**Shabbos Stories for**

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**New Ritz Bacon-flavored Crackers May Taste Treif, but They’re Kosher**

**By** [**Adam Soclof**](http://www.jta.org/author/adam-soclof/)



 NEW YORK (JTA) — Ritz has a new bacon-flavored cracker hitting shelves — with kosher certification.

 The signature O.U.-Dairy symbol will appear on the box of the Nabisco nosh.

 “There was much discussion over the decision about this product,” acknowledged Rabbi Moshe Elefant, COO of the Orthodox Union Kashrut Department. “The reality is there’s nothing close to bacon in this product. There are artificial bacon flavorings that give the ‘bacon flavor.’

 “Nobody’s going to think this is actual bacon,” he added, noting the packaging, which has the words “Artificially Flavored” in large type right below the word “Bacon.”

 At least one reviewer, however, says the cracker tastes like the real thing.

 “These actually taste too much like bacon,” [commented](http://www.today.com/food/i-love-it-today-editors-try-new-bacon-crackers-2D79410725) Rina Raphael, style editor for NBC’s “Today” show, who sampled the crackers before they hit shelves.

 That’s not the sort of claim the people at the kosher certification agency can verify.

 “We’re not in any way saying that it tastes like the real thing,” Elefant said. “That’s not at all what our certification represents.”

 Kosher imitation-bacon products may be rare but they aren’t new.

 Elefant vaguely recalled another bacon-flavored product that nearly lost its O.U. certification for not printing the words “imitation” or “artificial” prominently enough on the packaging. Ultimately, though, the manufacturer addressed the O.U.’s concerns.

 Jeffrey Yoskowitz, who runs the website [Pork Memoirs](http://www.porkmemoirs.com/) though he does not eat pork, pointed to beef fry, a postwar pork alternative, and Bac-Os Bits, certified kosher in the 1990s. He also cited the J&D product line of bacon-flavored mayonnaise and salt that bear the O.U. symbol.

 “There seems to be a whole industry of kosher-certified bacon flavors,” Yoskowitz said.

 But Yoskowitz says he won’t be sampling the new crackers.

 “This is a particular type of American item I don’t want to be a part of, specifically because of the artificial flavoring,” he said. “I’d rather have beef bacon or lamb bacon on a cracker.”

 He also has a specifically Jewish objection.

 “To see a Jew eating kosher bacon-flavored crackers is just as confusing as a Jew walking into a non-kosher restaurant,” Yoskowitz said.

Elefant acknowledged that some Jews will feel uncomfortable with the product.

 “I’m not saying I wouldn’t eat it,” he said, “but I could understand someone not eating it.”

 Still, the rabbi sees no problem with issuing certification in this instance.

 “Kosher law is kosher law,” he said. “If proper law, supervision and certification are followed, the law is the law; no law that says you can’t have artificial-flavored bacon.”

*Reprinted from the JTA (Jewish Telegraphic Agency) story of March 21, 2014.*

**Weekly Chasidic Story #858**

**A Palestinian Journey**

**From Jail to Yeshiva**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

[**editor@ascentofsafed.com**](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/21?folder=Inbox&msgNum=0000pHG0:001Imxw800001qC8&count=1389104003&randid=1957232658&attachId=0&isUnDisplayableMail=yes&blockImages=0&randid=1957232658##)

 As more details on the story of an Palestinian Authority Arab ex-con on his way to converting to Judaism are revealed, the more astonishing it becomes.

 Yaniv Ben-David, an Arab from the PA territories and Haifa whose official name until recently was Busmon Abu-Ras, found Judaism and G-d while serving a 12-year term in prison. The full miraculous story has come out in three interviews, including one with Arutz-7 and another on Radio Kol Chai with the head of the Civil Administration, Brigadier General Yoav Mordechai, known as 'Poli.'

 Yaniv's speech is liberally sprinkled with "May G-d's Name be blessed" and the like, as if he had grown up all his life in a traditional Sephardic neighborhood. But in actuality, his story is very different. Without getting into details, he explains that he became involved in criminal activity of which today he is very ashamed. Once in jail, no one in his family ever visited him. "My crime was not related to terrorism, Heaven forbid, chas veshalom," he says, "but I don't want to discuss it."

