



The Lady Baltimore, where the kosher food mix-up took place

# Kashrut Fiasco On Boat Stirs Local Debate

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A recent Jewish fund-raising event at which participants were served and ate treife (non-kosher) food has produced a heated controversy within the Orthodox community.

The immediate issue is a Vaad Hachashrus policy regarding the certification of caterers who provide both kosher and non-kosher services. But the debate may also be a prelude to a power struggle between the Vaad Hachashrus, the locally based, nationally recognized kashrut supervising agency, and a number of local Orthodox rabbis and leaders who feel the Vaad may have too much clout.

The controversy began on June 28 during a fundraising boat trip on the Lady Baltimore in Baltimore's harbor on behalf of Camp Shalom, a Jewish day camp in Frederick. About 140 people were on board and were served what they thought was a kosher lunch. But it was discovered during the course of the meal that the food being served was not kosher and the guests, many of whom were Orthodox, obviously were upset at the mistake.

How did it happen? Camp Shalom had contracted the food through Oyvelea Caterers, a non-kosher firm that also operates Shalom Caterers, a kosher caterer, under the supervision of the Vaad Hachashrus. Although of-

ficials from both the camp and the caterer are reticent to discuss the matter, it seems that the mistake occurred when the camp thought it was booking Shalom and instead was served food prepared by Oyvelea.

Since the event, some in the Orthodox community have called for the reinstatement of a *taikhanah*, Hebrew for existing rule that had been in place in Baltimore for more than four decades prohibiting the kosher certification of anyone holding a major position in both a kosher and non-kosher catering establishment. The premise behind the *taikhanah* was to maintain high kashrut standards by avoiding the possibility of confusion over whether an event was kosher or not.

The Vaad Hachashrus, under the leadership of Rabbi Moshe Heineemann, made that *taikhanah* moot in 1963 when it agreed to allow Oyvelea to establish Shalom as a kosher division and provide kosher meals for a federally funded Eating Together program here.

A number of Orthodox rabbis at the time protested the Vaad decision. Prophetically, one rabbi told the Baltimore Jewish Times in 1961, "this decision could open a Pandora's box" by creating the possibility for errors and confusion regarding kosher catering.

The leaders of the Rabbinical Council reluctantly ap-

Jews are concerned most about caring for aging Jews and least about resettling Soviet Jews.

These ratings of issues were part of a survey of Baltimore Jewish Times subscribers done by Scarborough Associates of New York. The study, whose overall intent was to compile a profile of Baltimore Jewish Times readers, was commissioned by the Baltimore Jewish Times.

The survey asked respondents to rank the importance of issues on a one-to-seven scale. One represented an issue of most concern, seven, of least concern.

Of the 375 subscribers who responded to queries about specific issues, 26.4 percent rated caring for aging Jews as their topmost concern. Only 1.6 percent rated resettling Soviet Jews as the most important issue of concern to the Baltimore Jewish community. Soviet Jewry was considered "less important" by 46.7 percent of the respondents.

The aged Jewish population of Baltimore more than doubled from slightly over 6 percent in 1988 to 17 percent in 1995. Of the 20 Jewish communities in the nation that have commissioned demographic studies, Baltimore has the fifth highest proportion of elderly.

Leaders of several Jewish institutions were especially surprised at the low rating given the resettlement of Soviet Jews. One official at the Associated Jewish Charities said he would have to give further study to the survey's data, but that he still believes that resettling Jewish refugees — from any country — is a high priority of this city's Jews and of world Jewry.

Gail Kramer, director of immigrant rehabilitation services at Jewish Family Services, said that despite the low rating given resettling Soviet Jewry, the issue still elicits "great excitement." If she answered from a personal point of view, then I can

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