



Our Machadim Mentor

It's unusual to develop such a personal relationship with a *gadol*, yet Rav Shlomo Machpud, one of the great *shochtim* of the generation and the *av beit din* of Badatz Yoreh Deah, has been a longtime ally of the irrepressible halachic adventure-seeking duo known to all as "Ari and Ari." From archaeological excavations to giraffe innards, from soft matzah to gourmet grasshoppers — how did the American-born dentist and professor get the world-renowned Yemenite sage on board for their exploits?

Ari and Ari share the high points of an unlikely and treasured relationship

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY **Ari Z. Zivotofsky and Ari Greenspan**



Mishpacha



When the last *dafyomi* cycle reached *Maseches Chullin*, the venerated *posek*, mohel, and world-class *shochet*

Rav Shlomo Machpud and his Badatz Yoreh Deah kashrus organization arranged a *shiur* on the Gemara topic of the day — the intricate laws of kosher slaughter and *treifos* inspection. But this was no ordinary *shiur*. It was geared to the who’s who of the kashrus and rabbinic world — 1,000 *talmidei chachamim*, *rabbanim*, kashrus supervisors, and committed *dafyomi* learners, many in Fedoras, Homburgs, or *shtreimels* — and took place on a Motzaei Shabbos in a wedding hall in Bnei Brak that was decorated with entire sides of cows hanging on display.

The guests may have been bewildered when we entered the hall. And they certainly were surprised when Rav Machpud caught sight of us and immediately ushered us right up to the front.

It’s no secret that Rav Machpud is a most unassuming and apolitical *rav*. But what the audience didn’t know is that for the past 15 years we’ve been blessed to have benefited from an unusual *talmid-chaver* relationship with this world-renowned authority. Now we were right in the thick of a masterful *shiur* in which he was a combination surgeon, showman, and of course expert in all matters of *treifos*, as he skillfully explained each aspect of the cow, sharing the stage with him.

Like many Yemenite *rabbanim*, Rav Machpud is fascinated by anything that has an impact on halachah, and he lives and breathes the world of *halachah l’maaseh*. He was schooled in that same hands-on philosophy as Rav Yosef Kapach *ztz”l* — a *dayan* of the Supreme Rabbinical Court in Israel, researcher of ancient manuscripts, and leader of the Yemenite community in Eretz Yisrael — who once told us that his illustrious grandfather instructed him as a young boy to break open a fertilized chicken egg on every day of the 21-day gestational process. There’s no better way, he explained, to understand the halachic descriptions of blood spots in eggs. For Rav Machpud, the same principle applies to a cow, a chicken, or anything else related to Jewish law.

A Bird in the Hand When we first met Rav Machpud — we’re embarrassed to admit — we had no idea he was a *gadol* in disguise. We were just looking for a *shochet* with a *mesorah* who could help us identify the kashrus of rare fowl. It was before our first “Mesorah Dinner” in 2002. In case you don’t remember that historic event, it grew out of our realization that in an age of industrial food production, centralized

