

REMEMBERING RABBI BENJAMIN SHANDALOV ז"ל

cRc Kashrus Administrator
from 1981-1996

by Rabbi Zev Shandalov

Obstinate, demanding, meticulous, Yekkish and tenacious. These are some of the words that have been used to describe my father, Rabbi Benjamin Shandalov, a"h, as far back as I can recall. In addition, humor, organizational skills, love for the Jewish People and for his family were also words that I recall for as far back as I can recall. While they may sound like two contradictory lists of words, believe me when I say that they integrated with each other beautifully.

Beginning in the summer of 1981, my father, a"h, entered the world of *kashrut*. He brought with him years of experience in communal organizations, such as Camp Moshava and Hebrew Theological College. Skills that he gained there were honed at the cRc almost from the moment he began as Kashruth Administrator. It was the qualities of his being punctilious about every single detail in everything that he did that quickly earned him a reputation that there was a "new sheriff" in town in the world of kosher.

He desired to see standards set in the cRc that all members of the community would be comfortable eating that which was under the cRc's aegis. Not to say that everyone was thrilled with his desire to raise *kashrut* to a much higher standard. He ran into various roadblocks along the way, but he refused to be stymied by them. Before long, hotels, manufacturers, stores and caterers understood he meant business. It was that mix of a good sense of humor and stick-to-it-iveness that earned him the respect of one seeking excellence in the world of kosher.

Without a doubt he had numerous individuals who helped him along the way, not the least of which were Rabbi Chaim Goldzweig, z"l and (yl"t) Rabbi Gedalia Dov Schwartz, shlit"a. Their counsel and advice proved to be of immeasurable help and gave him the backing he needed during both the early days and later on in his career.



In his desire to raise not only the standards of Chicago but those of the entire United States, he founded ACKO, precursor to AKO, the Association of Kashrus Organizations. This association began quite modestly with a few representatives of the *kashrut* world in attendance. It has since grown into a multi-day conference with hundreds in attendance from all over.

One of my favorite stories dates back to the mid-'70s when I was a *semichah* student at HTC. At that time, there were some rooms on the first floor that were reserved for senior students, and we eagerly looked forward to occupying them, mostly because they were wired with private phone lines, an important feature for young men in their early 20s.

Right before it was our turn to move in, the decision was made to repurpose those rooms for guest faculty. We were very disappointed, since it would mean that we would remain with the other college students, who shared payphones in a common area.

Together with a colleague, I approached Rabbi Shandalov and explained how much we wanted the privacy those rooms afforded and asked if we could have our rooms on the second floor fitted with phone lines.

Rabbi Shandalov listened and then said, "No. I'm not going to give just you older students phone lines. I'm going to call the phone company and have them put in phone lines for all the rooms occupied by college-age students," the bills for which we were responsible.

In a sense, that personified Rabbi Shandalov. He was fair, equitable, and always compassionate.

– As recalled by Rabbi Dr. Jerold Isenberg

Rabbi Shandalov was a significant part of Magrabar's history and it is truly sad news to all of us to learn of his loss. As our very first contact at cRc when Magrabar was establishing itself at our current location through to his continuing visits to us after his "retirement", he made every visit a pleasure and we will miss him. Our records still show his first visit to us – on 2/16/1984.

I also wanted to share this photograph. It is from 2008 when we provided him with his very own hard hat for his visits and I think is a good reflection of our memories of him. (See photo, previous page.)

– Colin J. Hoather, Magrabar

And while my dad made this mark and had such impact, he could never have done it without the backing of the Kashruth Division of the cRc under the able leadership of Rabbi Ben Dov Liebenstein. Along with Rabbi Liebenstein and the Kashrut Commission, he and all those present always sought (and continue to seek) to dedicate themselves to seeking the highest standards in the world of kosher food production.

It says in the first *perek* of *Tehillim*: "יִכְלֹא אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה יִצְלִיחַ" that he finds success in all he does. That thought truly encapsulates my father, a"h, in that whatever he set his mind to, he was, *Baruch Hashem*, not only successful but enabled others to benefit from that success.

His legacy in the world of *kashrut* and in the hearts and mind of his family and friends will live on forever. ▲



Rabbi Shandalov at Camp Moshava



Rabbi Benjamin Shandalov, Rabbinic Leadership Awardee at Hebrew Theological College 89th Annual Banquet, November 22, 2011

(Photo credit: Hebrew Theological College)

One of Rabbi Shandalov's first steps at the cRc was to change how *hashgachah* was done at a large Chicago hotel where many *simchos* were made. Up to that point, the level of *kashrus* was sub-par, and Rabbi Shandalov wrote them a letter demanding that they purchase a new oven, new hot boxes, new trays, etc. which would all be dedicated for kosher service. The hotel replied that it would cost \$40,000 and they had no money budgeted for such an expense. Rabbi Shandalov wasn't afraid of them – or anyone else – and told them that they should put that refusal into writing, and he would then rescind their *hashgachah* effective in 72 hours. They quickly responded that they figured out how to pay for it and would make the requested changes.

– Rabbi Moshe Katz, at the 2020 AKO Convention