



PESACH; A TIME OF UNITY OR A TIME OF STRIFE

As we begin our normal Pesach preparations, families around the world make plans to get together to celebrate Yom Tov . Married children go to visit either her parents or his parents. Brothers and sisters come home from schools where they have been studying all year to get together for the seder. Aunts and Uncles come to visit relatives they haven't seen for a while.

In each family gathering there are people from different walks of life. Some might come from Chassidik homes while others are from Ashkenazi homes. Some relatives might be from a Sephardic background. With the assortment of relatives come different shitos (different philosophies) and different ways of celebrating the yom tov.

It is ironic that specifically for the Yom Tov of Pesach, when so many families unite there is the greatest potential for disagreement while each member of the extended family tries to assert their perspective on the other members of their family. Many times hours are spent arguing while each one tries to convince the other that his way is correct.

It can become very challenging to figure out ways to get along and bridge the gaps that might otherwise cause strife during these extended family gatherings.

In Israel we have witnessed this problem in many communities. Ultra orthodox clash with modern orthodox. Ashkenazi groups clash with Sephardi groups. Each group tends to feel that they understand the only right way to serve Hashem and that they have the responsibility to make sure that everyone does as they do.

The question is 'who **is** right and which shita should we follow'?

It is no coincidence that the holiday of Pesach and Sefirat Ha'omer come out at the same time. Sefirat Ha'omer is a time of mourning because thousands of students of Rabbi Akiva died.

The Gemarrah in Yevamos 62 and Beraishis Rabbah explain that the reason they died was

because they did not afford one another the proper respect.

I would like to address a few obvious questions in relation to this Gemarah.

Firstly, the fact that the Torah mentions this at all, means that it is coming to teach us a lesson. What lesson are we to learn from this?

Secondly, why does it not say that they did not love one another instead of saying that they did not show one another respect? It was Rabbi Akiva, their teacher, who taught "love your fellow as yourself" so why don't we talk about not showing proper love?

And thirdly, according to Halacha, a student is defined as one who follows his Rebbi's teachings. These were Rabbi Akiva's "students par excellence." How could it be that they did not follow his most basic teaching; the one that he said was the basis of our Torah! Does not a lack of respect show a lack of love?

My Rebbe answered these questions based on the following Gemmarah;

תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת ברכות פרק ט' דף י"ג
טור ג/ה"א
כשם שאין פרצופיהן דומין זה לזה כך אין דעתן
דומה זה לזה

The Gemarah teaches that "just like no two people look alike, so no two people think alike." What is the relationship between these two concepts that the Talmud connects the two?

The reason that each person was created with his own unique look was so that no one can say that he looks just like Adam (the first man) and therefore, he is the true descendent of Adam. So too, no one can say that my way of thinking is the only right way, and therefore, because I love you so much I will make it my business to convince you to follow my way.

The Gemarah tells us אין דעתן דומה זה לזה. No two people think alike. Each person was created with his own unique neshama that has

its source in a unique place. And because its origin is specific to that neshama, it has its own unique derech cut out for it. What is right for you is not necessarily right for him.

We see this concept many times. The following are just a few examples:

The Benei Yisroel are descendents of twelve different tribes. Torah counts the tribes separately and gives them different tasks and different inheritances in the land of Israel.

Hashem separated the tribe of Yehuda for kingship. He separated the tribe of Levi for work in the Mishkan. And He further separated the Kohanim from the Tribe of Levi.

Indeed all of Bnei Yisroel are separated into kohanim, Leviim and Yisroelim with different mitzvos applying to each.

But the talmidim of Rabbi Akiva, because of their intense love towards their fellow Jew (which they learned from their Rebbe), felt that if their way of learning was so special and beautiful to them, then they would try to

convince their colleagues that their way was superior. Because of their love for their friend, they wanted their friend to have the very best. But when the Gemarrah said that they did not afford the proper respect to one another, it is teaching us that even though we are all different, respect those differences and love your fellow together with his differences.

Another Gemarrah in Maeches Aruvin reinforces this concept of mutual respect.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת עירובין דף יג עמוד ב
אמר רבי אבא אמר שמואל: שלש שנים נחלקו
בית שמאי ובית הלל, הללו אומרים הלכה כמותנו.
יצאה בת קול ואמרה: אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים
הן, והלכה כבית הלל. וכי מאחר שאלו ואלו דברי
אלקים חיים מפני מה זכו בית הלל לקבוע הלכה
כמותן - מפני שנוחין ועלובין היו, ושונין דבריהן
ודברי בית שמאי. ולא עוד אלא שמקדימין דברי
בית שמאי לדבריהן.

The Gemarrah teaches that when there is a difference of opinion between Bais Hillel and Bais Shammai, the Halacha is like Bais Hillel. Why do we follow the halacha according to

Bais Hillel?

One reason given is that Bais Hillel first taught the Halacha according to Bais Shamai and only after that they taught it according to their own opinion.

The Gemarrah in Brochos (page 36:b) says that when Bais Hillel and Bais Shammai differ, Bais Shammai has no authority.

וב"ש במקום ב"ה אינה משנה

What made Bais Hillel so special that every Halacha was taught according to the way they interpreted it?

The answer is that Bais Hillel had every right in their own Bais Midrash to teach only according to their opinion.

But out of **respect** for Bais Shamai, they not only taught the opinion of Bais Shamai but they taught it first. This was true Ahavas Yisroel.

Ahavas Yisroel is respecting other people and understanding that they too, can be right.

Getting together with our extended families while keeping this in mind or even living together in one community with this attitude can become a unifying experience. We can go a step further than just tolerating other people's differences, we can actually come to respect them!

We also need to have ahavas Yisroel for every Jew, even those who are not yet observant in Torah and Mitzvos. Judging them favourably will bring them closer to Torah and Mitzvos.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Va'ad harabonim and the Va'ad Ha'ir in Montreal who represent all the different sects of the Montreal Jewish Community. They work diligently to bring together Montreal's diverse Jewish community.

My hope is that we see tolerance and achdus in all Jewish community's the world over and especially in Artzeinu Hakedosha.

Wishing you all a Chag Kasher Vesameach and a wonderful family experience.



