

'KOSHER' LABEL IN ADVERTISING**The Canadian Food Inspection Agency Guide to Food Labelling and Advertising**

reads as follows:

"In the labelling, packaging and advertising of a food, the Food and Drug Regulations prohibits the use of the word kosher or any letter of the Hebrew alphabet, or any other word, expression, depiction, sign, symbol, mark, device or other representation that indicates or that is likely to create an impression that the food is kosher, if the food does not meet the requirements of the Kashruth applicable to it.

The terms "kosher style" and "kind of kosher" are not allowed, unless they meet the requirements of the Kashruth. "Jewish-style food" or "Jewish cuisine" are not objected to, although the foods may not necessarily meet the requirements of the Kashruth.

Rationale: "Kosher style" is considered to create the impression that the food is kosher, and therefore the food must meet the requirements of the Kashruth. "Jewish style" food may not necessarily create this impression."

The CJN makes no representation as to the kashruth of food products in advertisements.

Labour Day: a Jewish holiday

Rabbi Aaron Levy

A recent front-page article in the *National Post* brought attention to the claim currently before the Ontario Labour Relations Board that the Kashruth Council of Canada hasn't been paying its mashgichim overtime, as mandated by provincial law. While COR disputes the charge, the case impels us to consider what Jewish law and values teach us about employer-employee relationships.

Of course, like all matters in Judaism, this is a complex and lengthy topic, so we'll just barely skim the surface of a few traditional texts in the space of this column (and we won't touch on the history of Jewish involvement in modern labour movements).

In the fourth of the Ten Commandments, just as Jews are bidden to observe Shabbat by refraining from work, so too are their employees "so that your male and female servant may rest as you do" (Deuteronomy 5:14). Every person, Jewish or not and regardless of socioeconomic status, must be given respite from work for one day each week, for we don't live to work, but rather work in order to live.

The Torah also forbids withholding the wages of a day labourer:

"You must pay him his wages on the same day, before the sun sets, for he is needy and his life depends on it" (Deuteronomy 24:15). The Babylonian Talmud further develops this law into the requirement that all employees must be paid on time and offers a bold interpretation of the biblical verse: "His life depends on it" – Anyone who withholds a labourer's wages is like one who takes his life from him" (Bava Metzia 112a).

Rabbinic Reflections

The Mishnah regulates working hours and benefits: "One who hires workers and tells them to start early or stay late, in a place where the custom is not to start early or stay late, the employer may not coerce them. In a place where the custom is to feed the workers – the employer must feed them, to provide sweets – the employer must provide sweets. Everything goes according to the custom of the land [*minhag hamedinah*]" (Bava Metzia 7:1). Prevailing norms of employment – even in seemingly trivial matters – must be upheld so that employers can't incrementally degrade work-

ing conditions and create a race to the bottom for their employees.

The talmudic dictum "dina d'malchuta dina" – "the law of the land is the law," means that secular law becomes enconced as Halachah (Jewish law). Contemporary labour laws – federal, provincial or municipal – certainly fall under this rubric, so adhering to them is, therefore, doubly mandated – by government and by Judaism.

Beyond the various Jewish laws regarding the treatment of employees,

the Talmud offers an anecdote that illustrates the broader value accorded to labour in Judaism. "Rabbi

Judah used to go into the beit midrash carrying a pitcher on his shoulders and would say: 'Great is work, for it honours the worker'" (Nedarim 49b).

As we approach Labour Day, let's each ensure that all our businesses, communal organizations and personal hires follow civil and Jewish employment law in both letter and spirit, and that we truly honour workers.

Rabbi Aaron Levy is founding director of Makom: Creative Downtown Judaism (MakomTO.org) and a board member of Rabbis for Human Rights-North America.

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Finding each other in Elul

The month of August signifies the midpoint of the summer, and that soon we will be entering the fall season. Everything around us is preparing for the changing circumstances in nature between summer and fall. Interestingly, this reflects what's happening in the Jewish calendar as well.

The end of the month of August is also the beginning of the Hebrew month of Elul. This is an important month in Judaism, since it signifies the last month before the High Holidays.

During the month of Elul, it's customary to blow the shofar on weekdays after Shacharit. It's also customary to assess our behaviour over the past year and seek out those people who deserve an apology from us.

In fact, the name of the month Elul in Aramaic means "search,"

which is certainly the prime activity of the month. We often think that it's about searching ourselves internally and honestly confronting who we have been.

It's about searching our hearts and searching our souls. In fact, Maimonides says that the shofar blast is to awaken us to begin the search.

Midrashic Moments

Rachel Turkienicz



But the sages of the Talmud add another interesting layer. According to the rabbis, God is never the problem. As a forgiving parent, God will and does grant us unconditional forgiveness. When we have done something wrong and we approach our parents with the apology, we will most often be forgiven. The problem occurs if we have hurt someone else.

As children, if we hit a sibling and go to our parent with the apology, the parent will correctly teach us that we must first apologize to our sibling for the hurt we caused. But then we must also apologize to our parents, because when we hurt a sibling we also hurt them. Parents suffer when their children suffer.

So the rabbis teach us in the midrash that the search of Elul is to seek and find those people whom we have hurt. We must approach the High Holidays having done our due diligence.

On several occasions, the sages have explained Yom Kippur this way: "Matters between you and God, who is everywhere, can be forgiven you. Matters between you and your fellow human beings will not be forgiven until you conciliate them."

While we search ourselves, we identify who we must seek out on Elul.

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