance and child support.



MEDICAL ETHICS

The JCC provides guidance to members of the Jewish community and medical personnel on matters related to medical directives, living wills and health care proxies.

HALACHIC DOCUMENTS

The Beth Din of Montréal supplies the various forms needed in Jewish law.

TRANSLATION

Translation services from Hebrew to English or French of official documents required by law.

MARRIAGE DOCUMENTS

Couples planning to marry in foreign countries can obtain specific marriage documentation prior to the religious service.

INHERITANCE

The Beth Din convenes hearings for cases of personal status as well as inheritance. As is often required by Israeli law, a document pertaining to a will must be signed in front of a Beth Din.

ATTESTATION OF JEWISH ANCESTRY

A service is provided whereby, members of the public are able to obtain confirmation from the Beth Din of Montréal that they are of Jewish descent.

Lighting WITH DEDICATION

An Understanding of the Different Practices Concerning Recital of Haneiros Hallalu

When is the proper time for reciting Haneiros Hallalu? Clearly, the intended time for recital is at the time of lighting the Menorah. There are differing opinions, however, as to the precise placement within the Menorah lighting process.

Generally, all are in agreement that nothing at all is to be said between the conclusion of the recital of the Berachos and the action of lighting the very first candle or wick.¹ Resultantly, the first night of Chanukah contains no room for practical disagreement. The question pertains only to the following nights, in a situation where multiple lights are being lit. In this case, there are two prevalent customs. One practice is to begin Haneiros Hallalu immediately after the first flame has been successfully lit and the fire has taken hold, reciting while kindling the remaining flames. The alternative practice is to wait until one has completed kindling the full number of lights due on that night before reciting Haneiros Hallalu. Both of these practices have strong Halachic backing.²

Wherein lies the reasoning behind these divergent approaches?

A Beracha is not a freestanding statement but rather one said in direct connection with an action being performed or the occurrence of an event. By way of illustration: A Beracha on a food item, while acknowledging and praising Hashem for the vast array of food items he has given humanity, is nonetheless only said in direct connection with an act of consumption. A Beracha thanking Hashem for the fine fragrance of flowers is only recited when one is actually smelling those very same flowers. Were one to speak between the Beracha and the first bite of food, or first smelling of the fragrance, those words would act as a break between the two, severing the connection. The ensuing result would be the rendering of the Beracha a Beracha Le'Vatala, an improper and useless Beracha, and thereby a recital of Hashem's name in vain as well. A new Beracha would then have to be recited before partaking of the food or fragrance.

The same principle holds true in regard to berachos on the performance of mitzvos. The Beracha is said as a component of the act of the Mitzva, and must therefore be recited in direct proximity to the action being performed. The speaking of even a single word between the Beracha and the action would sever the bond between the two, render the Beracha invalid, and require the recitation of a new Beracha before performing the Mitzva.

As such, be it lighting the Menorah or any other Mitzva, such as shaking Lulav and Esrog, counting Sefiras HaOmer or other, nothing may be uttered between the Beracha and the act of the Mitzva. The only exception would be in regard to saying something necessary for the performance of the Mitzva itself, such as asking for help with replacing a wick or a similar request. Although this, as well, should ideally be avoided, should one speak in this regard, it would not be problematic. Speech such as this can be viewed as a part of the Mitzva fulfillment, rather than a deviation from the matter at hand.

¹ If one erroneously did begin Haneiros Hallalu prior to the first flame taking hold, it is questionable whether one would be required to recite a new Beracha before lighting. (see below, footnote 4)

² עי' בזה בס"ד (ס"ק ה') ובמג"א (ס"ק ג') ובפמ"ג (מ"ז וא"א שם) ודעת המשנה ברורה (ס"ק ח') שיאמרונה מיד אחר הדלקת הנר הראשון אך מכל מקום מי שממתין עד אחר שייסיים הדלקת שאר הנרות נמי שפיר עבד

Having established the rules of speech prior to beginning the act of a Mitzva, the next step is to discuss speech while in the midst of performing the Mitzva. In this category, the rules are somewhat more relaxed. Although it is ideal to avoid unnecessary speech altogether, thereby allowing the Beracha to connect with every portion of the act of the Mitzva in its entirety, nonetheless, if one did speak about unrelated matters, he would not effect a Beracha Le'Vatala, nor would he be required to make a new Beracha. A classic example in this regard is that of speech while in midst of hearing the sounds of Tekias Shofar. Even after satisfactorily hearing the requisite minimal amount of Shofar sounds, one is to avoid unnecessary speech until one has heard the entirety of the customary one hundred soundings of the Shofar. If one did in fact speak, however, it would require no new Beracha. The rationale here is that although speech serves as a "hefsek", a separation between the Beracha and a portion of the Mitzva, since the Beracha has already successfully taken hold with the initial act of the Mitzva, it is a true and valid Beracha and no further Beracha is required.

