

יז' תמוז תש"פ / July 9, 2020

To our Beloved Five Towns and Far Rockaway Community,

Our community is very unique in that we have a hashgocha where the kashrus professionals work under the auspices of the community Rabbonim. In the day to day running of our Vaad, the kashrus professionals answer to a rotating board of community Rabbonim and lay leaders reflecting a broad cross-section of the community.

There is a great advantage in having a single universally recognized hashgocha in a community. In communities with competing hashgochas, the consumer is often ill informed of the specific reliability of each kashrus organization, which leads to confusion, and inevitably lower standards of kashrus. Our community is unique in that any community resident or visitor, who sees the certificate of the Vaad Hakashrus of the Five Towns and Far Rockaway, can eat without any hesitation as to the quality of the kashrus. Due to the transparency through which the Vaad operates, even a consumer who accepts stricter standards, can know with certainty whether a given establishment is appropriate for him.

Two Rabbonim in the community have recently formed a new hashgocha, the "Mehadrin of the Five Towns" which certifies **FiveFifty Restaurant and Shoppe, Chimichurri Charcoal Chicken, and Keneret Fresh Market**. We have no personal ill feeling toward the Rabbonim who provide the hashgocha, and are always open to consider and incorporate opposing views to enhance the kashrus standards of our community. However, after careful consideration, we cannot in good conscience, recommend that one rely on this hashgocha.

We are aware that kashrus issues are often contentious, and can easily lead to discord within a community. However, we feel strongly that maintaining high standards of kashrus is best accomplished when the vast majority of the community Rabbonim volunteer their time to direct our kashrus professionals, with no motive other than ensuring the best interest of our community. This is done by Rabbonim who have nothing to gain other than enhancing the religious life in our community. When the field of kashrus is opened up to those who do not collaborate with the vast majority of community Rabbonim, there will be an inevitable decline in both standards and unity. We therefore discourage the members of our community in the strongest terms, from patronizing local food establishments that are not under the hashgocha of the Vaad of the Five Towns and Far Rockaway.

As a rule, it is worthwhile to remember that if one sees an unfamiliar hashgocha it is wisest to consult with your trusted local Rabbonim for guidance, just as you do for all religious matters. The established Rabbonim of the Five Towns and Far Rockaway have earned the trust of its residents over many decades of selfless service and dedication. It would be tragic to throw this valuable relationship away in one of the most important areas of Judaism.

With heartfelt prayers that our sincere efforts to enhance *kashrus* and religious life in our community are successful.

We, the 53 undersigned Rabbonim,

Rav Shalom Axelrod
 Rav Dovid Bender
 Rav Meir Braunstein
 Rav Pinchas Chatzinoff
 Rav Ariel Edelstein
 Rav Yaakov Feitman
 Rav David Friedman
 Rav Dr. Aaron Glatt
 Rav Yaakov Yitzchok Horowitz
 Rav Mottel Katz
 Rav Simcha Lefkowitz
 Rav Jonathan Muskat
 Rav Ephraim Polakoff
 Rav Shay Schachter
 Rav Dovid Spiegel
 Rav Ya'akov Trump
 Rav Akiva Willig
 Rav Zalman Wolowik

Rav Hershel Billet
 Rav Eli Biegeleisen
 Rav Moshe Brown
 Rav Shaul Chill
 Rav Aaron Feigenbaum
 Rav Binyomin Forst
 Rav Aryeh Zev Ginzberg
 Rav Kenneth Hain
 Rav Yudi Jeger
 Rav Moshe Zev Katzenstein
 Rav Yoni Levin
 Rav Motti Neuburger
 Rav Zvi Ralbag
 Rav Pesach Schmerling
 Rav Mordechai Stern
 Rav Moshe Weinberger
 Rav Shmuel Witkin
 Rav Mordechai Yaffe

Rav Yaakov Bender
 Rav Yisroel Meir Blumenkrantz
 Rav Dov Bressler
 Rav Shaya Cohen
 Rav Eytan Feiner
 Rav Yitzchok D. Frankel
 Rav Daniel Glatstein
 Rav Simcha Hopkovitz
 Rav Yehuda Kamravapour
 Rav Aryeh Lebowitz
 Rav Avi Miller
 Rav Uri Orlian
 Rav Isaac Rice
 Rav Yehuda Septimus
 Rav Moshe Teitelbaum
 Rav Pinchus Weinberger
 Rav Eliyahu Wolf