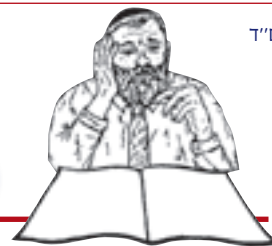


# THE Daf HaKASHRUS



A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE OU RABBINIC FIELD REPRESENTATIVE

## ASK OU9 – SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

### ASKOU KASHRUT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

*Second Generation of European Rabbis Being Trained*

BY STEVE STEINER

When 26 young men gathered this week at Orthodox Union headquarters in New York for the Harry H. Beren ASKOU9 program, a three-week seminar presented in alternate summers by OU Kosher to educate the new generation of kashrut professionals, two of the students came a long way to attend the sessions: from Hungary and Ukraine, via Berlin, where they are rabbinical students.

When they return to Germany, they will use their newly acquired expertise to advance kashrut in Central and Eastern Europe.

Zsolt Balla, 29, from Budapest, and Avraham Yitzchok Radbil, 24, from Ukraine, are advanced students at Yeshivas Beis Zion, a project of the Lauder Yeshurun Foundation to bring organized Jewish life to Central and Eastern Europe. They will receive *semicha*, or rabbinical ordination, next summer. Both fluent in English, they applied to ASKOU at the suggestion of Rabbi Joshua Spinner, executive director and founder of the yeshiva, who himself had taken the ASKOU program several years ago and who represents the first generation of kashrut professionals trained by ASKOU in its 13 years of existence.

ASKOU9 is sponsored by the Harry H. Beren Foundation of Lakewood, NJ, which sponsors a wide variety of OU Kosher educational initiatives. There is also a companion one-week ASKOU9 program, with an enrollment of 70, for rabbinical and kollel students and for communal rabbis and members of *Vaadei HaKashrut* who want to brush up on their kosher skills. The three-week program is reserved for rabbinical and kollel students only.

With lectures on a wide variety of topics from OU experts on the intricacies of kosher law, and field trips to factories and kosher establishments to see what they learned put into action, the three-

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*Rav Yisroel Belsky, OU Kosher Posek, dispensing wisdom on a field trip for ASKOU9.*

### ASKOU PARTICIPANTS

*From the Four Corners of the Torah World*

BY STEVE STEINER

They came from Jerusalem and they came from Brooklyn, and from Berlin and Paris which are roughly in between the two. Others came from Las Vegas, from Providence, Rhode Island and from Grand Rapids, Michigan, which is also roughly between the two.

Twenty came from Lakewood and others from Monsey and New Square, NY, bastions of Judaism; smaller Jewish communities such as Indianapolis, Indiana and Scranton and Allentown in Pennsylvania were represented as well.

Besides Brooklyn, Kew Gardens Hills in New York was well represented. New Jersey communities included Cherry Hill, Springfield and West Orange. Philadelphia joined Scranton and Allentown in the Pennsylvania delegation.

Take a map, look for a Jewish community, and chances are that it was represented at the recently concluded ASKOU9 program of OU Kosher, intensive *kashrut* education for future *mashgichim*

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## KASHRUT

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week ASKOU9 participants are able to return home and to assume positions of responsibility in their communities regarding kosher certification and kosher education.

“We consider it both a great privilege and an enormous responsibility to be able to train the future rabbinic and kashrut leadership on the European Continent as well as Russia,” commented Rabbi Yosef Grossman, Director of OU Kashrut Education. “The Orthodox Union takes great pride and joy in the fact that Zsolt and Avroham Yitzchok represent the second generation of European rabbinical students that we are training for the sacred mission of implementing excellent kashrut standards on the other side of the Atlantic.”

“We need all of this kashrut experience to take back to Europe,” declared Avraham Radbil, who came to Germany with his family in 1997, when he was a teenager, for reasons of economics and education. “The OU is the best place to come for kashrut education. You can’t get so much practical experience in Europe like you can get here.”

“Anyone involved in *rabbanut* (the rabbinate) needs kashrut, in providing *Yiddishkeit*, the first thing is kashrut,” agreed Zsolt Balla, who came to the Berlin yeshiva following a scientific and technical education in Budapest. Both students are married, and both have their wives with them for their stay in New York.

When they return home, they will spread the word, with plans to visit communities in Hungary, Austria, Switzerland, Poland and elsewhere, serving as a *rav hamachshir*, a kosher supervisor, answering questions, making sure kosher food is available, and



“Speaking in learning” with OU Posek Rav Herschel Schachter.

taking advantage of Berlin’s central location for easy access to both Central and Eastern European locations and to Western Europe as well.

“We plan to continue learning, to take back whatever we learned here,” Zsolt Balla said. Avraham Radbil agreed. “Both of us enjoyed the experience of ASKOU,” he said. “Wherever we go we will bring our knowledge with us.”

## PARTICIPANTS

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and for those already active in their communities who came to strengthen their skills.

