

Keeping Kosher in Israel

RAV EITAN

One of the most fun parts of the year in Israel is taking advantage of all the kosher food available in Israel – even the Torah itself makes a big deal about the wonderful foods available here! But we all know that just because it’s in Israel, and even if it has Hebrew writing on it, doesn’t make it kosher.

This guide will help get you started as you make kashrut decisions. Read it when you arrive so you can begin to get the concepts straight, and then keep it handy as you begin to take your first kashrut steps in Israel. *Shemita* is a totally new topic for almost all students, so we’ll cover it when you arrive.

Topics to be covered:

- How to decide which products in stores are acceptable
- How to decide which restaurants are acceptable
- What to do when you have a question

How to decide which products in stores are acceptable

Kashrut in Israel is a lot like it is where you come from: there are large kashrut organizations, like the OU, Star-K, etc., and then there are local kashrut organizations, like the one where you live which provides supervision on local stores and restaurants.

It’s the same in Israel. We have large, well-recognized hechsherim, and we have lots of small, less-well-known ones. Here are some of the larger ones you can rely upon; when you come upon others, you should ask your kashrut expert. (Who’s my kashrut expert? More below...)

Symbol	Organization	Rabbi	  PDF version
	Beis Din Tzedek of the Eida Hachareidis of Jerusalem	Rav Naftali Halberstam, Kashrus Administrator; Rabbi Pinchos Binder, Ingredient Specialist.	
	Badatz Mehadrin	Rav Simcha Hacoen Kook, Rav; Rav Avraham Rubin	
	Beis Din Tzedek of Agudas Israel Moetzes Hakashrus	Rabbi Zvi Geffner	
	Chug Chasam Sofer - Bnei Brak	Rabbi Shmuel Eliezer Stern, Rabbi Yitzchok Shlomo Ungar	
	Chug Chosam Sofer - Petach Tikvah	Rav Daitch	
	Beis Din Tzedek of K'hal Machzikei Hadas - Maareches Hakashrus (Belz)	Rabbi Mordechai Brisk	
	Rabbi Moshe Yehudah Leib Landau	Rabbi Moshe Yehudah Leib Landau	
	Rabanut Rechovot Mehadrin	Rabbi Avraham Rubin, Kashrus Administrator.	
	Rabbanut Yerushalayim Mehadrin	Rabbi Adler	

	Sheris Yisroel	Harav Chaim Shaul Karelitz, Rosh; Rabbi Yekutiel Dershowitz, Menahel; Rabbi Michael Hoffman, Rabbi Dov Brecher; Rabbi David Birenbaum, Rabbi Baruch Vormesser, Rabbi Mordechai Knopplmacher
	"OU" in Israel OU Israel Center	Rabbi Mordechai Kuber
	Rabbanut Yerushalayim	Rabbi Yehoshua Pollack, Segan Rosh Hamoatza Hadatit of Jerusalem
	Harabanut L'Kashrut Haaratzit, Chief Rabbinate of Israel	Rabbi Yaakov Sebag, Segan Rosh Hakashrus., Rav Eliyahu Maimon, Menahel, Dept. of Taasiya & Charoshet, Beit Yahav
	Bet Din Zedek Bet Yosef	Harav Ovadiah Yosef
	Badatz of the Hisachdus Kehilas Hayereim	Rabbi Yisroel Yaakov Landau, Rabbi Yisroel Schwartz
	Rav of Tenuva Products	Rabbi Zeev Weitman
	Rabbinical World Union For Kashrus (Igud Rabbanei Olami L'kashrus)	Rabbi Yaakov Auerbach
	Bais Din Tzedek Yore Dea	Rabbi Shlomo Machpud, Kashrus Administrator. Rabbi Daitch

It can be confusing at first, since a lot of the symbols look similar, but you'll get the hang of it... and if you're out shopping and you have a question – just call your expert! (Who's my expert? More later...)

Bakery Counter

Keep in mind that, like where you came from, everything you eat needs a hechsher. So let's say you're in the local supermarket, and they have a bakery counter – before you choose what you want, make sure there's a valid "te'udah" (kosher certificate). What makes a "te'udah" valid? We'll get to that below, when we talk about restaurants.