Returning to the Mitzva of lighting the Menorah, the same holds true. After the first lit flame has taken place, the act of the Mitzva has, on some level, already been performed. Although one is very much still within the action of the Mitzva, speech at this point falls within the less sensitive category of speech in midst of a Mitzva as opposed to the more sensitive category of speech between the Beracha and the beginning of the Mitzva.

This brings us back to Haneiros Hallalu.

As stated, even in midst of a Mitzva, speech is to be avoided unless directly necessary for the performance of the Mitzva. The recital of Haneiros Hallalu, although a truly beautiful expression of the concept we wish to articulate with the lighting of the Menorah, would not seem to be integral to the act of lighting. This, then, is the rationale of those of the first practice. Haneiros Hallalu is viewed as complementary yet non-essential and should as such not be recited until the Mitzva has been successfully completed. Only after the full number of flames have been kindled is Haneiros Hallalu to be said.

What about the opposing view? Why begin Haneiros Hallalu at a point where it would seem unwarranted?

Perhaps it would be possible to explain this view by way of a rather cryptic statement found in one of the preeminent Rishonim, the Mahari"l. The Mahari"l³, when describing the Menorah lighting process, states the following:

”נוהגין בו לברך... ואחר כך מתנה עליהם הנרות הללו...”

“They have the custom to recite the Berachos... and subsequently, to stipulate [in regard to the flames] Haneiros Hallalu”



These words are quite enigmatic. Recite Haneiros Hallalu? Most definitely. But to stipulate? How does Haneiros Hallalu indicate any form of stipulation? What exactly are we stipulating?

Throughout the discussions of the laws of lighting the Menorah, a recurring theme with a variety of practical applications is that which Chaza"l were concerned that the lighting might accidentally appear to the observer as a casual act of lighting up one's home. Certainly in time periods prior to the advent of electricity, and to a degree in certain situations yet today, a person might choose to light candles simply to increase light within his abode. If the Menorah lights would be thus mistaken, it would run counter to the very fabric of the Mitzva, the concept of Pirsumei Nisa, publicizing the great miracles which Hakadosh Baruch Hu performed for us. To this end, several laws were enacted to prevent this impression. As an example, one who lights the Menorah while holding it in his hand will not fulfill the Mitzva, even upon subsequently setting it down, for this very reason.



Holding the Menorah in one's hand indicates to the observer that one intends to use this light around the home, carrying the light around as necessary. The light would appear as one of practicality, and would fail to convey any unique message.

Perhaps the Mahari"l understood the institution of Haneiros Hallalu very much in this vein. Reading through the words of Haneiros Hallalu, one observes that although the latter words mention the purpose of lighting, that being the giving of praise and gratitude to Hakadosh Baruch Hu for that which He did and continues to do for us, the initial portion of Haneiros

Hallalu focuses on a far more technical and legal note.

”הנרות הללו אנחנו מדליקין...
הנרות הללו קודש הם ואין לנו
רשות להשתמש בהם אלא
לראותם בלבד”

“These flames we are lighting in regard to the miracles and salvations which You performed... These flames are designated as Holy and we are not permitted to use them, being allowed only to view them.”

The expression of Haneiros Hallalu, then, can be understood not merely as a complementary expression of praise, but rather as a very integral stipulation that these flames are for a dedicated cause.⁴ It is a declaration that they are not, and should not be confused with, standard household lighting.⁵

As an integral part of the Mitzva, a necessary way to allay misperception, it is far easier to understand the custom of those who recite Haneiros Hallalu while kindling the remaining lights. Rather than a Hefsek, a deviation from the act of the Mitzva, it is to be viewed as a component, and ought to be recited while in midst of performing the Mitzva, so long as the first flame has already been lit.

Of note, when lighting the Menorah on Friday, just prior to the onset of Shabbos, many have the custom to recite Haneiros Hallalu immediately at the time of lighting, while singing Ma'oz Tzur or other liturgy only when returning home at night, at time of the Shabbos meal. Perhaps this is indicative as to the integral role Haneiros Hallalu plays within the act of lighting the Menorah.

⁴ לפי הבנה זו יראה שאם אחד טעה והתחיל באמירת הנרות הללו קודם שהדליק הנר הראשון שאין לו לחזור ולברך ואין לדונו כהפסק ולא גרע מאמירת הבא מלח בין ברכת המוציא ואכילה דקיי"ל (סי' קס"ד סעיף ו') דאינו חוזר ומברך מדהוה מצרכי הסעודה ואין לחלק דהכא אין האמירה מעכב כלל במצות ההדלקה שהרי התם מבואר דגם אמירת תנו לפלוני לאכול אינו הפסק ומיירי בין בעני ובין בעשיר ואפילו אין כוונתו ליתן לו מפרוסת המוציא אלא כבר בעלמא לברך עליו הרי אפילו לדבר שאינו חיוב או מעכב כלל אינו נידון כהפסק כזוהו ולא דמי למה שכתבו הפוסקים דאין להתפלל יהיה רצון באמצע סדר התקיעות דהתם אינו שייך לעשיית מצות שופר כלל אלא הוא ענין תפילה לעצמה משא"כ הכא האמירה כמסייע וחלק בצורת קיום המצוה ובאמת אפילו אם לא כהדרך המוכרז למעלה סו"ס מאחר דקיי"ל דראוי ונכון לאמר הנרות הללו באמצע ההדלקה בהכרח שאמירתה בא כחלק וסיוע בקיום המצוה עצמה והיה ההסבר האין שיהיה אין ראוי לדונו כהפסק

