R’ Yitzchok Hisiger Hello everyone and welcome back to Let's Talk *Kashrus*, presented by the *Kashrus* Awareness Project in conjunction with *Torah* Anytime. Today I am privileged to be joined by Rabbi Sholem Fishbane, *Kashrus* administrator of the CRC and executive director of AKO. Thank you Rabbi Fishbane for being here.

R’ Sholem Fishbane.Pleasure. Thank you for having me.

R’ Yitzchok Hisiger I'm very excited today to talk about the new revolutionary CRC app..It's amazing what you and your team have produced here. Really an app that we've been hearing about for so many years because people have always asked. They've asked, how come there isn't such a thing? And today there is such a thing. And this app has many different features.

But I would start off by asking you about what I would think is the most prominent feature of this app and I encourage everyone watching here, if you have a device that could, that could handle such an app, get it because you'll, you'll really benefit from it. And that is the, the *Hashgacha* scanner, is that what it's called?

R’ Sholem Fishbane Yeah, the logo scanner.

R’ Yitzchok Hisiger Logo scanner. Basically, if you're in a supermarket and you see a *kashrus* symbol that you're not familiar with and you want to know, is it good or not? You simply scan it with this app and it will, it will tell you immediately, is it on the CRC approved list. It's incredible. You don't have to call anyone, you don't have to do anything. So that alone, I think just for that, this app is revolutionary because it, it empowers people with information.

R’ Sholem Fishbane Yeah, we're very excited about it. It took us about two years to do. I'll be honest, it was close to $200,000 at the end of the day.

R’ Yitzchok Hisiger Wow.

R’ Sholem Fishbane And what people should know is that it's completely, you know, there's no one sponsoring it, there's no monetizing. I mean, we're open for sponsorship, but the point is that it's not a business where we're being paid. It's completely to help the consumer.

R’ Yitzchok Hisiger Wow.

R’ Sholem Fishbane Completely to help the consumer. And a lot of credit to Rabbi Akiva Niehaus in our office to the brains behind it and making it and seeing it from beginning to end.

And we're very excited about it. The amount of calls that have come in have increased by, I don't even know the numbers. The hits we're getting are through the roof and we're very excited about it. And, you know, really, it used to be in our office, we had on the back of our, on the wall a picture of the United States, because we get calls.

Hi, I'm in the supermarket. I'm in Trader Joe's. There's a K. I'm not sure if this is Michigan, Wisconsin, maybe. Oh, maybe it's Peru. You know. And then we'd have to, okay, does it look like this, does it look like that. Um, and you know, my best, my best one was that someone called, um, that I'm, I'm in with there's a K and it's, uh, it's in a square, but it's a funny looking square.

And, uh, finally the, you know, the, the lady that answered said, you know, she says, okay, it was a *bochur* that called. Okay, describe the square. Well, it's got like three sides. Oh, that's a triangle. Oh, was that, that's a triangle? that's a triangle. True story. Uh, so, um, because so we, we spend a lot of time. So this, what this does now is as you said, you just take your phone, it's called CRC Kosher on the app, on the Apple store, on Android, you know.

You just put your, and it will give you maybe three, four suggestions of what it might be. Now you'll see, oh, that's what it is, and you press it. You'll press it and you'll get either recommended per the CRC or not found on the CRC list. Not found doesn't mean it's no good, because we don't list everyone that's good.

We don't have a very clear black and white list, so to say. But it just says, find out more. So you can either call us, there's actually a, a place where you can write a question and press submit. We'll answer it.

R’ Yitzchok Hisiger Through the app?

R’ Sholem Fishbane Through the app.

R’ Yitzchok Hisiger And how, how quickly do, could a person typically expect a response?

R’ Sholem Fishbane Yeah, it's all pretty fast. You know, I don't know if you're standing there now about to buy it and you know, you're waiting right away, but it's it's, you know, hopefully a *ben yomo*. So.

R’ Yitzchok Hisiger Wow.

R’ Sholem Fishbane Yeah, yeah, now we're very, very, we have great, a great staff answering.

