



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

New Rules for Purim 2015

Due to the egregious abuses in Flatbush this year, we the members of P.U.R.I.M. (People Upholding Rules In Midwood) are imposing new regulations on the citizenry of our fine neighborhood for Purim 5775, in the event we are not yet in *Yerushalayim Ihr Hakodesh*.

Frankly, had *Moshiach* shown up on Sunday, he probably would have had to double park his donkey somewhere on Beverley Road and walk if he wanted to get to Coney and J, stand in front of TD bank, and tell everyone to pack. He probably would have gotten disgusted and gone down to Boca where he could have had a *heimishe* meal and then spoken to people who'd been waiting to see him a very, very long time.

Things were a little out of hand this year. Of course, things are a little out of hand every year, but it seemed really super-crazy this year. Consequently, P.U.R.I.M. was formed in order to avoid similar situations next time this wonderful *Yom Tov* rolls around. So, without further ado, here then are the Rules for Purim, 2015/5775:

1. Absolutely No Superheroes! Honestly, it looked like a Marvel Comic regurgitated all over the streets of Flatbush! There were enough foam rubber pecs and abs floating around the neighborhood to supply the Tempurpedic Corporation for years to come! Superman, Batman, Spiderman, Kollectman...oh, you missed Kollectman? He's the superhero who dresses in a black cape and a dusty "up" Borsalino with 4" brim. He also wears a black mask to protect the identity of his *mashgiach*. He carries his *Mishnah B'rurah* under one arm and his *shtender* under the other. If he sees you doing something he thinks is *K'neged halacha*, he looks it up at the speed of light, then smacks you over the head with the *shtender*.
2. Absolutely no Penguins! What was it with the penguins this year? With everyone waddling around in black and white, I thought I had stumbled into Boro Park!
3. Absolutely No Themes! Okay, we get it: you're very clever. You figured out all by yourself that if you dress the kids like turkeys, dress yourself and your spouse...like pilgrims, and send turkey poule, cranberry sauce, yams, and a bag of Pillsbury together with a note saying, "We came here on the May'flour' with food you'll 'gobble' up!", everyone will say "...oh, Moish, look how cute...Columbus Day!" Ugh. Just shoot me. Do us all a favor and go back to the Presidor Wafer Rolls with a bottle of grape juice, will ya? Please?
4. No home made *challahs*. Ever. May cause *lashon horah* and/or lying, r"l.
Example of the *lashon horah*:
"Chani, did you get *Shalach Manos* from Esther? Did you see that *challah*? What was that, a hockey puck?"
Example of the lying:
"Esther? I'm *mamash* calling to tell you how incredibly delicious your *challah* was. You *must* give me the recipe!"

5. No Honda Odysseys with Jersey plates. We're congested enough, thank you very much. Kindly limit your *Shalach Manos-ing* to Lakewood.
6. No BMWs with Jersey plates. We're congested enough, thank you very much. Kindly limit your *Shalach Manos-ing* to Deal.
7. What the heck; no out-of-town plates whatsoever. *Mihr hoben inzer eigener tzuris*, know what I mean?
8. No Limos. Problem with limos is twofold:
 - A. They hold approximately 87.5 maniacs.
 - B. The drivers *clean up* after 87.5 maniacs.

Largest permissible car for transporting maniacs: Uncle Gershon's '98 Dodge Caravan. The one with no seats.
9. No music (played in a house) at a higher decibel level than a jackhammer in an echo chamber. No music in the street. No dancing in the street. In fact, no PEOPLE in the street. Okay, fine; no people under 30 in the street. Okay, 25. No, let's stick with 30.

10. All *bochurim*, ages 12-40 must wear GPS bracelets with built-in breathalyzers. Each *bochur* must check in with D.B.M.S. (Drunk *Bochurim* Monitoring Station) with his alcohol level reading every 90 minutes (on second thought, let's make that every half hour). If said reading is not within predetermined limits, Kollectman is dispatched posthaste with his *shtender*.
11. Triple parking is strictly prohibited, except on Coney between J & K, where it's pretty much standard procedure. But most of the stores on the block were closed anyway, so the point becomes moot. Which is better than the point becoming broken. Especially in middle of a math regent.
12. No dressing up as traffic agents (i.e. meter readers). May cause serious cardiac complications, particularly in Cary Court (side of Eichler's).
13. Only 6 (six) cars may double park on any given side street at a time. There are roughly anywhere between 54 and 68 parking spots on any given block in Flatbush, depending on how many driveways, apartment houses, etc. Anything more than 6 (six) interlopers, um, visitors, at a time is enough to *shterr* the *chag* for the folks who actually live there. And if you happen to block someone's car who's trying to get out because he still has to take his little *kinder* up to The Heights so Oma and Opa can see just how adorable they are with the lipstick and makeup smears that wore off from their vampire and soldier get-ups hours ago, he's gonna be one unhappy dude. And remember: guys around here generally aren't even friendly enough to say "Good Shabbos" when they're ostensibly in a good mood. *Al achas kama v'kama* when they've been *shlepping* around in the company of their crabby wives

and hungry, tired, screaming kids, and have been popping Excedrin all day, you do not wanna make 'em crankier than they already are. So be super-careful where you leave your wheels, lest you come back and find yourself with a couple flats.

