

Sefer
SHEMIRAH
TOVAH
(Good Watch)

Describes in detail the inferiority of the shechitah in New York and in the United States in general, according to what the author saw with his own eyes during the eighteen years he served as a shochet and a ritual inspector in this country.

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Introduction

We are presenting before you a reprint of the book titled **Shemirah Tovah**, written by a G-d-fearing **shochet**, who was employed in this field for forty years, the last twenty of which were in New York City, where he saw many pitfalls in the slaughter-houses, caused by the workers, the rabbis who grant **hechsherim**, and the rabbis who indirectly undermine the kashrus, and since the pitfalls that he recounts are applicable in our times as well, the procedure of the **shechitah** having changed very little, and the people upon whom the responsibility lies, used various excuses, which they still use today, as the reader will readily see, I deem it beneficial to reprint this book for the benefit of the public. I have added some important notes in brief according to the subject matter.

Also, for the benefit of the public, we have broken up the material into parts, with a title over every new topic, in order to give a general overview of what is written below. I hope that many will become aroused by this and that the eyes of "the blind" who tap in the darkness, will be enlightened. May the darkness that has darkened the eyes and the heart of Israel, because of the many trials and tribulations visited upon them, be speedily removed, and knowledge be increased!

May the Al-mighty cause a spirit of wisdom and purity to rest upon us to serve Him wholeheartedly, united as one, out of purity of soul from now and forever!

P.S. We have not added anything to the text of the sefer Shemirah Tovah except the titles, and the notes below it. Anyone who wishes to see the book in its original print, may do so at the end of this book.

SEFER SHEMIRAH TOVAH

1

In all Jewish communities, the city supports the rabbi, and the rabbi supports the shoctim, but in New York it is the opposite

(p. 20)

Moreover, from the proof I bring you concerning eating animals of dubious kashrus, you will see and understand by yourselves that the blame lies on the heads of our people, who do not follow the procedure of the cities set down in earlier times and followed in all Jewish communities, that the city would hire the rabbi and the rabbi would hire the **shoctim**.¹ Here, in our land, even though New York City is an important center of Jewish population, the city knows nothing of the rabbi, nor does the rabbi know of the **shoctim**, and the entire matter is very lax both for the rabbis and the **shoctim**, and whoever has the ability to control the situation through stealth, trickery or concealment, has the upper hand.

1. The author decries the change between the custom of New York City and the tradition in all Jewish communities in previous generations. Years ago, in all countries, the congregation would hire the rabbi, who would, in turn, hire the **shoctim**. In this manner, the **shochet** feared the rabbi, and the rabbi feared the Al-mighty. In New York City, the situation is the opposite. The owners of the slaughter-house support the rabbi (together with several other factories that manufacture foodstuffs and beverages) and the **shochet**, both of whom fear the owners of the slaughter-house. This alone would be enough to render useless the **hechsher** of the rabbi (and although the author describes the matter of the rabbi and the **shochet** in a slightly different manner, it is, nevertheless, so in our times).

2

In New York, anyone who wants to becomes a rabbi and anyone who wants to becomes a shochet.

The Tanna says: Engage for yourself a rabbi and acquire a companion. This means that the leaders of the city must select a competent and honest rabbi, as the Torah says, "Righteousness, righteousness shall you pursue." The rabbi must supervise the **shochtim**, who must always be under his strict supervision. ² This is especially true in a large city as ours, and if one rabbi is insufficient, they should hire two or more, so that they should be considered as the chief rabbi, not without whose sanction no rabbi should dare to raise a hand to grant **hechsherim** on any product. Under these should be many other ³ rabbis affiliated with however, and assisting them, but only under their sanction.

2. The author means to convey that in a large city it is easier to falsify, and, therefore, special precautions must be taken. Moreover, in New York City it is easier to support the rabbi, so that he can supervise the **shochtim**, even more so than in earlier times, when poverty reigned and, even so, they supported the rabbi, surely in a large city such as New York, that can afford to support the rabbi, and he should not have to turn to the owner of the factory for his check, since, in such cases, his need for money will cause him to overlook violations of the law.

3. The author brings to light an important point, that, unlike the current practice, that one rabbi is appointed over many divisions of kashrus, and also litigation, etc. for then it is impossible for him to supervise this work properly. Also, he should not appoint ordinary **mashgichim** under him, but there should be many rabbis, each one appointed over one division of kashrus, which he can control, and over these should be a **chief rabbi**.

In our city, anyone who comes along, acquires for himself a congregation through trickery ⁴ and becomes a rabbi; similarly, any **shochet** acquires a wholesaler who pays the **shochtim** according to what they agree upon, and he becomes a **shochet** whether the rabbi agrees or not. ⁵ If he foreman of the **shochtim** recommends him and claims that he is capable, he remains a slaughterer and thus he slaughters the city.

4. He alludes to the current practice in the United States, that whoever wishes to practice the rabbinate, finds for himself a group, opens a synagogue, and puts out a shingle, that this place belongs to such and such a synagogue. The author decries the situation, that this causes a terrible deterioration, because thereby, any empty headed individual can take the staff of the rabbinate into his hand, whereas, in earlier times, the community would select the rabbi, and before selecting him, they would examine and test him to discover any flaws in his knowledge, and if they found any flaw in his piety, they would refuse to accept him. In those days, it was extremely difficult to be accepted as a rabbi. In our times, however, one opens a synagogue as one opens a store, and whoever is dissatisfied with the rabbi, goes to another synagogue. The rabbi, on the other hand, feels that he is exempt from preaching and admonishing the congregants, since they never accepted him as a leader and guide. He appointed himself as a rabbi, since this is a clean and easy way of earning a livelihood. The generations, thereby, become spiritually impoverished.

