

The Tree of Life

עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה ותומכיה מאושר

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Jewish Wealth

Jewish wealth is not houses and gold. The everlasting Jewish wealth is: Being Jews who keep Torah and

Mitzvot, and bringing into the world children and grandchildren who keep Torah and Mitzvot

Hayom Yom

Concern regarding Kashrus and its availability is reaching a crescendo in Sydney. In this week's Australian Jewish News I have written an op-ed which follows below.

Isabelle Shapiro, Woollahra Councilor and member of South Head, has written a petition. There has already been an overwhelming response from members of the community who have seen it. If you are as concerned with the availability of a high and affordable standard of kosher products as I am, I urge you to email Isabelle – ishapiro@bigpond.net.au.

I would also like to hear your thoughts on Kashrut here in Sydney and publish them. You can either post these on our blog by going to <http://www.southhead.org/> or you can email them to me directly. While I understand that this is a highly emotive issue, I do ask that all correspondence be civil and non-personal - we must be as careful of what goes out of our mouths as what goes in.

AS the rabbi of one of Sydney's largest congregations it is my duty to report that there are concerns about the Kashrut Authority (KA).

This should not be taken as meaning that the KA has acted inappropriately. What it does mean is that the KA has not enunciated its policies clearly and succinctly in a manner that both ordinary laymen and rabbis can understand. It may also mean that the KA

Kashrut at the Crossroad

•Rabbi Benzion Milecki

has bitten off more than it can chew.

For example, outside the KA itself, I have not met anyone who really understands why certain kosher caterers and restaurants are permitted to buy meat from Melbourne whereas others are not. When challenged with this, the KA first attempts to give an explanation which for most is just too esoteric.

We are then told that due to this lack of community understanding, the KA is now working on a plan to increase the number of butchers here in Sydney under KA supervision, the intention being to eventually force all kosher suppliers to only purchase meat under KA supervision.

Frankly I don't understand this. If meat from Melbourne is currently acceptable by the KA, then surely the KA should facilitate its availability rather than attempt to block it. There are currently three hashgaschot (supervisory authorities in Melbourne) all of which are of a Charedi standard. Both caterers and the general public want freedom of choice.

Another issue is the cost of kashrut supervision at kosher establishments. In order to maintain the highest standards of kashrut, it is imperative that certain establishments have constant supervision. This is a given

according to accepted standards of halacha. The question here is who is responsible for this cost -- the KA or the kosher establishment? The KA says that it is the responsibility of the establishments whereas the establishments say that they cannot possibly absorb this cost without making the cost of their product prohibitively expensive. As no-one expects the supervision to be without cost, this presents a dilemma.

I do not believe that this dilemma can be resolved within the current structure of KA here in Sydney as it may require subsidisation by the community. The community in turn would only be prepared to subsidise kashrut if the organisation was fully open and accountable.

I have the utmost respect for Rabbi Moshe Gutnick as a talmid chochom and someone extraordinarily well-versed in commercial kashrut, and I believe that we are very lucky to have someone of his calibre at the head of the rabbinic arm of the KA.

However it does seem to me that the KA has two quite distinct roles. One is the supervision of kashrut to the highest standards as should be expected by the community. The other is facilitating an open-market

approach to kashrut and making kosher products available to as many people as possible at affordable prices, which may require subsidisation, and/or the input of experienced business leaders. I am not convinced that these two roles are best served by the same person, or indeed even by people sitting on the same board. It would be wise to take a page out of the book of Kosher Australia (formerly Melbourne Kashrut), a newly constituted community body which comprises strong rabbinic and lay leadership from across the Orthodox community. Better still, perhaps amalgamation with Kosher Australia should be considered. In a small market such as Australia, there appears to be great advantages in that.

The issue of kashrut is of utmost importance. There are many people in my community, and in communities across Sydney, who are "borderline" kosher. If they perceive things as being unfair, or just too hard, it won't take a lot for them to be pushed over the edge. And the current situation is certainly not conducive to more people adopting kashrut. It must be a major part of the role of a community-based kashrut organisation to ensure that keeping kosher is as easy, simple and affordable as possible that everyone will want to do it.

Dumped Temple Mount Rubble Yields Jewish Artifacts

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An historic excavation has been taking place in an eastern Jerusalem valley for the past six months: the first-ever archaeological examination of the Temple Mount.

In November 1999, the Islamic Wakf carried out an illegal construction project on the Temple Mount, Judaism's holiest site. The unsupervised digging caused irreparable damage to the important site, as well as to untold priceless artifacts contained in rubble removed during the construction and dumped clandestinely in the Kidron Valley.