According to the bylaws of P.U.R.I.M., the rules and regulations listed above may be modified and/or amended between now and Purim 2015 only through a meeting of our members and then by a simple majority vote. In the event of a tie, Your Humble Servant shall cast the deciding ballot, which makes perfect sense, considering all the other members reside in his head. Quite comfortably, I might add; they've been there a long, long time.

Fret not, *balabustas*: Pesach is around the corner!

Rocky Zweig

PS A few weeks ago I was involved in a minor argument herein with someone who went by the moniker of "Lakewood Yungerman." On Sunday my landlord rang my bell (and it wasn't even the first of the month!) and handed me a beautiful package that had been given to him by someone in Rabbi Ginsburg's *shul*, where he *davens*. That person had received it from "Lakewood Yungerman" who apparently did some research and found out where I live, just to be able to send me *Shalach Manos*. What he probably didn't realize is that, because I am in *aveilus*, I did not receive a single other *Shalach Manos* this year, making his act of extraordinary *chesed* all the more significant. So...*kol hakavod* and *yasher koach*, Mr. Yungerman; I take back all the nasty things I was thinking about you (just kidding!)

More on Let's Stop Relying on Rav Alleh!

Mr. Rocky Zweig took issue with my letter titled **Let's Stop Relying on Rav Alleh!** He writes that my letter gave him a headache. Mr. Zweig, could it be that reading my letter gave you a headache, because the truth hurts? He wrote, "There are many establishments I could use as examples of places that have developed a *cheskas kashrus* over the years, but in order not to mention names, I shall instead choose some venues of the past: let's talk about the Menora Temple, the Armon Terrace and the Aperia Manor In their day they were extremely popular, and I would venture to guess that virtually no one walked into the *shmorg* demanding to see the *mashgiach*." I have first hand knowledge about the *kashrus* situation at the Armon Terrace, because every time I was invited to a Simcha there I called and asked about the rabbinical supervision. The answer invariably was that they had none! One time the person I spoke with even told me that if I thought that he needed supervision, then I was not a "*Maimon*." I found it strange at the time, and still do, that anyone would suggest that there was something wrong with the Torah *Hashkafa* of someone who felt a caterer should have *kashrus* supervision. About twenty years ago I was invited by

a Flatbush Rav to the *Chasunah* of one of his daughters. It was to take place at the Armon Terrace. I called the Armon Terrace and was told that the hall had no supervision. The next time I saw the Rav I gave him "Mazel Tov" on his daughter's upcoming *Chasunah*. I then asked him "Who gives the supervision at the Armon Terrace?" There was silence for a moment, and then I said, "He has none." The Rav was taken aback and said, "He must have *hashgacha*." I replied that I had recently inquired and been told that the Armon Terrace had no *kashrus* supervision. The Rav told me that he would look into the matter. When I again saw him, he told me that he was going to bring in a *mashgiach* to supervise the *kashrus* of his daughter's wedding. And indeed, at the wedding there was a card on each table indicating that Rabbi so and so was supervising the food. So, Mr. Zweig, if this Rav felt that his daughter's wedding at the Armon Terrace required *hashgacha*, shouldn't everyone who "walked into the *shmorg*" have asked "to see the *mashgiach*" and not relied on Rav Alleh? Mr. Zweig also wrote, "And as far as supermarkets are concerned, asking them to vet the *kashrus* of every product on their shelves is totally unrealistic and unnecessary, not to mention ludicrous. Who shall be the arbiter of which *hashgocho* is acceptable and which isn't? What if you trust a certain *hashgocho* and I don't! Should it be on the shelves or not?" I have to admit that I do not understand the logic of these sentences. Who else but the consumer is "to be the arbiter of which *hashgocho* is acceptable and which isn't," to him/her, and how is s/he to make this decision unless the *hashgacha* on each product is clearly indicated? Indeed, virtually every factory produced product one sees today in "kosher" supermarkets is under some supervision so one can easily determine whose supervision a product is under by looking at the packaging. My concern was with items being sold in a "kosher" supermarket that were not factory packaged. Specifically, I wrote, "I know first hand of a 'Kosher' supermarket that sells bread, rolls and *challah* bearing a label saying that these products are under the strict personal supervision of the *rabbonim* who supervise this supermarket, when, in fact, these baked goods come from bakeries that are *not* under their direct supervision. I think this is misleading labeling, and the label on these products should clearly indicate who actually supervises the bakeries that the products are produced in." A talk with one of the *Mashgichim* at this supermarket this past week revealed that cakes, cookies and similar items that are labeled "Baked by this supermarket" are not baked by this supermarket. They are baked by a bakery that is not indicated on the packaging. This I also find misleading. However, I am pleased to be able to report that I spoke with the head of the organization that supervises this supermarket, and he told me that the labels on all of the baked