⁵ ויראה שיש להביא סיוע להבנה זו כי הרי כתבו הקדמונים כי מניין התיבות של הנרות הללו הוא מכוון בדקדוק כמספר נרות של חנוכה וזוהו טרחו לישב פתרון הדברים כי קשה למצוא נוסח שיעלה כמספר הנכון וכתבו בזה כמה דרכים ויש שיישבו ע"ד מספר לו' תיבות כמספר הנרות של מצוה ויש שהלכו עם מספר מד' תיבות כמספר הנרות כולל השמש ויש שהוסיפו או פחתו מילים מהחשבון ע'י באלי"ר ובמחצה"ש ובמש"ב והנה מביאים מהקהלת יעקב (ארחות רבינו ח"ג עמ' כב') כי המספר הנכון הוא לו' והכוונה רק להמילים מהתחלת הפזמון עד המילים "אלא לראותם בלבד" אבל המילים הנאמרים לאחר מכן אינם מעיקר הדברים וא"כ מבואר מזה הבנתו כי עיקר יסוד הפזמון הוא העמדה על גדר ההשתמשות והאיסור להשתמש בהם ואילו הענין של "כדי להודות ולהלל" אכן הוה המשך ונתינת טעם וגם פירסום אך מ"מ אינו מעיקר תכלית הדברים

CHANUKAH

and its Customs

Chanukah commences on the 25th of Kislev and continues for 8 days.

- Eulogies and fasting are prohibited during the eight days of Chanukah. However, if a Torah scholar dies, he may be eulogized during Chanukah.
- The Mitzva of lighting candles is obligatory upon all of us. Every household should have at least one candle burning every night.
- The custom is to use olive oil for the Chanukah Menorah. If olive oil cannot be found, then regular oil can be used, provided it is Kosher certified.
- Some people use candles to carry out the Mitzva.
- Enough oil or a long enough candle should be placed in the Menorah to last at least an hour after nightfall.
- If many Menorahs are being lit in the household, one should ensure that these are separate from each other.
- All the candles or wicks should be on the same level, none lower, or higher than the other. The Menorah should also be set up in a straight row and not in a circle.
- For those who use wicks and oil, any leftover oil in the Menorah or used wicks should be destroyed after Chanukah, as one may not derive benefit from them. Unused oil remaining in the bottle may be used for any purpose.
- It is customary to have an additional candle, called the 'Shamas', which is used to kindle the Chanukah lights. One should position it higher than the other candles. The Shamas may not be lit from the other candles.
- One cannot derive any benefit from the lights of the Chanukah candles.
- As the Mitzva of Chanukah is 'pirsuma nisa', publicizing the great miracles that happened, it is best to light the Menorah in the presence of all household members.
- On the first night of Chanukah, 3 Brachot are said: 'LeHadlik Ner shel Chanukah', 'She'asah Nisim la'Avosainu' and 'Shehecheyanu'. On the remaining seven nights, only 'LeHadlik Ner shel Chanukah', 'She'asah Nisim la'Avosainu' are said.
- On the first night, one places the candle on the extreme right of the Menorah and, each night thereafter, one adds a candle to the left, lighting from left to right, with the additional candle of that night being lit first.
- The Blessings should all be said prior to lighting the candles, and one should not speak from the time of making the Brachot until the end of candlelighting.
- Some light the Menorah at sunset, some light it 10 minutes after sunset, and there are those that light it an hour after sunset. Others wait until after the Ma'ariv evening service and light it after nightfall.
- On Friday evening, prior to the onset of Shabbat, one should ensure that enough oil/candles are placed in the Menorah, in order that they should burn for at least an hour after nightfall. The Chanukah candles should be lit prior to the Shabbat candles.
- On Motzei Shabbat, some light the Chanukah candles prior to the Havdala, others do it after Havdala.
- Once the candles have been lit, the custom is that women do not carry out any work during the first half hour that the candles are burning, although cooking is permitted.
- During Chanukah, we say the full Hallel every morning during the Shacharit service, praising Hashem for the great miracles bestowed upon us.
- During Shmonei Esrei and Birkat Hamazon, we add the prayer Al HaNisim.
- It is customary for children to play dreidel (spinning the Chanukah top) and to receive Chanukah gelt. The letters on the dreidel are 'nun', 'gimmel', 'hey', 'shin' or 'pey' indicating that a great Nes (miracle) happened here or there (Israel).
- It is customary to eat dairy foods because of the legend of Yehudit, the daughter of Yochanan Kohen Gadol (High Priest), who was taken by the Greek ruler, who wished to defile her. She gave him cheese, causing him to be thirsty, and then wine, which caused him to get drunk, whereafter she killed him.
- It is customary to eat food fried in oil (donuts, latkes, etc.), commemorating the miracle of the Menorah.



