

**KASHRUT AND HALAL –
SHARING OF SACRED FOOD AND NEW DIRECTIONS FOR
JEWISH-MUSLIM DIALOG IN POST 9/11 AMERICA**

by

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-Barack Hussein Obama

**PHI 352
Ethics of Kashrut
Rabbi Jill Hammer
May 2009**

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INTRODUCTION

“For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness. We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus, and nonbelievers. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth.”¹

-Barack Hussein Obama

In his inauguration address January 9, 2009 Barack Obama became the first American President to publicly name the diverse religious traditions comprising American life in the 21st century. Clearly, the religious face of (North) America is rapidly changing. While exact numbers are difficult to ascertain², today there are approximately 5 to 8 million Muslims in America. As the fastest growing of the world religions, across the globe and in the United States, it is likely that, over time, there will be more Muslims in America than Jews.³ Perhaps, we are moving towards the day when it will be more accurate to speak of Jews as being part of a tripartite American civil faith, with the idea of a ‘Judeo-Christian tradition’ replaced by values inherent in the ‘Abrahamic traditions’.⁴

Between changing demographics and the unstable politics of the Middle East, inter-relations between Muslims and Jews have become increasingly complex and volatile, charged with emotional reactivity and bias. Living in a post 9/11 world, there is an urgent need for communication, dialogue and deeper understanding between Muslims and Jews.

The intention of this paper is to explore an aspect of Jewish-Muslim relationship - the sharing of food - by examining *kashrut* in Judaism and *halal* in Islam. My goal is to articulate an ethic, an underlying approach to *kashrut* that can encourage conversation among Jews and between Jews and Muslims about ways to share sacred food that is both *halal* and kosher at the same time.

In the first part of this paper, I discuss development of *eco-kashrut* and its evolution into the contemporary *Hekhsher Tzedek* “movement”. Tracking this process over the course of three decades, I see an example of how a prophetic idea based on values of right relationship to earth and other human beings, can grow into fruition and manifestation. It is the promulgation of new attitudes towards an ethical *kashrut* that motivates my exploration of *halal* and *kashrut*. It also gives me a sense of hope that real societal change is possible.

Next I spell out the basis of a value of “deep ecumenism” as an antidote to the tribal particularism that has, at times, characterized Jewish life. It is an openness to and the sharing of mutual spiritualities that is needed to guide any attempt at creating a joint *halal-kashrut* enterprise. After looking at similarities and differences between *halal* and *kashrut*, in the final sections of this

paper, I explore ways sharing of sacred foods between Jews and Muslims. By way of conclusion, I propose the creation dual *Halal-Kosher* certification in restaurants and on food products.

FROM RENEWAL TO MAINSTREAM - ECO-KASHRUT AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE *MAGEN TZEDEK*

In the late 1970's Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi first coined the term "eco-kosher", defining *kashrut* more broadly as a way of measuring not only approaches to food, but speaking about "a broader sense of good everyday practice that draws on the wellspring of Jewish tradition and wisdom about the relationships between human beings and the earth."⁵ Bringing to bear an entirely new understanding of *kashrut*, Reb Zalman would often ask, "is energy from a nuke kosher?"

Over the next two decades, a number of streams of Jewish life have converged leading towards creation of a new ethic regarding *kashrut*. As a leading spokesperson of the renewal movement, Rabbi Arthur Waskow took Reb Zalman's visionary idea, and ran with it. Waskow began to write and speak on "eco-kashrut" and in 1988 published an article in *Tikkun Magazine* envisioning creation of a Commission on Ethical *Kashrut* which would give due consideration to such Jewish values as *oshek* - prohibition of oppressing workers; *tza'ar ba'alei hayyim* - respect for animals; *leshev ba'arets* - living with, and not ruining the earth; *shemirat haguf* - protection of one's own body; *tzedakah* - sharing of food with the poor; *rodef shalom* and *rodef tzedek* - obligation to pursue peace and justice; and *berakah* and *kedushah* - conscious eating with a sense of holiness and blessing.⁶ In 1990, Waskow convened the first of numerous conferences on the theme of *eco-kashrut*,⁷ inviting rabbis from all denominations. Throughout that decade, he continued teaching and writing advocating a new approach to *kashrut*, relevant not only to food, but applying a standard of ethics to all dimensions of Jewish life. Much of Waskow's vision of ethical *kashrut* is articulated in his 1995 book *Down-to-Earth Judaism - Food, Sex, Money and the Rest of Life*.⁸

Around the same time, a Jewish environmental movement, while not specifically focused on *kashrut*, began bringing into awareness issues of *bal tashchit*, environmental impact, sustainability, etc. ⁹ In the past decade as environmental concerns have entered mainstream American life, a "green synagogue" movement¹⁰; back to the earth Judaism; Jewish organic farming; Jewish vegetarianism¹¹; organizations like Hazon, which describes its mission as "creating healthier and more sustainable Jewish community - as a step towards a healthier and more sustainable world for all"¹²; and blogs such as "The Jew and the Carrot"¹³ have all become part of the American Jewish landscape. The climate has been ripe for a new earth-based, value-based ethic of *kashrut*.

But it was what transpired after the release of PETA's undercover video footage of Aaron Rubashkin's Iowa kosher slaughterhouse practices that catapulted Reb Zalman's *eco-kashrut* vision into the forefront of Jewish community life.¹⁴

In May 2006 an article in *The Forward* by Nathaniel Popper¹⁵ exposing abuses at Agriprocessors, Inc. meat-processing plant, brought into public view an awareness of unethical, illegal and

questionably *halakhic* practices at the country's largest kosher slaughterhouse. This unleashed in the American Jewish community a tumultuous process of studious re-evaluation of the deeper meaning and implications of *kashrut*. Over the past three years all denominations - but especially the Conservative and Reform movements, which comprise over 50% of the affiliated Jewish community - have begun thinking about *kashrut* in a broader sense, encompassing both ethical and *halakhic* standards in determining what constitutes kosher. In the wake of the Agriprocessors scandal "ethical *kashrut*" with regard to food¹⁶ has entered the mainstream.¹⁷