 "Some of the Jews in prison with me," he relates, "began talking to me, and said things like, 'There's something special about you, something that doesn't seem to belong to that world that you came from... You seem to have a spark of Jewishness... Specifically, one very special guy began teaching me about Judaism, and little by little, I began to enter the world of holiness and Torah and the Chosen Nation, etc., may G-d's Name be blessed..."

 At the same time, however, that he was undergoing changes in his religious outlook and identity, the prison authorities were preparing him for another change: Early release from jail, back into the areas of the Palestinian Authority - which terrified him because he knew many there would seek to kill him for his connections with Jews and Israelis.

 Here's where Providence stepped in. Gen. Mordechai relates:

 "I was driving shortly before midnight on Route 443 to Modiin where I live, when I saw a strange sight at the checkpoint, and I stopped. It seems everything is truly from Heaven. I saw this young man, Yaniv, crying and sobbing at the checkpoint, and he told me an amazing story - of how he had come close to Judaism while in prison, and how all his requests and pleas to be recognized as a former prisoner whose life would be endangered in the PA were turned down, including by the Supreme Court.

 “I had trouble believing this, but I saw him quoting Biblical verses and all... Meanwhile, he was stuck at the checkpoint; the soldiers wouldn't let him cross, and he refused to enter the PA. I did some quick checking with the social worker in the prison and with the prison rabbi, and they said very complimentary things about him, such as that he had been released for good behavior, and how sincere he was... I had no immediate solution for him, but I was able to have him brought to a nearby IDF base for a couple of days, and then, after some not-simple struggles with the Shabak and other government bodies, we were able to find a place for him..."

 Yaniv is now studying and living at a yeshiva in Jerusalem, whose name and location he will not disclose.

 Both Gen. Mordechai and Yaniv do not cease to express their amazement at the Divine providence of the story. Yaniv said, "Poli is truly an agent of G-d, blessed be His Name, sent specifically to save me. He is a true tzadik [righteous person]..." Asked what he would have done had Poli not happened by at that time, he said, "I would have waited there all night, and put on my tefillin in the morning..."

 "I was standing there at the checkpoint, I saw two Palestinians coming close to me - I was afraid not only for my life, but even more that maybe they would take my tefillin! For them to take my holiness, the holiness of G-d, I couldn't take it!.. But I said, If G-d wants me to put on tefillin next to these Palestinians, I'll do it! I stood and screamed out, Shma Yisrael, Hear Israel, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One!"

 "...And then G-d sent Poli to save me. I had already been rejected by all the courts, and I went to the synagogue and said, 'G-d, thank You for all you have given me - the good and the bad. If this is Your will, that I return and have to die for the Sanctification of Your Name, then I'll do it... But G-d sent Poli; G-d never abandons anyone who doesn't abandon Him, Blessed be His Name forever."

 Yaniv, who is towards the end of his formal conversion process, says he does not know exactly when he will become an official Jew. "Meanwhile, I'm enjoying learning Talmud, praying, etc... When I pray the Amidah, it is not from this world; I see lights..." He acted as the gabbai (sexton) of the prison synagogue. "Gathering people for the prayers, setting up the prayer books - this is where I feel my holiness, this is my blood, this is my life, nothing else, may G-d's Name be blessed."

 He related, as well, that he was forced to withstand many difficult situations in prison: "G-d sent me many tests, but I believe that, with His help, may He be blessed, I was able to stand up to them."

 On the day of his release, the deputy commander of the prison, a Bedouin, wanted to cut off his sidelocks - customarily grown long by Hassidic and other religious Jews. "I told him, without fear: You can kill me, you can do anything you want - but no one will ever touch my peyot, my holiness. I didn't care about anything; it was unthinkable that I would lose my holiness, my sidelocks... How could it be that someone wanted to take my holiness!"

 Yaniv related that when he first began to observe Jewish customs in jail, "there were some goyim there [Arab Muslims] who mocked me, and even threatened me. I couldn't understand those people, that nation: I find something for my soul, why should they care? ... But I was not afraid. I felt that I would rather die to sanctify G-d's name, than not be observant."

