

THE RULES OF DESCERNING FOOD FROM THE ASPECT OF BEING KOSHER IN THE JEWISH WORLD

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ABSTRACT

This paper introduces one of the greatest challenges in Jewish religion in our running world nowadays. It is not easy to keep the rules of kosher dining, and my aim is to present what the expression 'kosher' means, although, I also intend to show the foods that are forbidden to eat, the foods that are non-kosher. My goal is to introduce the following five pillars of the topic: 1) the kosher way of cutting down the animal; 2) to make the meat kosher; 3) the meaty and the milky foods; 4) kosher food in a non-kosher plate; 5) the way of making food to be kosher.

If you go into a supermarket and buy a bar of chocolate or a bottle of wine which has letter 'K' or a stamp of a rabbi printed on the back of the bar or on the back of the bottle, you can be sure that the chocolate or the wine is kosher. It means that the quality of the food and the quality of the drink is checked and is found clean from the beginning of the manufacture and of the vinification until the end of them. I think that everybody heard about the so-called kosher plum pálinka.

The basis of kosher traditions goes back to ancient times. As The Bible says: "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk." (Exodus 23:19) The believer Jews, who follow the eating habits of the religion, do not simply feel happy about their dining traditions or do not exactly know that these customs make them healthy, but they accept the rules as God's commandments.

In everyday speech we often use the word 'kosher' for a person, for a situation or for a thing that is all right or perfect. This usage comes from the original meaning of the expression. The Hebrew word means clean and suitable. The explanation shows that the opposition of 'kosher' is not perfect, not clean, not suitable and is not all right. The 'non-kosher' expression is used for situations, for persons and for objects that have some problems in their work.

When we read literary works of art, especially when we read Jewish literature, we get to know the realization of the fact that the theme of eating, the theme of kosher dining is in the centre of most of the novels or prose. I intend to show one of the masterpieces of Jewish American literature. My aim is to give a brief presentation of the novel of Chaim Potok, *The Book of Lights*, as the main character gets into the Korean War in the years of 1950s, and he eats according to the kosher rules even in the hard situations.

Having a kosher establishment is like the basis of a house. However, the base is not the house in itself, and you cannot live on the root without the house. On the other hand, the home standing without firm bottoms, can fall down easily. The kosher routine is the ground for living day after day following the words of The Torah, the Five Books of Moses. But to be a religious Jew, it is not enough in itself, and living without keeping the rules of being kosher, leads Jewish people to the way of assimilation. However, assimilation is not the topic for today.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is not easy to define the full meaning of the word 'kosher.' We have the connotation of the expression as being clear and being suitable for the orders, although the note of 'created by kosher mood' on the packages of foods either being kosher or not, squarely means that the specialities are 'non-kosher.' The expression of 'kosher' is neither used for

the making of special foods nor implies peculiar flavours, but it has a well-demanded denotation as a ritual term.

In my publication, my aim is to introduce the following five pillars of the topic: 1) the kosher way of cutting down the animal; 2) to make the meat kosher; 3) the meaty and the milky foods; 4) kosher food in a non-kosher plate; 5) the way of making food to be kosher. Before showing these elements, in the following table I intend to give a brief presentation of the foods and drinks that are allowed and those that are forbidden to consume. (See: Table 1.)

Table 1. A short collection of allowed and forbidden foods and drinks according to the rules of having a kosher house-hold

		Allowed	Forbidden
Foods	Meat	Bull	Pig
		Cow	Camel
		Sheep	Rabbit
		Lamb	Horse
		Goat	Ostrich
		Veal	Swan
		Springbok	Eagle
		Chicken	Owl
		Turkey	Pelican
		Duck	Vulture
		Goose	Stork
			Snake
			Insects
	Fish	Tuna	Shrimps
		Salmon	Crabs
		Herring	Mussels
			Lobsters
	Others	Fruit	
Drinks	Alcoholic	Vegetables	
		Cereals	
		Honey	
		Diary products	
		Wine	Brandy
	Non-alcoholic	Whisky	Beer
		Pálinka	
		Water	
		Mineral water	
		Orange juice	
		Coffee	
		Milk	
		Cocoa	
		Tea	