As a *halakhically*-based approach to Jewish life, in late 2006 the Conservative movement appointed a joint commission from the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism to evaluate AgriProcessors and other kosher meat packing plants "to learn about working conditions at the plant, and to establish next steps, if needed, to help ensure worker dignity, safety and rights, within the context of Jewish law, values and tradition."¹⁸ Out of this initial inquiry "The *Hekhsher Tzedek* Commission" was formed under the direction of Project Manager Rabbi Morris Allen to develop a proposal for creation of what was originally referred to as a *tsedek hekhsher*, "a certification that the manufacturer has met a set of standards that determine the social responsibility of kosher food producers, particularly in the area of worker rights."¹⁹

The document the Commission produced in early 2008, *Hekhsher Tzedek Al Pi Din*, is a testament to the ongoing viability and dynamism of the *halakhic* process. The Commission identified a number of areas of inquiry - wages and benefits; employee health and safety; product development policies; animal welfare; environmental impact: and corporate transparency and integrity²⁰. Taking study of traditional texts very seriously, the Commission then evaluated a wide pastiche of Biblical, Rabbinic and medieval sources related to these various issues, aspiring to highlight values of righteousness, social responsibility and integrity in business practices as a basis for ethical *kashrut*.

In addition to the *Hekhsher Tzedek Al Pi Din* document rationalizing issues of ethical *kashrut* in traditional sources, the Commission also created Policy Statement and Working Guidelines²¹ for implementing a process of evaluating *kashrut* based upon ethical standards, giving consideration to all those areas of inquiry mentioned above.

After the *Hekhsher Tzedek* Commission documents were released, both clergy and laity, the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, approved the entire proposal of the *Hekhsher Tzedek* Commission. The rapidity of the approval process is itself significant, highlighting the priority ethical *kashrut* has assumed in the American Jewish community.

But this is only the beginning and not the end of the story.

In April 2009 an organization entitled "*Magen Tzedek*" was formed, described as "the new ethical certification seal that will be introduced to the kosher food industry in the coming months".²²

Now, *eco-kashrut* is about to enter the food chain, with a symbol of certification that will not replace traditional *hekhsher* certification, but augment it. As the *Magen Tzedek* website indicates:



The Magen Tzedek seal will be awarded to kosher food companies based on a number of criteria having to do with such matters as employee health, safety and training; wages and benefits; the company's environmental impact; corporate transparency, and product development.²³

In response to what was a communal crisis in the *kashrut* industry, the process has moved from i) Rabbinic study and approval by national organizations; ii) to the beginnings of wider communal education; iii) development of an organizational process for evaluation of ethical *kashrut* standards; iv) and ultimately, towards marketing and transformation of business practices.

Undeniably, the *eco-kashrut* idea once envisioned by Reb Zalman has now become viably embodied in the *Hekhsher Tzedek* movement, and (at least for the time being) symbolized in the *Magen Tzedek* "seal of approval". No doubt this will affect the nature of *kashrut* certification, organizational set-up, business practices of the food industry, marketing and sales of kosher foods.

Observing all of this from the standpoint of the history of religions, this is actually a unique and fascinating phenomenon. In very little time, a community consensus has developed (at least among non-Orthodox Jews), that a traditional Jewish value of *kashrut* needs to be re-envisioned based upon emerging environmental and food consciousness values of the late 20th and early 21st century. It is obviously happening. This is a very dynamic situation and no doubt there will be progressive changes in the coming years.

FROM TRIBAL PARTICULARISM TO DEEP ECUMENISM: A NEW ETHIC FOR JEWISH-MUSLIM RELATIONS

Developments in the *eco-kashrut* movement illustrate clearly how in our age even mainstream religion is being re-formatted so as to be in alignment with religious and spiritual values that support the well-being of the planet. However, in addition to concerns with quality of food, labor relations, animal rights, environmental impact and integrity in business, there are other pressing questions of our age, other ethical issues that have not been addressed by the *Hekhsher Tzedek* Commission.

In particular the whole question of *kashrut* and inter-religious understanding is potentially problematic and requires a new ethic, a transvaluation in the words of Mordechai Kaplan. In order to deal with major religious conflicts of the 21st century, we have to move beyond the old paradigm of Jewish xenophobia that often found expression in *kashrut* practices.

As part of a long-standing strategy to guard against assimilation, non-Jewish wine, oil, bread, and cooked foods were all declared off-limits for the Jew. To be a Jew meant to remain separate from other peoples and religions. For example, *Mishna Avoda Zara 2:6* speaks of how bread baked by a non-Jew - *Pat akum* - is specifically prohibited for Jews to eat. *Avoda Zara 35b* explains that the purpose of this *halakha* is designed to limit social interaction with Christians, intentionally reducing the risk of intermarriage. “*Why should the Sages have thought fit to prohibit it? As a safeguard against intermarriages!*” Tractate *Shabbat 17b* speaks of this decree as being one of the eighteen decrees issued by Hillel and Shammai, considered to be quite stringent and difficult, if not impossible, to rescind.²⁴

While this does not explain all the reasons for *kashrut* practices, it does highlight at least one of the functions *kashrut* practices served through the ages. Given the legacy of persecution, it made sense that dietary laws were used to limit social interaction between Jews and non-Jews. But is this necessary or even relevant today, especially in America where, given the inter-marriage rate of over 50%,²⁵ the emerging Jewish community is already multi-ethnic, and diversely religious?

I am not advocating elimination of *kashrut* practices, as did the early Reformers.²⁶ However, I am clear that Jewish tribal particularism, based upon restrictive food practices is certainly not what is needed to enhance inter-cultural cooperation in our times.