Rabbi N. Daniel Korobkin

BAYT-Toronto

THE REAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHAMETZ AND MATZAH

Chametz and Matzah: two food types that are inexorably linked to Pesach. One is the unleavened icon of our liberation, while the other is the leavened opposite of Matzah. As opposite as they are physically and philosophically, however, the actual word morphologies of these two foods - חמץ and מצה - are almost identical. They share two letters, the mem and the tzadi, but "Matzah" has a heh at the end, whereas "Chametz" has a "ches" at the beginning. But even these differences are slight. The "ches" and "heh" actually look very similar. The only difference between them is the small aperture in the left side of the letter "heh," while the "ches" is closed on both sides. Even the pronunciations of the "ches" and "heh" are similar, so much so that the halakchic authorities are careful to admonish someone leading services to carefully distinguish between the two pronunciations.¹



The minor difference between the letters "heh" and "ches" is taken up by the Gemara (Menachos 29b). Hashem created this world with a blueprint in the shape of the letter "heh." The only side of the letter "heh" that is completely open is the bottom, which teaches that if one is not careful, he may fall "out" of the "bottom" of this world through his sins. So why is there a little aperture on the side of the letter? To make it very easy to come back into this world through teshuvah (repentance). Without the aperture, it would be too difficult to come back in the same way one left, through the bottom. That is why this world needed to be a "heh" instead of a "ches."



Many times this world appears to be like a "ches;" it's static and there doesn't seem to be any way to make up for the past. The challenges seem insurmountable, and change doesn't seem possible. Indeed, Bnei Yisrael were slaves in Egypt and had become so demoralized that they couldn't even envision themselves as free people. According to the Zohar, this is when Pharaoh believed that he had permanently subjugated and conquered the Jews.

His mistake, however, was that he didn't account for one element that still remained within the Jewish people, and that was their Emunah, their faith in Hashem. In Chassidic thought, the belief alone that Hashem can help us is enough to change our mental and physical realities. Because of Emunah, the static "ches" was transformed into the dynamic "heh" - a door was opened for the Jewish people, enabling them to come back and be part of Hashem's world and be liberated.

Sometimes it's hard to see the door, because the world appears opaque and impenetrable. The world looks like one big "ches" without the aperture to let us back in. The redemption process was therefore Hashem enabling Bnei Yisrael to find the door, to realize that the "ches" was really a "heh." Bnei Yisrael had the ability to leave Egypt at any time, and the doorway to their freedom was always open. But until they mustered Emunah, they were

¹ See Magen Avraham and Mishneh Berurah to S.A. Orach Chaim 53:12.



unable to find the door.

Sometimes realities exist all around us, but we just can't see them. We are taught of two tragic figures in the Torah. When Hagar was wandering in the desert, the verse says (Gen. 21:19), "Hashem opened her eyes and she saw a water well." Our sages observe that the well was always there; it was only Hagar's ability to see which changed. Our ability to see things as they truly are is predicated on Hashem allowing us to see them.

The second figure was Balaam, in that his donkey saw the "angel of Hashem" standing in front of them on the road, but it was only after Hashem opened up Balaam's eyes that he, too, could see the angel (Num. 22:31): Here, too, the Midrash echoes the same message as with Hagar: Balaam wasn't blind, yet his true sight came only after Hashem opened his eyes.

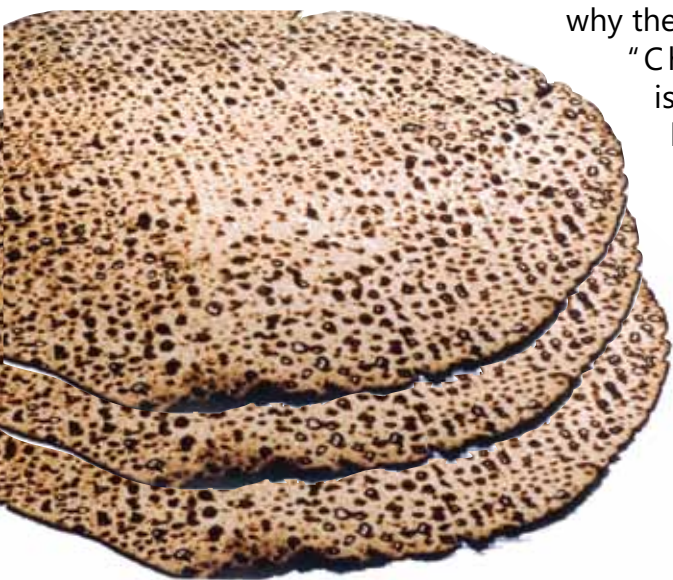
We may now understand why "Matzah" and "Chametz" are so connected etymologically. They both emanate from the same "mem" "tzadi", two letters which form the root word for reality ("metzius"). When the world appears to be a "ches," it seems so real that it's the main part of what a person experiences in his frame of reality. That is why the "ches" in "Chametz" is the first letter of the word, in that i t

completely overwhelms and overshadows one's reality. But the goal is to hone our vision to the true reality, stripped of the "ches." We are meant to transform the "ches" into a "heh," and put it at the "back" of our reality, acknowledging that our true purpose is not realized in this world but in the Next. Our goal, therefore, is to transform the "Chametz" into "Matzah".

Pesach is a time when the individual has greater ability to experience redemption, the redemption of being able to see the aperture that Hashem leaves open for the individual, allowing him to come back "in" to this world of goodness.

The difference between the "ches" and the "heh" is so tiny but it makes all the difference in the world. The difference between "chametz" and "matzah" is just air, but it is that airy façade that prevents a person from seeing the world for what it is. In order to experience redemption, all we need to do is have a little faith and open our eyes. We can then break free of whatever vices are holding us back from realizing our goals and dreams. The key to breaking free is Emunah that the door of the "heh" is there if we seek it, and then Hashem will enable us to see the door. He'll open our eyes and give us the faculties to come back into this world and experience our own redemption.

May we merit to see the doorway to the ultimate redemption this Pesach. Chag sameach!





Rabbi Ephraim Cremisi

Vaad Harabbonim

Lors du seder de pessach, la torah ordonne à tout père de famille de susciter la curiosité de ses enfants, et d'apporter une réponse à chacune de leurs questions. Elle se soucie même, de manière tout à fait exceptionnelle, du niveau de compréhension de chaque enfant et donne quatre réponses différentes adaptées chacune à une catégorie, donnant naissance aux fameux quatre enfants de la haggadah: viend d'abord le fils sage et érudit, le chacham, puis le rasha, l'enfant rebelle, et le tam, l'enfant simple, et enfin l'ignorant, le sheheyno yodeha lisheol.