 He said that he hopes to continue studying in Yeshiva, and in the future, to possibly give lectures about Judaism and Torah: "The Jewish people - for some reason, I just don't know why - many of these holy people don't observe G-d's will.

 “I hope I can help them to truly return to G-d, and bring the Messiah - who is here, by the way; as soon as everyone observes two Sabbaths, he will be revealed... This is a very difficult generation, a very, very hard generation, G-d knows, there are very strong temptations. But the place in which stands someone who returns to G-d, even a righteous person cannot stand..."

 "I want to tell all of Israel: Just like a convert loves G-d with all his heart - I do His will with all my heart, He performed great kindnesses for me, and I serve Him with all my essence, with perfect faith and with serenity, even though I went through many tests - so too G-d loves Israel... G-d took care of me. G-d never abandons anyone; we just have to try to perform His will; give Him an opening the size of a needle [as the Sages say - HF.] and He will open entire worlds for us...."

 \*Source: Excerpted by Yerachmiel Tilles from an article by Hillel Fendel on November 1, 2010. © Copyright IsraelNationalNews.com

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**Tales of the Gaonim**

**The Downtrodden People**

**By** [**Rabbi Sholom Klass**](http://www.jewishpress.com/author/rabbisholomklass/)

 The great sage Don Yitzchak Abarbanel (1437-1508) would never stop lauding the brilliance and sagacity of his fellow Jews to King Alfonso V of Portugal. Abarbanel was the King’s treasurer and he was respected and loved by the monarch.

 

**Portrait of the Abarbanel and the title page of a 1642 Hebrew and Latin edition of Abarbanel's commentary on the Prophets, *Perush ‘al Nevi’im ahronim*.**

 Once, while riding in the royal chariot, a discussion came up.

 “You can never make me believe that every Jew is a genius or at least smarter than his heathen neighbor,” said the king.

 “Very well,” answered Abarbanel. “Let us experiment with the ﬁrst Jew we encounter on the road.” Turning a corner they encountered a poor Jew with a walking stick wearing tattered clothes. He carried a sack on his shoulders that contained all of his belongings.

 “Stop the coach!” commanded the king as he invited the frightened Jew into the royal coach.

 “Fear not,” said the king. “I only want to discuss something with you.

Noticing Don Yitzchak in the coach, the Jew felt relieved.’

 “Tell me,” asked the king, “where do you come from and what is your occupation?”

 “I live in one of our provinces, Your Highness,” he answered. “I am a junk peddler and my wife, children and myself barely eke out a living.”

**The Chosen People**

 “Listen to what I have to say, Jew,” said the king. “You are one of the people who believes himself to be the chosen of G-d and that the world was only created for you. Then why are you so miserably poor wandering from town to town, hounded and chased in every country? You remind me of a poor creature we have in the insane asylum who keeps shouting that he is King Alfonso, although he is beaten every day by the guards. What is your answer to this?”

 The peddler suddenly grasped his forehead and exclaimed, “Woe is me. I just reminded myself that I lost my dear heirloom, which is very valuable to me. My mind will not be at ease until I find it.”

 “Don’t worry,” said the king, “what could it be worth, two or three talents of gold? I’ll give you ten talents of gold, so you can forget about it.”

 “Not so,” said the Jew. “No money in the world can replace its value to me.”

 “Very well,” said the king. “Tell me where you lost it and I’ll arrange for my servant to look for it.”

 “It is near a new building that is being built a few kilometers back where I stopped to rest this morning.”

 The king ordered the coach to turn about, and they rode until they came near a building in the process of being built.

**Who Is The Proprietor?**

 Pointing to the workers, the Jew asked the king, “Your Highness, can you tell me who the proprietor of this building is?”

 “Surely,” answered the king, “the man who is standing on the bottom watching all the working men climbing over the building.”

 “I beg to differ,” answered the peddler. “I believe the owner of the building is the man who is standing at the top shouting commands to the workers. Also, your man seems to be afraid that something may fall on him and he is now running into the house.”

 Turning to Abarbanel, the king laughingly said, “This is your smart Jew? Any fool can see that the foreman of the construction is only the temporary boss.