We need a new ethic for living in a global society to help us think about *kashrut* and the sharing of food in an inter-religious context. For inspiration, I look to teachings of Mathew Fox and his understanding of what has been termed “Deep Ecumenism”. Deep ecumenism is the opposite of tribal xenophobia and religious fundamentalism. It is an attitude towards inter-religious understanding that assumes divine wisdom has manifested over time in all cultures, all religions. Using the image of an ever-flowing underground river, Fox writes:

There is one underground river—but there are many wells into that river: an African well, a Taoist well, a Buddhist well, a Jewish well, a Muslim well, a goddess well, a Christian well, and aboriginal wells. Many wells but one river. To go down a well is to practice a tradition but we would make a grave mistake (an idolatrous one) if we confused the well itself with the flowing waters of the underground river. Many wells, one river. That is deep ecumenism.²⁷

Deep ecumenism emphasizes the shared truths rather than differences between religions. While uniqueness and cultural particularities are not ignored or under-valued, deep ecumenism seeks to highlight the spirituality that human beings of different religions and cultures can share; in Reb Zalman’s language, the shared God-field. Deep ecumenism recognizes that as human beings, souls in evolution, we are all part of a shared planet, a living organism. And at this critical juncture in human history we need each other for the healing of our planet. In a sense of our survival depends upon it.²⁸

Approaching *kashrut* from this point of view, I begin with the assumption that Judaism and Islam both share beliefs about and sacred practices related to food preparation and eating. From the perspective of deep ecumenism the question I ask here is: how can we use food and the sharing of food as a way of healing inter-relationships with Muslims? Judaism and Islam have a lot in common. Jews and Muslims are both “People of the Book” and as a result there is somewhat of a common mythic history. Arabic and Hebrew are similar, and in the sense that Judaism is a Middle Eastern religion, (rather than an Eastern European one) there are similarities of cultural styles, certainly between Sephardic Jews and Muslims. And more than any two other religions, Judaism and Islam both share a set of values and practices about dietary laws and the sacred preparation of food.

There are numerous similarities between *halal* and *kashrut*. By exploring both the similarities and differences between Jewish and Muslim food practices, as we shall do below, we can begin to see where and how we might be able to share food with Muslims.

KASHRUT AND HALAL: WAYS OF SANCTIFYING FOOD

Observance of dietary laws has a primary place in the traditional practices of both Jews and Muslims. For Jews, foods and drink acceptable for consumption are kosher, *kasher*, **raf** (Esth. 8:5) meaning “proper”. Laws of *kashrut* are originally found in Torah, and elaborated upon and clarified in Rabbinic, medieval and later *halakha*.

In very broad terms, laws of *kashrut* focus on clean and unclean animals, fish and fowl (Deut. 14:3-10); methods of ritualistic slaughter, known as *shechita*, and the removal of blood (Deut. 12:21-25); separation of meat and milk (Ex. 23:19; 34:26; Deut. 14:21); as well as dealing with preparation of food, including plant products; in addition there is a set of special kosher laws for Passover. Food deemed unclean for consumption is known as *treifah*, which literally means torn or mortally wounded. According to Exodus 22:30: “Do not eat meat from an animal torn (*treifah*) in the field.” Originally, *treifah* was one of numerous categories of non-kosher meat; however, it has come to be used in a more comprehensive as non-kosher, ritually unfit foods.²⁹

For Muslims, foods acceptable to eat, understood as good and wholesome foods, are referred to as *halal*³⁰, legally permissible, from the Arabic word “*halla*”, to undo, free, be permissible. The foundation for Muslim dietary practices is found in *Qur’an*, and in the *Sunna*, the practices of the Prophet Muhammad, as delineated in the *Hadiths*, and subsequently developed in later Islamic law, known as *shari’a*.³¹

In very broad terms, *halal* laws focus on forbidden and acceptable animals; methods of slaughter and blessing of animals; and the process of removal of blood. All of these relate to the animal kingdom, and *dhabiah* is the term used to describe the prescribed method of ritual slaughter. One further aspect of *halal* laws focuses on prohibition of alcohol and other intoxicants. Foods not considered *halal* are known as *haraam*, an Arabic term meaning “forbidden”. In addition to being

a description of impure, forbidden food, *haram* is also used to categorize certain types of illicit behaviors.³²

Central to Islam, and hence to the laws of *halal* is a belief that Muslims are enjoined to follow divine orders: “O ye who believe! Eat of the good things wherewith we have provided you, and render thanks to Allah if it is He whom ye worship” (Qur’an 2:172). The term that appears frequently in Qur’an is *Halal-un-Tayyaban*, that which is “permitted, and good or wholesome”. Thus we find: “O, Mankind! Eat of that which is Lawful and Wholesome in the earth...” (Qur’an 2:168); “Eat of the good things. We have provided for your sustenance, but commit no excess therein” (Qur’an 20:81).

Both Judaism and Islam promulgate an extensive legalistic-based approach to food preparation. Harold Kushner, speaks of *mitzvah* as a sacred deed, as a way of taking an ordinary act and making it extraordinary, holy, imbued with a sense of God’s presence.³³ Through the observance of laws of *kashrut*, the ordinary human act of eating food is made extraordinary, sanctified. For Islam, underlying the traditions of *halal* is emphasis on bringing a sense of purity and cleanliness to the preparation and eating of food. Although these are slightly differing perspectives, both religions seek to transform one of the most basic human acts, eating of food, into a profound sense of encounter with the sacred. *Halal* and *kashrut* are comparable, albeit notably different, systems for sacralizing the human encounter with food.

KASHRUT AND HALAL: SIMILARITIES AS FOUND IN THE SACRED TEXTS

From the perspective of deep ecumenism, we want to first explore the shared field of sacred food traditions found in Judaism and Islam. Below is a collage of texts highlighting points of similarity in the foundational sacred scriptures upon which the systems of *kashrut* and *halal* are based.³⁴

ACCEPTABLE AND UNACCEPTABLE ANIMALS:

And the Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying to them, Speak to the people of Israel, saying, These are the beasts which you shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth. What ever parts the hoof, and is cloven footed, and chews the cud, among the beasts, that shall you eat. Nevertheless these shall you not eat of those that chew the cud, or of those that divide the hoof. (Lev. 11:1-4)

O ye who believe! fulfill (all) obligations. Lawful unto you (for food) are all cattle four-footed animals, with the exceptions named: But animals of the chase are forbidden while ye are in the sacred precincts or in pilgrim garb: for Allah doth command according to His will and plan. (Qur’an 5:1)

MARINE LIFE:

These shall you eat of all that are in the waters; whatever has fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, those shall you eat. And all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of any living thing which is in the waters, they shall be an abomination to you; (Lev. 11:10-11)

MARINE LIFE (CONT'D):

Lawful to you is the pursuit of water-game and its use for food,- for the benefit of yourselves and those who travel. (Qur'an 5:96)

PROHIBITION - DEAD ANIMALS:

You shall not eat of any thing that dies of itself; you shall give it to the stranger that is in your gates, that he may eat it; or you may sell it to a foreigner; for you are a holy people to the Lord your God. (Deut. 14:21)

Forbidden to you (as food) are dead animals (Qur'an 5:4).