Through this, the rabbi's income is very meager, since the worshippers never accepted him as rabbi, and never agreed to support him, and since he cannot go to work in a factory or do other menial labor like tailoring, or peddling in public, as this would impair his image as a rabbi, he becomes a slave to the producers of foodstuffs and to the owners of the slaughter-houses, to certify their products in exchange for a sizable salary.

5. Not only do they not ask the rabbi whether he approves of the **shochet**, but even if the **shochet** is lax in his piety and causes pitfalls for the public, the rabbi has no power to do anything, because the **shochet** and the butcher attack him with "iron spears" and silence him with a reprimand.

3

Rabbis beautify themselves so that the people will like them.

Consequently, such rabbis and **shochtim** can command the respect of the people only by conforming with the populace, i.e. by shaving their beards and their **peyos**; then the people will enjoy them, seeing that they conform with them and probably, it is perfectly permissible. Although there are some famous rabbis from Europe, who are as reliable as any rabbis in any Jewish communities, they are powerless to do anything, since the other rabbis have control ⁶ of the city, and since they are not supported by the city, the city cannot tell them anything. This is what the tanna means by, "Make a rabbi for yourself." That is, that the rabbi should be responsible to you, to the pious of the city, not that the rabbi should be the boss over you to do what he wants. Fortunate is the generation in which the greater ones listen to the smaller ones, because then the small ones will listen to the great ones. Then he concludes, "And acquire for yourself a companion." I.E., he is explaining how this can come about, only through acquisition. Just as it is impossible to acquire anything except directly from the seller, so should it be with the acquisition of a companion, that all children of Israel should gather together in unison and in one accord concerning the companion then everything will be done in the proper manner.

6. See above note 4, and you will understand what he means here.

4

The foundation of a proper hechsher is the investigation of the source of everything involved

Everyone knows the Talmudic maxim: "Throw a stick into the air, and it will land on its root." Although this is a short or popular proverb, nevertheless, the mundane conversation of a scholar requires study, and we can learn from this that when a person comes to study anything, he must study the root of its essence. That is the meaning of "it lands on its root." King Solomon, too, stated, "The wise man - his eyes are in his head." That means that the wise man looks at everything from its head, i.e. its beginning; if he can rectify the thing from its beginning, it will be satisfactory in the end. In the holy Torah, we find, too, (Deut. 29): "Lest there is among you a **root** producing gall and wormwood." This indicates that the Torah warns us that our root must be good, and if it is not good, we must uproot it, for so is the truth of what avail is it to cut off the

7. He means that if one wishes to make improvements in the slaughter-house with things that do not appear proper, he is considered a fool and he resembles one who cuts the branches off a tree whose roots are rotten, since more rotten branches will grow from the rotten root. So it is in this matter; the wicked will think of plans, and, for each improvement one makes, they will endeavor to create many more kinds of deterioration. The only solution is to search for the root of the deterioration, how it came to be as it is; perhaps the **shochet** is inferior, or perhaps the supervision is inferior, or the owner exerts pressure, and there to institute improvements.

bad branches if the bad root remains? The branches will grow again from the bad root, as everyone can understand.

5

Rabbis' visit in the slaughter-house - a mere sham

I will explain to you what I think is the root of the evil according to my knowledge in this field, and especially now that we have famous rabbis who have just come to our country and are unfamiliar with the procedure of the land and especially with the procedure of **shechitah**. Even if a rabbi explains it to them, ⁸ and even if he takes the famous rabbis to the slaughter-house and points out with his finger how the **shochtim** stand and how everything is done in the best manner, do not listen to him, because all this is a sham, a fraud, counterfeit.

8. Apparently, the author wishes to illustrate the tactic of those lax in piety, to bring rabbis to the slaughter-house to show them how everything is conducted in the best possible manner, and the cunning hidden in this trick, because in the majority of cases, the rabbis are unaware that they do not know, what is happening. This author did a great service to make the rabbis aware of this fact, that in order to understand what is happening in the slaughter-house one must be there at least three consecutive months. This is very important for every pious rabbi to know, so that no pitfalls will come about through him, and especially rabbis who just came from Europe, who are totally unfamiliar with the character of America, and when they are invited to visit a slaughter-house, they think that it is run like those in the countries of their origin, and with a short visit they can become completely familiarized with its running. This is a fatal mistake, through which many people have led to sin.

6**It is impossible for a rabbi to determine what is being done in a slaughter-house unless he stays there for three consecutive months**

It is impossible for any person ⁹ to know and to understand the root of what is going on in the slaughter-house until he stands there and engages in the work itself with all the laborers, both Jews and gentiles, no less than three consecutive months steadily from the beginning of the work day until the end. Then he will understand whether the working of the slaughter-house is good or otherwise. Because one person cannot possibly see from a distance what the next person is doing there and to understand what he sees by himself but is not doing with his own hands, and if he sees one thing, he does not see what is being done in the next room at that time, or in the third or fourth room, etc., for the slaughtered bull is divided into seven parts, each of which is processed in different rooms. Therefore, seeing the slaughter-house as the rabbis do, is worthless¹⁰, because a person does not have seven eyes to see seven places at once, or to know what is happening there.

9. He emphasizes that it is impossible for anyone, even if he be as wise as King Solomon and as pious as Moses, to understand the activities of the workers just by looking at them..