CONTINUED ON PAGE 49

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 48

goods would soon be changed to indicate that they are not baked by the supermarket. He thanked me for pointing out the fact that the labels that are currently being used are both inaccurate and misleading. Mr. Zweig wrote that I “ask about the reliability of the *hechsheirim* of businesses advertised in *frum* newspapers. All these publications have disclaimers stating that they are not responsible for the *kashrus* of their advertisers. It is not the *achraiys* of the publisher to delve into questions of *kashrus*, nor is it the responsibility of the establishment in question to supply information.” Again, I have to admit that I do not understand the logic of these sentences. Is it not common practice in many *frum* publications to give the *kashrus* supervision of the restaurants listed in their Dining Guides despite the disclaimers? The FJJ does this. So why shouldn't this be the practice when caterers, products and dinners are advertised? Mr. Zweig also wrote, “And now I'd like to wax nostalgic for a moment, if I may. Or even if I may not. I have no idea how old Dr. Levine is, but when I was a kid, we had one criterion when it came to making a decision about eating a Hershey Bar or Pixie Stix or Bonomo Turkish Taffy or wax soda bottles with colored sugar water inside: if there was no gelatin listed among the ingredients, we ate it.” The world of *kashrus* has changed drastically in the past 25 years. One can no longer rely on the ingredients listed on a product label. The OU has a data base of thousands of ingredients, some of which it considers acceptable according to their *kashrus* standards and others that it does not. *Kashrus* standards of 25 years ago simply do not apply today. The following is from article **Reading the Label** at <http://www.ok.org/v1/Content.asp?ID=232> “There was a time when label-reading was relied upon heavily. Today *kashrus* is much more complex, and we are more aware of the possible pitfalls involved in relying on a product's ingredient list. In addition, we are blessed to have thousands of products that are properly certified *kosher*. There is no longer any justification to rely on labels to determine *kashrus*.” Mr. Zweig mentions two butcher shops from the past that did not have a *Mashgiach*, and yet he claims were reliable. This may indeed have been true for these two butchers. However, I suggest he read Timothy Lytton's recent book **Kosher: Private Regulation in the Age of Industrial Food**. It is an eye opener regarding what went on in the “kosher” meat business in the past. In the first chapter of this book titled “The Failures of Kosher Meat Supervision, 1850-1940” Mr. Lytton writes in part “America's liberal, democratic, pluralistic, sprawling free market thus frustrated repeated efforts to establish centralized communal control over *kosher* meat production - especially in New York City - between 1850 and 1940. One might view this as a problem of wanting to have one's *kugel* and eat it too. Liberty and eco-

nomnic opportunity were two leading reasons why Jews immigrated to the United States, and yet they complained about the loss of centralized communal governance that accompanied these features of life in America. “For nearly a century, *kashrus* in America was plagued by anarchy that facilitated widespread fraud and corruption. That began to change only when nostalgia for centralized communal control was replaced by faith in a quintessentially American institution with the potential to provide reliable *kosher* certification: the private business enterprise operating in a competitive market.” Let's get rid of Rav Allah!

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Appreciates Shadchanim

Dear Mrs. Chana Rose,

I read your notice to the public about all the time and work that goes into arranging the technical details of a date; and how years ago, this was taken care of with a phone call from the boy to the girl. I agree with you that an enormous amount of your time is wasted with these arrangements - time that can be better spent making more *shidduchim*. I don't think we will go back to the days of personal phone calls between boys and girls, but I do have a suggestion that might help you and other *shadchanim*.

What you really need is a “secretary”. I don't mean that you should hire an official secretary, but perhaps you might have a friend, neighbor or relative who would really love to help out in the Shidduch scene, but does not have the “knack” for getting people to go out. Someone like that can help you out by making the back and forth calls necessary to arrange timing for each date. You can give them the necessary information, phone numbers etc, and this person can do the technical work, thereby freeing up your time to use your matchmaking talents.