PROHIBITION - SWINE:

And the swine, though its hoof is parted, and is cloven footed, yet it chews not the cud; it is unclean to you. (Lev. 11:7)

He has only forbidden you... the flesh of the swine. (Qur'an 16:115)

PROHIBITION - BIRDS OF PREY OR SCAVENGERS:

Of all clean birds you shall eat. But these are they of which you shall not eat; the eagle, and the vulture, and the osprey, And the kite, and the hawk, after their kind, And every raven after its kind, And the owl, and the kestrel, and the gull, and the hawk after its kind, The little owl, and the great owl, and the barn owl, And the night prowler, and the gier-eagle, and the fish owl, And the stork, and the heron after its kind, and the hoopoe, and the bat. (Deut. 14:11-18)

... someone in ihram [sacred state a Muslim must enter to perform major or minor pilgrimage] should not kill any predatory birds.. (Sayings of Prophet: Malik's Muwatta, Book 20)

PROHIBITION - BLOOD:

And whoever there is of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn among you, who eats any kind of blood; I will set my face against that soul who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul. Therefore I said to the people of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, nor shall any stranger who sojourns among you eat blood. (Lev. 17:10-14)

Forbidden to you (for food)blood (Qur'an 5:3)

Although our survey is by no means exhaustive, these texts demonstrate a commonality of tradition in Torah and Qur'an regarding permissible and prohibited foods. Through interpretation and elucidation of these texts Jews and Muslims developed comparable systems of dietary laws, ritual slaughter of livestock, guidelines for food preparation.

KASHRUT AND HALAL: DIFFERENCES AND CHALLENGES

In spite of the similarities, we have not yet demonstrated that traditional Jews and traditional Muslims can, in reality, share their sanctified foods with one another. The goals of "deep

ecumenism” not withstanding, it turns out, there are significant and perhaps unbridgeable differences between *kashrut* and *halal*, at least with regard to the eating of animal products.

Are *kashrut* and *halal* the same? It depends upon whom one asks. According to *Qu’ran* 5:5: “*The food of those who have been brought the Scripture is lawful for you.*” In other words, it’s okay for Muslims to eat food of other Peoples of the Book - Christians and Jews. Based upon this passage, many Muslims in America frequently assume Jewish kosher food standards to be acceptable as *halal*. While not the case universally, it tends to be so among liberal Muslims today. Dr. Khalid Blankinship, a Muslim colleague of mine in the Religion Department of Temple University, informed me that he patronizes and comfortably eats food from the same Glatt Kosher deli at a local Acme where I myself shop on occasion.³⁵

However, though kosher meat can often satisfy *halal* standards, it is not the case in reverse. There are a variety of differences between the two systems, and for reasons delineated below the laws of *kashrut* do have a greater complexity to them:³⁶

MEAT

Halal requires that an animal have split hooves. *Kashrut* is stricter, requiring mammals both chew their cud and have split hooves. Hence, meat from a camel is *halal* but certainly not kosher. Additionally, *kashrut* law prohibits eating the sciatica nerve of animals, hence the hindquarters of otherwise kosher livestock are not eaten. This is not prohibited according to *halal*.

SEPARATION OF MEAT AND DAIRY

Kashrut prohibits preparation and eating meat and dairy products together. This necessitates separate meat and dairy dishes in preparing and serving kosher food. *Halal* does not have any such restrictions.

FISH

Kashrut prohibits all forms of shellfish; some but not all Muslims will eat shellfish.

INSECTS

Kashrut law prohibits eating of any types of insects. According to Islamic practice, all insects are forbidden except locusts.

In addition, there are ways *kashrut* practices do not conform to Islamic *halal* standards:

SLAUGHTER PRACTICES

Halal practice requires saying the name of Allah prior to slaughtering an animal. *Kashrut* law does not require a prayer for each individual animal slaughtered.

ALCOHOL

Alcohol, even in miniscule quantities, is prohibited in *halal* foods. *Kashrut* allows alcohol, as long as it has no non-kosher ingredients.

This list is not in any way exhaustive. However, it clearly highlights the gap that has to be bridged around sacred food in order for observant Jews and Muslims to be able to share holy meals with one another. To cross that bridge from tribal particularism towards a global spirituality, deep ecumenism invites us to look ways in which Jews and Muslims can, and have in the past and present been able to share food together.

FROM THE TEXTS TO THE TABLE: JEWS AND MUSLIMS SHARING FOOD AND FOOD CONCERNS

Now, in the spirit of deep ecumenism I will look a number of instances in which Jews and Muslims have been able to share food together, and point to areas in which future creative collaboration can take place. I offer this as “an imagistic collage” of opportunities and possibilities for Jewish-Muslim sharing of food, and inter-religious healing.

THE GOLDEN AGE OF SPANISH JEWRY

First, let us imagine traveling in time to Spain in the 9th-11th centuries, to the era referred to as the Golden Age of Spanish Jewry. In Moorish Spain, under Islamic rule, Jews and Muslims got along famously, producing an era of tolerance, cooperation and an inter-cultural flourishing in the arts, literature, philosophy, science, economics, and more.³⁷

We can imagine that repeatedly during this time, Jews and Muslims had opportunities to share food. How did they do so? What creative and respectful approaches were used to bridge the differences between their respective food traditions? According to David Friedenreich, a scholar of Jewish, Christian and Muslim food practices, generally Muslim authorities of the Middle Ages accepted all Jewish food (except, of course, foods containing alcohol) as permissible for Muslim consumption. And in the Jewish world “Maimonides (Responsum 269, Blau 515-16) states that “the Sages of the West” would quickly mix honey into their wine when Christians and Muslims approached so that they could all drink together, implying that such commensal interaction was not unusual in Spain.”³⁸ No doubt there is a richness of wisdom to mined from a study of food practices between Muslims, Christians and Jews during this period of history.

Above all, the point here is that we do have historical precedents for Jews and Muslims finding creative ways to build bridges and not walls between each other in the realm of sharing of food. And it behooves us to investigate the practices of this era more fully as a potential paradigm for dealing with *halal* and *kashrut* concerns in our times.