Meat Counter

The same goes for the meat counter in a supermarket – it, too, needs a valid te'udah. And since we're in Israel, where even fruits and vegetables need to have terumah and ma'aser taken from them before we can eat them, even the produce section needs a te'udah (most produce sections have one – but look for it!). *Shemita* is a totally new topic for almost all students, so we'll cover it when you arrive.

“Mehadrin” Meat

We recommend that our students be careful to eat only “mehadrin” when it comes to meat and meat products, since “mehadrin” is similar to what you’ve been eating if you’ve been eating OU. In addition to other issues, non-mehadrin is often not *glatt*, and *glatt* in most communities today is what you’ve been careful to eat all your life.

Gelatin

Most kosher consumers from outside Israel have learned that gelatin isn’t kosher if it comes from non-kosher animals. But actually, the question of gelatin is a halachic debate, and many Israeli poskim do allow gelatin from non-kosher animals. If you grew up in the US, Canada, the UK and the like, your custom is to avoid this gelatin, so you’ll need to avoid Israeli products which contain it (such as some yogurts, some “gummy worms/bears,” and the like). Note that “gelatin” in Hebrew is spelled ג'לטין – rather than ג'לוטין, which looks very similar but translates as “gluten.”

How to decide which restaurants are acceptable

In addition to choosing a restaurant for your tastes and budget, you’ll also want to make sure its kosher standards are acceptable. Just as people do in your home community, you’ll need to find out who provides the supervision and decide whether it’s acceptable. *Shemittah* is a totally new topic for almost all students, so we’ll cover it when you arrive.

Kashrut info changes quickly – for example, a restaurant manager decides to switch to a different *hashgachah* (perhaps one that is not acceptable); a restaurant is caught violating kashrut standards and has its supervision removed entirely; a restaurant manager decides to save money by not renewing the kashrut supervision, but naturally doesn’t warn his customers that the place no longer has supervision. These are all common situations, things everyone who lives in Israel has experienced.

Because the info changes so quickly, it’s necessary to check the situation every time you walk into a restaurant. It’s simple – you just look for the kashrut certificate, or “*te’udat kashrut*.” Many restaurants have other kinds of certificates – awards for their excellent food, certificates from the health department, notices that they treat their employees properly – but the only one which matters for kashrut is the “*te’udat kashrut*.”

If you find a restaurant by word of mouth, or by checking on the Internet, or even by calling the place yourself, it’s important to know that you still need to check once you get there. Your friend says “It’s badatz”, and it was, but yesterday things changed; the website says “Mehadrin,” but it turns out it’s one of the “fake hashgachot” (more on this later); the person who answers the phone says basically whatever they think the customer wants to hear, and not out of spite, but just because he or she often doesn’t know much about kashrut – and often isn’t observant (some are hoping you’ll just come to the restaurant and then forget to check, or decide it’s too annoying to have to go somewhere else). So – no matter what you know, once you get there you need to check the *te’udah*.

Checking the *te’udah* means ascertaining five key pieces of information:

- That the *te’udah* is an original, not a photocopy
- The name of the organization providing the kashrut supervision
- The name of the restaurant
- The address of the restaurant
- The date when the *te’udah* expires

The name of the organization providing the supervision is critical because you need to know that it's someone legit behind this certificate. Many dishonest people who want to make easy money have opened up fake hashgachot, even here in Jerusalem. They provide legitimate-looking certificates which have all the right buzzwords on them ("mehadrin," "badatz," "glatt"), charge rock-bottom prices for their "services," and then basically never show up to ever do any supervision at all. (Everyone's happy, right? The restaurant manager saves money; the fake hashgachah company makes money; the consumer thinks she's eating food with supervision...)

The name of the restaurant is important because sometimes – like in a mall's food court, for example – many restaurants share the same address, and a restaurant lacking supervision might photocopy its neighbor's te'udah and stick it up on the wall, hoping you won't look closely.

The address is important because when it comes to stores with multiple branches – fast-food places, supermarkets, etc. – one branch can "lend" its te'udah to another branch which doesn't actually have supervision. You want to be sure the food at *this* branch has supervision.

The date on which the te'udah expires is important because after that date, there is no further supervision. Don't accept any excuses for an expired te'udah without calling your kashrut expert; people are in the restaurant business to make money, not to help you keep kosher.