Cette attitude de la torah est assez surprenante, et il faut essayer de comprendre ce qui rend cet événement si exceptionnel pour qu'elle se soucie à ce point de la compréhension des enfants.

Il est vrai que la sortie de Mitsraïm est un événement de très grande importance, puisque nous avons l'obligation de nous en souvenir chaque jour et chaque nuit, en l'évoquant par exemple dans le shemah. De plus, le premier des dix commandements n'est autre que "Je suis ton Dieu, Celui qui t'a sorti d'Égypte". Mais n'y a-t-il donc pas eu d'événement autre que celui-ci et qui soit aussi mémorable?

De plus, toujours dans la parashah de boh, les bnei israel reçoivent l'ordre de prendre

pour chaque famille l'agneau pascal, et, chose surprenante, de l'attacher au pied du lit afin de provoquer les égyptiens, pour qui l'agneau était une divinité, et de ne leur laisser en rien ignorer le sort qu'ils subissaient. Après lui avoir fait la shechita il leur fallait récupérer le sang et en badigeonner les linteaux de la porte d'entrée, et le Midrash nous dit que les trois linteaux représentait Avraam, Ytshak et Yaacov.

La torah ordonne aussi d'agir ainsi LEDOROTAM, c'est à dire de perpétuer cette mitsvah du korban pessah, afin qu'hashem voie le sang sur les portes des bnei israel et les épargne.

Les questions que l'on se pose sont simples: quel besoin avions nous de provoquer ainsi les égyptiens? Les macot n'avaient-elles pas suffi? Et quelle est la signification du sang sur les linteaux de porte? Et pourquoi représente-t-il les avot? Enfin pourquoi nous demander d'accomplir cette mitsva comme un rituel annuel ledorotam, puisqu'il s'agissait d'un événement exceptionnel?

Le midrash relate que au moment où hashem décida enfin de délivrer les bnei israel les mal'achim lui demandèrent par quel mérite le peuple d'israel allait connaître cette yeshouah, étant lui même un peuple idolâtre.

Une des réponses du midrash est que malgré le fait qu'ils étaient ovdei avodah zara, ils n'avaient jamais changé leurs noms, leurs habits et leur langue qui était le lachon hakodesh. En quoi ces détails pouvaient-ils les sauver? Il aurait pu s'agir d'une sorte de déguisement!

Voici un mashal d'un des grands maîtres du chassidisme. Il y avait une fois un royaume où, suite à une anomalie la récolte entière était porteuse d'un mal étrange, qui causait à tout ceux qui la consommait de devenir fous. Le roi réunit donc ses conseillers et leur soumit deux solutions potentielles au problème.

La première était évidente, il s'agissait de ne pas consommer cette récolte mais il fallait affronter le risque de paraître différents aux yeux du peuple, et donc anormaux.

La seconde solution était au contraire de consommer la récolte, comme le peuple, mais qu'il fallait au préalable se marquer le front avec un signe qui leur rappelleraient, chaque fois qu'ils se regardaient mutuellement, qu'ils ne se trouvaient pas dans leur état normal. Ce fut celle qu'ils adoptèrent.

Il arrive que parfois l'homme s'égare parfois, mais il n'est pas toujours responsable de cela car il existe certains facteurs qui peuvent l'entraîner même contre sa volonté. Notre responsabilité qui doit

toujours demeurer est de garder nos repères et d'avoir toujours conscience d'où on se trouve, à quelle distance de notre objectif.

La torah nous raconte que Kain avait tué son frère Avel et qu'hashem lui avait pardonné. Le midrash raconte qu'un jour Adam rencontra Kain et lui demanda: comment est-ce possible qu'hashem t'ait pardonné à toi alors que tu es responsable du meurtre de ton frère à cause de ta jalousie, et moi, qui ai seulement commis la faute de manger le fruit d'un arbre proscrit, j'ai été renvoyé du gan eden?

Kain lui répondis alors: je me suis repenti tandis que tu as cherché à rejeter la faute sur Hava. Adam comprit alors sa faute et rédigea le mizmor du chir chel yom hachabat, où il écrivit: il est bon de Te reconnaître et de Te remercier hashem!

Cette capacité à pouvoir savoir précisément quel est notre projet initial et de ne pas s'égarer et se mentir à soi-même, voila ce qu'est la midah du emet.

Chaque homme est en réalité composé de ces quatre enfants (les mots banim et bynian sont de la même racine). Certains messages de la tora nous sont claires et nous les acceptons avec sagesse et amour, nous sommes alors le fameux Chacham. D'autres messages nous sont au contraire difficiles à recevoir et à prendre, et nous nous rebellons, c'est donc que nous sommes le Rashah. Certains messages nous laissent indifférents, et c'est la partie tam qui est en nous qui ne réagit

pas. Certains enfin nous sont carrément inconnus, et c'est la manifestation du Sheeino Yodea Lishol en nous.

Notre rôle est de travailler sur nous-même afin de combler toutes ces lacunes qui sont en nous, même s'il ne s'agit pas toujours d'une tâche facile. Nous devons garder notre modèle initial, et toujours essayer de nous en approcher. C'est également la signification du mot EHAD AH ET DE DALET dans le shemah, qui est composé de ah et de dalet, qui équivaut à quatre.

Quand un homme réussit à réunir ces quatre enfants, ces quatre parties de lui-même qui le composent, c'est là que l'on ressent vraiment la souveraineté d'hashem.

Même s'il est vrai qu'ils étaient devenus ovdei avidah zara les bnei israel n'avaient pas changé leur habillement, ce qui montre qu'ils avaient gardé un modèle et n'étaient donc pas totalement corrompus.

Le nom d'une personne correspond en vérité à sa destinée, ce qui est attendu de lui. On lui donne un nom à la naissance et son rôle tout au long de la vie est de le mériter.

Enfin, le langage d'un homme est en vérité l'expression de ce qu'il est et de ce qu'il aspire à être, voila pourquoi on peut juger de ses préoccupations et de ses aspirations grâce à son parler.

Ce qui veut dire un ben israel aussi a des points faibles mais la différence est que nous

perdons jamais notre repaires Prendre un agneau et l'attacher au lit n'était pas une provocation mais affirmer notre choix et ceci était indispensable pour que achem nous sauve.

Le sang sur les linteaux en citant les avots pour avoir comme repères que le seul message juste est vrai c'est le message qu'ils ont laissé. Alors achem nous sauvera car malgré nos faiblesses nous gardons nos valeurs et nos convictions.

