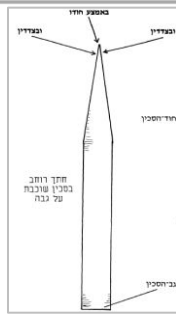




## Number of Inspections

21. **12 inspections.** There are three surfaces on a knife's blade that require inspection: the sharp edge in the middle and the two sides below it [pictured is a cross section of a knife with the three surfaces at the top]. Each of the surfaces must be checked twice – once in each direction. In other words, 6 passes are done with the flesh of the finger and 6 with the nail, for a total of 12 passes. There is a hint to this in the posuk "ושחתם בזה" – (שמואל א' י"ד, ל"ד) "ושחתם בזה" in gematria equals 12 (שמלה חדשה סק"ז).



22. **Today.** Since we only check the knife's blade with the nail and not the flesh, we are short 6 passes (19). Some do 12 passes with the nail to fulfill the minhag of 12 inspections (דעת (קדושים סק"ט). 6 inspections should be done with the nail, section by section, with a slow motion, and along the entire length of the knife. Afterward, another 6 inspections should be done with the nail with a quicker motion along the entire knife at once.

## Number of Inspections after Shechita

23. **Hefsek after the bracha.** There is a machlokes how many post-shechita inspections (16) one must do when shechting multiple animals. Some say one should not do 12 inspections, as there should not be such a long hefsek between the bracha and the second shechita (שהחיות ישנים הובא בדרכ"מ סק"ד). However, many Acharonim hold one must do 12 inspections [or at least the 6 with the nail (see 22 above)] even after the shechita (מהר"ל הובא בדרכ"מ). It is not a hefsek after the bracha since it is done for the purpose of shechita (ש"ך סק"ז, פ"ח סק"ז, שמלה חדשה ס"י, תבוי"ש סק"כ, פמ"ג סק"ד).

24. **When there is no hefsek.** It should be noted that in modern shechita houses, the shochet makes a bracha before the first shechita and continues shechting for hours from this bracha, and he talks during his break. Also, sometimes there is someone other than the shochet appointed to check the knives. In these cases, where there is no issue of hefsek after the bracha, they should technically be careful about 12 inspections after the shechita too. Some Acharonim write that this should be done l'chatchila if there are not time constraints (ש"ע (הרב ק"א אות ה', דעת קדושים סק"ו, בית לחם יהודה סק"ג).

25. Nevertheless, some Acharonim hold one may be meikel to do only two of the 12 inspections [back and forth over the sharp edge] after shechita (כנה"ג בהג' הטור סק"ו, ש"ע הרב). This is because the knife has the status of being checked, as it was checked before the shechita, and as long as it did not touch the back of the neck and nothing happened that would raise any questions, a minimal inspection is enough to maintain its status. If something did happen, it requires 12 inspections.

## Checking with Focus

26. One must check the knife slowly, deliberately, and with focus; his mind should not be on other things (בית דוד ס"י י"ח ס"ה). This requires much composure, concentration, and yiras Shomayim. One's sense of touch is affected by his level of concentration (ש"ע ס"ז), especially since the nicks found on our strong knives do not usually catch a nail (7) or a hair (8); they are usually merely felt (9) or like a stalk of grain (10), which are very subtle.

## Shechting Many Animals or Birds

27. Since the knife must be checked before (15) and after (16) the shechita, one who shechts many animals or birds must check the knife between each one. If he checked after each one and found a nick in the knife after the final shechita, all besides the last one are kosher.

28. If he did not check between each shechita and saw after the final shechita that the knife had a nick, all of them, including the first, are sofeik neveilos, as the knife might have gotten a nick on the skin of the first animal before shechting its simanim. If that happened, they were all sheched with a posul knife and are neveilos (ש"ע ס"א).

29. **Willing to have a sofeik.** If one is willing, he may enter a sofeik by only checking the knife after shechting multiple animals or birds; if the knife is found to be nicked in the end, it will ruin all the shechitos (ש"ע ס"ב). It is unlikely one would do this for expensive animals, as he might lose a lot of money; it would be better to take the trouble of checking the knife before each animal than to lose the value of multiple animals.

30. When shechting chickens, which are not so expensive, sometimes it is worthwhile to risk shechting many chickens by only checking the knife at the end, thus avoiding having to pause after each chicken to check the knife. In modern shechita houses, the shochet only checks after many chickens; some check every three minutes, some every five minutes or longer. Each shechita house follows the instructions of its rav and its level of kashrus. From a financial perspective, it makes more sense to shecht large quantities of chickens in a short time and check the knife afterward than to take pains to check after each chicken.