10. The confusion and the complication exist today too. The animal is cut into many parts and separated to many rooms. In some particulars, it is much more involved now than when this book was written.

7

A shochet in a slaughter-house who would not even taste meat

Everyone knows Rava's statement that one may tell about himself in a place where he is not known. I will, therefore, publicize today that I am, thank G-d, seventy-two years old, and until I was sixty I worked as a **shochet** and an inspector. At the age of twenty, I worked in the city of Nevel with famous **shochtim** who were very learned and pious. One was Rabbi Moshe Leib o.b.m. the son of Rabbi Peretz, the rabbi of Nevel, who served at the end of his days in Cherninov, where he lies buried.. After him there was none like him. For about twenty years I worked in New York at slaughtering and inspecting, and now for more than ten years I am not working in that field, and, thank G-d, I have sufficient to live on, and I do not have to work in my old age. May the L-rd grant me my sustenance for the rest of my life on this earth! I have not tasted meat neither from cattle or sheep for the past fourteen years, for even in the last three years that I was working in the slaughter-house, I did not eat what was slaughtered there,*¹⁰ because the other **shochtim** did not follow the rules, and I could not oppose them. I, therefore, eventually left my position there.

***10.** We learn from here many things: 1) that the status of the **shochet** does not attest to the status of the meat, that one should deduce that if there were any doubts, that **shochet** would not work there, for here we see a **shochet** who would not eat the meat of the slaughter-house because of the other **shochtim**.

I too, testify that I heard from a very competent **shochet** who testified about himself that, since there are many pitfalls, he limited himself to eating only from the animals that he himself slaughtered and took home.

8

When they complain about the pitfalls to the dignitaries of the city, they say, "Go to the rabbi."

I told this to many of the wealthy and respected members of the city, and they gave me their answer, "We don't watch for that. We have rabbis there who say that everything is all right, and we must rely¹¹ on them.

9

Rabbis certify meat of doubtful kashrus with the excuse that otherwise they will sell definitely non-kosher meat

When I spoke to a certain famous rabbi and advised him that he should remove his **hashgachah** from a certain slaughter-house so that people should know that the slaughter-house has no **hashgachah**, and he would not be responsible for the shortcomings of its kashrus, he said to me, "What would be the use of my removing my **hechsher**? The owners will take a worse rabbi. They are the bosses to decide which rabbi to choose, and they introduce him to the wholesalers and make up his salary. Thereby, he becomes the rabbi and is in control of the entire city and the metropolitan area, because his name is attached to meat sold in the city and the country, and he is

11. There is nothing new under the sun, and today, you will hear this excuse from everyone, from the greatest to the smallest. I was really astounded when someone told me, "Although I know that meat production has many problems since I worked there I, nevertheless, continue to eat meat on the account of the rabbi who gives **hashgacha**." Is such an excuse acceptable to any sensible person? Will it be accepted by the Heavenly tribunal?

known as the great rabbi in the city.¹² Therefore, manufacturers come to him for **hechsherim** on all products sold with a **hechsher**. For this they pay a goodly sum, because the **hechsher** they receive from the rabbi will be inherited by their children and grandchildren throughout all generations,¹³ attesting to the fact that the product was made under the supervision of the rabbi and is kosher for the most scrupulously observant. I have seen such **hechsherim** in places where the rabbi never entered, neither he nor his **mashgiach**. Even in some places where there is a **mashgiach**, they have one where they need five!”

12. The author calls our attention to the fact that the lax rabbis profit doubly through their **hashgacha** on the slaughter-house; first, with the money they receive for the **hechsher**, and second, the honor they receive, through which they become famous as great rabbis, without which they would be totally unknown. Obviously, in such a situation, the temptation is double and the pitfall very great. This is a lesson that wherever there is danger that the rabbi is looking for fame, the greater the possibility that his hashgachah is inferior. In this respect, we have sunken tremendously. Years ago, the rabbi of the city did not need any fame, because he was famous in his city (in addition to the fact that the rabbis were engaged in holy work and were not looking for false honor). Moreover, he did not receive a higher salary because of his **hashgachah**. It was, therefore, very easy to refuse to certify any foodstuff whose kashrus was doubtful. Not so in our times, when the rabbi is paid for each food individually, in addition to the fame he receives, that his name is known all over the section. What fool would give up such a lucrative profession as long as he has any kind of excuse to give a **hechsher**?

13. He alludes to the practice of many manufacturers to attach labels on packages of food, bearing the name of a rabbi who has passed away twenty or thirty years ago. The **hechsher** is like a monument for his soul, and thereby they mislead the public. This is in addition to the **hechsherim** that are given by rabbis who have never seen the product, only the money sent to them for their **hechsher**.

10 The procedure of Shechitah here in New York

I will tell you the procedure of **shechitah** here in New York.

About thirty years ago, the Jews of New York decided to send to Vilna to bring over the famous Rabbi Jacob Joseph o.b.m., who as then accepted as chief rabbi. True he accomplished very much and closed many breaches in this field, introducing beneficial innovations for the good of our brethren in New York City. But, since he was forced to speak with the dealers, and especially with the wholesalers of beef and mutton, all of whom spoke only German and English, he was unable to communicate with them. Consequently, he found it necessary to take an interpreter, a rabbi who was to serve as an intermediary between him and the dealers. At that time, the Congregation Anshei Ungarn was the most influential in New York because of their wealth. After many quarrels among our brethren concerning who was to be the assistant rabbi, the Hungarians won, and their rabbi, a certain doctor, who spoke a fluent German, was chosen, since he could converse easily with the wholesalers, and what involved decisions in **halachah** did not belong to the assistant rabbi, since all questions of **halachah** were submitted to the chief rabbi.