Il est évident qu'il est très difficile pour ne pas dire impossible d'enseigner à ses enfants une idée que nous même nous sommes pas convaincu et parfois l'enfant est en vérité notre propre reflet et une mitsva qui nous prend à cœur l'enfant le ressentira et il l'acceptera avec facilité et entraînement.

Une mitsva qui nous est pénible l'enfant le ressentira et elle lui sera également pénible et avec le temps le rebellera.

Soyons clairs en nous même renforçons notre emouna personnel alors nos enfants pourront également se renforcer mais si au fond de nous même nous manquons de conviction notre enfant sera le premier à le ressentir.

Et c'est l'obligation de mentionner la sortie de Mitsraïm deux fois par jour afin de garder nos repères de emouna et nous rappeler à l'ordre et ceci jusqu'au machiah et l'expression LEDOROTAM a toutes ses dimensions.



Rabbi B. Bell
Vaad Harabbonim

Pharaoh's Hardened Heart

The concept of free choice is fundamental to Judaism. But when we read about the Exodus from Egypt, and learn that G-d "hardened Pharaoh's heart," we face the obvious question: "If G-d made Pharaoh act that way, he had not free choice, and how could he be punished?" This article will offer some perspectives on this issue based on classical commentaries as well as Jewish mysticism.

The commentaries explain that G-d indeed "hardened Pharaoh's heart," but only after Pharaoh had tormented the Jewish people for a lengthy period of time. A simple reading of the sequence of events confirms this. Pharaoh's inhumane treatment of the Jewish people, including infanticide and devastating oppression, begins at the opening of Shmos, before Moshe is even born. G-d's first statement of intent, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart", was said only after Moses had grown up, escaped to Midian, married and had children. Therefore, it was only after Pharaoh had sinned in the most severe manner that G-d stripped him of his free choice.

But what was the purpose of removing his free choice? Maimonides explains that the loss of his free choice was itself Pharaoh's punishment. Normally, the path of repentance is always open; G-d wanted to show the world that a person could sin so severely that he would be denied the ability to correct it through repentance, causing him to die in that degenerate state. In a way, this is the ultimate punishment, since the person is denied the ultimate reward of the World to Come.

However, there must be some deeper reason as well; there are numerous ways by which G-d could have punished Pharaoh. What was the point in punishing Pharaoh in this specific way?

Elevating Sparks

There are a number of approaches to resolving this question, the first of which involves the mystical concept of purification of sparks, or birurim.

Kabbalah explains that with the creation of the universe, sparks of holiness were spread throughout the world. This process is alluded to in the second verse of the account of Creation (Bereishis 1:2), which says, "The spirit of G-d hovered above the water." The Hebrew word for "hovered," is *m'rachefet*, and contains five letters. When rearranged, these letters spell out the phrase "288 died" [*rachaf-met*], alluding

to the descent of these 288 sparks from their spiritual source above down to the physical world.

These 288 sparks must be purified and elevated in order to bring the world to completeness and redemption. In Egypt, 202 out of the total 288 sparks were purified.. This is alluded to in the verse, "A mixed multitude [erev rav] came up with them" (Shmos 12:38). The Hebrew word, "rav" ["multitude"] has a numeric value of 202, referring to the 202 sparks which were elevated. After the Exodus from Egypt, we are left to work on the remaining 86, which had split into countless minute sparks.

How? How Long?

Some of the ways in which these sparks can be purified are known to us; others are concealed from us in what is known as the "secret of purification," *sod habirurim*. The primary purification of the sparks in Egypt was achieved through the exhausting labor of the Jewish people. This is actually one of the reasons why the work was so hard: the sparks had to be completely elevated before the Jewish people could leave.

If they hadn't worked so strenuously, the 210 years would not have been sufficient; they would have had to remain even longer to elevate the sparks. It was vitally important to elevate every spark as part of the overall scheme of creation. In addition, these sparks contained various souls which, when purified, would later descend to become vital elements of the Jewish people.

Hard Work

There was another factor as well. The Jews who were enslaved in Egypt were being prepared to receive the Torah on Mount Sinai. Scripture therefore compares Egypt to a "crucible," which purifies metal through intense heat. Only this process can expunge the impurities, and produce pure, untainted gold. Accordingly, the Egyptian bondage was an integral part of creating the Jewish people. Had they been redeemed "prematurely," the purification would have been incomplete.

Had it been up to him, Pharaoh would never have allowed this process to be completed. The plagues, as his servants pointed out to him, had virtually destroyed Egypt. There was no point in holding on to the Jews any longer. But had he relented earlier, the purification of sparks and the preparation of the Jewish people would not have been completed. The hundreds of years of slavery would have been pointless.

This helps us understand why G-d punished Pharaoh by taking away his free will. In this way, G-d ensured that the Egyptian exile would last the proper length of time, and that its ultimate purpose be achieved. Although the removal of Pharaoh's free will did fulfill this function, our question is still not entirely answered. Certainly, G-d could have kept the Jewish people in Egypt in some other way. The Jewish people could have been kept in Egypt without resorting to the extreme measure of denying Pharaoh his free will. This can be understood by a deeper appreciation of the Redemption from Egypt.

Step Aside

The universe was created in a way that it appears superficially to be separate from its Creator. Only through deep contemplation does one come to the realization that there is an Infinite Source. Perceiving the true force manifest in the universe, however, presents an indirect challenge to one's personal "ego." If G-d is the true source of everything, then this realization entails that one must put aside one's personal agenda and be concerned only with G-d's.

The Amida prayer, therefore, concludes with the petition, "Let my soul be like dust before other people; open my heart to your Torah." For only through the quality of humility and nullification of ego does one become a fitting receptacle for G-d's holiness. From this perspective, the ultimate expression of holiness is nullification of one's will. By allowing one's own concerns to fade in the face of G-d's concerns, one allows G-d's presence to be revealed.

Conversely, ignoring G-d's role leads to a feeling that the universe (or a certain part of it) is the true existence. This sense of independence constitutes the primary characteristic of idolatry. One who worships an idol does so out of a conviction that the idol is dependent on nothing else other than itself.

An arrogant individual personifies this same quality. The Torah therefore paraphrases G-d as saying, "In the place where an arrogant person stands, both he and I cannot both be present."

One way in which G-d brings about this nullification of self is through physical and/or emotional tribulation. It is difficult to feel crushed and egotistical at the same time.

