

CHAPTER

6

The Dietary Laws: A Diet for the Soul

Kashrut is the Hebrew word that refers to the Jewish dietary laws. It is a variation of the word *kosher* which means *fit, proper, or in accordance with the religious law*. Any food that satisfies the requirements of Jewish law is *fit* for eating; it is *kosher*. The expression *kosher-style* is misleading and deceptive. *Kosher* does not stand for an ethnic way of cooking food nor for certain tastes. It is a religious term with very specific religious meaning. Its applicability is determined by set religious criteria. Either a food is *kosher* or it is not. Wherever the term *kosher-style* is used, the inference is clear that, although the reference may be to favorite Jewish dishes, they are not *kosher*.

Actually the word *kosher* in the religious literature is applied to any item that is prepared in accordance with the *halakha*. Thus we find such expressions as a *kosher Torah*, *kosher tefillin*, *kosher mezuzah*, *kosher talis*—meaning that they have been properly made, satisfy the requirements of Jewish law and are suitable for ritual use. A decent person who lives his life in accordance with the religious teachings in *every respect* is called a *kosher person* (*adam kosher*). Its colloquial usage in English as meaning "correct," "proper" (e.g., a *kosher deal*) is very true to its classical Hebrew usage. Nevertheless

the term is most widely used in relation to food, and it is in that context that we shall use the word *kosher*. For the same reason, we shall use the term *trefah* to designate everything which is not kosher (although in Jewish law, the term is technically applied only to an animal whose organs are damaged or diseased).

The Jewish dietary laws prescribe not merely a diet for the body but a diet for the soul as well; not so much a diet to maintain one's physical well-being as a diet to maintain one's spiritual well-being.

The faithful Jew observes the laws of *kashrut* not because he has become endeared of its specific details nor because it provides him with pleasure nor because he considers them good for his health nor because the Bible offers him clear-cut reasons, but because he regards them as Divine commandments and yields his will before the will of the Divine and to the disciplines imposed by his faith. In the words of our Sages: "A man ought not to say 'I do not wish to eat of the flesh of the pig' (i.e., because I don't like it). Rather he should say: 'I do wish to do these things, but my Father in Heaven has decreed otherwise.'" Although "the benefit arising from the many inexplicable laws of God is in their practice, and not in the understanding of the motives,"¹ nevertheless the Jew never tires of pursuing his quest to fathom the Divine Mind and to ascertain the reasons that prompted the promulgation of God's laws. For the man of faith is sure that reasons do exist for the Divine decrees even if they are concealed from him.

Before proceeding on this quest, let us first put to rest the very widespread misconception that the *kashrut* laws are just some ancient health measures. This may have been encouraged by the English translation where the terms "clean" and "unclean" are used to describe the creatures that may and may not be eaten. To the reader of the Torah in translation, the English words "clean" and "unclean" are understood in terms of physical cleanliness and uncleanness, and the assumption is quickly drawn that it is all a matter of hygiene. The fact that the pig, a commonly-eaten domestic animal to which Jews have had a particular aversion, is an animal which is traditionally pictured as wallowing in dirt and with which the disease of trichinosis is associated only serves to strengthen the misconception. The special aversion to the pig is more a result of historical factors, for it was this non-kosher animal that oppressors often tried to force upon the Jew as a means of denying his faith—and our history records many martyrs who suffered death in resistance.

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Simple hygiene would not explain the prohibitions against eating the camel, the horse, or the hare (commonly eaten foods in many parts of the world) which are not any dirtier than the cow or the goat. Also, the Torah permits the eating of barnyard fowl (chickens, etc.) which have no great reputation for cleanliness, either.

In fact, the terms used in Hebrew to designate the clean and unclean animals are *tahor* and *tamai*. These are terms that are never used to describe physical cleanliness or uncleanness, but rather a spiritual or moral state of being. The term *tamai* is used only in relation to moral and religious deficiencies that contaminate the soul and character of man, particularly incest and idol worship, and to characterize the absence of ritual purity. It is often also translated as *defilement*. The creatures designated as *tamai* were not only forbidden as food, but also for sacrificial purposes. The English words *clean* and *unclean* are therefore to be understood as *purity* and *defilement* in a spiritual-ritual sense. A *clean* tongue, a *dirty* mouth or *dirty* mind, "who shall ascend unto the mountain of the Lord, a man with *clean* hands . . .," all provide examples of how even in English *clean* and *unclean* are used in a moral-spiritual sense. It is in this sense only that the Hebrew terms *tahor* and *tamai*—used consistently in the laws of *kashrut*—are to be understood.

Even though some parts of the *Kosher Code* deal with diseases and organ injuries that make the animal *trefah*, for reasons that are clearly hygienic, or health-related, and while Jews have never questioned the hygienic wholesomeness of the dietary laws (the commandments of the Lord could not but be beneficial to man in every respect, physical as well as spiritual), hygienic or health considerations were not regarded as the prime purpose of *kashrut*. Furthermore, the limitation on the creatures that could be eaten, the requirements of ritual slaughter, the removal of the blood, the mere non-cooking of meat and milk—all these and more do not at all support the validity of the "ancient health measure" theory.

