

Revised Standards
For the Magen Tzedek Service Mark
Released by the *Hekhsher Tzedek* Commission

Dr. Joe M. Regenstein of Cornell is Chief Author of the Standards

*Engagement of Firm to Produce Industry-Ready Standards
Expected in Coming Months*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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September 9, 2009 (New York, NY) – Rabbi Michael Siegel and Jerold Jacobs, co-chairs of the Hekhsher Tzedek Commission, announce today that -- one year after the release of the preliminary working guidelines for the Magen Tzedek ethical certification seal -- the revised **Standards for the Magen Tzedek Service Mark** are ready for public viewing.

Representing thousands of hours of research, work and consultation with food industry professionals and others, the new standards were produced by Dr. Joe M. Regenstein, professor of food science at the Kosher and Halal Food Initiative at Cornell University. They can be viewed on the new website of Magen Tzedek and the Hekhsher Tzedek commission: www.hekhshtzedek.org or www.magentzedek.org.

In the last quarter of 2009, Hekhsher Tzedek expects to engage an established firm to prepare an industry-ready standard for its program from its full set of evaluation criteria. This will allow the Magen Tzedek application, review process and service mark to be tested in the coming months, followed by a wide release to food companies.

Posted the week before Rosh Hashana, the new standards are especially timely, states Rabbi Morris Allen, founder and director of Hekhsher Tzedek. "It is staggering to think about the volume and scale of business world scandals that took place this past year," he said. "Our Magen Tzedek seal is a preventative to the unethical practices that have sadly seeped into the kosher food industry and it is also a reminder that we are commanded to lead ethical lives."

Rabbi Allen added that the purpose of Magen Tzedek is also to celebrate those companies that are engaged in good business practices. "For the first time a religious community will indeed certify that good corporate citizenship can be understood through religious teachings," he said.

Designed to coexist with the traditional rabbinic kosher seals, Magen Tzedek is the symbol that will be featured on kosher foods whose companies successfully apply for ethical certification from the Hekhsher Tzedek commission. It will be awarded to kosher food companies based on a number of criteria having to do with such matters as employee wages and benefits; health, safety and training; humane treatment of animals; the company's environmental impact; corporate transparency and, consumer information.

"Magen Tzedek is a catalyst for a changed consciousness about the relationship between ritual observance and the ethical underpinnings of Jewish law," stated Rabbi Julie Schonfeld, executive vice president of the Rabbinical Assembly. "I am confident that it will renew the Jewish community's focus on the ethical teachings of our tradition and provide a roadmap for ethical renewal within the Jewish community and beyond."

While a number of logistical concerns still exist – for instance, would the symbol physically appear on a label or be listed on the company's website – the concept is close to being concretized, members of the Hekhsher Tzedek Commission state. "The power of Hekhsher Tzedek to mobilize and motivate our movement has already been demonstrated," said Rabbi Steven Wernick, executive vice president of The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. "Everyone eagerly awaits the opportunity to purchase products with this seal and raise the awareness that ethics cannot be separated from the ritual aspect of kashrut."

MOVING FROM CONCEPT TO SERVICE MARK

The preliminary working guidelines produced by KLD Research and Analytics of Boston were an important first step in the creation of the new standards, said Dr. Regenstein. "What we learned about moving the Magen Tzedek from concept to service mark in the course of these past months is extraordinary," he said. "The biggest challenge for us was creating a compliance application and process that was practical for food companies who wish to acquire this important new symbol."

Launched during the summer of 2007, Magen Tzedek is a joint project of the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. It has received support from the Nathan Cummings Foundation.

For more information about Magen Tzedek or to set up an interview with any member of the Hekhsher Tzedek Commission, please call Shira Dicker at 917.403.3989. To learn more, please go to www.hekshertzedek.org; www.magentzedek.org; www.rabbinicalassembly.org or www.uscj.org.

A blog about Hekhsher Tzedek is written by Rabbi Morris Allen. It can be found at <http://rabbimorrisallen2.blogspot.com/>.

ABOUT THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY

Founded in 1901, the Rabbinical Assembly is the international association of Conservative rabbis. The Assembly actively promotes the cause of Conservative Judaism, publishes learned texts, prayer-books and works of Jewish interest, and administers the work of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards for the Conservative movement.

Rabbis of the assembly serve throughout the world in congregations, on campus, as educators, hospital and military chaplains, teachers of Judaica and officers of communal service organizations. Its membership spans over 20 countries and numbers 1600 rabbis.

ABOUT THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM

United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism represents and supports the synagogues of the Conservative movement in North America. We work with lay leaders and Jewish professionals on the national, regional, and grassroots levels to teach, inspire, and motivate Conservative Jews to live lives increasingly filled with Jewish learning, ethical behavior, spirituality, and mitzvot.