This was another dimension of how the Egyptian bondage helped prepare the Jewish people to receive the Torah on Mt. Sinai. Only when they reached the deepest level of self-nullification were they capable of receiving the highest revelation of G-dliness.

Full of Himself

But G-d's revelation was meant to elevate the entire

world, not just the Jewish people. Accordingly, the whole world also had to go through a process of nullification in order to facilitate the eventual ubiquitous revelation of G-dliness.

For this process, Egypt was again the primary focus. As mentioned previously, Egypt was the major repository of holy sparks from the time of creation. And in the area of arrogance, Pharaoh was unsurpassed. He proclaimed himself a god, claiming to possess supernatural powers. When Moses first approached him, Pharaoh scoffed, "Who is G-d, that I should listen to Him?!" Claiming to transcend the bodily limitations, he would take care of his physical needs in secret to create the impression that he was superhuman. He publicly declared that he had actually created the source of all life in Egypt - the Nile River. He even claimed to have created himself!

In order to prepare the world to receive the holiness at Mt. Sinai, Pharaoh and Egypt needed some very intense nullification. This came first and foremost in the form of the plagues. Egypt was virtually demolished, and as the arrogance of Pharaoh and the Egyptians eroded, the world automatically became better prepared for the revelation of G-dliness.

But even as G-d took away their food and water, their health and sense of security, there was still one thing he did not take away.

The Most Essential Freedom

In the account of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, G-d mentions the unique quality of man - that he has the freedom to choose between good and evil.

It was precisely this last vestige of control that G-d took away from Pharaoh. Even as Egypt was being devastated, Pharaoh, in his arrogance, could always come up with an alternate interpretation of the events. And even if he didn't, the essence of what distinguishes a human being from all other beings was still in his possession.

G-d therefore brought about the ultimate shattering of Pharaoh's ego. He stripped him of the most basic element - the last frontier, so to speak - of human control. He stripped away his free will. This punishment was a "measure for measure" rectification of Pharaoh's sin. He claimed to be the most powerful being in the universe. From his perspective, even G-d had no control over anything. "Measure for measure," however, G-d showed Pharaoh that it was he who didn't have control even over himself.

This represented the consummate nullification of Pharaoh's egoistic excess. By denying Pharaoh his free will, G-d broke his coarseness and thereby prepared the world to become a place where G-d's glory could be revealed.



Rabbi Zushe Blech
author of 'Kosher Food Production'

מצה זו שאנו אוכלים

THIS MATZOH THAT WE EAT

Although we generally refer to the holiday as "Pesach" (Passover), this name technically refers to the 14th day of Nissan, the day that the Korban Pesach (Paschal Sacrifice) was brought. The main holiday is referred to in Chumash as חג המצות - the Holiday of Matzoh, since it is characterized during its entire seven days by observance of the requirements of Chometz and Matzoh. Although the requirement to eat Matzoh applies only during the Seder, one is prohibited from eating Chometz during the entire holiday. In addition, many authorities rule that although one is not obligated to eat Matzoh during the rest of Pesach, one actually fulfills the Mitzvah of Matzoh every time it is eaten during Pesach (שיטת הגר"א). There are a number of different types of Matzoh, and it is important to know their Halachik distinctions in order to be able to approach the fulfillment of the Mitzvos of Chometz and Matzoh in the most appropriate manner.

Both Chometz and Matzoh are made from the same ingredients - flour and water - and it is impossible to understand one without the other. Chazal teach us that the grains: wheat, rye, oats, barley and spelt can ferment with water to become Chometz. This fermentation may be from the spontaneous fermentation that can occur when the grain becomes wet for even a brief period, even without the addition of yeasts or other leavening agents. Matzoh is defined as bread made from any of these grains, which are susceptible to becoming Chometz, but are mixed with water and baked in such a way that guarantees that it does not ferment and become Chometz. Although other "grains", such as corn (maize) and rice, may ferment, such fermentation is classified as סירחון ("rot"), and not true Chometz. [Many are classified as Kitniyos, whose use is also restricted according to Ashkenazic custom.] As such, bread made from these sources cannot be considered Matzoh. Similarly, Matzoh made with flour from one of five grains but using liquids other than water - such as fruit juice or eggs - will also not create true Chometz, but neither can it be considered true Matzoh. One must therefore be very careful when making Matzoh, since the difference between Chometz and Matzoh can be very slight, indeed.

The Torah teaches us: ושמרתם את המצות - one must guard the Matzohs. Chazal interpret this injunction in two ways. First, one must be extremely vigilant to ensure that the Matzoh does not become Chometz. Second, one must bake the Matzoh that is to be used to fulfill the Mitzvah of eating Matzoh with that express purpose in mind (לשמה). The approaches used to satisfy these requirements present us with a variety of different types of Matzoh.

The first concern with the preparation of Matzoh is to ensure that the flour is free of Chometz concerns. Matzoh flour must therefore be guarded (שמורה) to ensure that it does not come into contact with water and begin to ferment before the actual Matzoh baking process. There are three opinions discussed in Halacha as to the level of guarding that is required. The most lenient opinion states that this requirement is satisfied as long as care is exercised from the time the flour is mixed with water to ensure that the Matzoh is baked before it can become Chometz (שמורה מלישה ואילך). This opinion should only be followed in cases of extreme necessity, and none of the Matzoh sold today follows this approach. [Indeed, most flour today is soaked (tempered) in water before milling, which raises the concern that it may be true Chometz]. The

second opinion holds that the grain must be guarded from the time it is milled into flour, since it is at that time that it is most susceptible to fermentation when it becomes wet (שמורה מטחינה ואילך). The grain is inspected before milling to ensure that it has not begun to sprout or exhibit other signs of Chometz, and by doing so we are assured that even if the whole grain had become wet it had nevertheless not become Chometz. Most machine Matzoh made today uses such flour, and such Matzoh is commonly referred to as מצה פשוטה - "regular Matzoh". The third approach requires supervision of the grain from the time of its harvesting to ensure that it did not come into any contact with water whatsoever until the actual baking of the Matzoh. (שמירה משעת קצירה) Such flour is used to bake all hand and some machine Matzoh, and such Matzoh is referred to as מצה שמורה - "Shemurah Matzoh".