THE JERUSALEM STEAKHOUSE, MONTREAL, QUEBEC C. 2005

Haaretz newspaper reported a fascinating story of a devout Israeli Jew and a devout Palestinian Muslim who went into business together running a restaurant serving *halal* and kosher food. Sassi Haba, a right-wing Likudnik, and Musayid Amla a Palestinian from Beit Ula, near Hebron, met face-to-face for the first time at an Israeli roadblock near Jerusalem. Amla, on his way from Ramallah to Jerusalem, was being harassed by an Israeli soldier unwilling to let him pass through the roadblock. A

shouting match ensued, and Haba, who was standing nearby decided to intervene. Speaking in Arabic, Haba was able to calm Amla down, respectfully saying to him: “Everything is okay, you can go through.” Touched by the unexpected courtesy of a soldier in Israeli uniform, Amla quickly asked Haba for his phone number, figuring it was a good idea to have the number of an Israeli soldier who speaks Arabic.

Three months later Amla, the Palestinian Muslim called Sasi Haba, whose family owned a restaurant in Mahaneh Yehuda market in Jerusalem, and arranged for the two of them to meet, and eventually suggested to Haba that he join him in moving to Montreal, Canada and opening up a restaurant.

What’s amazing about this story is that they did just that. According to another article in a local Montreal news service, dated July 15, 2005, Musayid Amla and Sasi Haba co-own and co-operate the Jerusalem Steak House, a Middle Eastern restaurant in Mile-End, a unique multi-ethnic neighborhood of Montreal.³⁹

According to the article in *Haaretz*:

In order to maintain a proper partnership, they make a point of maintaining reciprocity. The meat is slaughtered especially for them so that it will be defined both as kosher for the Jewish patrons of the restaurant and as halal for the Muslims. In return for the agreement of the traditionally observant Haba to open the restaurant on Saturday, the Muslim Amla agreed to sell alcohol on the premises. On Passover they served matzas and the everyday practice is to play Arab music.⁴⁰

Reading the story of this restaurant, in a beloved neighborhood in my hometown of Montreal, I enthusiastically tried to contact the owners to find out more about their joint adventure. Unfortunately, the phone number I had was no longer associated with the restaurant. I did have email communication with the Montreal journalist who wrote the story; Bill Brownstein informed me “the restaurant is no longer in operation. But not due to internal bickering, rather they had landlord issues.”⁴¹

I was get excited about the thought of being in Montreal, eating kosher *shwarma*, while listening to Arab music and drinking Turkish coffee in the neighborhood that spawned the Montreal bagel, and the creative genius of Irving Layton, Leonard Cohen, and Mordechai Richler, author of the coming of age story “The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz”, the movie that begin Richard Dreyfus’ career over thirty-five years ago. But I guess not.

But I am inspired by this story. It evokes an image of deep healing between Muslims and Jews. If Musayid Amla and Sasi Haba can co-create a kosher-*halal* restaurant, with some modifications, this experiment can be replicated elsewhere. And, in fact, it is being replicated elsewhere.

WILDER DINING HALL, MOUNT HOLYOAK COLLEGE, 2001

During the summer of 2001, Wilder Dining Hall on Mount Holyoke College, in South Hately, MA was being re-furbished and prepared as the first kosher-*halal* dining facility at an American College campus. With tedious detail-oriented research and planning, the dairy and meat kitchen was set up, to provide for the dietary needs of observant Jews and Muslims. With a profound sense of irony, the official opening took place September 13, 2001, two days after the Sept. 11 terror attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

According to Rene Kroll, Union Manager at Mount Holyoke College, there continue to be challenges in working with the Jewish and Muslim students and faculty.⁴² But the Wilder kosher-*halal* Dining Hall has operated successfully for the past eight years, with every product served acceptable under the dietary rules of Torah and *halakha*, *Qu'ran* and *shari'a*.

The Wilder Dining Hall has become a model for other college campuses. With the growth and integration of the Muslim population in American society, a trend may well be in the making. In recent years Brown University and Dartmouth College have likewise established *halal*/Kosher dining facilities for students and faculty. With some conscious effort and planning, Jewish and Muslim, and other students are able to share time and conversation together, eating food that is both kosher and *halal*. *Hinei ma tov, u mah nayim, shevet achim gam yachad*.

HALAL-KOSHER LABELING LAW, VIRGINIA, 2006

Did you hear the one about the Chabad Rabbi, the Muslim *Imam* and the Governor? No it's not a joke - it's a true story! On October 16, 2006 Governor Tim Kaine, of Virginia, in the presence of Jewish and Muslims religious leaders, signed into law the first joint kosher-*halal* labeling law in the United States. Through the lobbying efforts of Chabad Lubavitch of Northern Virginia, in collaboration with the Muslim community, legislation was created to guarantee "that any food offered as sale for kosher or *halal* be labeled with the name of the person or organization certifying the item kosher or *halal*."⁴³



Governor Tim Kaine signs the halal-kosher law, surrounded with communal leaders.

This legislation is part of an ongoing process to guarantee consumer protection and quality control in labeling of *kashrut* and *halal* items. Similar lobbying has taken place in New Jersey and New York. What is significant here is that both the Jewish and Muslim communities have worked together. The possibility exists for continued collaboration in this area.

Sales and marketing of both *halal* and kosher products is continuing to grow significantly. A 2001 statistic indicated annual kosher sales of between \$3-5 billion dollars.⁴⁴ However, in 2008 Lubicom Marketing, which runs the annual Kosherfest in Manhattan, reported an explosive growth in the kosher food industry, estimating an annual \$10 billion sales of kosher foods.⁴⁵

With regard to *halal* foods, even though most of the 6-8 million Muslims in America observe *halal*, there has not been much of a concerted effort within the food industry to market to this consumer group. There are *halal* and ethnic grocers found in major metropolitan areas, but *halal* certification and marketing is not as developed as the *kashrut* marketing industry. However, the Muslim community is looking at the ways in which the Jewish community has developed *kashrut* standards and marketing over the past decades, and national and international organizations involved in certification of *halal* foods, are emerging.

