texts. Through the invaluable labor of documentary editing, he makes a seemingly familiar figure new. This is a book for scholars to consult, for teachers to assign, and for all of us to enjoy.

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Timothy D. Lytton’s *Kosher* is a smart, pithy, and impressively lucid book. It is part overview of the kosher certification industry over time and part argument for using the successes of kosher certification as a model for regulating American food today. Lytton’s dual focus reflects his background; he is a law professor rather than a historian, and his first interest seems to be present policy.

Kosher certification was not always a model of reliability. From the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, kosher meat certification in the United States was chronically corrupt, as disintegrating community oversight and ebbing rabbinic authority resulted in widespread fraud. To Lytton, the early failures of kosher certification demonstrate that religious factors alone do not guarantee honesty and that even deeply flawed regulatory practices can get better.

Since the mid-twentieth century, Lytton argues, a variety of factors transformed industrial kosher certification into “a model of nongovernmental industry regulation” (3). Most important was a core of religiously motivated consumers who demanded reliable certification and paid attention to agencies’ reputations. Even though only 8 percent of kosher food consumers are observant Jews, the stakes for those consumers are high. Many believe that “consumption of non-kosher food, even by mistake, irreversibly contaminates one’s soul” (65). To ensure their reputations, agencies invested in oversight and training. Moreover, Lytton writes, the rabbis running the big agencies for the most part genuinely cared about reliability and hoped to make *kashrus* observance more common by making it practical and cheap.

The growing complexity of industrial food production in the second half of the twentieth century spurred demand for kosher certification. Food scientists created more than a million additives that required kosher certification,
sometimes in products—like butter—that do not require certification in non-industrial forms. I wish Lytton had spent more time on this aspect of his story. He notes that the proliferation of additives presented challenges to rabbinic supervisors whose jobs came to require expertise in food science. Yet we hear surprisingly little about these changes or about questions they raise about what counts as food in the first place, at a time when paint chemicals and petroleum-derived additives were becoming regular ingredients in processed foods.

Industrialization also resulted in longer and more complicated supply chains, which meant that agencies had to be able to trust each other. For the most part, Lytton argues, interdependence led to mutual oversight and cooperation, and his data suggests that any recent cases of mislabeling or adulteration have been rare and accidental. This data comes almost entirely from the certifying agencies themselves, however. Lytton treats his sources with skepticism, but I wonder how his story might have been complicated had he spent more time with sources from outside the industry.

The kosher certification model cannot be neatly imposed on America’s massively complex industrial food system, but its successes are worth considering. Under the right conditions, Lytton argues, private certification can be reliable, especially in tandem with government oversight. His argument is compelling given the profound problems with current governmental regulation of American food production. According to Lytton, the history of kosher certification shows that the conflicts of interest that inevitably arise when one private company pays another to certify some aspect of its production can be managed with the right social context and market conditions, especially when vigilant consumers help to keep tabs on certifying agencies. Indeed, since food industry insiders now routinely head government regulatory bodies, this point could be well applied to public regulation, too. Lytton’s thought-provoking book will be useful to anyone interested in the complicated question of regulating the food supply, whether in the past or in the present.

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In Sharing the Prize, Gavin Wright adds an overlooked perspective to the