The second concern involves the requirement that Matzoh used to fulfill the Mitzvah of eating Matzoh during the Seder be made לשמה - with the intention that it be used for a Mitzvah. Until about two hundred years ago, all Matzoh was made by hand. The process involved hand mixing small batches of dough with water that had been allowed to cool overnight (מים שלנו), hand rolling the dough into Matzohs, and then using a hand-held tool to place the Matzohs into the oven. Since each of these steps was done by a Jew with the intention of making Matzoh for use as a Mitzvah, all of the Matzoh was considered as made לשמה-- for the sake of the Mitzvah. With the advent of machines capable of mixing dough, rolling it into Matzohs, and placing it into the oven, several new issues presented themselves. First, it is obvious that a machine cannot make Matzoh - with the intention for a Mitzvah. However, does the intentional action of turning the machine on constitute an act sufficient to consider Matzoh made by machine to be indeed made for the sake of the Mitzvah (לשמה)? This question has been



the subject of much Halachik discussion. Although many manufacturers of machine Matzoh attempt to address the requirement of יו"א by having some direct human involvement in the production of the Matzoh (such as in the mixing of the dough), many people insist on using hand Matzoh during the Seder in order to ensure that they had been baked לשמה. It is worth noting, however, that at least one specialty machine Matzoh baking company in Israel performs all critical steps by hand to ensure that their Matzoh is indeed made לשמה.

[A special type of hand Matzoh is discussed among the Halachik authorities especially for use at the Seder. As we noted before, the holiday of Passover actually begins on the afternoon of the 14th day of Nissan, when the Korban Pesach (Paschal Sacrifice) was brought in the Beis Hamikdash. According to many authorities, one should ideally bake the Matzoh to be used at the Seder that very afternoon. Indeed, many Gedolim insist on baking their Matzoh in this manner. However, such an enterprise requires great care, and the custom by most is to bake their Matzohs in advance.]

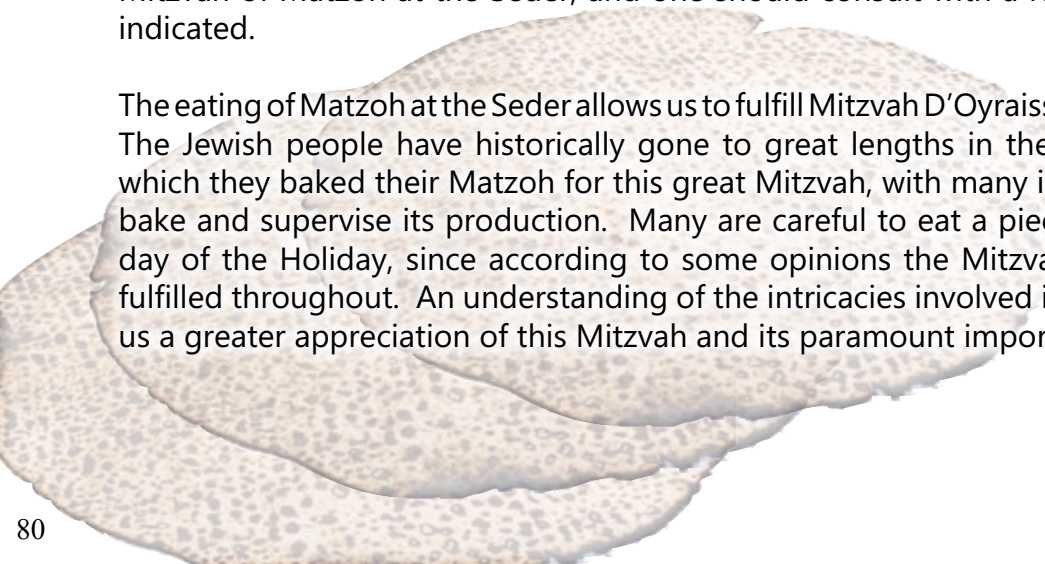
A third concern stems from the need to ensure that the Matzoh dough does not become Chometz during the baking process itself. Chazal tell us that under normal conditions it takes at least 18 minutes for dough to become Chometz. This time can change drastically, however, with changes in the surrounding environment. Heat will significantly hasten the process, and for this reason the oven in a Matzoh bakery is segregated from the area

where the dough is handled. In order to avoid any possible concerns, hand Matzoh factories shut down their production every 18 minutes. At that time the tables, mixing equipment, rolling pins, and all other equipment is thoroughly cleaned to remove every trace of dough from the previous batch. The workers even wash their hands carefully, and the Mashgiach checks everything before production is allowed to resume. Some machine Matzoh production also follows this approach, and the equipment is designed to be dismantled and thoroughly cleaned every 18 minutes. Such machine Matzoh is called "18 Minute Matzoh", and is made from both Shemura and regular Matzoh flour. Most machine Matzoh, however, is produced on equipment that is cleaned thoroughly at the beginning of a production cycle, but not every 18 minutes. They rely on the following considerations. First, Chazal tell us that the time before dough becomes Chometz can be extended for a much longer period if it is constantly being worked (e.g. kneaded). These machine Matzoh factories therefore design their systems to attempt to keep the dough in a constant state of motion. Furthermore, the equipment is designed to prevent the dough from sticking to the equipment or otherwise remaining in the system for 18 minutes. Since the speed of the Matzoh production is such that every mixture of dough passes through the system into the oven well within 18 minutes, it can be assumed that all of the Matzoh has indeed been baked within 18 minutes of the time it was first kneaded. Any minor amounts that might remain on the equipment would be Halachikally insignificant (Batul).

Another type of Matzoh is called Egg Matzoh (מצה עשירה). It is produced from Passover Matzoh flour, but uses eggs or fruit juice instead of water. In theory such Matzoh cannot become Chometz, since it does not contain regular water. It does, however, pose significant issues. First, although it may be permitted to be eaten, it may definitely not be used to fulfill the Mitzvah of eating Matzoh at the Seder, since it is not לחם עוני (Bread of Affliction) and by nature cannot become Chometz. Second, the Remah rules that since contamination of the fruit juice with even a slight amount of water could cause the dough to become Chometz immediately, the custom is to refrain from eating such Matzoh on Pesach at all, except by children or the infirm.

Our discussion of Matzoh would not be complete without noting the special efforts made to meet the needs of those who cannot eat regular Matzoh due to certain health considerations. Although Matzoh can be made from any of the five grains, virtually all Matzoh today is made from wheat. Unfortunately, certain people are allergic to the protein found in wheat (gluten). To address this need, special productions of spelt and oat Matzoh are available. However, please note that these products may pose special Halachik concerns for use in fulfilling the Mitzvah of Matzoh at the Seder, and one should consult with a Rav when these products are indicated.

