Rabbi Obadia Yosef and Halaq meat

Last time (see **here**) we explained that the Hebrew word "Halaq" (Halak) means "smooth", and Halaq meat refers to red meat coming from an animal whose lungs are completely healthy and without any *sirkhot* (fibers, filaments). The presence of these filaments render that meat forbidden, according to the Sephardic tradition. The Ashkenazi custom, however, is more lenient in this case, and it authorizes non Halaq meat when some removable *sirkhot* were found in the animal lungs (Ashkenazi Jews who adopt a stricter opinion consume Glatt meat). This debate is already found in the Shulhan 'arukh. Rabbi Yosef Caro, the author of the Bet Yosef/Shulhan 'arukh, adopted the stricter view. That is the reason Halaq meat is known and marketed today as "Halak Bet Yosef".

Rabbi Obadia Yosef z"l emphasized very much that Sephardic Jews should continue the tradition of their ancestors and consume exclusively Halaq meat. When Rabbi Yosef began this clarification campaign, in the early 80's, he found a big opposition, not just from an Halakhic standpoint but mainly because the Israeli food market had already adopted the more flexible Kashrut standard. This new requirement was going to affect not just the butchers but also restaurants, hotels, caterers, etc. What is more, even the average Sephardic Jew was not very enthusiastic about Halaq meat because it was very difficult to find. I remember in 1982, when I was a rabbinical student, there was just one butcher in Yerushalayim, Mahane Yehuda, that sold Halaq meat. And the price was almost double the price of the standard Kosher meat.
Winning this battle took Rabbi Yosef many years of struggle, but today we can see the fruits of his persistence. In Israel, in NY and in many other cities in the world, the standard meat for Sephardic Jews is Halaq Bet Yosef.
We should clarify that the category "Halaq meat" applies specifically to cow meat. Chicken or turkey, for example, do not have problems of sirkhot, and their lungs are not even checked. So the Halak concept does not apply in the case of poultry. Therefore, for white meat, the Sephardic and Ashkenazi Kashrut standards are exactly the same.

This is a recording from the famous classes that rabbi Obadia Yosef z"l used to teach Saturday nights in the Bet haKeneset shel Yazdim, for many years. This class is from the 80's and its main subject is the development of Basar Halaq in Yerushalayim (audio only, Hebrew).