The chief rabbi summoned all the **shochtim** of the city to appear before him to be examined, and any **shochet** or inspector who failed the examination was summarily dismissed. Also, he enacted a rule that lead seals be attached to the kosher meat, also on the fowl slaughtered in the kosher manner was to be a seal signed by the chief rabbi. Everything was done in the best manner, both in the

field of kashrus as well as in the field of synagogue practices. All this continued until the chief rabbi took sick and was bedridden for five years. All this time, he could not go out of his house where he was confined until the day of his death. During these five years, his wife conducted the household, and unknown to the rabbi, many changes took place. During these years, the assistant rabbi, who was doing everything according to the instructions of the chief rabbi, and for the latter's benefit, to support him, became stronger and stronger.

After the demise of the chief rabbi, the assistant usurped the rabbinate by force, for he was respected by the wholesalers, who refused to accept another rabbi, since he spoke their language and was from their city. Consequently, he became the rabbi of the city to grant other **hechsherim** since that was the practice here in New York, that the one whom the wholesalers considered the rabbi was the true rabbi of the city, since they would pay his salary. Also, the **shochtim** obeyed him, since he made it easier for them with his lenient rulings. They started shaving their beards just as he did, but they would try to beautify themselves even more. Unfortunately, this practice has remained with us until this day.

The **shochtim** were held in such esteem by the wholesalers that eventually they had more power than the rabbis, and the rabbis were compelled to listen to the **shochtim** in the entire procedure of the **shechitah**. Also, the **shochtim** united and formed a union, like the tailors, and no **shochet** was accepted to a position until he would pay what the union demanded, and then he entered the union to be a **shochet**. The rabbi had no voice in this matter. The power of the **shochtim** with the wholesalers came about because of one thing, that after the passing of the chief rabbi, the **shochtim** made it more lenient for the

owners and also for themselves, viz. that whereas previously, they would pay the **shochtim** a weekly salary - when, obviously, it made no difference to the **shochtim** how many **trefos** came about - now they changed the practice, that the **shochtim** would get paid only from the kosher animals and not from those that turned out to be **trefah**. Surprisingly, the number of kosher animals multiplied many fold. This I cannot attest to definitely, since I did not work in the slaughter-house where that doctor was rabbi. I was in a slaughter-house that stood under the supervision of the rabbi of Moscow, Rabbi Jacob Vidrevitz o.b.m., where I worked for eighteen years and five months. As long as Rabbi Vidrevitz had the **hashgachah** on that slaughter-house, the owners, i.e. the wholesalers, begged him to allow them, too, to pay the **shochtim** only for the kosher animals, but he did not allow this under any circumstances. He insisted that the **shochtim** receive their salary as workers hired by the day, who receive salary every week according to the time they worked. May this merit stand him in good stead, since he did a great thing.

Consequently, all Jewish workers, who would differentiate between the kosher and **trefah** animals, such as those who affixed the seals on the meat and on the "small stuff," i.e. the innards, the heads, and the feet, also received their salary every week, and hence had no business with the **shochtim**. It was, therefore, possible to do everything according to the law of the Torah.

11

The process of Shechitah, Bedikah (inspection), and Butchering

In those days, the number of animals slaughtered weekly was about three thousand, and in one hour everything was slaughtered and all the work finished on sixty large bulls. According to our figuring, this means that in one minute a

large bull would be slaughtered and all the work involved, completed, i.e. the flaying, butchering, cleaning the innards, and bringing each part to the place it belongs. One who did not witness this will wonder how it is possible that all the work involved in the preparation of a large bull can be done in one minute. Yes, indeed, it is possible. Immediately¹⁴ after the bull is slaughtered, six workers come simultaneously. Four flay the feet, one to the head, and one commences (he only commences) to flay from the neck to the stomach and leaves it as it is without flaying it. He just makes the place for the other workers to continue to flay after the bull is hung by his forelegs and his hind legs. With the assistance of a machine, this is accomplished very quickly, and then the workers come to complete the flaying and to butcher the animal. Other workers stand ready with wheelbarrows. In one they put the innards and in one they put the lung and the liver, and in one they put the stomach only, because it is big. In another wheelbarrow, they put the heads; in another they put the feet, and everyone goes to its place, to a designated room where they clean the insides from the excrement and the fats, and the intestines are separated into three parts, the small intestine separately and the large intestine separately, the last stomach separately and the first stomach separately, because each part is sold individually, and the heads are separate, and the tongues are separate and everything is cleaned with a stream of water for each part, since gentiles are strict about cleanliness.

14. This system is still used today. Concentrate on his words, because from them you will understand the procedure of slaughtering and inspecting that is practiced today..

Only the first row, the ones that are slaughtered at the beginning of the day, the first twelve animals that are slaughtered at once, takes approximately one-half hour, because the workers must stand in line waiting until one finishes his work so that the next one can start his. The second row of slaughtered animals, however, does not require this waiting, since, before the first row has finished its work completely, the second row, the next twelve bulls, are already slaughtered and lying on the ground, and the workers are flaying the head and the legs and doing their work on the ground and making sure that everything is ready to hang with the assistance of the machine in place of the first ones. There are innumerable workers, and one does not know what the others are doing; they start their work and call the next ones to complete it, and the foreman stands over them so that they should not rest even a second. There were times that the owners needed to slaughter more. Then they would finish eighty bulls in one hour, for the gentile workers are plentiful, and when he needed more, he would hire more.