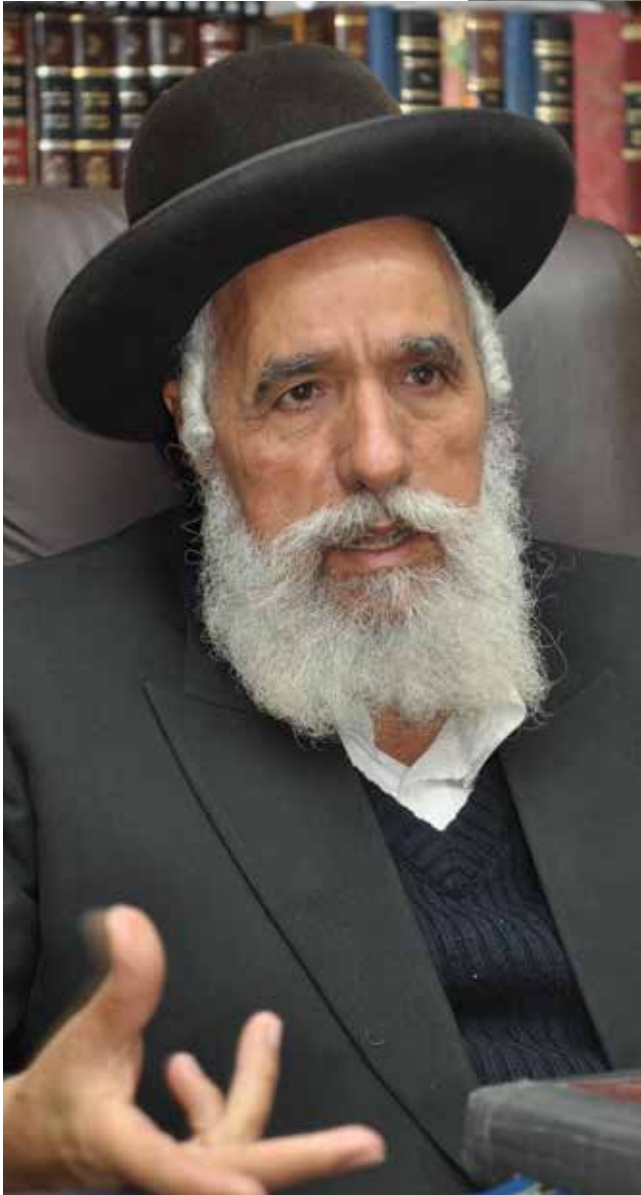


PHOTO: SHUKI LEHRER



Somebody suggested we try the Yemenite *shochet* Rav Shlomo Machpud, so we appeared at his front door with a squawking live guinea hen



KILL TWO BIRDS Rav Machpud gives us a lesson in *shechting* turkey. Be it a peacock, a partridge, or a guinea fowl, our curiosity about the *mesorah* is Rav Machpud’s hands-on adventure

slaughterhouses, and the massive shifts in Jewish population centers, the old rabbis and *shochtim* who remembered their local *mesorah* were dying out. We’d spent several years traveling the world, searching for clues and information about animals that are no longer eaten but are actually kosher. So we decided to make a public event, to make sure the chains of these traditions don’t disappear. (We subsequently held four more of these dinners: in New York in 2004, in Los Angeles in 2007, again in Jerusalem in 2010, and in Chicago in 2011.)

So there we were, trying to locate old

shochtim from North Africa who remembered *shechting* the guinea fowl in their native countries decades earlier. Somebody suggested that we try the well-known Yemenite *shochet* Rav Shlomo Machpud, and so we drove to Bnei Brak and appeared at his front door with a squawking live guinea hen. Rav Machpud, who had been working together with Rav Landau in Bnei Brak for years, had just established his own kashrus organization, Badatz Yoreh Deah, and happened to be together with another Yemenite *shochet* and disciple. Both of them recognized the bird as kosher and both had a *mesorah* — a halachically binding tradition — to that effect. Rav Machpud said he remembered that one of the leading *shochtim* of Tel Aviv, Rav Nadaf, had *shechted* many of them in the 1960s.

He then invited us to go down the block to his *beis din* and, unfazed by the squawking bird and a curious crowd, he proceeded to *shecht* and dissect our bird, amid a group of eager kids

trying to get a peek through the small window. That first interaction has blossomed into a unique friendship that has translated into many adventures over the years. Fascinated as we are by the practical implications of our *mesorah*, we found Rav Machpud a willing mentor and partner on many exploits. We’ve *shechted* deer together in the Golan and exotic birds near Beit Shemesh, examined ancient *mikvaos* together in Gush Etzion, visited a *techeiles* factory in the Judean desert, and scrutinized fish farms in the Galil. We’ve accompanied him on his inspections of *esrog* orchards, matzah bakeries, and shofar factories. Together we’ve also visited excavations and archeological sites — because for Rav Machpud, knowledge and halachah are inextricable.

From the Neck Up Early on in our relationship with Rav Machpud, we were researching the kosher signs of the giraffe. As it happened, a full-grown female giraffe had died of unidentified causes during Chol Hamoed Pesach in the Ramat Gan Safari and we were asked if we wanted to dissect it.