Hatzlocho in your good work,
An Appreciative Yid

Introducing a New Initiative for the Jewish Orthodox Dating World

We all know how difficult and complicated Orthodox Dating can be. We are all aware of the many different opinions and thoughts of members of our community on what has become to be collectively known as “The Shidduch Crisis”. We see the issue discussed and debated in the letters to the editors of our Jewish papers as well as in the comments sections of our Jewish online news sites. We see the initiatives that have been created at the behest of our Gedolim in order to address this sensitive and important community issue. A little under two months ago I began my own initiative that has begun to gain traction and I would like to share it with you here. Although the project has a website component to it (www.justten.org) it is not a

dating site and I will explain exactly how it works below.

The concept is simple and intuitive to understand. First, singles sign up online by filling out a short straightforward form that gives them a space to tell me who they are and what type of person they are looking for in *shidduch*. Then, when there are 10 singles of each gender that are a basic match for each other, I organize an event and invite those matching singles to the event. So the event is made up exclusively of people that are a match for each other based on the information that they provided in the form. This provides singles with a way to meet a much larger pool of people and yet still feel comfortable knowing that it isn't just a random group of singles but rather a group that fits the basic criteria for what they are looking for in a *shidduch*. Singles will get invited to additional events when there is a new group of singles that matches what they are looking for. The events will be overseen by an older married adult that will act as the coordinator of the event. In addition, the event is kept to a maximum of ten people of each gender. This ensures that everyone gets a chance to meet everyone else. That in a nutshell is how the project works. Singles can sign up at www.justten.org. I don't pretend to think that this is a magical solution to getting everyone in our community married. However I do believe that this project enables singles to meet a larger pool of serious candidates in a manner that is more time efficient than going out on a larger amount of first dates. I also feel that this is a way to give singles a chance to meet people that they might otherwise never meet simply because they did not share any mutual connections. It also provides a way for singles to do their own *hishtadlus* and to not rely so heavily on the hope that someone else out there will take the time to set them up with someone. The project has seen an initial enthusiastic response and B”H I have already made two successful events with more currently being planned.

I feel that this project can grow to a scale much larger than it currently is. And this is where you come in. Any new product or project that is created usually has to pass through a stage in which the general public is not accepting of it and I'm sure this project will be no different. I'm sure that this article will cause discussions at the Shabbos table and letters to the editor. And that's ok. This project will gain traction and acceptance only if you help it do so. Our community is resistant to change and to new things because our Mesorah has taught us that change that isn't according to the way of our Torah is dangerous and something to be avoided. This policy has enabled and ensured our continuity since our beginning. However this *midah* has also prevented us from being able to join together to work on initiatives and new endeavors that are crucial for our community. Solving community issues needs to be a group effort. I feel strongly that this project can be a real help to our community. But it's not going to happen

without our collective participation. I am not asking you for your financial participation, although that would be really appreciated as well. Rather I'm asking you to put aside the part of you that is quick to be critical and judgmental. I'm asking you to come together to help facilitate a solution for all the singles out there that are hoping and praying desperately to find their one.

I hope I have been clear, and I will end by saying that I am open to any and all suggestions, comments and anything else that you might want to communicate to me. There is a form on the website that goes directly to my personal email. Feel free to use it.

Connecting to My Heritage

I had the wonderful opportunity of spending the evening in Brooklyn, experiencing the amazing Jewish community there. I meet every Wednesday night at a local Starbucks with several friends to discuss various events pertaining to Judaism. Simcha, the one who runs it, started the night by taking me and my two friends to a rabbi's house, where we discussed numerous topics, ranging from the importance of family to the purpose of *tefillin*. The rabbi showed us family artifacts that had been in his family's possession for generations. Among them were his grandfather's grandfather's grandfather's *tefillin* and a book of Talmud that was over 200 years old.

There were approximately 15 people there, so someone was always asking a question, keeping the discussion going. Although I consider myself to know a considerable amount about Judaism, compared to the average person at least, I found myself very enlightened. After learning with the *rabbi* and *davening mincha*, we headed off to have dinner with Rabbi Zucker, who comes to our school every Monday as part of JSU, the Jewish club at our school.

The food was amazing! We ate at Chap-A-Nosh, a *kosher* restaurant that specializes in Chinese and American cuisine. Most people, for some reason, automatically assume that *kosher* food is of lower quality or, at the very least, has a worse taste. Personally, I've always found that ironic, considering the fact that *kosher* food has more restrictions, making it healthier and, quite often, tastier. This time was no different. I had the beef Hawaiian delight, which might be the best dish I've ever tasted at a restaurant that sells Chinese food. Looking around at the table, I could tell that I wasn't the only enjoying his food.

The entire experience was superb. Whether it was when I was learning more about Judaism or when I was diving into a plate of scrumptious beef, I was constantly engaged in the situation. For a guy who comes from a family that really isn't that religious, yesterday was a great chance to connect to my heritage and learn as much as I could. I would do it again in a heartbeat, and I yearn for the chance to do so! My gratitude goes out to all those who made it possible.

Alex Evelson, Staten Island Tech HS