While the bull is still lying on the ground,¹⁵ the inspector must examine the lungs with an internal examination, i.e. while the lung is still inside the animal, and if he takes one minute too long with his inspection, he loses the inspection of the second bull¹⁶ lying then on the ground, because there is one worker whose job is to go from one bull to the next and to saw open the breast from beginning to end, so that

15. I.e. the short time from the beginning of the flaying until the animal is hung by its feet.

16. **Responsa Levushei Mordechai** rules stringently concerning a lung that has been thrown from place to place.

when they hang up the animal, it will be easy to throw out the lung and the liver. The worker does his work quickly because of the foreman who stands over him. The foreman doesn't care whether the inspector examines the lung or not, and if the one who inspects the lung inside the body does not fix up all the adhesions that must be left intact on their places so that they are not ripped off, virtually all of them are lost by the workers who throw the lung with force, from the bull to the floor and from the floor to the wheelbarrow by another non-Jewish worker. Very often, they ride over the lung with their wheelbarrow, and the adhesions are completely destroyed. Then they come to the one who makes the external inspection. If he dwells on one lung for at least fifteen minutes, he can determine where it is cut, but it is impossible to do this, because the table will immediately fill up with lungs from the second row, and it will be impossible to tell which lung is from which animal and from which row, so that the complete process is handled according to the **halachah**.

Gentlemen, pay attention and try to understand how fast the **shochtim** and the **bodkim** (inspectors) have to work because of the haste of the non-Jewish workers, who work like lightning because they are accustomed to doing it quickly, and they do not have to be concerned with kashrus, nor how many are needed for it, to separate the kosher animals from the **trefah** animals to affix the seal of "kosher" on them, since every kind of meat is in a separate room where the work is completed, and there they are mixed, the kosher and the **trefah**, and there must be a Jew standing there to separate them. This Jew, when he is in one room, cannot see what is happening in the next room. In order to avoid confusion, they mark the parts with a crayon on the intestines and on the stomachs, and on the other parts of the bull. This, however, helps very little and is quite unreliable, because the meat is washed and rinsed

several times, all but obliterating the crayon mark. In any case, the Jew must be the responsible party, because it is in his power to feed us with **trefos** as with kosher meat, and the owners warn and threaten him, and the **shochtim** warn him **not** to lose even¹⁷ one of the kosher animals. Look who these "trustworthy" people are, not learned men, nor scholars, not even people with common sense. Whomever the **shochtim** can hire cheaply, they take.

One, I remember, was a flagrant Sabbath desecrator. His name was Isaac. He would affix the seal to the "small stuff," *¹⁷ until I finally had him discharged through much trouble and intervention. In any case, while the rabbi of Moscow was in charge of the slaughter-house, there were eleven **shochtim** and **bodkim**, five who affixed seals, and one **mashgiach**, a total of sixteen (sic) men. The owners paid everyone his salary at the end of the week according to the time he put in. Immediately after the rabbi's death, however, the **shochtim** took the aforementioned rabbi so that everything should be under his **hashgachah**, and lest the public complain that it was not proper to rely on one man for the **shechitah in all the slaughter-houses: Swartzels, United, and New York, the three main slaughter-houses in Metropolitan New York, they appointed another rabbi to share the hashgachah** for

17. It is self-understood that the fear of the owner, who gives him his bread and butter, is upon him. Therefore, if he loses the numbers of the kosher animals and the **treifos**, he must make up the missing ones from those that come into his hand, as long as he does not lower the proportion of the kosher ones, because then the owner will be angry with him and may even discharge him from his position.

*17. The small parts of the animal, e.g. the head, the liver, the tongue, the lungs, the intestines, etc.

his name only.**¹⁷ in the United slaughter-house. They stipulated with him explicitly that the **shochtim** would be his bosses, and that they took him as their rabbi. They made this clear to him according to all the rules of stipulations.

Then the leaders of the **shochtim** agreed with the wholesalers to change the wages, to take only from the kosher animals, as they had wanted previously, because in every slaughter-house the **shochtim** have two representatives: one known as the foreman and one known as the secretary. They speak with the owners and decide all matters. Then the number of **trefah** animals that was

"17. Hence, we can judge how much we have retrogressed, for, in the days of the author in America, when the situation of **shechitah** and **bedikah** was so inferior, as anyone can see from these lines, people, even those lax in piety, understood that one rabbi could not accept the responsibility for three slaughter-houses (apparently, he had no responsibility for other products) and the pious Jews and those who are scrupulous in their observance would complain when they saw the seal of the same rabbi on three slaughter-houses, and in order to fool the religious people, they found it necessary to add another rabbi for the sake of appearance, as is related in this book.

In our generation, we have sunken so low that the owners of the slaughter-houses and factories don't see any loss of business if they hire the same rabbi who is responsible for several slaughter-houses and several hundred food products of various kinds, scattered in many cities.

It is very frightening, because this proves conclusively that the observant Jews are extremely lethargic, inattentive in the field of kashrus, and no one raises a hue and cry. If the observant Jews would protest against this terrible breach, the manufacturers would, perforce, hire several rabbis so as not to incur a business loss (remember that then, too, there were many **mashgichim**, as is related in the text).

previously about forty out of a hundred and no fewer than thirty-five, remained that way for the three years, I stayed with them after the death of the rabbi of Moscow.