 “While he and his workingmen are building the house they are on top and the real boss has to keep quiet. But when the house is completed the real owner will take it over and he will eject the workmen.”

 “I have just found my lost heirloom,” said the Jew to the perplexed king. “I used the word ‘heirloom’ as an allegory to the intelligence that I had inherited from my ancestors. Momentarily I had lost it when I didn’t have the proper answer for you, but now you gave me the answer.

 “This world is similar to a newly built house. We are constantly improving it. We Jews, possessing the Holy Torah, are the real owners. But we now stand in the lowest position while the heathen, the workers led by their foremen, the kings, are now on top. When this house will be completed, when G-d will complete the allotted span of this world, then we will enter the true World and we will sit at the top while the heathen will stand at the door.”

 The king was very impressed with this wise answer and he acknowledged the superior arguments of Abarbanel as he sent the Jewish peddler away richer with many talents of gold.

*Reprinted from the December 13, 2013 edition of The Jewish Press.*

**Laemmle’s List: A**

**Mogul’s Heroism**

**Unlike His Peers, a Studio Chief**

**Saved Jews From the Nazis**

**By Neal Gabler**

 Among the pioneering moguls of Hollywood, Carl Laemmle, who commanded Universal Pictures for more than 20 years and who died 75 years ago, was not only less recognizable than the rest, he was also different from the rest. For one thing, he was older than the others and the first to emigrate from Europe to America.

 For another, he was less autocratic. Laemmle, an elfin man, was informal, unpretentious and cheery. Everyone, including his own son, called him Uncle Carl. Most of the others made a point of declaiming their American-ness. Laemmle kept close ties to his native Germany — he visited Europe each year — and called the country his fatherland.

 But there was another way in which Laemmle, whose studio was responsible for the silent [“Phantom of the Opera”](http://movies.nytimes.com/gst/movies/titlelist.html?v_idlist=37953;370600&inline=nyt_ttl) and the original [“Frankenstein,”](http://movies.nytimes.com/gst/movies/titlelist.html?v_idlist=18476;18478;18479;18480;137493;314450;317024;416618&inline=nyt_ttl) was different from nearly all his Hollywood confreres. When Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933, Hollywood barely reacted. Laemmle, on the other hand, was terrified of what Hitler’s ascension would mean for his country, for the village of Laupheim (where he was born), for members of his family — many of whom had remained in Germany — and, perhaps above all, for his fellow Jews. And Laemmle, unlike the other studio heads, was determined to do something about it.



**Carl Laemmle, a founder of Universal Pictures,**

**Credit Bain News Service/Buyenlarge, via Getty Images**

 Though it is not widely known, Laemmle, like Oskar Schindler, kept a list — an ever-lengthening and changing list of Jews whom he fought to save from the Nazis. The list was his instrument in a long, emotional battle during which he confronted the German government and, even more, recalcitrant elements of the American State Department to get endangered Jews out of Europe.

 It was a battle to which, by his own estimation, he devoted 80 percent of his time from the mid-1930s, when he surrendered the economically distressed Universal to the financier J. Cheever Cowdin. And though the numbers are imprecise, by the time Hitler invaded Poland, Laemmle directly or indirectly saved more than 300 Jews.

 Two recent books — “The Collaboration: Hollywood’s Pact With Hitler” by Ben Urwand and “Hollywood and Hitler, 1933-1939” by Thomas Doherty — investigated the alleged complicity between the Hollywood Jews and the Nazis to protect the studios’ German profits, books in which Laemmle is scarcely mentioned. But there is another reason to tell the story now.



**Policemen at the Berlin premiere of “All Quiet on the Western Front” in 1930.Credit Imagno/Getty Images**

 Knowing of my interest in the subject, a longtime entertainment executive named Sandy Einstein asked me to write about Laemmle’s efforts, and provided documentation he had collected. Mr. Einstein had a personal motive: His father was among those whom Laemmle had saved.

 It may seem strange that Laemmle alone among the Hollywood chieftains — a group that included Adolph Zukor of Paramount, William Fox, Louis B. Mayer of MGM, Harry Cohn of Columbia and the Warner brothers — sought to save Jews, since all of those studio heads were Jews themselves and nearly all of them had emigrated from Eastern Europe, over which Hitler was casting his ominous shadow. But almost from the inception of the American film industry, the Hollywood Jews were dedicated to assimilation, not religious celebration. They had come to America to escape their roots, not embrace them.