Though the archaeological remains were no longer in their original contexts, they held enormous potential to shed light on the undocumented human history of the Temple Mount, as systematic archaeological excavation or scientific study have never been permitted there. The mounds of dirt in the Kidron Valley therefore contained the only available data from the Temple Mount to which modern archaeologists have ever had access.

At the time, the police and the government Antiquities Authority refused to interfere, citing concerns of violence by Muslims who deny that Temples ever stood on the Temple Mount. Zachi Zweig, then an archaeology student, called a press conference to publicize the extent of the archaeological havoc being perpetrated. Zweig caused a stir in the media by displaying an assortment of artifacts that he had easily scooped out of the piles. The story elicited outrage across the political spectrum in Israel, which was followed by temporary restrictions on the free access of heavy construction equipment on the Temple Mount. The dirt itself into which the Wakf had mixed garbage, was meanwhile ignored, and the Antiquities Authority refused to fund an examination of the tons of rubble.

Prominent archaeologist Dr. Gabriel Barkay decided to undertake the task of sifting the 70 truckloads of Temple Mount dirt in order to rescue as much archaeological information from the destruction as possible.

Using a mechanical sifter, the rubble was first separated into heaps consisting of material of differing sizes. The piles were then sifted by hand.

The work at the site was at first conducted primarily by volunteers who heard of the project by word of mouth and through Jerusalem-based email lists. Soon, groups from schools and on programs began pitching in for a few hours at a time.

The sifting and examinations have already yielded important artifacts from various periods, starting from the First Temple period until today. Among the discoveries so far:

* A coin from the Great Revolt against the Romans, preceding the destruction of the Second Temple bearing the Hebrew phrase *L'Herut Tzion*, "For the Redemption of Zion."



Coin bearing the phrase "For the Redemption of Zion"

* On the eve of Hanukkah, workers discovered the "pinched style" spout of a Hasmonaean lamp.

* On the Tenth of Teveth (one of the fast days commemorating events that lead to the destruction of the First Temple) a crusader arrowhead was discovered.

* An unexpected find, due to the Wakf's removal of almost all large artifacts, was a large segment of a marble pillar's shaft - one meter tall and 60 cm in diameter, streaked with purple veins and white spots.

* A large amount of pottery shards were discovered, 10-20 percent of it from the time of the First Temple period and a small amount from the Second

Temple period.

* Animal bones - remnants of sacrifices.

* A number of mosaic tiles and prehistoric flint implements.

* An inscription on a jar fragment of First Temple period with the Hebrew letters "Heh.", "Ayin" and "Koff"

* A seal impression from the Hellenistic period showing a five-pointed star with the ancient Hebrew letters spelling "Jerusalem" spaced between the points.

* Numerous ceramic oil lamps were found. The most common among them are "Herodian lamps" from the time of the Second Temple.

* About 100 ancient coins, among them, several from the period of the Hasmonaean dynasty.



Hasmonaean coin bearing inscription "Yehonathan High Priest, friend of the Jews" one side and a picture of a cornucopia with a pomegranate in the center on the other

* A fragment of a figurine from the First Temple period

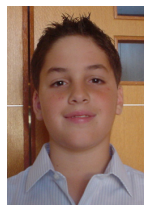
* A Scytho-Iranian arrowhead, of the type used by the Babylonian army of Nebuchadnezzar that destroyed the First Temple in 586 BCE.

* A bronze arrowhead from the Hellenistic period

* An ivory comb, apparently from the Second Temple period. Similar combs have been found at Qumran and it is probable that they were used as preparation for ritual purification in a mikveh (ritual bath), prior to entering the Temple courts.

"Our prime intent is to collect all man-made relics so that later we will be able to conduct a more intensive study based on quantitative analyses," Barkay said. "By these studies we may learn more about the level of activity on the Temple Mount during the different periods, and the characteristics of each period."

Mazal Tov to Matthew Meyerson who celebrates his BarMitzvah on Shabbat Metzora 7 Nisan (Apr-16); Mazal Tov to parents Denise Meyerson and Julian Meyerson and to grandparents Dave & Miriam Meyerson and Charles & Selma Simmons.



Super Special Community Service Erev Pesach Kiddush at South Head

So as to avoid the need to have bread in the home in close proximity to the Pesach food and dishes, South Head is having a small Kiddush on both Friday night and Shabbat day at which only challah-rolls will be served.

Please phone Nicola (9371 7300 Ext 1) or email admin@southhead.org