KOSHER NEWS

MONTRÉAL'S KOSHER DINING SCENE JUST GOT EVEN MORE *exciting*



PIZZA PITA PRIME

Pizza Pita, one of the largest Kosher pizzerias in the city, has been a Jewish Montréal icon for over 30 years. What started-out as a small restaurant on Victoria Avenue serving only pizza and falafel quickly grew into a three-story restaurant and reception hall on Décarie Boulevard serving pizza, pasta, falafel, poutine, salads and much more. In addition, it opened the first and only Kosher take-out window in North America. Since then, the restaurant

has become “the place” for the city’s Jewish teens to hang-out, for family celebrations, Sheva Brachot and Bar Mitzvas, and for thousands of tourists looking for kosher cuisine. It recently moved again, this time to **5345 Vézina**. With its brand-new location also comes a brand-new name: Pizza Pita Prime. Throughout the pandemic, it has continued to provide top quality food for delivery and take out. Learn more at www.pizzapita.com.



LAURA SECORD AT THE JEWISH GENERAL HOSPITAL

Anyone with a sweet tooth will know that Laura Secord has been providing an impressive assortment of mouth-watering Kosher-certified treats for years. However, the Laura Secord counter at the Jewish General Hospital just became the first and only fully Kosher-certified Laura Secord outlet in Canada, under strict **MK** (Kosher Dairy - Non Cholov Yisrael) supervision. With over 100 stores across the country,

Laura Secord is Canada’s largest and best-known chocolatier. In addition to premium-quality chocolates and ice creams, Laura Secord also makes other delectable treats, such as brownies, caramel crunch and chocolate fudge. Now you can satisfy all your sugary cravings at the **JGH location** and pick-up delectable gifts for your family members and friends at the same time!



Ⓜ recently certified four new establishments and is delighted to welcome them to the city's increasingly diverse family of Kosher eateries.



LEFALAFEL

Lefalafel is 100% Kosher and also 100% vegetarian. Its chefs use traditional Israeli recipes and seasonings to make authentic salads and meals, including grilled eggplant, shakshuka, sabich, malawah, hummus, and tehina. They also serve-up the occasional daily special, like Moroccan Harira soup. But they're best known for their Israeli-style falafel, and many customers claim that it's by far the best in the city. Lefalafel opened in July

2020 with a commitment to providing authentic and fresh food, friendly and personal service, and a clean and warm environment. If you take a quick look at the reviews, you'll see that it's living up to its promise! Check-out Lefalafel's menu on Facebook or call them on **514.731.1221**. You can eat-in, take out, or get delivery through Uber Eats. Lefalafel is located at **6245 Décarie Boulevard**, just north of Van Horne.



MIKE THE BUTCHER

This store is a slice of heaven for meat-lovers. Prime cuts of meat, savoury sausages, perfectly-roasted chickens, savoury deli meats, rich pâtés - you name it, Mike the Butcher's got it! While you're there, you can also pick-up some gourmet grocery items to go along with your feast or order a scrumptious sandwich served on freshly-baked challah. If you're lucky, they may even have whipped up a batch of paella with

chicken and chorizo to take home for dinner! Are you hosting a party? Mike the Butcher also makes beautifully-presented deli platters that will impress your guests. The store is located at **5450 Westminster Avenue** in Côte Saint-Luc. If you can't get there in person, you can order from their website and have your food delivered to your door. Check-out **www.mikethebutcher.ca** or call **514.481.0003** for more information.



THE JEWISH *Transformation*



In the Decarie Boulevard offices of the Jewish Community Council of Montréal, quiet transformations take place. Here, prospective converts attend the weekly classes of the JCC's Montréal Jewish Conversion program to learn what it means to be a Torah Jew.

The French and English speaking teachers educate their students about Jewish law (halacha) and Jewish thought (hashkafa), but "the conversion program is much larger than a classroom experience," stresses Mrs. Esther Hochstadter, senior teacher at the program. Rather, "it's experiential."

The curriculum requires each prospective convert to have "sponsoring families" who host them regularly for Shabbos meals and festivals (chagim) throughout the Jewish calendar. Indeed, many converts point back to these Shabbat table experiences as the single most powerful factor that propelled them on their journeys to Judaism.