You may be getting the impression that we suspect people (even Jews, and even frum Jews) of lying when it comes to kashrut. Sadly, that impression is correct ☹️. Experience shows us that when it comes to making money, people are often not able to stay completely honest, and that's why we need supervision in the first place. Be polite – when the guy at the shawarma place swears on his mother's life that he really is kosher, or that the te'udah is coming tomorrow, just say, "Thank you. My rabbis have taught me that I'm not allowed to eat unless there's a te'udah."

Glance through the examples on the following pages and familiarize yourself with how to find the five key pieces of information on a te'udah. Let's say you're reading a te'udah and you're not sure what it means, or you don't know if it's reliable? Call your kashrut expert!

What to do when you have a question

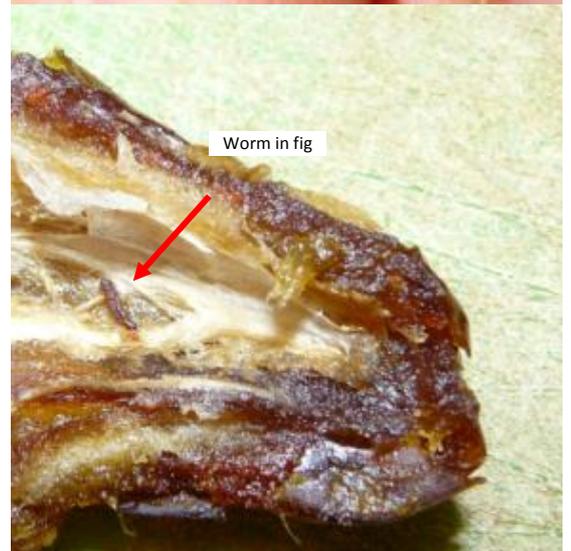
It's simple – you call us! "Us" means those teachers who have kashrut knowledge and experience in Israel, some of whom are listed below. Put our numbers into your phone now! Don't be concerned that you're disturbing us – we're here to help you eat kosher. Just be polite and don't call or text us late at night. If one of us can't answer, just go on to the next "expert." And if you can't get an answer – for now, eat something else, and ask us when you see us!

Bednarsh, Leora -- 052-618-6814
Berglas, R Meyer -- 052-608-9501
Knapel, R Jason -- 052-600-4603
Lerner, R Yitzchok -- 054-840-6633
Mayer, R Eitan -- 052-668-4691

Insects

Once you've bought kosher products, you're all set. Just be aware that sometimes you need to take an extra step, since our Israeli bugs love food as much as you do, and we may have bugs in products you didn't need to check at home. For example, before using flour, most kosher consumers in Israel sift it to remove bugs, since bugs are more commonly found in flour here than in some other countries. And naturally, you'll need to check all fruits (especially dried fruits), vegetables, and nuts for bugs too. Full details from your kashrut expert, or you can sign up for our kashrut course!

(I took all of these (gross) pictures myself, of fruit and vegetables I had bought – the point being, you really do encounter these guys in real life, so you need to check. Yuch!)



Official name of the organization giving the hechsher: if you haven't heard of them, stay away



Symbol of the hechsher organization: can help you quickly identify who's behind the hechsher – but be careful, the fakers make their symbols similar to the legit ones...

Expiration date: since things change quickly, this is important. If it's expired, just move on – don't listen to any excuses

Expiration date: since things change quickly, this is important

Restaurant name & address: make sure they are correct & not "borrowed" from another branch

Name & cell # of the mashgiach in case you're not sure of something

Name of Israel's Chief Rabbi (don't call him ☺)

הרבנות הראשית והמועצה הדתית ירושלים
 בד"ץ רבנות ירושלים למהדרין
 רח' החבצלת 12 ת"ד 13, ירושלים, טל' 02-6214828 פקס' 02-6214832

בס"ד
 והענינה הוותיקה
 תשס"ח

תעודת הנפש
 KOSHER CERTIFICATE

בשרי

למהדרין
 GLAT DEPARTMENT

הננו מאשרים בזאת כי

יוג'ה

עמק רפאים 25

עומד תחת השגחתנו וכי במקום זה נשמרת
 שמיטה כהלכה והבשר חלק בית יוסף

תוקף תעודה
 זו הוא עד:

כ"ט אלול תשס"ח (29.09.08)

שם המפקח: הרב יעקב דותמקין 052-4268054

תעודת מס' 68/4/4059

לתשומת לב!
 תעודה זו בתוקף רק אם היא מקורית
 לא מצולמת.
 התעודה היא רכושה הבלעדי של הרבנות
 הראשית לירושלים והיא רשאית לקחתה
 בכל עת שתמצא לנכון.

