

On the Air with Rav Aviner

*Q&A from
Rav Shlomo Aviner's
radio call-in show*

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between Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai, and the halachah was finally decided in accordance with Beit Hillel. A great person – Rabbi Tarfon – got up and publicly ruled like Beit Shammai which impinged upon the authority of Beit Hillel. People were saying, "Beit Hillel is lenient in this matter." The damage which he caused by acting this way was greater than the value of reciting the Shema according to Beit Shammai. Therefore, if someone wants to be strict in a matter, it is better to be strict in honoring Torah scholars than in questioning the validity of a kashrut certification. Ha-Gaon Rav Avraham Dov Auerbach, Av Beit Din (Head of the Rabbinic Court) of Tiveria, once told me about an incident that occurred in the past in Tiveria. One time the "eruv" was damaged, and the Rav of Tiveria ruled that the "eruv" was kosher. There was a great Torah scholar who lived there and he bumped into the Rav of the city after Shabbat. They talked, the Torah scholar walked him home and they sat and chatted. The Torah scholar said, "Let's learn some Torah." The Rav of the city obviously agreed. The Torah scholar took Massechet Eruvim and they learned. Suddenly, the Rav of the city said, "Oy va-voy! If so, I ruled incorrectly today!" The Torah scholar said, "It appears so." The Rav of the city asked, "Did his honor announce in his shul not to carry on Shabbat?" "No," he responded, "since carrying in this place is a rabbinic prohibition, but honoring a Torah scholar is a Torah mitzvah. I therefore did not say anything." If we say that the kosher certifications which Rabbis provide are not acceptable, this impinges on the honor of Torah scholars. One must therefore be extremely cautious.

Q: If someone eats food with kosher certification which turns out not to be kosher does he have a "dulling of the heart" (dulling of one's spiritual sense which is often equated with eating non-kosher food)?

A: No. Maran Ha-Rav Kook, writes in his book "Musar Avicha" (p. 19) that the dulling of one's heart comes from one's violating a prohibition (Yoma 39a). As a result, there is no difference between whether one eats non-kosher food or violates other prohibitions. Therefore, someone who eats food with kosher certification which turns out not to be kosher does not have a "dulling of the heart," as his intention is not to violate a prohibition. He thinks that he is eating kosher food.

❖ Which Kosher certification for guests?

Q: I invited a guest for a Shabbat meal and he told me that he only eats from a particular kosher certification of meat. Do I need to buy that type of meat or can I buy meat with the kosher certification which I usually use?

A: There are two possibilities: A. Buy what he wants. There is a guest, go out to greet him. B. You can tell him, "No, I always buy this kosher certification." Does a guest dictate what you do in your house? I once heard a story about a Rabbi in North Africa who had an event at his house, a bar mitzvah or something, and he honored one of his guests, who was also a Rabbi, to lead the "Birkat Ha-mazon" (blessing after eating). The guest replied, "Thank you, but I do not eat from this kosher certification." When he heard this, the host took a key, locked the door, stood next to him with a chair and said: "You will eat this right now or I will break this chair over your head." "Kol Ha-Kavod" – Way to go! What is this? You are invited by people, and you say that what they are eating is not kosher?! If this is how you feel then don't come, or say that you have a stomach ache or I don't like this food. You are not obligated to eat everything, but don't come to someone's house or event and say it is not kosher enough.