

PROFILES IN KASHRUS

Rabbi Zvi Fishbane



Rabbis Benzion Fishbane, Sholem Y. Fishbane, Zvi Fishbane, and Menachem Fishbane at the AKO Convention

After 50 years in the field of shechitah, first in St. Louis, then Denver, and finally based out of Chicago, Rabbi Zvi Fishbane is stepping down from his position as Rosh Hashochatim for the shechitah supervised by the cRc. In honor of the occasion, we asked Rabbi Fishbane to share some memories and reflections from his half-century in the field.

Rabbi Fishbane, can you please begin by sharing some of your personal history?

I was born and raised in Toronto, where I attended the local Jewish day school. Since there was no local *yeshiva* high school back then in Toronto, my parents sent me to Baltimore, where I attended Ner Israel. After graduating, I went to Eretz Yisrael, where I learned in the Mirrer Yeshiva until my engagement.

What attracted you to shechitah?

My grandfather was a *shochet*, so in retrospect, it was something that I had in me all along. But I actually entered the field when I was living in St. Louis and teaching in the local day school. Rabbi Menachem Eichenstein suggested that I learn *shechitah*, and I took his advice. With his assistance and guidance, I received *kabbalah*, certification to be a *shochet*.



Rabbi Zvi Fishbane with cRc staff studying various pieces of meat

I moved to Denver in 1970, where there was a large-scale kosher slaughterhouse at the time. While in Denver, I continued to refine my knowledge of *shechitah* from Rabbi Shlomo Twerski, with whom I merited to gain *shimush* and learn much practical *mesorah*. This was a great honor, as Rabbi Twerski had learned from the *shochet*, Rabbi Velvel Heller, who, in turn, was trusted by Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik of Brisk, the legendary author of the *Beis Halevi*.

When the meatpacking in Denver closed down, our family moved to Chicago, which was close enough for me to commute to several *shechitah* enterprises, including the abattoir in Aurora, Illinois.

What is the position of Rosh Hashochatim, and what does he do?

The *Rosh Hashochatim* is the team leader, responsible for recruiting the finest *shochatim*, each of whom is learned, proficient, and meticulous. He is responsible for making sure that the team is operating according to the highest *halachic* standards and that each person's work runs smoothly.

What changes have you seen over the past 50 years?

The most significant change is with the kosher consumer, who is educated in *halacha* and wants to have the highest standards. The producers of kosher products have answered that call, and *glatt*, which was once a rarity, has become standard.

Another major improvement is that virtually all meat is salted on site, instead of being sent to butchers and homemakers to salt on their own. This ensures that the salting is done in a timely manner, in the best possible way, with little room for surprises or accidents.

How has commercialization changed things for *shochatim*?

There was once a time when a *shochet* could live at home and go to work in the morning like everyone else. Today, many *shochatim* are away from home from Shabbos to Shabbos, *shechting* in remote locations, which is challenging. This is something any prospective *shochet* needs to consider. I was only able to do it due to the strength of my wife, who managed alone with the children during the week.



cRc *shechita* group examining duck *veshet* - esophagus - at the cRc; L-R Rabbis Dovid Oppenheimer, Yona Reiss, Dovid Cohen, Zvi Fishbane and Sholem Y. Fishbane

Having lived in Chicago for 45 years, you have seen a lot of change. How has our community evolved?

We have so many more beautiful organizations of *chesed*, as well as stellar *yeshivos* and *kollelim*, which have blossomed and continue to multiply. It's primarily thanks to the vibrant young families that choose to lay down roots here, becoming teachers and communal leaders and giving so much to our community.

For decades, you have led the team and set the standard for the cRc-supervised *shechita* in Aurora and elsewhere. What has been a highlight for you, working with the cRc?

For me personally, the most wonderful experience has been the weekly *chaburah* that I have been part of in recent years. On a weekly basis I merited to learn with the Av Beis Din and several cRc *rabbonim*, reviewing the laws of *shechita* and *bedikah* in depth. In addition to learning *Tur*, *Shulchan Aruch* and the commentaries, we've made trips to the

slaughterhouses and seen how the learning is applied.

I was glad to gain additional proficiency through learning with these great scholars, each of whom added so much, and to give over the *mesorah* (tradition) that I've received. These standards and practices that I have been taught are now recorded and will be incorporated in the cRc's policies for years to come.

How has your decades-long relationship with the cRc been?

From when we began *shechita* at Aurora in '84, the cRc leadership has represented us and our sensitivities in the best way possible. Beginning with Rabbi Israel Karno, zt"l, and continuing with Rabbi Gedalia Dov Schwartz, zt"l, we always knew that they had our interest and the interest of the kosher consumer forefront in their minds, bringing prestige to *shechita* and *kashrus*.

This beautiful relationship continues with Rabbi Yona Reiss, shlit"a, who treats all *shaalos* with gravity and provides appropriate *halachic* solutions to questions posed.

Of course, I've also had the pleasure of witnessing my son, Reb Sholem, become part of the cRc as Kashrus Administrator, and I watch with pride as he guides the institution – and *kashrus* as a whole – to new heights! ▲



L-R Rabbis Raanan Broderick, Sholem Y. Fishbane, Moshe Heinemann (Star-K), Zvi Fishbane, and Avi Bloch at a cRc *shechita* in Kansas