The eating of Matzoh at the Seder allows us to fulfill Mitzvah D'Oyraissa - a Biblical commandment. The Jewish people have historically gone to great lengths in the stringencies and care with which they baked their Matzoh for this great Mitzvah, with many insisting that they personally bake and supervise its production. Many are careful to eat a piece of Shemura Matzoh each day of the Holiday, since according to some opinions the Mitzvah of eating Matzoh can be fulfilled throughout. An understanding of the intricacies involved in its production should give us a greater appreciation of this Mitzvah and its paramount importance for the holiday itself.



IGA OPENS IN PIERREFONDS

by: Mr. Chaim Ginsberg

Having recently opened its doors to the public, IGA Pierrefonds have taken the initiative to obtain MK supervision in order to attract kosher consumers to their store. Just a stone's throw away from the West Island, Jewish community, the supermarket is in fact ideally located for many consumers seeking a wider variety of kosher groceries, many of whom have had to travel extended distances in order to obtain the kosher goods they needed.

The new IGA store is beautiful. A combination of tasteful design and some superb photography adorning the walls help make shopping at the store a very pleasant experience. With its excellent layout and wide aisles, the store is also very easy to navigate.

Kosher consumers will be delighted with the wide selection of kosher food available at the store. Not just a selection of a few staple products, this store boasts a huge assortment of kosher products, much like you would find in any typical kosher grocery store.

The supermarket has one completely kosher aisle. There, besides for layer upon layer of kosher groceries, you'll find a large dairy refrigerator stocked full with a choice of cheeses, yoghurts, Chalav Yisrael milk and a whole lot more! Another designated kosher meaty refrigerator, packed with a choice of meat and poultry, stands near a baked goods section carrying an assortment of fresh bread, rolls, bagels and cakes from a number of different MK certified bakeries. Additionally, basic religious articles like Shabbos and Havdalah candles are also available at the store.

I had the opportunity to meet with the owner of the store, Mr. Michel Akoury. A kind and friendly man, Mr Akoury informed me that he along with the mashgichim at the store intend to stay ahead of the Jewish calendar in order to make sure the store will be fully stocked with appropriate supplies in good time for every holiday.

A Mashgiach is employed by the MK to work at the store full time, guaranteeing the kashruth is at the highest of standards. All work related to meat, poultry - which includes an onsite chicken barbecuing facility – and the preparation of fresh kosher bagels, is carried out by the mashgiach himself as required by Halacha. All the Meats are packaged using our "Maftach V'Chosem" system – i.e. clearly marked as kosher and sealed with a sticker that cannot be removed without damage to it and the packaging. Kosher products at the store are also stored in separate refrigerators and freezers to the non kosher products.

The Mashgiach, like the rest of the staff at the supermarket, is happy to listen to the questions and suggestions of customers in areas of kashruth and to be of assistance to them. IGA Pierrefonds is determined in their efforts to supply kosher food in the best way possible to their kosher consuming customers. Take a look for yourself; you'll be a frequent customer at the store in no time!



by: Mr. Chaim Ginsberg

You may already be familiar with the two Second Cup cafés in the Jewish General Hospital. These cosy and warm corners of the medical centre have been for many, places to contemplate and gather in the events of the day, or just an escape from the winter cold. Whatever may bring you to the Hospital, perhaps a new baby, or to brighten the day of a patient in need of a familiar face, a moment to relax and reflect over a steaming cup of fresh, aromatic brewed coffee is always appreciated.

The Cafés, the only Second Cup cafés to bear MK certification, are two of 350 Second Cup cafés in cities like Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal as well as many small towns and neighbourhoods.

The Second Cup has over 5,000 trusted coffee experts serving over 1 million coffees and teas to Canadians each week. Founded in 1975, Second Cup is Canada's largest specialty coffee franchisor. From the start, Second Cup has been committed to providing its customers across the country with the best coffee available selecting their beans from only the top 3% of beans in the world.

Second Cup roasts their coffee to four levels of intensity; light-medium, medium, medium-dark and dark. The longer coffee is roasted, the darker and bolder it becomes. Think of it like cooking a steak. Some people prefer medium rare, others like well done—the same applies to coffee; it's all a matter of personal preference. Second Cup ensures each one of these levels will be unique by combining four unique characteristics; aroma, acidity (coffee with little acidity will taste flat and lifeless), flavour and body.

As I sipped my coffee, taking in the warm and pleasant decor of the main hospital café, I couldn't help noticing how everything has been taken in to account. From the lighting to the choice music and most important, the layout - perfectly designed to allow customers easy entry and exit during the bustling peak hours - everything is just right. An occasional visitor to the café myself, I also notice how low the turnover of the staff is. This has allowed customers and the friendly staff to grow familiar with each other, bringing the service in the café to an even higher level.

COFFEE – KOSHER – PERFECT!

Chatting with the owner of the café, Mrs. Eiman Masri, I am enthusiastically told how all their coffees, ground on site, are used within four hours of being ground. Once brewed, the coffee must be served within an hour. All this, she tells me, is accomplished with almost nothing going to waste! She also tells me that every season the café introduces new beverages. Whenever you may decide to visit the Second Cup café at the Jewish General Hospital, you won't regret taking a moment out of your busy schedule to enjoy a piping hot cup of coffee, or one of the other popular drinks from their broad choice of hot and cold beverages. An assortment of delicious cakes and sandwiches are also available at the cafés from MK certified bakeries like Adar, Homemade and Mandelli. You will always be served quickly and with a warm smile. In their words, "we care for our customers as if they were guests in our homes."

The MK has also gone to lengths to ensure that customers who prefer chalav yisrael can enjoy drinks at the cafés too. All beverages from the Barista Espresso machine as well as freshly brewed coffee and ice coffee (regular coffee with ice cubes) are all pareve when ordered black. Ice latte can also be prepared with chalav yisrael upon request. Conveniently a list of drinks available at the café to chalav yisrael consumers can now be found at the café.

The cafés are found in two locations inside the hospital. The larger of the two, which provides seating, is located by the main entrance on Cote-des-Neiges. The other take out style café is located by the Légaré entrance. During weekdays, the main café is open 24 hours and the Légaré café is open from 7am till 4pm. Both are closed on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays. Both cafés also offer free WiFi service. In approximately one year the café by the Légaré entrance will be moved to the new pavilion currently under construction and may also accommodate a seating area.