31. **Number of inspections between shechitos.** Although some hold a shochet who checks every couple minutes should do 12

inspections (23), the prevalent minhag is to just do two – back and forth over the sharp edge (25) – and to rely on an inspection while the knife is wet, even though the quality of the inspection is not as good as when the knife is dry.

## Knife Inspection Procedure in Shechita Houses

### Knife Checker

32. **One checks for another.** In some relatively small shechita houses, two shoctim work together in a shift and they swap every half hour. In some places, each shochet checks the other's knife so that he will not only rely on himself when checking his knife. It is better for there to be a designated third person who is the only one who checks knives and does not also work as a shochet.

33. **Special knife checker.** In many large, high-level shechita houses, many shoctim work simultaneously along a production line. A special knife checker is appointed to be in charge of checking all the shoctim's knives; each shochet must show his knife to the knife checker at set times. The knife checker also goes along the production line at set times during the shechitos. This is all besides for the regular inspections each shochet does personally with his own knives.

### Shechita Process in Shechita Houses

34. In the big shechita houses for chickens, there can be 10 or 12 shoctim working simultaneously, divided into groups of 3 or 5 shoctim. The shoctim in each group place the sheched chickens into cones on the conveyor belt from where the blood drips. In this way, all the sheched chickens from any given group are mixed together. At a later stage, all the chickens of all the groups are put together, suspended on the conveyor belt.

35. **Work pace.** The work pace of the shoctim varies between 8 to 12 chickens per minute per shochet. Since each chicken can weigh several kilograms, it takes physical strength and it is tiring. Thus, each shochet usually works in half hour shifts and rests in half hour breaks between shifts, at which point he fixes and sorts out his knives as necessary.

36. Hence, if a group of three shoctim checks knives every three minutes, about 90 chickens [30 per shochet] accumulate between inspections and are mixed up with each other.

37. **A mixture with neveilos.** If one of their knives is found to be nicked in the inspection after three minutes of work, every chicken sheched with that knife since the prior inspection – around 30 chickens – is a sofeik neveila (28), but they are mixed together with the kosher chickens from the other shoctim whose knives passed the inspection. What emerges is a mixture of 30 neveilos among about 60 kosher chickens.

38. **Stopping the production line.** In shechita houses, there is a button next to the knife checker which he uses to immediately stop the line if a knife is found to be nicked. This way, the rav in charge can calmly evaluate the mixture that was created without more chickens getting mixed in.

### Mixture Containing a Neveila

39. When there is a mixture containing neveilos and kosher chickens, the rav in charge must determine the status of the chickens. It depends on whether the type of nick that was found is halachically problematic, e.g., if it catches a fingernail (7) or hair (8), or whether it is merely felt or rough (9-10).

40. Some kashrus agencies differentiate between chickens at different stages of the process. Among chickens that still have their feathers, which all poskim agree are viewed as "אינם ראויים להתכבד" (ש"ע, רמ"א י"ד קא ס"ג), the sofeik neveilos are botul in the kosher majority, and all the chickens are mutar. The chickens in the mixture which were already plucked, which according to the Rama are considered "החתיכה הראויה להתכבד" and are not even botul in 1,000 (ש"ע), are sold to a non-Jew or sold as kosher but not mehadrin, relying on the Shulchan Aruch's opinion that a raw or very large piece of meat is considered "אינה ראויה להתכבד" and botul b'rov (ש"ע).

41. Other kashrus agencies remove all the chickens in the mixture after determining the level of the nick. The shechita house manager knows, based on the pace of the conveyor belt, how far the chickens can get in three minutes. All those chickens that entered the sofeik, plus some more, are removed from the belt and sold with a basic, not mehadrin, level of kashrus. They do not rely at all on bitul b'rov.

### Behind the Scenes

42. What we wrote is just a small peek through the shechita house doors, which are usually locked to the public. We have seen how sensitive these matters are; they are dealing with matters of crucial importance – the kashrus of the Jewish home. The differing circumstances and halachos are extremely fine; it is obvious why every shochet and bodek must have abundant yiras Shomayim and the rav hamachshir must be an expert in the many halachos. He must also be present during the shechita to oversee things, verify that everything is going properly, pasken halachos, and make decisions in real time – not because *perhaps* shailos will arise, but for *when* the shailos arise.