Yearly Shabbatons in the Laurentian mountains, Chanukah parties, and Purim meals (seudot) at teachers' homes are opportunities for the prospective converts to meet successful "graduates" of the program and hear details about their integration into Orthodox Jewish communities.

The program's holistic approach to conversion includes a mental health aspect as well. The Jewish Community Council partnered with noted California psychologist Rabbi Dr. David Fox, who formulated a conversion readiness assessment to ensure that prospective converts are emotionally stable and are approaching Judaism with a solid motivation.

The program's three dayanim meet the students every few months throughout the program to ascertain their level of knowledge and sincerity to convert.

Sincerity is difficult to ascertain. Mrs. Hochstadter challenges her students with this question: "you have seven Noachide laws - your ticket to heaven. Why would you want 613 commandments?" A class of fifteen prospective converts can whittle down over two plus years of education, but the aim in an authentic conversion program is quality, not quantity.

Indeed, the nachas that these geirei tzedek give to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, the teachers who invested so much effort into them, and their sponsoring families, are immense. "My students

become family," says Hochstadter. "When I go to Israel, I visit my former students regularly and remain connected to them throughout the year via WhatsApp. We remain connected through Torah, which was our original bond, via classes which I give over Zoom. I marvel at the homes they're building and the ways in which they're gainfully contributing to the Jewish community, oftentimes in Israel."

Branching Out

While some graduates of the Montréal Conversion Program stay on in Montréal, many others move on to Jewish communities the world over.

In recent years, several graduates of the program have moved from Montréal to the Northern Israeli town of Yavniel. Yavniel has a large community of converts, and two geirei tzedek from Montréal's program have taken on leadership positions in the community.

Just over a year ago, these converts decided to give much needed chizzuk to local converts and baalei teshuva by organizing a Shabbaton for them. Not knowing how to organize such a Shabbaton, the community turned to their teacher and mentor, Mrs. Hochstadter, for help.

Mrs. Hochstadter flew to Israel and spoke at the Shabbaton in person. She saw there that the ongoing support that the Montréal program offers its graduates was sorely

lacking in the lives of other converts.

As the Shabbaton wound down, a prominent Rabbi in Yavniel turned to Mrs. Hochstadter. “It seems that, in Montréal, your efforts towards continuity and integration have been a source of your great success,” he observed. His sentiments were echoed by the many community leaders who have noted that the converts from the Montréal program are the most well-prepared, connected, and contributing converts they have met.

The Shabbaton was a smashing success for its participants, and it did something else too: it gave Mrs. Hochstadter and other Shabbaton

organizers the impetus to create an international network in which geirei tzedek could connect and thrive as Jewish community members well past conversion.

One of the outcomes of this initiative is a newsletter, which is published in Israel and edited and compiled by Mrs. Tzirel Rus Krieger, author of the well-known book “The Mountain Family.” Hochstadter and Krieger’s dream of connecting geirei tzedek worldwide and offering an umbrella of support to them has begun to materialize. Indeed, Mrs. Hochstadter’s bi-monthly Zoom classes now reach geirei tzedek as far as Singapore and France.

Says Hochstadter, “the program transforms others, but it has added a most inspirational dimension to my life. Geirus has become a huge focus in my life. It’s an awesome responsibility, but it’s also a tremendous privilege (zchut).”

The mission of the Jewish Community Council is to facilitate the maintenance of Jewish traditional life in Montréal. The Montréal Jewish Conversion program fulfills that mission by ensuring that new members of the Jewish faith are authentic and well-prepared to live a life of Torah and mitzvot as contributing members of their respective Jewish communities.

A Montréal Convert’s Testimony

I grew up in Montréal. My family was secular Sephardic and was almost entirely detached from Judaism. We were so detached, in fact, that my father is Jewish, but my mother was not. Growing up, I had no idea what being Jewish meant, but I always felt so different from my peers in the Christian school I attended. As I got older, I felt more and more distant from my friends.

As my distress grew, circumstances united me with a traditional Sephardic family in our neighborhood. They introduced me to kashrut and Shabbat, things I had never heard about before. I was intrigued, and I was determined to learn more. The more I learned about Judaism, the more I was convinced that it was the only path for me.

So, together with my mother, (who had also always wanted to convert, since her father was also Jewish), we started the conversion process. We attended classes and I drank up every word of Torah that I heard. I met extraordinary Jews. I never dreamed that such greatness could exist! Little by little, I took the mitzvot upon myself. I was delighted to learn of the treasures that the Torah offers.

I completed my conversion process at Montréal Jewish Conversion, the official orthodox Beit Din. My experience was positive. I had a great relationship with my teachers, who taught me both the basics of Judaism and its deeper realms. I still keep in touch with many of these teachers to this day. The program had comprehensive classes which included weekly parsha, halachot for kashrut, Shabbat, holidays, fast days, as well as chasidut. Montréal Jewish Conversion also required us to spend Shabbat and chagim with different families across the city. These families, whether they are aware of it or not, have significantly

impacted me. They showed me Jewish middot. They shaped my Jewish identity. The MJC also organized Shabbatons and evenings to celebrate different holidays. These created in us a sense of belonging to the program and helped us bond with fellow converts.