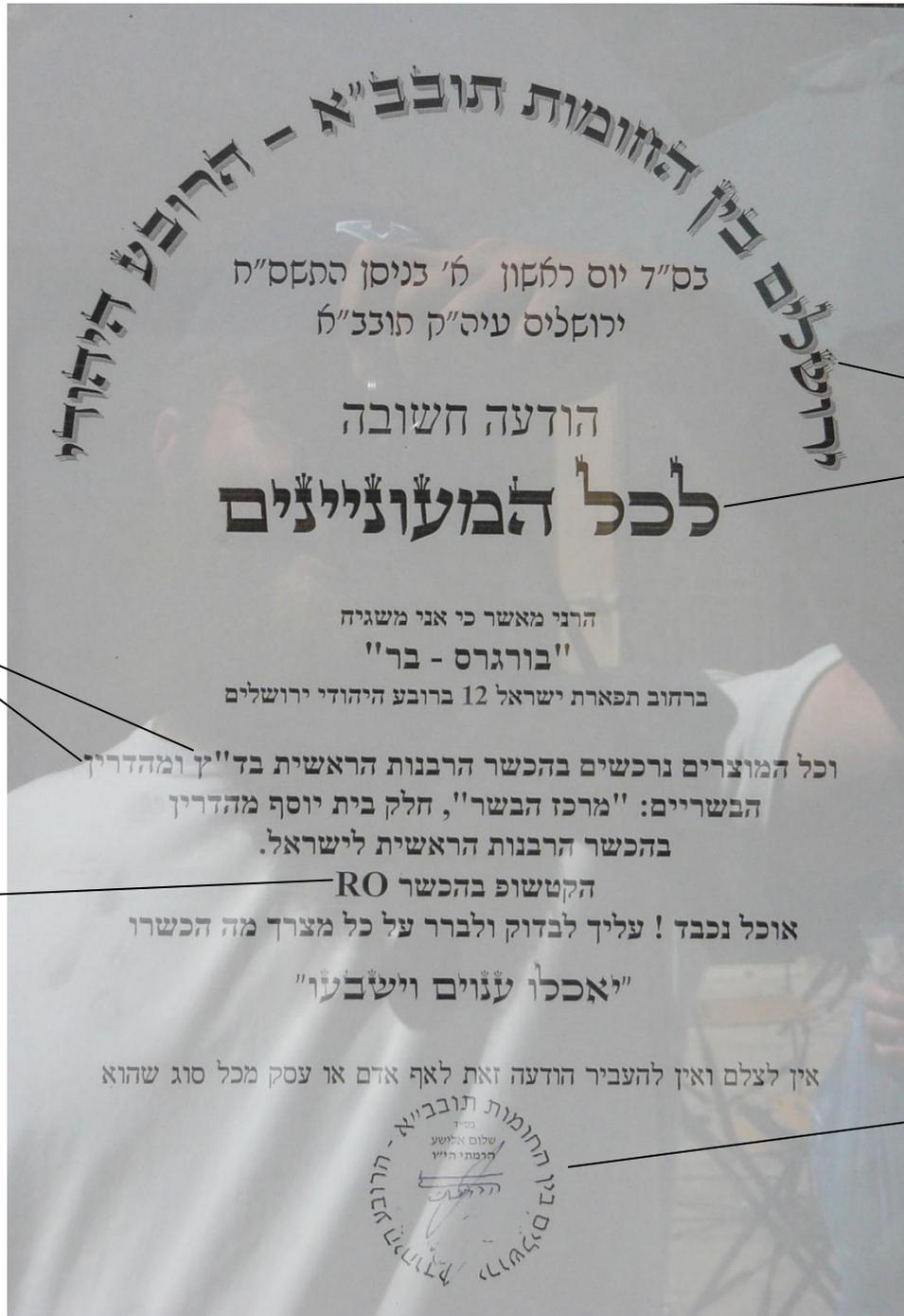
ידנה מצגר
 הרב הראשי
 לישראל

"Mehadrin" is meaningful only if you know it's being said by an organization you can trust

"Badatz" is meaningful only if you know it's being said by an organization you can trust. Legally, anyone who wants to can call himself a "badatz"!