I spoke with Dr. Farhat Quadri, Director of Community Service of IFINCA - Islamic Food and Nutrition Council, whose logo is a Crescent M - . Much of the work of this *halal* certification agency is focused on export to Muslim countries in Asia, notably Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. However, Dr. Quadri reported that he is also working with American companies for marketing of *halal* products in the United States, and Canada. There are national companies, like Tom's of Maine, Cabot Cheese, and Abbot Laboratories that are beginning to market within the American Muslim community.⁴⁶

I maintain that this is an entirely open area for future exploration and business negotiations with the Muslim community. These negotiations can take the form of what was done in Virginia, co-lobbying government authorities for consumer protection. But there can also be lobbying and negotiation within industry, leading towards a possible joint or co-certification process of *kashrut* and *halal* products.

For example, in New Zealand, a company called The Village Press is marketing "Kosher and Halal Certified Olive Oil". Similarly I was able to find online other food products advertising both *halal* and kosher certification, and images of these products appear on the following pages.

HALAL AND KOSHER CERTIFICATION



Kosher & Halal Certified olive oil

The Village Press is pleased to advise you that both Kosher and Halal Certification was approved for The Village Press Olive Oils.

The certification process has been attended to over the past few months - culminating in visits from the Rabbi and Halal certifying personnel to our Olive Pressing Facility with Kosher and Halal certification being approved.

Whilst this certification is important (and hopefully appealing) to the communities of the World, we believe it also reinforces and emphasizes the attention to good quality processing and management systems in place and being adhered to at The Village Press.

The Village Press sources its Olives from two of New Zealand's premium Olive and Grape growing regions - Hawke's Bay & Marlborough, so with excellent Olive Fruit, a range of varieties, efficient and effective processing facilities and attention to detail at every step of the Olive Oil processing system, we are very proud of the excellent and unique taste sensations from The Village Press Olive Oils.

In addition to our Extra Virgin Olive Oil range, we can also provide Olive Tapenade, Olive Pesto and a range of infused Olive Oils (Olive Oil & Dill, Olive Oil & Lime).

The Village Press Olive Oil range includes the following product types:

- o 250ml Glass Bottles (with stelvin cap with insert pourer)
- o 500ml Glass Bottles (with stelvin cap with insert pourer)
- o 1, 2 & 4 litre BagnBox
- o 15ml miniature plastic bottles - specifically manufactured for the Airline & Hospitality Industries.

We would be glad to receive any enquiries for our products and how we may be able to supply your requirements for Olive related products.

Kosher & Halal Certification

Airline Industries

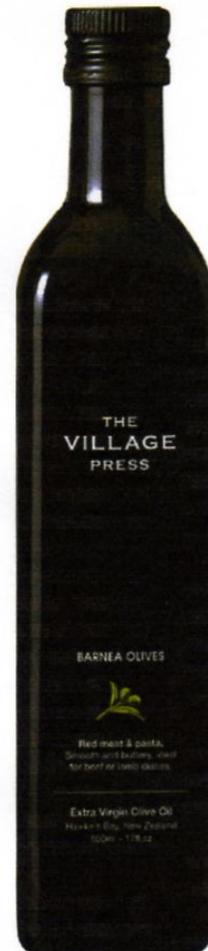
The Village Press & Peta Mathias

Become a Distributor

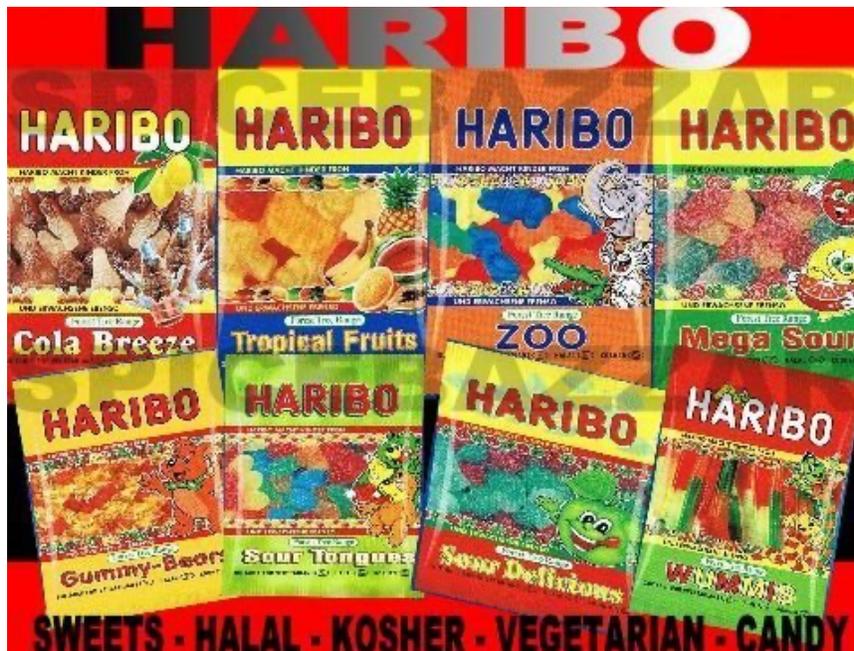
Bulk Olive Oil Orders

Kosher Certified

Halal Certified



HALAL AND KOSHER CERTIFICATION



http://cgi.ebay.co.uk/1-PACK-OF-HARIBO-SWEETS-HALAL-ISLAMIC-KOSHER-VEGETARIAN_W00QitemZ170326320843QQcmdZViewItemQQimsxZ20090429?IMSfp=TL090429123001r1764
HALAL AND KASHRUT - DUAL CERTIFICATION? JOINT CERTIFICATION?

It took over thirty years from when Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi first began speaking of *eco-kashrut*, until the formation of *Magen Tzedek* as an organizational context for evaluating ethics in *kashrut*.

Over thirty years ago I would often hear Reb Zalman ask why it was that Jews and Muslims could not stand together in peaceful prayer at Hebron and acknowledge that Father Abraham, *Ibrahim* was father to both Jews and Muslims. I don't know if this will ever happen, and yet the hope that perhaps Jews and Muslims can make peace in the Holy Land, and throughout the world has motivated me to take on this research topic. As a step in that direction, and by way of conclusion, I advocate the following:

HALAL-KOSHER EDUCATION

There is a complexity in many of the details of laws of *kashrut* and *halal*. These need to be examined in great details, through study groups of interested parties, from the standpoint of deep ecumenism, looking for ways in which effective collaboration can take place.