It was an irresistible offer to us — and we suspected it would be for Rav Machpud as well. So we invited him to join the expert team we’d assembled. We examined halachically relevant aspects of the animal, such as the hooves, the digestive system, and the structure of its neck. It seemed to us, and the Rav concurred, that the giraffe has all of the signs of a kosher animal — split hooves and chewing its cud — and contrary to popular misconception, there is no question about where on the neck to *shecht* it. We later verified via a CT scan that the giraffe has no upper front teeth, another sign of a kosher animal.

Beyond the dental exam, Rav Machpud showed us an esoteric kosher sign on the giraffe: the multidirectional grain of the meat under the tail. He verified that the *cheilev*, the fats forbidden in domesticated animals, looks the same in a giraffe as in other kosher mammals. The vets at the safari were unsure what the giraffe had died from, but Rav Machpud immediately saw the infection in the intestines



PHOTOS: DONI ZIVOTFSKY

“You Ashkenazim may not be experts, but we Yemenites are. Watch this,” he said, and proceeded to peel away and separate the 16 tendons like the finest surgeon would



SIGNS OF THE TIMES Rav Machpud, our willing mentor, gave us a lesson in *simanim* as we went to examine a swordfish in Teveria (top) and a giraffe in Ramat Gan (bottom)

and showed the vets the cause of death. Rav Machpud exemplifies the definition of a *mumcheh*, an expert, as we learned firsthand on many of our forays with him. During a visit to a bird slaughterhouse, he again displayed his expertise. A chicken has 16 tendons in its leg that must all be intact for the bird to be kosher. Ashkenazim no longer check the individual tendons and simply reject any chicken with problems in the nexus of these tendons for the reason the Rema in the *Shulchan Aruch* brings, saying “we are no longer experts in this.” Rav Machpud looked at us and said, “You (Ashkenazim) may not be experts, but we (Yemenites) are,” due to the fact that they never lost the tradition of what exactly to check for. “Watch this,” he said, and proceeded to peel away and separate the 16 tendons like the finest surgeon would. The traditions of *nikkur achorayim*, removal of the *cheilev* and *gid hanasheh* from the hindquarters of the animal, have been lost by virtually all Ashkenazim and most Sephardim. But Rav Machpud and his *beit din* are perpetuating these traditions, as the next generation of *shochtim* and *menakrim* are primarily his students. Certainly, if the ability to do *nikkur* remains intact for future generations, it will be to a great degree thanks to him and his transmission of the tradition. He recently published a book on *nikkur* replete with pictures of each piece of meat and each step in the process. He proudly told us that all of those pictures were taken under his supervision as he and his team did *nikkur* in Adom Adom, a large slaughterhouse in Beit Shean.

Ima, You’ve Triumphed! Rav Machpud, who didn’t have an easy childhood, said he could have ended up a farmer on a secular kibbutz and not a venerated *posek* and head of a kashrus organization, if not for some important people in his life and a large dose of Divine guidance. He was born in 5701 (1941) in Kfar Masieb, a small village two hours from the Yemenite capital of Sanaa. His father, Rav Yosef, was the local rabbi and *av beis din* as well as a carpenter, following the tradition of Yemenite rabbis to have another job. He once explained to us that as *av beis din*, it meant his father was also a *shochet* and mohel. His first *mori* (the Yemenite term for a Torah teacher) was blind, but knew all of Tanach word for word, as well as all of Ein Yaakov, and expected no less from his young charges. In 1949, soon after the establishment of the State of Israel, all the Jews in young Shlomo’s village set out on camels and donkeys for what turned out to be a four-month trek ending in a camp outside the southern Yemenite port city of Aden. Many of the old and young died en route and were buried along the way. Eventually, small planes came from Israel and took the weary travelers to the Promised Land, the culmination of a two-year journey known as “Marvad Haksamim” (Operation Magic Carpet). On orders of the Israeli emissaries, they left most of their physical and spiritual treasures behind. But despite all of the hardships and losses along the way, upon reaching Eretz Yisrael, they bent down and kissed the ground. The first stop for the Machpud family was the primitive *ma’abarah*,

Tooth and Grail



The Ramat Gan Safari giraffe wasn't the first animal we encountered whose kashrus hinged on its teeth. Several years ago, we took former Sephardic Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar to the Hula Valley in the Upper Galilee, once a huge swamp drained by the early pioneers, that had wild herds of water buffalo. Today just a few dozen remain there, tended by the nature authorities.