Source: The author's own collection

"According to the laws of The Torah, the only types of meat that may be eaten are cattle and game that have "cloven hooves" and "chew the cud." If an animal species fulfills only one of these conditions (for example the pig, which has split hooves but does not chew the cud, or the camel, which chews the cud, but does not have split hooves), then its meat may not be eaten." (KIR: What Does Kosher Mean?, 2010)

"The eggs of kosher birds are permitted as long as they do not contain blood. Therefore, eggs must be individually examined. ... Only fish with fins and scales may be eaten." (KIR: What Does Kosher Mean?, 2010)

As you can see, the fixity refers mainly to the meat, although questions appear around nearly every kind of provisions and of drinks. There is certainly main focus on the hygienic directions in connection with kosher dining in Jewish religion, but I do not deal with this topic in this publication.

2. RITUAL RULES

In this chapter, my goal is to present five aspects of the commandments in connection with eating traditions and in relation to kosher dining. There are several pillars of having kosher kitchen at home and outside, however, I only focus on five mile-stones of the question. I do not elaborate on The Torah, on the hygienic formulas or on medical issues. I attend to the animal-cutting, to the koshering, to the non-koshering and to the problems of the meat and the milk, instead.

2.1. The kosher way of cutting down the animal

"According to the laws of The Torah, to be eaten, a kosher species must be slaughtered by a "Schochet," a ritual slaughterer. Since Jewish Law prohibits causing any pain to animals, the slaughtering has to be effected in such a way that unconsciousness is instantaneous and death occurs almost instantaneously." (KIR: What Does Kosher Mean?, 2010)

Using drugs or medicines in order to the obfuscation of the animal is strictly forbidden, because this nerve procedure is cruel, so they make the meat non-kosher. We can say that the kosher way of cutting down the animal is a very human mode of the animal-cutting. Furthermore, this treatment has another bull-point: the "Schechita" – the cutting itself – makes it available that the blood of the animal flows out right at the moment of the ritual cutting without imbibitioning into the flesh. So, the hygienic standards and the prohibition of eating blood are also complied. (Donin H. H. 1991)

2.2. To make the meat kosher

In The Torah, in The Five Books of Moses a clear description can be found on the topic of the restraint of eating blood. Two effective ways of reaching the bloodless state of the meat exist: 1) koshering by simmering; 2) salting the meat.

As Hayim Halevy Donin argues in his book, every kind of meat is suitable for koshering by both ways except liver. It is the only type of incarnant that can be simply koshered by simmering since its blood-content is very high. (Donin H. H. 1991)

1) Koshering by simmering is a method in which the flesh must be cleaned by cold water, and it must be salted above the fire. When the meat is nearly ready, it must be cleaned by cold water again.

2) Koshering by salting is a procedure during which the flesh must be washed by cold water, and it must be glimmed into cold water for half an hour. Then the meat must be salted by middle-hard-salt, and it should be put on a down-graded area for one hour. This time is enough for the blood to bleed out from the flesh. Finally, the salt must be cleaned from the meat before cooking it.

2.3. The meaty and the milky foods

If you cannot decide what to eat together, you should keep in mind the words of The Torah: "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk." (Exodus 23:19) Those foods that contain parts of any kind of meat are called meaty, and the ones that have underived milk in them are called milky foods.

It is really important that the meaty and the milky nutriment are not allowed to mix. According to the traditions, if you eat something that is milky, you can eat meaty foods after half an hour is passed. On the other hand, if you eat something belonging to the meaty category, you are allowed to have milky thing only after six hours are passed.

The foods that contain neither meat nor milk are called 'parve,' and are permitted to eat together with either meaty or milky foods.