DUAL HALAL-KOSHER CERTIFICATION

In the realm of industry and food marketing, there can be developments in advocating for products to have both kosher and *halal* certification. This will require collaborative work between organizations in the Jewish community and in the Muslim community. I believe the initial work of *Hekhsher Tzedek* will pave the way for more open dialog with other Muslim groups as the Muslim community begins also to take on issues of ethics in the slaughter of animals.

JOINT HALAL-KOSHER CERTIFICATION

I would hope to see the day when there can be a joint *Halal-Kosher* certification, **HK**. I recognize there are all kinds of religious, political and organizational hurdles to cross to get to this place. But it can begin small scale, even at a local level. Most likely it will need to be a product certification that does not include meat. I think an ethic of vegetarianism and care for the earth, as well as an embrace of a deep ecumenism is the model to underlie creation of joint *Halal-Kosher* certification **HK**.

HALAL-KOSHER RESTAURANTS

I would also hope to see the kind of restaurants that were created in Montreal, and that exist on college campuses, restaurants that have a creative way of navigating through the complexities of Muslim and Jewish food laws, in search of a higher ethic of collaboration and sharing. Personally, I think vegetarian and fish restaurants will be the way to go. But that is for another research paper.

Finally, realizing this continues to be a work in progress, to end, I offer a mythic, Midrashic image to inspire the sharing of food between Jews and Muslims.

JACOB'S STEW - A VISION OF SHARING OF FOOD BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND JEWS

The Book of Genesis speaks of the death of the Patriarch Abraham, whom Muslims refer to as Ibrahim, father of Isaac and Ishmael. After breathing his last at a good old age (Gen. 25:8), Torah describes how “*his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre*” (Gen. 25:9). In what seemed to be a final act of reconciliation the two brothers stood side by side at Hebron, burying their father Abraham, mourning his death.

In the next chapter of the Torah, we come across a passage describing the culinary activities of Abraham’s grandsons. “*And Jacob cooked pottage; and Esau came from the field, and he was famished. And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I beg you, with that same red pottage; for I am famished. The text then informs us: “Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way.”* (Gen. 26:29-30; 34)

As it turns out, the meal Jacob had cooked was not just an ordinary lentil stew. According to *Midrash Tanhuma* (Buber, *Toldot* 3), following the death of Abraham Jacob was preparing food for mourners. We can imagine he carted a large pot of pottage to Mamre, especially for those mourning Abraham’s death. And who were the mourners? None other than his father Isaac and his Uncle Ishmael. This was clearly to be a meal of comfort and reconciliation.

Isaac and Ishmael, symbolically the progenitors of Judaism and Islam, not only buried their father together, but shared Jacob’s lentil stew, and probably bread and drink. And, we might assume that as mourners sharing of sacred food they were brought more closely together in their grief and loss. Jacob’s stew was a healing meal between two alienated brothers. *Hinei matov u’manayim, shevet akhim gam yakhad.*

It is a statement of the obvious to say relations between the descendents of Isaac and Ishmael, particularly in this century, have not been all that fraternal. In bringing together the essential values underlying both *eco-kashrut* and deep ecumenism, I envision that the Children of Abraham, Ibrahim, can one day find ways to sit at the same table, learning to share food with one another.

Hinei matov u’manayim, shevet akhim gam yakhad.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹ “Inaugural Address - January 20, 2009; 44th President of the United States Barack Obama”
http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/President_Barack_Obamas_Inaugural_Address/
- ² http://www.religioustolerance.org/isl_num.htm.
- ³ Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer, “Teaching Islam to Rabbinical Students” *The Reconstructionist* Vol. 72, No. 1 (Fall 2007) p. 14.
- ⁴ *Ibid*, p. 13.
- ⁵ Arthur Waskow, *Down-to-Earth Judaism* (New York: William and Morrow, 1995), p. 117.
- ⁶ Arthur Waskow, “Down-to-Earth Judaism - Food, Sex and Money” in *Tikkun .. to heal, repair and transform the world*, edited by Michael Lerner (Oakland: Tikkun Books, 1992). (Original article(s) published in *Tikkun*, January/February 1988, March/April 1988.)
- ⁷ Among the conferences: *Food, The Earth and Jewish Ethics Conference* at Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School Sponsored by Am Kolel in co-operation with Shomrei Adamah DC, Jewish Vegetarians of North America, the Shalom Center and the Washington Jewish Week. Presenters: Art Waskow, Richard Schwartz and others. 200 people attended. See also Leon Cohen, “Waskow’s eco-kashrut to headline state conference”, *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle*, (January 23, 2004).
- ⁸ Arthur Waskow, *Down-to-Earth Judaism*.
- ⁹ See Ellen Bernstein and Dan Fink, *Let the Earth Teach You Torah* (Philadelphia: Shomrei Adamah, 1992).
- ¹⁰ The Jewish Reconstructionist Federation has been active in this area, for example: “JRF Conference Call, “Greening Synagogues and Living a Sustainable Life Rooted in Jewish Values” (June 6, 2007)
- ¹¹ Roberta Kalechofsky, “Judaism and Vegetarianism” *The Reconstructionist* (March-April 1987), pp. 14-17.
- ¹² <http://www.hazon.org/>
- ¹³ <http://jcarrot.org/>
- ¹⁴ An early article written was Aaron Gross, “When Kosher Isn’t Kosher” *Tikkun*, No. 20, No. 2 (March/April 2005) 52-55.
- ¹⁵ The story that spread the news widely in the Jewish world was: Nathaniel Popper, “In Iowa Meat Plant, Kosher ‘Jungle’ Breeds Fear, Injury, Short Pay” *The Jewish Forward* (May 26, 2006). See also Phylis Klasky, “Is Kosher Slaughtering Inhumane?” *Moment*, (February 1991) 40-54; 54-55.
- ¹⁶ In recent email correspondence with Arthur Waskow regarding the “mainstreaming of ethical kashrut” he wrote: “I would say the biggest down-side of the mainstreaming has been that it applied eco-kosher to food alone.”. Personal email correspondence, May 5, 2009.
- ¹⁷ According to Rabbi Morris Allen, he first spoke publicly about *Hekhsher Tzedek* on Yom Kippur 2006 when he was beginning to get the Agriprocessors company to begin to change their orientation. Personal email correspondence, May 6, 2009.
- ¹⁸ Report of the Commission of Inquiry, (December 12, 2006) p. 3.
<http://magentzedek.org/pdfs/Report%20of%20the%20Commission%20of%20Inquiry.pdf>

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Avram Israel Reisner, *Hekhsher Tzedek - Al Pi Din* (New York: Hekhsher Tzedek Commission of the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue Council of Conservative Judaism, 2008) p. 2.