How would this date be written in the US?

Test yourself: Whose phone number is this?



ירושלים בני החומות תובב"א - הרובע היהודי

כס"ד יום ראשון א' בניסן התקס"ח
ירושלים עיה"ק תוצב"א

הודעה חשובה
לכל המעוניינים

הרני מאשר כי אני משגיח
"בורגס - בר"

ברחוב תפארת ישראל 12 ברובע היהודי ירושלים

וכל המוצרים נרכשים בהכשר הרבנות הראשית בד"ץ ומהדרין
הבשריים: "מרכז הבשר", חלק בית יוסף מהדרין
בהכשר הרבנות הראשית לישראל.

הקטשופ בהכשר RO

אוכל נכבד! עליך לבדוק ולברר על כל מצרך מה הכשרו

"יאכלו עֲנִיִּים וישִׁבְעוּ"

אין לצלם ואין להעביר הודעה זאת לאף אדם או עסק מכל סוג שהוא



Nice font, right? Looks just like the script in a Sefer Torah!

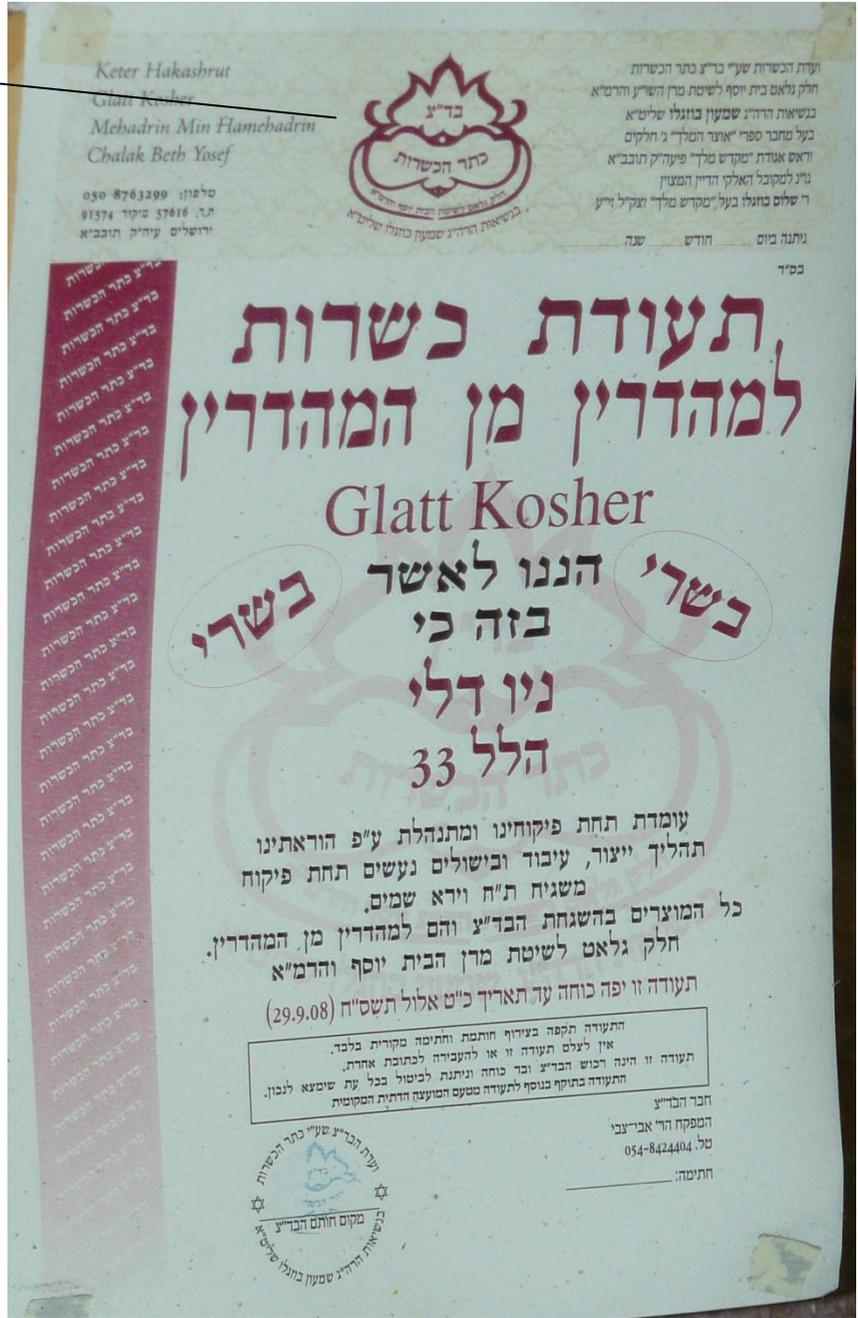
All the right words – what could be wrong with this?