Rav Amar wanted to study the buffalo up close, and ultimately, he asked for three freshly *shechted* heads to be brought to his office to examine. Imagine the scene: three huge, smelly heads, still dripping blood, *shechted* just hours before, on the finely polished table of the Chief Rabbi. As part of his exam, Rav Amar wanted to determine if there were upper front teeth, something kosher species do not usually have.

That's where Ari G.'s dental office came into play. We took one of the heads back to the office and X-rayed it. The results: no upper front teeth. In fact, the official statement of the chief rabbi makes mention that a dentist verified the lack of front teeth.

Rav Machpud knocked on their door, and the wife was more than happy to cook up the locusts

or tent city, in Ein Shemer (just northeast of Hadera). Next they moved to the upper Galilee near today's Amirim, and finally settled in Petach Tikvah. In Petach Tikvah his parents erected a tent and eventually built a small house. His brother Chaim still lives in that house and two other brothers and a sister live in that neighborhood. Another brother, a *rosh yeshivah*, lives in Bnei Brak.

Although the authorities initially placed young Shlomo Machpud in a secular public school in Petach Tikvah, he soon switched to a religious school, where one of his teachers — to whom he feels a huge debt of gratitude — realized his Torah aptitude and drive, and arranged for him to transfer to the Chinuch Atzmai Shearit Yisrael school. He describes that period of his life with great joy as he remembers his many friends and his growth in Torah learning. At the end of his learning there, one of his good friends planned to attend Yeshivas Kol Torah, and the friend's mother suggested that Shlomo join him. The *rosh yeshivah*, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *ztz"l* took the young, quiet, Yemenite boy under his wing.

Rav Machpud still remembers his first meeting with Rav Shlomo Zalman. First the Rosh Yeshivah tested him on a *sugya* in *Bava Kamma*. Then he asked about the Machpud family

and upon hearing of their travails — whom the secular authorities tried to strip of their traditions and beliefs — tears rolled down the Rosh Yeshivah's cheeks as he gently stroked his young charge and promised to provide for his needs. From then on, Rav Machpud enjoyed a close, personal relationship with this *gadol*, his *rosh yeshivah*.

At the tenth anniversary dinner of the Badatz Yoreh Deah kashrus organization in 2011, we heard for the first time how hard those early years really were. Rav Machpud, a generally private person who is more interested in halachah than talking about himself, surprised us, and the rest of the audience, by discussing his personal background and the trauma, shame, and pain suffered by Yemenite immigrants at the hand of those who wanted to “integrate” them. He was a little boy of eight during the ordeal, and he says it was his mother who kept him strong and his *emunah* intact.

He invoked his mother's dictum that when adversity threatens, stay strong and you'll prevail. “As I stand here at the head of this glorious organization, I can say, ‘Ima, you have triumphed!’ ” he declared in a voice choked with emotion.

Back to the City After five years in Kol Torah, the budding *talmid chacham* moved on to Ponevezh, later joining the Volozhin Kollel in Bnei Brak. During this period he spent his nights studying *shechitah* and then *nikkur* and *milah*. Rav Machpud says he had two motivations: First, his father was a *shochet* and he wanted to follow in his footsteps, and second, there was no way to support a growing family on a *kollel* stipend. He trained with some of the greatest practitioners of the previous generation and is today carrying their traditions forward through his many, many students.

Rav Machpud later served in the IDF infantry, and continued in the reserves for another ten years. Once his unit came under heavy fire, resulting in several casualties, yet he ran into the fire and pulled out a wounded comrade, saving his life. He was awarded an outstanding

soldier citation for that act of bravery.