The *yeshivot* and *kollelim* whose students participated were among the finest institutions of Jewish learning in the world. They included *Beth Medrash Govoha* in Lakewood, which sent the 20 *Chavrei HaKollel*, the largest delegation ever from Lakewood to an ASKOU program. The *Yeshivas Beis Zion* of the *Lauder Yeshurun Foundation* in Berlin sent two young rabbis who returned home fortified with the skills to strengthen *kashrut* in Central and Eastern Europe. The *Mirer Yeshiva Kollel* in Jerusalem and the *Philadelphia Community Kollel* sent students. The RIETS rabbinical seminary at Yeshiva University was well-represented at the program.

*Kollelim* at *Mesivta Tiferet Jerusalem* of the Lower East Side, NYC; *Bais Medrash L'Talmud* and *Ohr HaChaim* in Kew Gardens Hills, Queens, NY; and *Emek Halacha*, *Yeshivas Derech Chaim* and *Belz* in Brooklyn, NY all sent students.

ASKOU9 was divided into two programs – a three-week *kashrut internship* with 26 participants including rabbis, rabbinical and kollel students; and a one-week *kashrut training program* with 70 participants including community rabbis, assistant rabbis and students, as well as for members of local *Va'adei HaKashrut*. The two groups combined in the final week of the three-week session.



Rabbi Richard Levine points to a six story high Hydrostatic Cooker at Hanover Foods in Hanover, PA

“We were amazed at the high caliber and diversity of the ASKOU participants,” declared Rabbi Yosef Grossman, OU Director of Kashrut Education, who coordinated the programs. “They literally came to ASKOU from the four corners of the Torah and *kashrut* world. Many of the participants were noted Torah scholars and authors. It was a privilege to host such a distinguished and diversified group of upcoming future Torah leaders.”

Together, the groups participated in lectures from OU experts, and went on the road to plants, slaughterhouses, restaurants and catering halls certified by the OU. Their responses showed the value of the program.

When asked how he liked the three-week session, Shmuel Kruk, a *semicha* student in Lakewood, responded enthusiastically, “I loved it.” Rabbi Avrumi Tannenbaum, a member of a Brooklyn kollel and a one-week ASK OU participant, commented that the program was “excellent, informative, and unbelievable to receive a service of this sort from an organization.” Yehuda Gras, another one week participant remarked, “Fabulously run with military precision and fantastic, fascinating lectures!” All this from someone who has taken the program for the third time! Apparently he really loves it.

## EXCERPTS FROM REPORTS

*Participants' comments on their ASKOU9 experience.*

It was a big 'ה קידוש that Jews from all over and all different backgrounds came, not just for one shiur but for three full weeks, for intense study of kashrus. One of the things that impressed us all was OU's "open-door policy". Nothing was hidden. They explained all their policies etc. This can be seen in the OU symbol. The O symbolizes the globe/world. The U is "open" for anyone to come ask questions. – Yisocher D. Green

As a Jew from Europe...it was incredible to have a glance into the life of such an important and world-known kashruth agency, as the OU. You cannot really appreciate the incredible expertise, the halachic competence and the field work, until you see it for yourself. The impression that I had was so powerful...and it is fantastic, that an organization, like the OU opens their doors, and says: please come in, see what we are doing, learn from us, and help to make the kashruth situation better in the world, with the awareness, that to determine whether something is kosher or not is not just a two-hour shiur, but years of hard work, learning and expertise. – Zsolt Balla, Smicha student, Yeshivas Beis Tzion, Berlin, Germany

As a participant in "ASK OU", a three week intensive Kashrus-training program, I believe that the kashrus world (along with the rest of the world) has much to learn from the Orthodox Union. I do not know of any other Kashrus supervision agency, or any other institute for that matter, which would allow 26 'untrained' individuals come into their headquarters and scrutinize their operation for three full weeks. The OU has opened their doors to us and invited us not only to observe, look and inspect, but to actually challenge, test and give advice to them. This I believe is a testament to the OU's pledge to maintain the highest level of kashrus possible. We are truly fortunate that the OU is the foremost kashrus agency in the world. – Raphael Steinhart

Being from France I remember that going to a supermarket and looking for kosher is a fastidious task, you have to look on a kosher product list, and then look for the right bar code, and after that, you hope that you are eating kosher. I recall wondering when the first "OU" products reached the French shores, how could a simple "OU" on a product label in any supermarket attest to a reliable kosher certification? After being three weeks in the OU internship program I got the answer to that question and much more...the OU system is based on the principle of "וצא ונכנס"; a Mashgiach called RFR (Rabbinic Field Representative) could come at any moment to any plant in the world...!

– Avrohom Moshe Levy

To see the practical side of hilchos kashrus after spending a year and a half of learning the sugyos of Yoreh Deah was a great experience.