Of course, the process itself was not always rosy. My paternal family, for whom this whole process was a shock, strongly opposed my becoming religious. Religious Judaism to them was a fearsome unknown. My teachers and peers were also entirely unsupportive.

Nevertheless, at the age of 18, I completed my conversion process, which ended with my immersion in a mikveh, a day I will never forget. It was as if I had Har Sinai on my head! On that day, Hashem was asking me to accept his Torah!

The day of my conversion was both an end and a beginning. It was the end of my life as a non-Jew, and the end of my conversion process. At the same time, it was the beginning of my new life as a bat Yisrael who strives at all costs to serve Hashem and to absorb His precious Torah.

Two years after my conversion, I traveled to study at a seminary in Israel. My time in Israel was magical and I decided to stay on and make aliyah. My Judaism grew stronger and I became much safer in my practice.

I would like to remind you, who were born Jewish, of the incredible present that Hashem has given you. Being Jewish is not easy, I admit that. But nothing precious is acquired easily. All that is sustainable, healthy, and worthy requires great effort. Enjoy the unimaginable gift that Hashem has given you. Embrace it and cherish it, because it is more precious than pearls...

Demystifying KOSHER CERTIFICATION

What's behind the  symbol on so many of your favourite foods

Have you ever looked closely at the packaging on your food and wondered what the little Kosher symbol on it really means? Today is your lucky day, because the dedicated team at the  - Canada's Kosher Certifier, is here to take the mystery out of it!

What does the symbol mean?

"Well, that's easy," says Rabbi Saul Emanuel, Director of the , "If there is an  symbol on your food packaging, it means that your food is Kosher certified, and you know with absolute certainty that your food has been prepared in strict accordance with the Jewish dietary laws – the laws of Kashrut. From cookies, yogurt, chocolate, bread, lasagna to chicken chow mein – the  symbol means it is 100% kosher."

How does a company get a product Kosher certified?

"That's the really interesting part," adds Rabbi Emanuel. "There are several steps involved in getting a product Kosher certified, and everyone at the  has a role to play. The process is stringent, but we strive to make it as simple and straightforward as possible."



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF KOSHER CERTIFICATION?

"The process of getting a product certified Kosher is very rigorous and involves a lot of people. However, the benefits are tremendous, and they far outweigh any inconveniences," states Kalman Emanuel, 's Head of Marketing.

"There's a good reason why the Kosher food market is the fastest growing segment of the food industry,

expanding by more than 10% every year: When a product is certified Kosher, consumers know that it respects their religious dietary needs, that its ingredients meet the highest standards of quality, and that it does not contain any hidden ingredients that can trigger allergies," concludes Rabbi Emanuel.

"It's just a little symbol, but it means a lot!"

1 MAKING THE FIRST CONNECTION

STEP

“Before applying for Kosher certification, a food manufacturer calls me to find out what’s involved and whether their product is suitable. After all, there’s no point making an application if the product contains pork or if it’s bread made with animal-based shortening, for example!” says Liat Asseraf, Account Specialist of the . “It’s my job to clarify exactly what kosher means to those who don’t know, to explain how making a product kosher impacts both its ingredients and its manufacturing process, and to describe the certification process to those who are interested in applying.”

2 FILLING-OUT AN APPLICATION

STEP

“When a company decides it wants to move ahead, they begin the process by filling-out an electronic application on our website,” adds Liat. “When I receive the application, I open a file and get the ball rolling.”

3 SUBMITTING A LIST OF INGREDIENTS

STEP

“For a product to be considered Kosher, all of the ingredients that go into it must be Kosher. Therefore, our clients have to send us information about all the ingredients they use to manufacture their product,” explains Pearly Fuchs, from the private label & training department. “Since the information must be submitted via our online platform, either Liat or myself conduct a training session with every client to make things easier for them.”

4 REVIEWING INGREDIENTS

STEP

“This is where Rabbi Peretz Jaffe and I come in,” says Faigie Becker, Kashrus Compliance Specialist. “We check every ingredient for verification and Kosher approval, and we help customers find alternatives if any of their ingredients don’t meet the requirements. We’re here to help and find solutions!”

5 UNDERGOING A FACILITIES INSPECTION

STEP

“Kosher isn’t just about what a food is made of. It’s also about how that food is made,” explains Rabbi Jaffe. “Once Faigie and I have signed-off on a product’s ingredients, the ball is back in Liat’s court. She arranges for an inspector to visit the client’s production facilities to ensure that they respect all Kosher manufacturing rules.”