His wife Sarah’s family is originally from Sanaa, and settled in the Bnei Brak neighborhood of Pardes Katz when she was six. Her family became very close to Bnei Brak’s chief rabbi, Rav Yaakov Landau. Her uncle, Rav Azri Giat, was their *shadchan*. The couple had a 20-minute date and realized they were destined for each other.

Soon after they married, when she was 21 and he 23, Rav Machpud took the position of rabbi in the today heavily Breslov but then primarily Yemenite town of Yavne’el in Israel’s north. But after three months, Sarah Machpud decided rural life was not for them, and they returned to the center of the country where he learned in *kollel* for the next eight years while she supported the family as a teacher. After their fourth child was born and expenses increased, Rav Machpud began working as a produce *mashgiach* for Rav Landau, quickly moving over to *shechitah*, and eventually becoming head of a team of *shochtim*. For 26 years he worked for Rav Landau, years that he credits for an education in both halachah and kashrus organizational leadership. Yet he still puts his Torah learning first, framing his morning with a 4 a.m. *dafyomi shiur*, and delivering an in-depth Gemara *shiur* every evening.

In 2001, Rav Machpud, bowing to public pressure, agreed to head the Badatz Yoreh Deah, in particular to provide a kashrus supervision that would adhere to all the stringencies of Rav Yosef Karo, author of the *Shulchan Aruch*. Although its original mandate was *shechitah*, today it’s a multifaceted organization, and Rav Machpud takes responsibility for all its operations. In addition to its well-known meat production in several plants in Israel and in South America, the organization certifies hundreds of restaurants and factories, Pesach matzah bakeries, and *arbah minim*. And the Badatz Yoreh Deah *beis din* hears monetary as well as domestic cases.

On the Road It’s doubtful whether Rav Machpud ever takes a real vacation, but we can attest to several “*tiyulim*” he’s enjoyed along with us. One such excursion



REALITY CHECK Rav Machpud and Rav Herschel Schachter huddle together over some live kosher locusts (top); together with Rav Chaim Yeshurun, who remembers *shechting* partridges (middle); examining a “finger esrog” (bottom)

was to the Gush Etzion/Chevron area, where we visited Mearas Hamachpeilah, a Bayis Sheini *mikveh* with separate staircases leading up and down, and the ancient Derech HaAvos, with its Roman mile markers.

We obviously couldn’t pass over one of the largest Torah libraries in the country, so we stopped with Rav Machpud at the library of our alma mater, the *hesder* Yeshivat Har Etzion. The head librarian, our friend Rav Ahron Bejell, gave Rav Machpud a VIP tour of the library’s exceptional collection of *seforim*, including a number of private collections of rare and old books. Rav Machpud was truly entranced holding some of these ancient tomes. But what really piqued his interest was a *sefer* called *Zivchei Cohen*, a book on *shechitah* from Italy written in the 1830s. The book was printed with a fold-out poster of hand drawings of the 30 different birds on which the author had a *mesorah*. We enjoyed seeing his excitement at actually holding this tradition from Livorno, Italy in his hands.

Sensing his love of *seforim*, over the years we have brought him some old manuscripts to look at. On a visit to his home, he showed us some of the old Yemenite handwritten manuscripts that have been in his family for generations. Because *seforim* in Yemen were expensive and rare, one *sefer* for an entire group of cheder children meant that those kids would learn to read from any angle around the book — from the left, from the right, or upside down. Rav Machpud himself took out a *sefer*, held it upside down, and started reading it fluently.

Another time, we wanted to investigate the kosher status of the peacock. Despite the fact that we no longer rely upon Chazal’s anatomical descriptions to certify a bird as kosher, but rather need an oral tradition or *mesorah* (which the peacock doesn’t have), we decided to experiment and slaughter one to dissect it and study its innards, under Rav Machpud’s direction. As it happened, that day we brought along Rav Herschel Schachter, a major *posek* for the OU. It was quite an experience to see the two of them huddled over the bird evaluating its kosher signs. In order to make it clear

that he did not have a *mesorah* and that this was purely a research project, Rav Machpud insisted on “*shechting*” the peacock with a *pasul* knife. That same night we wanted Rav Machpud to share his knowledge about kosher locusts with Rav Schachter. We managed to round up some live kosher locusts. But who would prepare them? Luckily, Rav Machpud’s next-door neighbors were a Yemenite couple who had recently made aliyah. He knocked on their door and requested their assistance. The wife was more than happy to cook up the locusts, and there was quite a tumult when they were ready to be eaten. Rav Schachter observed from the side, but all the Yemenites there heartily ate the locusts and reminisced about the treat they had relished back in the “old country.”