– Yitzchak Winkler ישיבת מיר – ירושלים עיר הקודש

The experience that I have had over the past couple of weeks as an OU intern has been fascinating as well as revealing. The diverse schedule that the program offers helped paint a picture of what goes on at the OU as well as in kashrus in general. One crucial element to the program were the lectures given by the rabbonim at the OU as well as other Vaadim. In terms of those of the OU, it was great to have people who are experts in a particular area share their knowledge base with us. Each area of kashrus, whether it be dairy, fish, baking, ingredients, and a host of others, has a rabbinic coordinator on top of it, monitoring mashgichim and constantly double checking for any kashrus concerns. Rabbi Chaim Schwartz from the Vaad of Queens and Rabbi Yosef Eisen of the Vaad of the Five Towns also addressed our group. This was also of immense value because we got to hear how a more local Vaad operates successfully. In addition, awareness of kashrus concerns and issues were made known. Rabbi Schreier also addressed us in Dougies where we were exposed to what the various roles, responsibilities, and challenges of a Mashgiach are. Another element of the trip were the trips that the group was taken on.



*Nirbater Rav gives shechita shiur at OU.*

The trip that seems to stick out the most is the two day trip to Pennsylvania. First on the agenda was to visit the Empire factory where the chickens were being shechted. This entailed a tour around the factory as well as a demonstration of a shechita. As a way of limiting the traveling time, we spent the night at the Hampton Hotel where Rabbi Grossman gave a shiur and the swimming pool was offered to the group privately. The next day we were taken to a couple of factories where Rabbi Richard Levine showed us how the various equipment functioned as well as what the kashrus concerns were. Rabbi Levine's knowledge of how the plants functioned was unbelievable and

we got an overview of how larger plants operated. In addition to the above trip, I personally spent the day with Rabbi Sholom Lifchetz, a senior Mashgiach in Brooklyn as well as other areas, accompanying him along his hashgocho route. This was extremely beneficial. Rabbi Lifchetz seemed to be a paradigmatic example what Rabbi Schreier as well as others described of what a Mashgiach should be doing. He seemed to be on very good terms with the owners of the various factories that he visits. Yet, he was also on the lookout and not someone who would be pushed over. He also displayed a lot of knowledge of what goes on in the factories and how the equipment works. It was a good way of seeing what was being described in the lectures in action. Finally, the interns were assigned to audit restaurants that were under OU hashgacha. This was valuable in many ways. Most apparently, it gave us a chance to actively implement that which is being taught to us. Without these types of experiences, all that was being said to us would possibly remain on a theoretical level. It also gave us a chance to get an idea for how a Mashgiach works in a restaurant as opposed to a factory. This was finished off with Rabbi Luban and Rabbi Schreier offering their expert feedback on the audits so that we were made aware of how to interpret what we had seen. I had a sense that a lot of effort was being put in to make sure that we understood the issues at hand and we were being made more aware. This is only a portion of what this diverse program entailed and, Baruch Hashem, I found it to be tremendously informative and interesting.

– Yehoshua Reinitz

## IN THEIR WORDS

*Reflections on the recently concluded Harry H. Beren ASK OU9 Kashruth Internship (Three Week) and Training (One Week) Programs by the participants.*

**Extremely insightful and knowledge-packed sessions relevant to our times, given in a clear and precise manner  
!ממש בשלחן ערוך. It was great.**

– Yossi Fischer



**Well done. Eye opening informative.  
Much better appreciation of what  
the OU is doing to make sure our  
food is kosher.**

– Akiva Males

**Fascinating! Unbelievable!  
Unique opportunity to learn  
such great concepts and meet  
such big experts – all in one  
small week!!! Thanks!**

– Netanel Askarinam



*From top to bottom: Nikkur demonstration at Alle; Man meets machine; Nirbater Roy conducting tour at Alle Packing.*

## IN THEIR WORDS

*Continued*

During this program I was amazed at the honesty and integrity of the entire OU operation. Any issue no matter how controversial is fair game for the OU position to be given over and explained.

– Dovid Grossman



It moved me how much the OU cares and is concerned about Klal Yisroel having kosher food. They help Klal Yisroel לשם שמים. Basically, they exemplify true אהבת ישראל and מסירת נפש.

– Yechiel Weissman

אין מילים. שדה הכשרות היא יותר עמוק ויותר רחוב ממה שחשבתי.  
דוד מאיר וועבער



*From top to bottom: Two assistant rabbis delighted with the Alle Tour; Interns on the road with OU RFR, Rabbi Richard Levine (c), in Hanover, PA; Reb Yakov Jakubovitz, Alle expert Menaker, blows the Reiah (lung – not the shofar).*

## ASKOU9 IN PHOTOS



*Clockwise from top left: the interns at Kedem plant in Milton, NY;  
Rabbi Eli Gersten at Arizona Beverage plant;  
ASK the Rabbis session with (L to R) Rabbi Nachum Rabinowitz,  
Rabbi Seth Mandel, Rabbi Moshe Elefant, Rabbi Yoel Schonfeld  
and Rabbi Yaakov Luban; Rabbi Genack delivers shiur  
on Bishul Akum; Rabbi Yisroel Belsky inspecting Menukar meat  
at International Glatt, Brooklyn, NY*

## ASKOU9 IN PHOTOS



*Clockwise from top left: Checking vegetables with a lightbox for insect infestation; Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb offers greetings; Rabbi Yoffe checking vegetables; two interns checking strawberries with a loupe*