6 SIGNING A KOSHER CERTIFICATION CONTRACT

STEP

“When a client’s facilities have passed our inspection, it’s my turn to step in,” says Estie Goldberger, Kashrus Analyst. “My job is to draw up a contract with the company, detailing all the conditions and responsibilities that come with  Kosher certification.”

7 GETTING THE FINAL SEAL OF APPROVAL FROM THE CHIEF RABBI

STEP

“Rabbis, of course, play a big part in the Kosher certification process. We host a weekly meeting of the Vaad Harabanim of Montréal, which is a council made up of eight rabbis from Montréal’s various Jewish communities. They provide us with different points of view and additional guidance about the process,” explains Rabbi Emanuel. “For example, with their expertise, they can judge whether a facility’s equipment needs to be kosherized and, if so, at what temperature.”
“Then, before any company can get its Kosher certification, we submit their file to Montréal’s Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Binyomin Weiss, for review,” states Rabbi Emanuel. “It’s Rabbi Weiss who gives the final seal of approval,” he adds.

8 OBTAINING LICENSING TO USE THE CERTIFICATION MARK

STEP

“Once a client has received the OK from Rabbi Weiss and signed their contract, they’re on their way,” adds Rabbi Emanuel. “We provide the client with an electronic  certification symbol, which they can immediately add to their packaging.”

9 ONGOING COMPLIANCE

STEP

“The privilege of using the  symbol comes with a lot of responsibility,” adds Rabbi Emanuel. “Every client has to adhere to the conditions set forth in their contract, and our inspectors conduct regular inspections to ensure that clients are following the  rules.”

6 questions FOR RABBI MANI DIENA,

KOSHER INSPECTOR



What led you to become a Kosher inspector?

This is a very interesting question. I probably came to Kosher supervision from a different perspective and background than most Mashgichim (Kosher supervisors). I live in Toronto and I was originally involved in the business world. I owned and operated a large medical laboratory and a chain of pharmacies for thirty years. However, even though I was busy running my businesses, I was also interested in practical Halacha (Jewish law) and spent about half of every day learning about it. So, when Rabbi Jaffe approached me about joining the  as a Kosher inspector in 2017, I jumped at the opportunity to merge my two main interests, business and Halacha.

What does a Kosher inspector's job involve?

My job is to ensure that our clients respect the rules of Kashrus – the Jewish dietary laws. My role is different than that of most Mashgichim, who are on-site Kosher supervisors and inspectors for specific companies. Instead, I am a travelling inspector: I am responsible for inspecting all of the -certified plants in Ontario and Western Canada several times a year. When a new client comes on board, I make an initial visit to their plant and write-up a report detailing what would be required in terms of Kosher certification and supervision. This report is reviewed and studied by Rabbi Jaffe, who is a world-renowned expert in Kashrus technology and is a fountain of information about Jewish law. He provides me with comments, raises any concerns and tells me how many times a year I must visit the plant. I then visit the plant again to conduct a thorough inspection and to document everything, which is critical, as every client is unique. If any issues arise with a client, I am fortunate to be able to rely on Rabbi Emanuel, who is a master of corporate diplomacy.

What exactly is a Kosher inspection?

A Kosher inspection allows us to determine whether or not food is

being prepared according to the stringent Kashrus guidelines. By inspecting a plant, I can attest to the reliability of its adherence to Kosher standards. There are three significant factors to take into account in an inspection: the ingredients, the products and the procedure. The latter is very important, because, even if all of the ingredients that go into making a food are themselves Kosher, there are also very important laws governing the preparation of the food which, if not respected, render the product “non-Kosher.” That’s why, every time I visit a client, I check if they have made any modifications to their ingredients or manufacturing processes.

Kosher certification has tremendous rewards but also comes with significant responsibilities. There are enormous penalties for not respecting the terms of a certification contract. Building a relationship with my clients that is based on mutual trust and respect is therefore critical to my job as a Kosher inspector. When I enter a client’s premises, I must respect their rules and regulations and trust that they are telling me the truth. Fortunately, most people are honest and make every effort to comply. However, errors certainly can occur, and that is why it is essential for me to ask lots of questions and to carefully review all of the information I am

given. I am happy to say that I have friendly, professional and productive relationships with almost all of my clients.

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your work?

COVID-19 has made plant inspections more complicated. I can't just show up at a plant on any given workday unannounced anymore! However, because we have developed strong relationships with our clients based on trust, we have been allowed to safely conduct regular inspections throughout the pandemic. In fact, there are only two clients who have requested that their Kosher inspections be done virtually. If a plant absolutely must be sealed from outsiders for health and safety reasons, then we have to respect that decision. This is a whole new reality, and we are finding ways to adapt while still ensuring that Kashrus laws are 100% respected.

Every job has its perks and quirks. Do you have any funny stories to share?