The 24 hour café at the main entrance, which at most hours is bustling with activity, tends to quieten down during the mid-afternoon hours and then again as the night approaches. So for those looking for a quiet moment at the café, these hours are for the most part recommended.

And finally, a chag kosher v'sameach. All our visits to the hospital should be for only memorable and joyous occasions. Amen!

COMING TO YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD:

LES THÉS DAVID'S TEA



by: Mrs. Chaya Eigner

Although North Americans are first and foremost coffee drinkers, tea has been starting to make inroads into our society. It won't give you the boost of energy that coffee will, but tea is known to be the healthier beverage. More and more, you can expect to find trendy little tea shops alongside local coffee shops. It's official: tea is now in vogue.

David Segal, a young man who admits he was born to be an entrepreneur has capitalized on the rising popularity of tea in Canada. The founder of David's Tea, a fast-growing national chain has always loved drinking tea. As a young man, he wondered why he couldn't get a decent cup of tea in Toronto, which is where he lived at the time. Worst of all, tea was considered dull and stodgy, and David wanted to make it fun.

David says the secret to the chain's success is that they treat tea like fashion. To tea lovers, a Davids Tea shop is like a candy store to a child. The shops are brightly decorated, with row after row of colourful tins holding more than 150 loose leaf tea varieties. The names are imaginative and enticing: Buttered Rum, Citron Oolong, Dolce & Banana. To some, choosing a tea is like choosing a fine wine. Catering to tea collectors, the shops also stock tea accessories like clay tea pots, decorative mugs and iced tea makers.

Customer service is an important part of the Davids Tea concept. The staff is warm and friendly, and can't wait to introduce you to the world of teas. Choosing from among such a huge variety can be intimidating, but the staff makes it fun: they will bring ten different teas for you to smell.

The first Davids Tea shop, on Queen Street in Toronto. opened in September of 2008, six months after David Segal's dream was born. To make that dream a reality, David

approached his cousin Hershel Segal, founder of Le Chateau. He figured his youthful exuberance and passion, paired with Hershel's experience in the world of business would be a winning combination. He was right. To date, there are 70 Davids Tea stores across Canada, and two in New York City.

Last year, Davids Tea decided to go kosher, in order to expand its customer base, and make their teas available to kosher consumers as well. The MK was a natural choice for this fast-growing chain: both are homegrown, and are located mere blocks from each other. More than 140 of the teas are kosher: everything from unflavoured black, green and white teas, to herbal blends, and varieties like roibos, pu'erh and oolong. Though the shops themselves are not kosher certified, many of the tea varieties are. All kosher teas are clearly marked with the MK.

In recent months, a new Davids Tea shop has opened right in the heart of the chassidic neighbourhood, where Outremont ends and Mile End begins. The location is on St-Viateur street, east of Parc Avenue. David Segal says the new neighbourhood is very special to his family. His family home is there, and it's where his cousin and the co-owner of David's Tea grew up.

So the next time you need a pick-me-up, head to a Davids Tea shop near you. They have just what you need to warm you up on a cool day, or you can pour it over ice for a refreshing and healthy drink.



Cold Refreshing...and

By Sarah Rochel Hewitt

There are few treats as refreshing to both young and old as an ice cold popsicle on a hot summer day. The Vaad of Montreal is delighted to announce that Canadian kosher consumers can now find pareve popsicles even at their local chain supermarkets. Quebec based Les Aliments Lebel Inc. has now come under the supervision of the MK, and an entire line of private label ice creams will now bear MK certification.

Les Aliments Lebel has been in existence since 1986, but its origins go all the way back to the 1930s, when Augustine Lebel produced ice cream for the Kenogami Dairy in Saguenay. He passed the recipe to his son, Gaetan Lebel, who founded the company.

The early years of the company were dedicated to product development, and during this time Les Aliments Lebel created several novelty desserts. Their products caught the attention of a chain that was just then gaining popularity in Canada, and Price Club (now known as Costco) became one of Lebel's primary customers.

Les Aliments Lebel's journey to kosher certification began in 1997, although they did not know it then. That year they purchased the Laiterie Lowe dairy

facility and centralized the organization of Les Aliments Lebel in Lachute, Quebec. Shortly thereafter, Les Aliments Lebel decided to stop outsourcing the manufacturing of their products and began building a new plant. The plant was completed in 2000, and expanded in 2008/9.

With greater manufacturing capability, Les Aliments's product line and customer base grew as well. As a creator of private-label products, Les Aliments Lebel worked with most of the major Canadian chain supermarkets. The request for kosher certified products came from one of these national chains, who wished to attract the kosher clientele of Toronto. As they investigated what would be required of them to meet this request, they discovered exactly how large a community they could reach, even in their own province. This convinced them that certification would be worthwhile for all of their products, and benefit all of their customer companies.



Once Les Aliments Lebel made the decision to pursue kosher certification through the MK, the process took approximately six months. As a company that manufactures diverse food products, Les Aliments had to rearrange many of their ingredient suppliers, and their sources from across the continent.

Now Certified Pareve!

Each new source had to meet the standards of Les Aliments, and had to be approved by the private labels who receive the end product and be approved by the MK.

Now that it has been formally kashered, the plant itself is easy to maintain. The company's only disciplinary consideration will be staying up-to-date on the status of all of their suppliers, while also finding only certified suppliers for new ingredients. With the professionals at the MK on their side, however, this will not be difficult.

Les Aliments Lebel is an innovative company that continues to create unique products. Their "Double Delight" ice cream sandwich dipped in chocolate, and their mini ice cream cones, both won new products award. For the kosher consumer, however, their truly novel product is their line of pareve popsicles, an item that is not easily found outside of kosher supermarkets. Until now, popsicles available in local stores either lacked certification or were produced on dairy equipment.

For the kosher consumer, however, their truly novel product is their line of pareve popsicles

The idea of producing pareve popsicles was first brought to the attention of Les Aliments Lebel by Rabbi Peretz Jaffe, when he noticed how meticulous the factory was in maintaining its peanut free environment. For Les Aliments Lebel, this request was actually quite simple because the production process for popsicles is different from that of their dairy products. Les Aliments Lebel runs their popsicles first, and thus they are always produced on equipment that has gone through a complete cleaning and sanitization process. This daily cleaning process includes a special method of confirming that no dairy proteins remain on machinery. Additionally, there is no heat or forced steam treatment used during the popsicle production.

Kosher consumers can find Les Aliments Lebel products under private labels such as Originale Augustin, Iceberg and Lowe.