R’ Yitzchok Hisiger Now, talking about the logo scanner and the CRC approved list, this is something I've always wanted to ask. How, how did you and the rest of the CRC team formulate that list of what's considered accepted?

R’ Sholem Fishbane Oh, wow. You know, if you ask me what do I do most of my day, it's this. It's researching other *hashgachos*. The CRC is made up of *Rabbonim*. Okay? The CRC is a department, the *kashrus* department is to, is to help the *Rabbonim*. The CRC itself is made up of, um, we have different parts of life where there's a *Beis Din* for, from what they call cradle to grave. Right. Yeah.

So, so the *Rabbonim* said, listen, all these people come over to us, ask us about this *hashgacha*, we don't know. Help us out. Put together a list. That's how it was created.

It was created to help the CRC *Rabbonim* be knowledgeable to help their congregants, to help their *mispallelim*. That's why it was created. It was an internal Chicago only, I'll call it. And because I think we're really the only one that does it, it it just exploded.

And with the internet, it just exploded all over the place. Right. Now, there are about 1500 kosher agencies in the world. Wow.

Can you imagine how hard it is to research all of them? Sure. It's, it's a tremendous job. And, and I'll, the truth is over 80% do not meet the criteria.

R’ Yitzchok Hisiger So I was, I was going to ask, I don't know if this is sensitive to ask on camera, but do people give you a hard time or are people upset at you when they don't make the cut?

R’ Sholem Fishbane Very much. But what you just said is the exact reason why we still do it. What do I mean by that? At the end of the day, we're all here to make, you know, to, to make the, to make this a better place, to make *kashrus*, to bring *kashrus* awareness and, and to take away *timtum halev*.

That's why we're, we're put down here in this world. Do you know how many agencies and how many *hechsherim* have said, what's it going to take for us to be put onto the CRC list? So it's an incentive for them to better themselves. It's an incentive. So we send down a team of experts. We sit with them.

We spend time with them. We review their places. We give them a plan, stability, standards, *poskim*. There's a long list.

I look for stability. That's the most important. And, and besides the actual how to train to check vegetables and all of that. But we, *Baruch Hashem*, have been involved in helping, and we don't charge by the way.

And to do these reviews. Maybe some expenses, whatever, but it's not this is a... Not a moneymaker. A money loser. We do this and you know, *Baruch Hashem*, how many agencies have were able to raise their standard in order to get approved. That's what makes it worth it.

So for all the people that are upset with us, and there's a lot. There are so many people, *Baruch Hashem*, that first of all appreciate the fact that there's someone doing this. Uh, but also that we were able to raise standards. We're in the middle of right now three other agencies that we're in the middle of helping, we're reviewing and there's a long list afterwards.

I also work for a living, so it's, it's, it's hard back and forth. But that is honestly, um, why we continue to do it.

R’ Yitzchok Hisiger But that's a tremendous *zechus* that you have, that the CRC has, that you're enabling, first of all, the kosher consumer to be educated, and also, like you said, on the other end, you're, you're educating, you're, you're, uh, enabling, uh, the *kashrus* agencies to up their game, so to speak, and make it to the list. It's really unbelievable what you've done. And here another feather in your cap is this new app, which is just, uh, revolutionary.

Like I said, whoever downloads it and takes a look at it will see how amazing it is. The ease of use also, very easy to use. Sometimes people get scared of the new technology. I assure you nothing to be worried about.

R’ Sholem Fishbane It's easy to use, and, and they'll, they'll get it, the hang of it right away. So...And even the, even the, the, the, you know, the tags of the world that, you know, my understanding is that, um, they, you're able to get it even if you...Because it's an approved app.

R’ Yitzchok Hisiger Approved app. It's an approved app by all these agencies that filter out, uh, objectionable apps.

R’ Sholem Fishbane And there are many, many other new things on there that we, we don't have time for today, but this is, this is the main thing that people should be...The main thing.

R’ Yitzchok Hisiger Okay, we have to leave some, uh, you know, some, let some curiosity, we'll pique their curiosity. Check it out.

It's where, it's definitely worth the time. And again, thank you for all you do. We really appreciate it. Thank you.

R’ Sholem Fishbane Thank you.