Wait, what'd they say about the ketchup? It's supervised by the [®], huh? Well, that symbol means "registered trademark" 😊

So – who gives this hechsher anyway?



These "te'udot" say "badatz" – but they are from unauthorized organizations and can't be relied upon for kashrut. Don't they look just like the real thing?



Koshrut Dept.
Of the Rabbinical
court Beth Din Tzedek
"Nezer Habidur"
Glatt Kosher Mehadrin
Jerusalem

בית דין צדק
נזר ההידור
בגשיאות
הרה"ג אברהם קסלר שליט"א
בעיריית ירושלים תחב"א

מחלקת הכשרות שע
בית דין צדק
"נזר ההידור"
חלק בית יוסף
מתחריין מן המהדרין
ירושלים

בס"ד פעה"ק ירושלים ת"ז יום ט"ז לחורש סיון שנת תש"ח

תעודת כשרות למהדרין מן המהדרין

הננו לאשר בזה כי
לואיג'י
רח' יואל סלומון 10

ישנם מוצרים שמכילים
גבינה ודגים
והם מותרים למסוקים
כדוגמת חמ"ץ בלבד

עומדת תחת השגחתנו ומתנהלת ע"י הוראתנו
בתהליך היצור והעבוד וכל הבישולים
נעשים בפיקוח של משגיח ת"ח וירא שמים

חלבי **חלבי**

הירקות והפירות הינם שמיטה לחומרה
וכל המוצרים בהכשר הבד"ץ
והם מהדרין מן המהדרין לפי חומרת בית יוסף
ולפי חומרות כל פיסקי מרן השו"ע והרמ"א

תעודה זו כוחה יפה רק עד **י"ג ניסן תשס"ט** ולאחר מכן פג תוקפה.
נא להקפיד על תאריך וחוממות מקוריות
רב מפקח ר' דוד 054-6375437

These "te'udot" look great – but they are from unauthorized organizations and can't be relied upon for kashrut

Va'ad A' Kashrut
Kashrut L'Mehadrin
Glatt Beth Yosef L'Mehadrin

ועד הכשרות
הכשרות המהודרות
חלק בית יוסף מנהדרין מן המהדרין
בפיקוח של מו"צים ותי"ח
ובהסמכת הרבנים הגאונים

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ובהסמכת הרבנים הגאונים

טל: 08-9743037 פלאפון 050-5971040 ירושלים עיה"ק

כיב בניסן תשס"ז

תעודת כשרות למהדרין מן המהדרין

בשרי הננו לאשר בזה כי בשרי
מסעדת משפחה
מדרחוב נחלת השבעה, ירושלים

עומדת תחת השגחתנו ומתנהלת ע"י הוראתנו בתהליך הייצור
והעיבוד וכן כל הבישולים נעשים בפיקוח של משגיח ת"ח וירא שמים.
כל המוצרים בהשגחת הבד"ץ והם למהדרין מן המהדרין
חלק גלאט בית יוסף לפי חומרות מר"ן השו"ע והרמ"א.

תעודה זו יפה כוחה עד תאריך
ב"ץ הכשרות המהודרות

אסור לצלם ואו להעביר תעודה זו. אין תוקף לתעודה ללא
חתימה וחותמת. תעודה זו הינה רכוש הבד"ץ ובר כוחה להוציאה
בכל עת שימצא לנכון. לפרטים: 050-5971040

חלק בית יוסף מהדרין מן המהדרין
בפיקוח של מו"צים ותי"ח
ובהסמכת הרבנים הגאונים

מפקח: הרב איפרגן 050-5971040
משגיח במקום: הרב איבגי 054-6708511
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