²¹ <http://magentzedek.org/pdfs/Policy%20Statement%20and%20Guidelines.pdf>

²² <http://magentzedek.org/>

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ We similar find attitudes in *Shulkhan Arukh*, YD 122, and in *The Book of Holiness*, “Laws of Forbidden Foods”.

²⁵ There is pioneering work being done in the contemporary Jewish community, not to encourage inter-marriage, but rather to welcome inter-married couples and families into Jewish community and synagogue life. See for example, the national advocacy and education work of organization’s such as Kerry Orlitsky’s Jewish Outreach Institute: <http://joi.org/qa/index.shtml>; and Kerry M. Olitzky and Joan Peterson Littman, *Making a Successful Jewish Interfaith Marriage: The Jewish Outreach Institute Guide to Opportunities, Challenges and Resources* (Woodstock VT: Jewish Light, 1992); and on a regional level, the work on Interfaithways - The Interfaith Support Network of the Greater Philadelphia area under the Rabbinic Directorship of Rabbi Geela Rayzel Raphael - www.interfaithways.com.

²⁶ Lance Sussman, “The Myth of the Trefa Banquet: American Culinary Culture and the Radicalization of Food Policy in American Reform Judaism” *American Jewish Archives Journal* 57,1-2 (2005) 29-52.

²⁷ Matthew Fox, (Ed.) *One River, Many Wells: Wisdom Springing from Global Faiths* (Los Angeles: Jeremy Tarcher, 2002) p. 5.

²⁸ My thanks to Chaya Gusfield who helped me see the link of Mathew Fox’s “Deep Ecumenism” and issues of *kashrut* and *halal*. Chaya Gusfield, “Sacred Eating in Islam and Judaism: A Place to Come Together”, unpublished paper, 2005.

²⁹ Giora Shimoni, “What is Treif?” <http://kosherfood.about.com/od/kosherbasics/f/treif.htm>.

³⁰ According to <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halal>:

In Arabic-speaking countries, the term is used to describe anything permissible under Islamic law, in contrast to *haraam*, that which is forbidden. This includes human behavior, speech communication, clothing, conduct, manner and dietary laws. In non-Arabic-speaking countries, the term is most commonly used in the narrower context of just Muslim dietary laws, especially where meat and poultry are concerned, though it can be used for the more general meaning, as well.

³¹ J.R. Sulan (ed.), *A Conversation Between Muslims, Christians and Jews* (Adelaide, South Australia: Project Abraham, 2006), pp. 34-48.
See <http://www.projectabraham.org.au/files/projectabrahambookletapril2007.pdf>

³² J.M. Regenstein, M.M. Chaudry, and C.E. Regenstein, “The Kosher and Halal Food Laws” *Comprehensive Reviews in Food Science and Food Safety*, Vol. 2 (2003) 111-127.

³³ Harold Kushner, *To Life! A Celebration of Jewish Being and Thinking* (New York: Warner Books, 1993) pp. 55-60.

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- ³⁴ Texts are adapted from http://jews-for-allah.org/Jews-and-Muslims-Agree/halal_is_kosher.htm. This document is found on a website www.ConvertstoIslam.org. It has its stated purpose to do outreach to members of other religions, including Jews. Hence, it attempts to demonstrate a close similarity between laws of *kashrut* and laws of *halal*. It does also demonstrate the differences.
- ³⁵ Email correspondence with Dr. Khalid Blankinship, May 4, 2009.
- ³⁶ Section which follows is based on: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_and_Jewish_dietary_laws_compared, <http://meat.tamu.edu/kosher.html>, and J.M. Regenstein, M.M. Chaudry, and C.E. Regenstein, "Kosher and halal in the biotechnology era" *Applied Biotechnology, Food and Science Policy*, 1, 2 (2003) 95-107.
- ³⁷ See Vivian Mann, et. al. (Eds.), *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain* (New York; The Jewish Museum, 1992).
- ³⁸ David Friedenreich, Email communication through the H-JUDAIC Digest (#2009-79), May 6, 2009. See also Friedenreich, *Foreign Food*, Doctoral Dissertation, Columbia University, 2006.
- ³⁹ Bill Brownstein, "Partners in Peace - And Food" *Common Ground News Service*, 15 July 2005. <http://www.commongroundnews.org/article.php?id=853&lan=en&sid=0&sp=0>
- ⁴⁰ Haim Rivlin, "Where halal meets kashrut" *Haaretz*, (July 8, 2005).
- ⁴¹ Email correspondence with Montreal Gazette reporter Bill Brownstein, May 3, 2009.
- ⁴² Personal phone conversation with Rene Kroll, Union Manager, Dining Services, Mount Holyoke College, May 5, 2009. See also Fred LeBlanc, "Details, Details: The Making of a Kosher/Halal Dining Facility" *Mount Holyoke College Street Journal* (Sept. 7, 2001). <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/offices/comm/csj/090701/dining.shtml>.
- ⁴³ Michael J. Friedman, "Muslim, Jewish Communities Secure Halal-Kosher Labeling Law" *America.gov*, (18 September 2006).
Diverse communities in Virginia work to further common interests
- ⁴⁴ J.M. Regenstein, M.M. Chaudry, and C.E. Regenstein, "Kosher and halal in the biotechnology era" p. 97.
- ⁴⁵ Sue Fishkoff, ""Dietary Changes Afoot, But Are They Kosher?" *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, (October 29, 2008).
- ⁴⁶ Telephone conversation with Dr. Farhat Quadri, Director of Community Service, Islamic Food and Nutrition Council, May 5, 2009.