



**GENERAL YOSHON NEWS**

Chodesh Tov!

**TYNI and Yoshon.com Over-the-Yoshon-Season- “Break”**

Although everything is *yoshon* right now except maybe for a few “sprouted” items, we at The Yoshon Network Inc. have still been working full-time behind the scenes. Since there is little if any *yoshon* information to report in this month’s newsletter, we thought you might enjoy learning about some “behind the scenes” trivia concerning products that we report on. Some of our time has been utilized to contact manufacturers of common products on their shelf life, but there is another area we have been focusing more attention on as we try to reach our goals of getting bar code information online.

Our main focus during “break time” has been to gather *accurate* UPC (Universal Product Code) bar code number information, and to add these to every single product on Yoshon.com. This serves two purpose—accuracy in identifying products (one can do a search by the complete UPC instead of typing in the brand name and product), and the future ability to scan a product’s bar code to access information from the Yoshon.com database. This has actually assisted us in finding different product variations, such as one type of product being dairy, and the same product having *parve* ingredients only. Most often, the two different versions will have two separate bar codes, further helping to identify the product one wants to look up.

It takes a lot of time, but we are sure that this will be worth it in the long run.



**The UPC Bar Code Dilemma- What is Taking Us *So Long*?**

It is going on our third year of procuring UPC bar code number information. Since TYNI is volunteer-only with limited funds, we had started out using some free websites to get this information. Unfortunately, in this case, “you get what you pay for”.

There are many free “UPC Databases” out there, but unfortunately, they are too often inaccurate. Some sites rely only on their own visitors for gathering information. This has led to information that is not at all uniform, and UPCs have a very distinct structure. The numbers we had gathered the first year were not always correct, and we are still working to eliminate the few remaining entries. Fortunately, this process is nearly complete.

There were two major problems with the information found in these UPC websites. Products varied in the company prefixes, and sometimes the number of digits in the code varied from 10-15. A growing concern is that online stores like Amazon.com and eBay allow sellers to choose their own numbers for their stock. These numbers are unregulated and can often overlap with “legal” bar code numbers purchased from GS1, the company in charge of assigning bar codes.

There are even problems with some legitimate sources, in that when the first digit of a code is a 0, many store and manufacturer lists drop that in favor of having an 11-digit number. Also, some grocery store web sites may add extra zeros to the beginning of the code, or more commonly grocery store or manufacturer lists, product catalogs, and web sites, drop the very last number making it an 11-digit number, or drop the first and last to

make it 10-digits! Fortunately, there is a website we rely on that has this “Check Digit Calculator”. It makes sure our UPC information is accurate when dealing with dropped check digits.

TYNI had inquired to GS1 about the ability to purchase lists, or subscription access to their database. Unfortunately, their access fee is \$500 per year, and TYNI does not have the assured necessary funds. They refused to give any discount to non-profit organizations, so this option was out. That basically gives us no options but to forego our usual “break time” from *Pesach* until around July. B"H, we are able to now check and double check between several reliable grocery store web sites to assure the accuracy of our UPCs.



### How UPCs Work: Anatomy of a Bar Code

Most likely, you haven't given much thought to product bar codes that get scanned at a supermarket, unless the product didn't scan into the register correctly. If it didn't have the correct price, or more likely it didn't ring up at all, have you ever wondered why? Perhaps it wasn't programmed in correctly or someone deleted it from the system. Just what all goes into a UPC bar code?

The number of digits in a UPC is a standard of 12 in the USA and Canada, and 13 in European countries and Israel. The exception to these are items from Trader Joe's, since they have their own unique 8-digit bar codes.

A company buys sets of bar codes in 10s, 100s, 1,000s, and 10,000s. The prefix of the first six numbers indicate the manufacturer, and are the “company identifiers”. These will usually be the same for all of a manufacturer's products. If a company has added more items at a later time after their allotted numbers have been used up, they might have a different six numbers from the earlier products, but all of the later products will have the same prefix.

The next five numbers are “individual item identifiers”, one assigned to every single product. Some companies re-use the same number for different weights, other companies will have a different number for each size or version. General Mills has chosen to keep the same UPC for every Wheaties box, despite the constant changes of sports heroes featured on the front of the box, and slight fluctuation in product weight. Most other cereal companies will assign a whole new bar code number if a different picture is used, or if the weight fluctuates by a fraction of an ounce. As you can imagine, each UPC needs to be noted for our website's database, in order for proper identification to occur.

The very last number of the UPC is called the “Check Digit”, which is a specific number that tells scanning devices that a bar code is indeed correct. The device will multiply the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> digits by 1, and the next “even” digits by 3. All the resultant sums are then added together, and this final number (a sum of sums) is subtracted from the nearest multiple of ten, either equal to or higher in value. If equal to, such as 60, 60 minus 60, would create a “Check Digit” of “0”. If it was say, 65, that would be 70, and 70 minus 65 would yield a check digit of “5”. It is rather amazing to think that devices go through this whole process in a split second for each item scanned as we are waiting to get our groceries rung up.

With the knowledge of all that goes into a (not-so-simple) UPC bar code, one gets a special appreciation as to how these identify products so precisely. We think that this added information will be a big plus to further help identify the *yoshon* status and date codes of the different products on our website. More and more companies are requesting UPCs in order to answer product questions. This has actually helped us to be able to obtain more accurate shelf-life information from manufacturers in order to calculate date codes based on the information provided by Project Chodosh through the *Guide to Chodosh* and their Bulletin Updates. BE"H, we hope to have all our website updated with the UPCs in time for the new *chodosh* season.

### RECENT YOSHON UPDATES

There is nothing to report this month.

## YOSHON PRODUCT OR ESTABLISHMENT ALERTS

There is nothing to report this month.

## RECALLS AND ISSUES AFFECTING YOSHON OR POTENTIALLY YOSHON PRODUCTS

There is nothing to report this month.

## OFFERS, PROMOS, AND DISCOUNT COUPONS

**Coupons for Kellogg's Cereals:** This link offers a whole page of printable coupons with lots of cereals. (Just ignore the non-kosher items on the site!)

<https://coupons.kelloggsfamilyrewards.com/>

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**Coupons for Kikkoman Sauces:** The link for USA and Canada is below:

<https://kikkomanusa.com/homecooks/offers/coupons.php>

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**Coupons for Gerber Baby Products:** This link offers Gerber coupons, once your device is identified as not being a robot. It requires a verification code to be texted to your phone:

<http://bricks.coupons.com/enable.asp?o=136193&c=HA&p=bklqz24043&cpt=LHAs9CPJOSNXU54toeUghttp://bricks.coupons.com/Authenticate.asp?>

We hope you and your family have a wonderful Shavuot!

Chag Sameach and Kol Tuv,

The TYNI Staff

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