One of the first times my job took me to Western Canada, I was asked to do an initial report on a new Kosher vodka produced in Saskatchewan. After I had reviewed the ingredients and process and completed the report, I started chatting with the team about their business. They knew I had lots of experience, having worked in the corporate world for years, so they asked me for advice

about a business problem they had encountered. To thank me, they offered me a bottle of vodka. However, I explained that I don't accept gifts from clients and that, on top of that, I couldn't take the bottle on the plane with me, as I was flying with carry-on luggage. So, imagine my wife's surprise when six bottles of vodka arrived on our doorstep unannounced, and she had no idea why! She was rather shocked and a bit suspicious about what I was really doing for the ! In the end, I felt guilty and donated the bottles to the Agudath Israel of Toronto for their weekly kiddush.

What is the most common misconception about Kosher inspections?

The most significant misconception in the Kashrus industry is that, by reading the ingredient list, we can decide whether a product is Kosher or not. I am often told: "What could be the problem? It's just beans in a can!" The thing is, even if the ingredients in a product are 100% Kosher, the product can be 100% Treif (non-Kosher), due to how it's made. Consider a plant in which all the kettles are connected to the boiler, and the same water circulates from kettle to kettle. Then, if this plant makes both Kosher and non-Kosher foods, there will be contamination. It would be like trying to cook a Kosher supper in a pot that is not Kosher!



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Beso	5497 ROBERT BURNS ST	514-387-0313
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BISTRO	5663-A ROYALMOUNT AVENUE	514-731-1862
Cheskie Bakery	359 BERNARD ST WEST	514-271-2253
Chez Daniel - Esposito	340 MARCEL LAURIN BLVD	514-747-6464
Cité Cachère	4747 VAN HORNE AVENUE	514-733-2838
Coco Praline	11 SUNNYDALE ST, D.D.O.	514-685-2626
Creative Cakes by Ilana Cakes	5500 WESTBURY AVENUE	514-458-4279
Delicious Without Gluten Inc.*	90 BRUNSWICK BLVD	514-542-3943
District Bagel	5677 AVENUE DU PARC	514-735-1174
District Bagel	709 LUCERNE RD	514-735-1174
ESB Creations	6124 COTE ST LUC RD	514-588-3613
Fooderie Market	6680 AVENUE DU PARC	514-279-3663
Homemade /Canko	8575 8TH AVENUE	514-270-5567
IGA Cavendish	5800 CAVENDISH BLVD	514-482-4710

IGA Côte Saint-Luc	7151 CÔTE SAINT-LUC RD	514-486-3254
Kosher Quality	5855 VICTORIA AVENUE	514-731-7883
La Marguerite	6630 CÔTE SAINT-LUC RD	514-488-4111
Mimimelon	2069 SAINT LOUIS ST, VSL	514-737-6887
Montreal Kosher	7005 VICTORIA AVENUE	514-739-3651
Montreal Kosher	2135 ST. LOUIS ST, VSL	514-747-5116
Munch Real Kosher*	5495 PARE ST	514-738-3600
One Stop Kosher	6735 DARLINGTON AVENUE	514-738-3207
Paradise Kosher	11608 DE SALABERRY BLVD	514-421-0421
Pizza Gourmetti	5795 VICTORIA AVENUE	514-839-5050
Pizza Pita	6415 DECARIE BLVD	514-731-7482
Renfell's	2800 CHEMIN BATES	514-733-5538
Sfyngy's	5800 CAVENDISH BLVD	514-482-2992
Taty's Pizza	6540 DARLINGTON AVENUE	514-734-8289
Westminster Gourmet	5458 WESTMINSTER AVENUE	514-489-7111

TORONTO (Under COR Hashgacha)

Amazing Donuts	3772 BATHURST ST	416-398-7546
Easy Sweets Baked Goods	300 SUPERTEST RD	416-783-7200
Grodzinski Bakery - Bathurst	3437 BATHURST ST	416-789-0785
Grodzinski Bakery - Centre Street	1118 CENTRE ST	905-882-1350
Haymische Bakery	3031 BATHURST ST	416-781-4212
Hermes Bakery	2885 BATHURST ST	416-787-1234
Isaac's Bakery & Cafe	3390 BATHURST ST	416-789-7587
Lollicakes Limited - Specialty Bakery	500 LAWRENCE AVENUE WEST	416-482-2253
My Zaidy's Bakery	7241 BATHURST ST	905-763-6463
Richmond Kosher Bakery	4119 BATHURST ST	647-776-5995
Sobeys	441 CLARK AVENUE WEST	905-764-3770

OTTAWA (Under Ottawa Vaad Hashgacha)

Loblaws at College Square	1980 BASELINE RD	613-723-3200
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VANCOUVER (Under BCK Hashgacha)

Sabra Kosher Bakery	3844 OAK ST	604-733-4912
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RICHMOND, BC (Under BCK Hashgacha)

Garden City Bakery	9100 BLUNDELL RD	604-244-7888
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*gluten free!



WISHES YOU A
HAPPY CHANUKAH!