 Much of this was psychological — a way to begin life anew. But it was also self-protective. Though America’s self-appointed cultural commissars didn’t much care about Jewish domination of the film industry in its infancy, they began to care very much when the motion picture became the center of the country’s popular culture, and they inveighed against Jewish influence, which many Christian religious groups and civic organizations dedicated to cultural uplift felt would undermine traditional American values. These groups would eventually lobby against Jewish control in the media, fight for government censorship to diminish that control, and even call for boycotts of Hollywood films, arguing that they were corrupting the nation’s soul.

 In a way, these efforts would come to define Hollywood just as much as Hollywood would come to define the country. They forced the Hollywood Jews to demonstrate that they weren’t cultural saboteurs, that they were actually Americans first and Jews ... well, Jews last, which is why, in Hollywood, Judaism was always sotto voce. For all its power and visibility, Hollywood was a community racked by the fear that everything the Jews had won could be taken away, if they didn’t tread lightly.

 So when Hitler came to power and began his war against German Jews, most of the Jewish executives in Hollywood — as distinct from many of the actors, writers and directors, who didn’t harbor similar fears and who organized against the Nazis — reacted with indifference at best and appeasement at worst. Most of them seemed to fear not what Hitler might do to the Jews, but what conservative elements in America might do to them, if they spoke out. So they didn’t.

 The production head at MGM and resident Hollywood intellectual Irving Thalberg seemed to speak for them when he returned from a visit to Germany in 1934 and reported that a “lot of Jews will lose their lives,” but that “Hitler and Hitlerism would pass; the Jews will still be there.” He advised that it would be unwise to interfere.

 Carl Laemmle wasn’t as sanguine. Shortly after the Nazis made sizable gains in the Reichstag, they disrupted the German premiere of Universal’s [“All Quiet on the Western Front”](http://movies.nytimes.com/gst/movies/titlelist.html?v_idlist=1578;1579&inline=nyt_ttl) by shouting during the showing and then, when the projectionist turned off the film, tossing stink bombs and releasing mice into the theater.

 Later, Universal’s German representative, who happened to be married to Laemmle’s niece, was dragged out of bed in the middle of the night and held for questioning. Laemmle’s family in Germany also told him that a street named in his honor in Laupheim, Laemmle Strasse, had been changed to Hitler Strasse.

 Laemmle wanted to know why, and he collared a German-born public relations specialist named Joseph Roos, who had been investigating the Nazis, to provide an explanation. More, he hired Roos at Universal, in part, no doubt, so that Roos could be on call whenever Laemmle wanted to talk about Hitler. As Roos told me when I interviewed him years ago for my book, “An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood,” Laemmle would pepper him with questions about Hitler for hours.

 It is difficult to determine exactly when Laemmle’s interest in Hitler moved to activism, though it seems to have happened fairly early. For years, he encouraged family members who remained in Germany to get out. When Laemmle’s brother, Louis, reluctantly agreed, after his wife suffered a stroke, fellow petitioners waiting for visas at the American consulate, where Louis had gone for their papers, objected that she was half-paralyzed and not qualified to emigrate. Louis said, “Yes, if you have Carl Laemmle as a brother-in-law, you can get it, too.”

 As it turned out, you didn’t have to have Laemmle as a brother-in-law. At least as early as 1936, by Laemmle’s estimation, he broadened his efforts to fellow Jews in Laupheim. “Tell me how many inhabitants Laupheim has,” the American consul in nearby Stuttgart was said to have replied when he was bombarded with requests for visas listing Laemmle as the sponsor. That was when Laemmle began compiling his list from those relatives, friends and ordinary people who asked for his help. Early in 1938, Laemmle wrote that he had furnished a “hundred or more” affidavits over the past two years. Elsewhere, he said 200. The following year, he would provide many more.