Originally, if a **shochet** came to me and told me secretly that he was afraid that a certain bull had become **trefah** because he stopped in the middle of the **shechtah** or he pressed the knife instead of drawing it, because of the pressure of the workers, which is sometimes impossible to avoid under the circumstances, I would declare it **trefah**, **since I was the external inspector. Since they started paying only for the kosher animals, this stopped completely. Many times, I approached the rabbi and told him that certain animals I found to be trefah** while the other **shochtim** claimed that they were kosher. He went to them and asked them about this difference. They answered him point blank, "We know more than you about **shechitah**. Who brought you here to be a rabbi, anyway? Weren't we the ones? If you don't like the way we run things, you can get out of here! Tomorrow we'll take somebody else." The rabbi turned pale and went away disappointed.¹⁸ From that day on, he was a different

In one slaughter-house alone were eleven **shochtim** and six **mashgichim** compared to the present day slaughter-houses labeled "Glatt kosher," where the same number of animals are slaughtered, if not more, and there are but three **shochtim** and two **mashgichim**), and, even so, the owners feared that the public would be dissatisfied if three slaughter-houses were under the supervision of one rabbi.

18. We see here that a G-d-fearing rabbi who was troubled by the pitfalls that came about in the slaughter-houses, as soon as he heard the owner threaten to dismiss him and take another rabbi, became another person. Surely, in our times, this prevails, when the hiring and dismissing of the rabbi are solely in the hands of the owner.

person. If sometimes the meat of a **trefah** animal was mingled with the meat of a kosher animal because of the mistake of the one who affixes the seals, the foreman would go into the refrigerator where the animals were hanging, pick out one, make it **trefah**, and made the rest kosher. When I asked the rabbi, "Is this possible?" he replied, "In a week three thousand animals are slaughtered. If one or two **trefos** become mingled in, according to the **halachah** they become nullified by the majority of the kosher ones." When I heard this, I became frightened and could not talk to him, because what would my words help if he agrees with them? The truth of the matter is that everything that is in its place is counted like half and half and the law that it becomes nullified by the majority does not apply. Then I decided to leave my position.

11

The Mixture of Organs of Kosher with Trefah is Very Common

The mixture of "small stuff" is very common,¹⁹ and everything is made kosher by the foreman of the **shochtim**, who is the witness and the judge. No questions are taken to the rabbi.*¹⁹ The **shochtim** judge everything for themselves. But this is true, that the salary of the **shochtim** increased tremendously from what it was previously, because the owners make one computation of how many animals were found to be kosher, and this amounts to, let's say, eight hundred dollars, from which

19. He means that many separate organs of the animal, such as the tongue, liver, intestines, lung, two sides of the body of the animal, etc. can very easily be mixed up.

****19.** Nowadays also, according to what we hear, no questions come from the slaughter-house to the rabbi's house.

everyone receives his check according to the distribution made by the foreman of the **shochtim**, this one fifty dollars and this one forty dollars, and the workers according to what the **shochtim** pay them. If the grand total amounts to only seven hundred fifty dollars, each one's check will be so much smaller.

The salary check will not be the same every week, as it was previously, and it is obvious that, since everything is paid from the money of the **shochtim**, the more the number of employees is diminished, both the number of **shochtim** and the number of workers, they will profit more.²⁰ From this practice, the wholesalers gained millions of dollars and the **shochtim** thousands, but, may G-d forgive such wealth! The source of this law is in the **Gemara (Bechoroth 28b, 29a)**: If one takes pay to see firstlings, we may not slaughter them according to this ruling (that they have a blemish that permit their slaughter outside the Temple), even if he was like Ila in Yavneh, who was truly pious, and would not pervert the law, the Sages did not permit him unless he takes the same amount for those not permitted to be slaughtered as he takes for those permitted to be slaughtered. **Rambam** applies this ruling to **shochtim**, that they may not receive more for kosher animals than for those that become **trefah**. All the later authorities agreed to this ruling. Even if you find one opinion that it is permissible if the difference is small, this does not apply to America, because it applies only if there are one or two **shochtim**, but in our country, because of the tremendous amount slaughtered, even a penny is considered a large sum, because, even in one week, it amounts to a large sum, and, according to the law, such

20. The author explains here that when they divide the money among the **shochtim** according to the number of kosher animals, the

shochtim may not promulgate any such lenient decision.

It is understandable that, because of the tremendous number of **shechitos**,²¹ many questions arise daily, especially regarding the second stomach, which is sometimes punctured by large nails found there. No day

shochtim gain more when there are fewer of them, since thereby, there is more for each one. This applies nowadays as well, since the owners of the merchandise pay the **shochtim**, and they are too stingy to hire more **shochtim**, inspectors, and **mashgichim**, and, as long as the work can be accomplished with a minimum of personnel, they suffice themselves with that minimum, and they consider this work like any other work, that, as long as the work can be accomplished with fewer workers, they do not hire more. The same applies to **shechitah**: as long as it appears to be going properly, the **shochet** slaughters, the inspector inserts his hand, one inspects outside, one affixes the seal, euphemistically called a "mashgiach." Everyone is happy, both the rabbis and the owners, since they don't blatantly kill the animals in a non-kosher fashion, they don't declare any animal kosher without inspection or without a **mashgiach**, G-d forbid, they attach a seal, sealed with Jewish blood, and religious Jews eat and are satisfied.