He was willing to let one of us *shecht* the deer, but a moment later he took off his jacket, took out his knives, and started *treibering* and butchering the hind and forequarters



Another memorable “*tiyul*” brought us to the home of Rav Chaim Yeshurun, an octogenarian born in Kurdistan. At the time we were researching the kashrus of the partridge. Rav Chaim had never met us, and had no idea we were going to show up on his doorstep, but we

were holding a taxidermied bird out in front of us, and before we could even introduce ourselves, he said, “That’s a kosher bird. We have a tradition of our fathers in our hands. In Hebrew it is called *choglah*, in Kurdish it is called *kickliq*.” Rav Machpud was intrigued by Rav Chaim, one of the last of the Kurdish Jews who grew up with Aramaic as a primary language. It felt like we were meeting a living fossil, who spoke in the language that our great rabbis spoke during the time of the Talmud. Oh, Deer For one of our Mesorah Dinners, we felt it was important to have some deer served, as there are several important halachos specifically related to deer. Unlike buffalo and sheep, deer is a *chayah*, a nondomesticated animal. This means that, unlike a *beheimah*, its *cheilev* (certain fats) is permitted, its blood needs to be covered (*kisui hadam*), and there is no requirement to give its tongue (and certain other pieces) to a *kohein* (*matnos kehunah*). We have a friend in the Golan who used to raise deer, but now he had only one spotted deer left, which he was willing to let us *shecht* for the dinner. We acquired another European red deer (known as elk in the US) from a tourist site in the Golan which agreed to sell us one. With the deer, as with almost everything else we served, we had to deal with a slew of halachos that most people don’t ever get exposed to. First of all, we needed *shechitah* that was acceptable to a wide range of invitees. The person who made that possible is Rav Machpud, as he is universally accepted as one of the finest *shochtim* in the country, and widely seen as the kosher world’s expert *menaker*. We met Rav Machpud at a shofar factory in the Golan, and drove with him along the Syrian border to the deer farm to *shecht*, *menaker*, and butcher the deer. Despite his age and stature, Rav Machpud is never hesitant to personally “get his hands dirty.” He was willing to let one of us *shecht* the deer (under his watchful eye and after he had checked the knife), but a moment later he took off his jacket, took out his butchering knives, and started the physically

demanding tasks of *treibering* and butchering the hind and forequarters. Yom Tov with the Rav The Chagim are a special time to spend with Rav Machpud. Nearly every year since we have known him, we’ve paid him a visit in his rooftop succah during Chol Hamoed. He still lives in a small second-story walk-up above a falafel shop (which is not under his *hashgachah*, although people joke that it is “under Rav Machpud”). He certifies *arba minim* and runs a training program for his *mashgichim*, who then take up their posts sorting through thousands of *esrogim*, knowing that Rav Machpud will randomly show up to both check on and back up his people. On one of his orchard visits, he regularly selects for himself and for Rav Chaim Kanievsky particularly large Yemenite *esrogim*. One Succos after we got up to leave the succah, he invited us down to the apartment to see the beautiful *esrog* he had picked for himself. He brought out a massive, gorgeous Yemenite *esrog*, handing it to us so we could be suitably impressed, but Ari G. misunderstood, said “thanks,” and walked out with it. On the way down the steps Ari Z. told Ari G. that he had just “stolen” Rav Machpud’s prized *esrog* but that the Rav had been too polite to say anything. We scampered back up the steps to apologize and return it — but Rav Machpud refused to take it back. Pre-Pesach sees us traveling with the Rav to inspect matzah factories of all sorts. But for the Rav’s personal matzah, he prefers to bake in a *taboon* (a traditional Yemenite oven where the matzah is baked on the wall) in the front yard of his old friend Rav Yitzchak Levi, *rav* of Moshav Eshtaol. It’s just outside Beit Shemesh, and we have often joined him there two evenings before Pesach for a private baking session with a small circle of *talmidim*. Into the Covenant People like to joke that Rav Machpud was “born with a knife in his hand” — either for *shechitah* or milah. In certain circles, Rav Machpud