 The affidavits were pledges of support that were required of every immigrant to ensure that the individual would not become a public charge. In effect, Laemmle had promised those hundred or more refugees jobs or financial assistance. To a Dr. Emil Treitel, whose father Laemmle had known in Laupheim, and to Treitel’s wife and three children, Laemmle promised living quarters in New York City, money to buy food and other necessities, and continued subsidies “until such time as Dr. Treitel is able to support himself,” with Laemmle also offering to “make every effort to help Dr. Treitel continue his profession” as soon after his arrival in America as is possible.”

 And these were not idle promises or subterfuges. Records unearthed by a German historian named Udo Bayer, who lives in Laupheim, show that Laemmle actually did provide jobs and help. Sandy Einstein’s father, Hermann, who was also from Laupheim, met Laemmle in 1929 at a party. They met again in 1937, after Hermann, a Hebrew teacher in Dresden at the time, wrote asking for help.

 Thanks to Laemmle, he received a visa and emigrated in February 1938, then went to live at Laemmle’s Beverly Hills mansion and was apparently employed at the studio. A year later, he served as a pallbearer at Laemmle’s funeral. As time passed, Hermann became a factory worker and moved to the Orange County, Calif., suburbs. He always remembered Laemmle as his savior.

 But Laemmle at least knew Dr. Treitel and Hermann Einstein. He offered similar guarantees to complete strangers, including one family to whom he promised $10,000 to help them settle, and a young woman who needed a temporary place and a job in New York, and to whom he provided both. Laemmle had nothing to gain from this generosity, save the satisfaction of altruism. As he wrote Secretary of State Cordell Hull in 1937, “It is simply a matter that touches me deeply and I, for one, am willing to go the limit in helping these poor unfortunates in Germany.”

 That, however, is the not the end of the story. As Laemmle was providing affidavits, the American consul in Stuttgart, initially a man named L’Heureux and later his replacement, a man named Honaker, who were charged with issuing visas, seemed intent on sticking so scrupulously to the letter of the law that they were thwarting Laemmle’s efforts. By 1937, L’Heureux began insisting that Laemmle restrict his affidavits to relatives, though Laemmle insisted that he had already provided pledges to many individuals who were not any relation and that none of them had become a public charge. “I am a little bit disappointed on account of the stand that you are taking,” Laemmle wrote L’Heureux. If he were restricted to helping only relatives, “then I am absolutely helpless.”

 Honaker placed additional obstacles in Laemmle’s way. The consul demanded that Laemmle provide the details of the promised support: the addresses where each immigrant would live; the exact amount of money he would provide for each; and a precise accounting of his personal wealth, including stocks and bonds, which Laemmle thought ridiculous, since he had amassed a fortune of roughly $2 million. Laemmle suspected something was amiss. Still, he provided the information requested.

 But that didn’t pacify the authorities, who were clearly reluctant to help Jews, either because, as has been documented, they had some personal animus against them, or because helping them was thought to be politically inexpedient. Whatever the motive, Honaker began rejecting visa applications with Laemmle’s sponsorship on the grounds that at 70 he was too old to be relied upon to fulfill his obligations, and when Laemmle enlisted his son and daughter to guarantee the pledges, Honaker expressed skepticism.

 Even then, Laemmle didn’t retreat. He began writing other Hollywood notables, asking them to sponsor endangered Jews. “I am writing Jews but to gentiles as well, to all those I have the honor and pleasure to call a friend,” went his appeal. The director William Wyler was among those who answered the call. To circumvent Honaker, Laemmle contacted his congressman, John F. Dockweiler, to appeal to Hull to ease the restrictions on the affidavits, and when Dockweiler failed to get action, Laemmle began writing Hull himself — plaintively, passionately — urging him to push the consul.

 “It seems to me,” Laemmle wrote him in April 1938, “that my efforts should be appreciated even by your consul general because, after all, he is a human being just as you and I.” In another letter, he wrote, “I have never been so sympathetic to any cause as I am to these poor innocent people who are suffering untold agony without having done any wrong whatsoever.”

 The letters, the pleas, became more insistent as the war approached, and as Laemmle grew ill and frail. He died on Sept. 24, 1939, three weeks after Hitler invaded Poland. He would leave a legacy of a great studio and some outstanding films. But he would leave a much larger legacy in the hundreds of lives he saved while his fellow Hollywood executives remained impassive.

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