Were they smart, they would realize that the situation is terrible; the **shochet** is rushed to slaughter to examine his knife and then to examine the two slaughtered pipes in the neck of the animal, to wash his hands, and prepare for the next shechitah all in one minute. The same is true with the **bodkim**. Then they would understand that the work of the **shochet** differs from the work of the flayer, for in that job, everyone sees that it is being done properly, but in this field it is not dependent on the vision of the eye but on the understanding of the heart, and the **shochet's** presence of mind is robbed from him when he is rushed.

It already occurred that when the **shochtim** complained about the rush and demanded a raise because the work was very hard, their argument was rejected, and everything continued as before.

21. A method of slaughtering that is constantly performed in a rush, causes many questions, but no one cares.

passes without many such questions, yet everything is decided by the workers, sometimes it is brought to the **shochet** to look at, and is made kosher by them. Although there is one²² **mashgiach** in the slaughter-house, he stands in the room where the **shochtim** sharpen their knives. he never leaves that room; he sees neither the **shechitah** nor the **bedikah**, and never is a question brought his way, because he has no time, since everyone has his job to finish.

Also, in the slaughter-house are many open barrels without tops, filled with water from the faucet opposite them. Some are full of hot water, and some are full of cold water, whatever the workers need. In winter, almost all of them are filled with hot water, as is understandable. The workers who flay the carcasses are given large new rags, and everyone dips the rags in the barrel and washes and wipes the meat and the fats of the kidneys to cleanse them of filth and blood. Also, the knives with which they flay are always dipped into the barrel. Obviously, the hot water washes off the fat from the knife, and when they wash the meat with the water, it is noticeable that oil from the fat floats on the water in the barrel, and then the meat is still warm, and water is warm, and the warm water becomes absorbed into the warm meat. This is done daily; it is impossible to wait until the meat cools off, because, due to the large number of animals slaughtered, everything must be done quickly.

There is another time during the winter, before the holidays, that the dealers bring their merchandise to the large markets to show off the beauty of their area. Meat dealers, too, during the last few weeks before the holidays,

22. One **mashgiach** does not suffice, and surely if there is no **mashgiach** because the owners are stingy, as it is nowadays.

start making pictures on the meat to decorate and beautify it. The pictures are made in the following manner:

Immediately after the flaying, when the meat is still hot, they take the best fat and smear it on all the meat. Then, while it is still hot, they engrave various pictures into the meat, such as a tree with branches. The nature of hot meat is that when it is cut slowly, the meat separates immediately at the place of the cut, and the picture becomes beautiful and white from the fat on the meat. They do this every day before their holidays. Perhaps the honest butchers remove the fat from the surface of the meat, but the fat that they take pains to smear on the meat while it is still warm, and which becomes absorbed into the meat when they both are hot, **is impossible to remove**. Moreover, not all butchers are the same; some are particular about this, and some do not bother, for they are satisfied with the tags hung on the meat, with the rabbi's signature stating that the meat is kosher for the most scrupulous, and what more do we need?*²²

It is very doubtful whether the meat is kosher for the most scrupulous. One who is scrupulous wants meat without any doubt of its kashrus, and does not spare expense, as long as it is definitely kosher.

Therefore, Jewish brethren, I present you with this brief account of the procedure of the kosher slaughtering in our country.²³ It is impossible to write everything explicitly,

*²². From here it is apparent that meat sealed in the slaughter-house as kosher (as it is done nowadays all over) causes a terrible pitfall and an opportunity for the butcher to omit **nikkur** because the customer sees the seal and is satisfied, not knowing that it does not attest to **nikkur**.

²³. The author states that he had much more to write.

We can learn a lesson from here that the punishment the Rabbis

because I am old, and my hands become weary from writing. But this you should know, that it is not without reason that people eat meat of doubtful kashrus. Perhaps it is not doubtful but definitely unkosher. However, I do not want to say that it is definitely unkosher, because there may be variant views on certain questions, but in practical application, when they came to me, I would declare them **trefah**. Therefore, although the Rabbis gave us a time for searching out **chometz**, viz. the evening preceding the fourteenth of Nissan, and only with the light of a candle, but searching out this **chometz** is obligatory upon you daily, and you are guilty of its being found in your midst. Moreover, the light of a candle is unnecessary, because it is not hidden, but is in open view to the public, without the shadow of a doubt, as the Rabbis use the expression, "The

ascribed to anyone who has the ability to protest and does not do so, applies to anyone, even a plain person. No one is absolved from it. Let us think about the matter. In early times, the butchers were the roughest, coarsest, most brazen, worst tempered men, who had no respect for anyone, even for the greatest rabbi. In addition to this, in America laxity prevailed in the field of kashrus in those days.

Moreover, it is known that for monetary gain, anyone is apt to commit the worst crimes, and in those days, any Jew who left Europe for the United States was regarded lax in observance and one who cast off the yoke of heaven (and many families mourned for such a person), and was satisfied with laxity.

Because of each of these factors, it was possible for the owners of the slaughter-houses to cause breaches in the field of kashrus and **hashgachah**, according to their heart's desire, surely, with all of these factors combined, and yet, there was pressure from the observant laymen, at least to limit their laxity so that (at least it should appear as though) they hire enough rabbis and **mashgichim** as were needed. Hence, it is obvious that the owners are dependent on the public, because, if there are no customers, there are no sales.

ox is slaughtered before you..” *²³ There is no remedy except that everything should be controlled by the city. The rabbis should be paid adequately by the city, and all their income should go to the city. The same should be true with the **shochtim**. Then we would be sure that everything would be kosher. The way it is today, however, that each one must fend for himself, each one listens to the one who makes it easier for him. In every Rabbinical prohibition, they are lenient, saying that a doubt of a Rabbinical prohibition calls for a lenient ruling. Everything that requires a measure, they say is permissible, because measures are a **hallachah** to Moses from Mt. Sinai. From this, all the lenient rulings originate. If you really follow the true path, you will succeed, and the Creator will surely provide all your needs, for one who wishes to purify himself is helped, and we and all Israel will be blessed with peace. Amen.

