

ADDENDUM TO *CHALAV YISRAEL* IN AMERICA

TO THE EDITOR:

In the article “Kashrus Thrives in America” in the *Parashas Re’eh*/August 27 issue, Yitzchok Cohen writes: “In those years there were relatively few American Jews who were stringent in their kashrus observance, and there were hardly any farms that were willing to commit themselves to providing *chalav Yisrael*. After great effort, the Tzehlimer Rav succeeded in producing the first line of *chalav Yisrael* products in America. The line went by the name ‘Kahal,’ and all the strictly observant Jews in America knew that this was the only brand that was 100-percent kosher. The Kahal company later became the J&J Dairy Co.”

There is something more to the story of the production of *chalav Yisrael* in America. In 1882 Sholom Yitzchok (Isaac) and (Shifra) Rivka Raskas immigrated from Kovno, Lithuania, to St. Louis to join members of Mrs. Raskas’s family, the Sarasohns. They lived about ten blocks from the Mississippi River. Isaac started selling milk. After the turn of the century, the family moved to 1313 North Newstead, which at that time was still a semi-rural area on the western fringe of St. Louis, and began a small dairy that eventually developed into a large company.

The Raskases were sincerely committed Orthodox Jews. Pictures of their parents show that they both came from learned Litvishe families. They produced what was probably the first commercially available *chalav Yisrael* in America, long before the Tzehlimer Rav arrived here.

Furthermore, one should not overlook the role that Harav Dr. Yosef Breuer played in the production and distribution of *chalav Yisrael*. In *Rav Breuer: His Life and Legacy*, we are told, “Rav Breuer was in the forefront of the efforts to make *chalav Yisrael* milk products commercially available in the United States – a policy that was almost unheard of in America in the early 1940s.” A footnote to this statement adds, “The first commercially available *chalav Yisrael* in America, Balsam Farms, under the supervision of the Tzehlimer Rav, began production in the late 1930s. This milk was not available in Manhattan due to lack of demand. In 1940 Rav Breuer arranged for it to be sold in Washington Heights, and when Balsam could not keep up with the demand, made arrangements for supervision of what became known as Kahal Dairies. Later, J&J milk came under the Kehillah’s [KAJ’s] supervision.”

Thus, the Tzehlimer Rav first supervised Balsam milk, not Kahal milk, which came later. Also, it is clear from the information about Thank you for your letters and comments. We reserve the right to edit letters. Letters and emails should include your name, address, and daytime and evening phone numbers. See address on page 2.



the Raskas dairy that Balsam Farms was not the first commercially available *chalav Yisrael* in America.

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TIMELY TORAH TALK

TO THE EDITOR:

As always, thanks for your wonderful publication. I was thrilled to read “The Art of the Deal” in the Torah Thoughts column of the *Parashas Mattos*/July 23 issue.

Over a year ago, you printed an article that spoke of the introduction the Zera Shimshon, *zy”a*, wrote to his *sefer*. After a while I managed to get a copy of this beautiful and holy *sefer*. While I try to read from it every night *l’ilui nishmaso*, I must admit that in my limited capacity I usually do not understand the deep thoughts therein – until Rabbi Moshe Hubner wrote insights on the *parashah* based on the *sefer*. I was able to learn it that week with understanding.

The *yahrtzeit* of this *tzaddik* is 6 Elul. I thought that perhaps *Hamodia* might print another article based on the *Zera Shimshon*.

ANONYMOUS

RABBI HERTZ FRANKEL RESPONDS

TO THE EDITOR:

I would like to express personal thanks to Yitzchok Cohen for giving me his time in order to present a well-done interview in honor of the *yahrtzeit* of the Satmar Rebbe, *zt”l*. I am grateful to him for the opportunity to break the ice and talk to the media, for the first time ever, about my close affiliation with this great *tzaddik*.

I would also like to raise a point about the article in the *Parashas Shoftim*/September 3 issue on Harav Shraga Feivel Mendelowitz, *zt”l*. While discussing the topic of how the Satmar Rebbe, *zt”l*, related to Zionism, it seemed to me that there was an implication that the Rebbe had a temper. I would like to clarify that nothing could be further from the truth. Quite the contrary – he had a calm, composed, and unruffled manner about him and was one of the most serene personalities I’ve ever come across. But when it came to the issue of Zionism, he assumed a zealous stance and burned with fiery *kana’us*.

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