2.4. Kosher food in a non-kosher plate

Hayim Halevy Donin collected the main circumstances of having kosher food together with non-kosher plates. I highlight two major problems in this topic as they are the following: 1) every kosher food cooked or served in non-kosher pots and plates are non-kosher anymore; 2) non-kosher nourishments boiled in kosher vessels are still non-kosher. (Donin H. H. 1991)

I summarize the kosher and the non-kosher by an image in this sense. If a man living according to the kosher rules visits his friend having a non-kosher house-hold, are not allowed to eat there. On the other side of the scale, if they change places: the man bearing non-kosher rules are permitted to have a meal at his friend's house, no matter that the friend has kosher traditions at home.

2.5. The way of making food to be kosher

On the basis of The Torah, of the hygienic possibilities and of medical issues, having a kosher house-hold is an analogue for living in a healthy mood. With its advantages and disadvantages, being kosher is a way of living according to strict rules for Jewish and for non-Jewish people, as well.

The best way of making foods and drinks to be kosher is using kosher and clean primary commodities. In our enlightened world, you have the chance to find shops and supermarkets where the shelves are full of kosher products and stocks. When you buy the signed goods, you have only one duty left: you should get your kitchen clean and make it kosher following the rules of koshering pots and pans. (I do not deal with the topic of kosher kitchen in this publication.)

3. LITERATURE INSPECTION

Living according to the kosher ritual rules is not a habit; it is a lifestyle. If you keep the customs at home, you have the traditions outside, too. There are several literary works of art dealing with the topic of eating and the topic of eating habits. It is natural that some Jewish literature exists concerning with religious themes including Jewish dining and its kosher orders.

Chaim Potok is one of the greatest Jewish American writers of the 20th century. Several novels and short stories tend his name as their author. In this paper, I intend to show one of his novels, entitled *The Book of Lights* from the point of view of keeping kosher eating habits.

The main character of the novel is Gershon Loran, a young Jewish boy who is born into a religious family having strict rules for everyday living and for dining, as well. After finishing school, Gershon is inducted as a chaplain to the Far East right after the end of the Korean War in the years of 1950s. "It is this young man--raised in the absolute belief that "the Jewish religion made a fundamental difference in the world"--who, at the end of the Korean War, finds himself a chaplain in a country where Judaism has played no part, has had no reality, has never existed." (Potok C.: Synopsis: From the Dust Jacket, 1986) In these circumstances, he has to face the harsh conditions and he also has to fit Jewish traditions, such as holidays, Shabbat and eating kosher food. He suits everything: he keeps the festivals, reads The Torah and eats according to the ritual rules. When his fellows have meat for lunch, Gershon has eggs and bread. He knows that the most important commandment in Judaism is human life. Every Jew has to live his life in the safety of subsistence. So Gershon has to eat in order to stay alive even if the dishes and the plates are non-kosher in the kitchen of the army.

The Book of Lights written by Chaim Potok is just one example of the topic as part of literature. You can find some novels and short stories from the great assortment of the world's classics engaging in the theme of being kosher and having a kosher house-hold.

4. CONCLUSION

Today's deconsecrated society is full of prejudice. Jewish people are the objects of a great number of aggressions. One of the targets is the ritual side of the religion including the characteristics of eating habits, too. In this paper, my aim was to show some major points of Jewish dining traditions called 'kosher eating.'

In my publication, I introduced the following five aspects of the theme of being kosher: 1) the kosher way of cutting down the animal; 2) to make the meat kosher; 3) the meaty and the milky foods; 4) kosher food in a non-kosher plate; 5) the way of making food to be kosher. First of all, I gave a brief description of the meaning and of the using of the word 'kosher' itself. Furthermore, in a table, I made a short collection of foods and drinks that are allowed and those that are forbidden to consume in a kosher house-hold.

In the last unit of my thesis, I made an expansion of the topic dealing with Jewish American literature in the way of introducing Chaim Potok's novel, *The Book of Lights*.

There are several other pillars of kosher and non-kosher topics such as The Torah, medical problems and hygienic situations. These items are the focus of other publications but were not the basis of this writing.

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