is the “must have” mohel. If he’s not in a slaughterhouse abroad, when the sun is up Rav Machpud is likely on his way to a bris. We once asked him if we could accompany him on a bris day. We joined him first thing in the morning (and for him, first thing is really first thing — the crack of dawn) outside of his Bnei Brak apartment. “We have ten *britot* today,” he said as he checked his itinerary.

We went from Bnei Brak to Ashdod, then to Netivot and up to Jerusalem, crossed back to Bnei Brak and then to Petach Tikvah. In the afternoon, he got a phone call and we saw him take the bris list out of his pocket and scan it, asking, “Where?” It turns out that by mistake one name had not made it to the list. We backtracked and he did that bris, but as we were heading to the last bris on the list, he realized the sun might be down before he’d get to the house to perform it. He quickly called a *talmid* to be on standby, which was a good thing because the late afternoon traffic made it impossible for us to arrive in time.

Rav Machpud doesn’t eat a morsel at any bris, nor does he take a shekel. He comes in, blesses, cuts, bandages, obligingly dispenses brachos to the many “chassidim” who flock around him, and is out the door to the next bris.

Now, doing that many brissim creates a huge amount of work in examining the infants post-op, removing the bandages, and instructing the parents. There is just no way he

can make a return visit after all those brissim. The solution: Rebbetzin Machpud manages the post-op care, and her small apartment is often crowded like a dentist’s waiting room with parents waiting with their infants.

The Rebbetzin told us that it was Rav Shach who instructed her to take on the task. She related that as Rav Machpud’s kashrus obligations multiplied, he just didn’t have the time and told Rav Shach that he’d probably stop doing brissim. Rav Shach instructed him to continue with this important mitzvah and responded to Rav Machpud’s protestations about his limited time that his *rebbetzin* should take over the follow-up care. And that’s how it’s worked for the last 23 years.

Phone Company Rav Machpud, humble and unpretentious, makes himself available to answer anyone’s *she’eilos* throughout the day. It seems like the entire country has his cell phone number, as he fields questions from the most basic to the most complex, spanning all four sections of the *Shulchan Aruch*, from both advanced students and simple Jews. He once left his phone in the car as we went to inspect a matzah baking for exactly 30 minutes, and when we got back into the car we looked at his phone and saw he had missed 21 phone calls.

His halachic prowess coupled with his accessibility has made him sought after not only

by the *amcha*, but by leading *rabbanim* across the Torah spectrum. But maintaining these good relations entails staying away from politics, and during this spring’s campaign season, he stayed clear of supporting any particular *moetzes*. “I support anyone who learns Torah,” was all he proffered when we tried to feel him out during the campaigning.

In fact, the week before the elections, he called us because he needed some information on the humanitarian, ethical side of *shechita* for a non-Jewish veterinarian who’d approached him. But when we saw the number on the caller ID, we didn’t recognize it. “Kevod HaRav, did you switch your phone number?” we asked. Rav Machpud sighed, telling us he had no choice. “Just until the elections are over,” he said, recounting how he was being hounded day and night for endorsements, but also feeling bad that he wasn’t as reachable to those who needed him.

Against the backdrop of his prodigious qualities, Rav Machpud’s humility is exceptional. During the many hours we’ve spent in his presence, we’ve learned that there are no pretenses. His door and phone are literally open to each and every Jew who wants to reach him. We’re honored and grateful that we’ve established a close relationship with the modern-day master of *mesorah*. When it comes to the Mishnaic directive of “*aseh lecha rav*,” Rav Machpud is undoubtedly the *mehadrin* choice. ●