I have related here the procedure and the payment for **shechitah** as it was then. It is up to you²⁴ to ascertain whether it obtains nowadays. For approximately ten years I am out of this field, and it has possibly changed. But this I know, that when I asked the rabbis why the **shochtim**

In our times, too, if the strictly Orthodox would make a public protest and refuse to buy meat or any other products unless they are definitely kosher for the scrupulously observant, the owners of the slaughterhouses and the factories would be compelled to obey their cry.

*²³. The author found no remedy other than to put the ritual slaughtering under the jurisdiction of the city.

²⁴. This is important in our days as well.

²⁵. Unfortunately, in our times they say the same thing.

should receive pay only from the kosher animals, they denied it and told me that the difference is very small, only two cents more from the kosher animals than from the **trefah** animals. This was completely untrue. In any case, in America there is no such thing as a small difference, because even one cent amounts to a sizable sum when it comes to the end of the week, when the **shochtim** are paid. Furthermore, many say that in America everything is kosher, because, whenever an adhesion is found on the lung, the animal is considered **trefah**, but this is totally false. On the contrary, they are very lenient with all such questions, much too lenient.



To Expose the Truth in the Marketplace from the introduction of “Vayoe Moshe”

The prophet Jeremiah in Ch. 5 states: “Go around in the streets of Jerusalem and see now and know, and search in its streets, if you will find any man, if there is anyone who performs justice, who searches for faith, and I will forgive it (the city).” The exegetes wonder, do we not find that there were many righteous and holy men at that time? How does the prophet say that there were none? **Redak** cites his father, who explains that the righteous of Jerusalem were all hidden in their homes and could not appear in the streets because of the wicked. **Shelah**, too, explains that for this reason the prophet states, “in the streets,” because if they were not afraid of the wicked and would appear in the streets to expose the truth, they would have been able to protect the city. Ibn Ezra, (Gen. 18:26) “If I find in Sodom fifty righteous men in the midst of the city, I will forgive the entire place for their sake,” explains that this means if they fear G-d in public, they will be able to protect the cities. He refers to the verse in Jeremiah. Hence, Ibn Ezra, too,

explains the verse like **Redak**, that only if the righteous come out in public and are known in the streets of the city, will they be able to protect the city from destruction. Our father Abraham, too, prayed that if there were fifty righteous men in Sodom who did not fear the populace, that G-d should save the cities. Now, why didn't Abraham start off by praying that even if there were fifty righteous men who were afraid to come out into the open, that G-d should save the cities for their sake? Apparently, he knew that such righteous men did not have the power to save the cities, and there was no use praying for them. Now, it was obviously very dangerous to go out into the streets of Sodom and protest the evils of that city, because the people harassed anyone who followed the way of G-d. This is made plain by the story of the girl who gave bread to the pauper and by the Torah's account of the Sodomites surrounding Lot's house because of his hospitality to the angels. Consequently, they were known as people who would not accept admonition. Yet, Abraham prayed that the city be saved only if there were fifty righteous people who did not fear the people of the city.

Shabbath 55

Anyone who can protest against the members of his household, is seized for the members of his household; [if he can protest] against the citizens of his city, he is seized for the citizens of his city; (if he can protest) against the whole world, he is seized for the whole world, etc. The Divine Attribute of Justice said before the Holy One, blessed be He, "L-rd of the Universe, why do these differ from those?"

He replied, "These are perfectly righteous."

She retorted, "L-rd of the Universe, they should have protested and they did not."

He replied, "It is known to me that if they had protested, the people would not have heeded them."

She retorted, “L-rd of the Universe, if it is known to You, is it known to them?” That is what Scripture says: “And you shall commence from My sanctuaries...” Rav Yosef taught: Do not read this as: And from My sanctuaries, but as: And from My hallowed ones. These are the people who fulfilled the Torah from A to Z (Heb. from **aleph** to **tav**). (**Shabbath** 55).

The following is a quotation from Rabbenu Yonah (**Shaarei Teshuvah** 3): “(Deut. 22:3) You shall not hide yourself,” — We were warned with this commandment not to be lax in saving our fellow’s property and to devise plans to save them in their time of distress. King Solomon said: “(prov. 24:10) If you were lax on a day of distress, your strength will be lessened.” This means that if you were able to save someone with a plan or with intervention, and you pretend that you have no strength, your strength will indeed be lessened, payment in kind. The following verse reads: “If you say, but we did not know this, the One Who counts the hearts — he will understand, and the One Who guards you should — He knows, and He will recompense man according to his deed.”

We learn from this that if a person can help his fellowman — in matter of eternity e.g. to guide him on the straight path, the path of the Torah, through admonition, and he did not do so; it is regarded as though he had harmed his friend, as mentioned above. This is because of the stringency of the sin of failing to admonish, as the Rabbis said: Jerusalem was destroyed only because they did not admonish one another (**Shabbath** 119). We see that the Rabbi overlooked many serious sins of that generation and mentioned only this sin of failure to fulfill the positive commandment of: “(Lev. 19:17) You shall admonish your friend.” Why were they so severe? Because they found this to be the key to all the sins, as we stated above.

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