The only hint or clue that the Biblical text itself provides as to the reason for all these regulations is that in almost every instance where the food laws are referred to in the Torah, we find a call to holiness. In Leviticus, Chapter 11, for instance, following the entire section which lists what may and may not be eaten, the chapter concludes: "For I am the Lord your God; sanctify yourselves and be holy, for I am holy . . ." (Lev. 11:44). Elsewhere, "for you are a people consecrated to the Lord your God. You shall not boil a kid in its mother's

milk" (Deut. 14:21), or "You shall be holy men to Me; therefore you shall not eat flesh torn by beasts in the field" (Exodus 22:30). The latter directive is in fact part of a section dealing with acts of justice and righteousness, which too have the purpose of sanctifying the people.

The idea of holiness is reinforced by the Torah's relating these laws to cautions against *defilement* (the opposite of holiness). For not only are the forbidden creatures designated as *tamai*, but Israel is repeatedly warned not to defile itself, not to make itself *tamai* with them (Lev. 11:43-44).

This emphasis upon holiness as the reason or the purpose of these kashrut regulations deserves to be better understood and appreciated; for it is an integral part of the entire picture of Judaism and has many ramifications.

To distinguish between "the beast which is to be eaten and the beast which is not to be eaten" (Lev. 11:47), is an aspect of the broader requirements that Israel learn to "distinguish between the unclean and the clean" not only in food, but in all areas of life—the sexual, the moral, the ethical, the spiritual. The laws of kashrut do not stand isolated from the purposes and goals, from the disciplines and demands that are part of the total picture of Judaism. To treat kashrut in isolation is to distort and misunderstand it.

In Judaism, holiness does not mean an ascetic, saintly withdrawal from life. Holiness does not insist upon the self-denial of any legitimate human pleasures nor the total repression of any bodily drives. But neither does it condone self-indulgence. Gluttony and drunkardness were the hallmarks of the stubborn, rebellious, incorrigible son (Deut. 21:18-21). They were regarded as abominations. The lack of self-control and the readiness to satisfy one's cravings regardless of their merit, propriety or legality were indicative of spiritual weakness and moral decay. Holiness meant and means becoming master over one's passions so that one is in command and control of them, and not they of him.

The one who has been trained to resist cravings for forbidden foods that tempt him may also have strengthened his capacity to resist his cravings for forbidden sexual involvements that may tempt him too; it may also strengthen his capacity to resist forbidden unethical actions that may hold forth the promise of tempting financial or status rewards. The transference of this religious discipline to other areas is not guaranteed, but there is no denying the inherent

value in a religious discipline intended to train one to resist bodily drives and urges just to satisfy a craving or experience a pleasure.

The Biblical call to holiness is reflected by Judaism's attempt to elevate the satisfaction of all basic urges—for food, drink, sex—in which we differ not from any beast, onto a level worthy of man. Kashrut is a good example of how Judaism raises even the most mundane acts, the most routine activities, into a religious experience. What narrower minds look upon as a picayune concern with trifling kitchen matters is really an example of how Judaism elevates the mere physical satisfaction of one's appetite into a spiritual act by its emphasis on the everpresent God and our duty to serve Him at all times.

The table upon which food is served became identified in Jewish traditional thought with the Temple altar. "When the Temple stood, sacrifices would secure atonement for an individual; now his table does" (Hagigah 27a), was the way it was put by one Talmudic Sage. (This symbolic identification explains the widespread custom among Jews of not sitting down upon a table; it explains the custom among some of sprinkling salt upon the first morsel of bread eaten—just as was required of the ancient sacrifices; or of removing all knives from the table before the recitation of grace because knives and swords—symbols of war and violence—were forbidden on the altar, a symbol of peace; it is even one of the reasons given for the ritual washing before the meal—which is done not only for reasons of cleanliness but also to symbolize the ritual purity required of the priests when they officiated at the offerings.) Even during the meal we are directed to raise the level of the conversation, as befitting the sacred symbolism of the table. "Three who eat together and no words of Torah are exchanged, it is as though they ate from pagan offerings . . . But if three have eaten at a table and spoke words of Torah, it is as though they ate at the table of the Lord" (Avot 2:4). The *birkat hamazon*, the grace after meals is in fact a minimal satisfaction of this requirement. But the imagery is always in terms of an altar; and the very act of eating is a form of offering to God, at which appropriate prayers are recited before and after.

As the table is sanctified through blessings and prayers said around it, and by what goes on it, the Jew is taught that even as he sits down to eat, he must be aware of his Master and serve Him faithfully. As it was forbidden to bring certain animals upon the altar to God, so is it forbidden to do so upon the table. The laws of kashrut provide

another example of how Judaism insists that "In all your ways, know Him" (Proverbs 3:6).

But this does not sufficiently explain why some things were picked for prohibition and some not. Was it just Divine caprice, and the same disciplinary and spiritual effects might have been achieved if the prohibited were permitted and the permitted prohibited? Torah scholars saw significance to the specific regulations as well. Whereas some saw some practical health benefits, others ascribed only higher moral reasons to the specific regulations, emphasizing that the purpose of holiness was also involved in the specifics. The latter saw the prohibition against the eating of blood and the eating of meat and milk together as a way by which to wean the Jew away from bloodshed and from insensitivity to the feelings of any living creature. How else to explain the prohibition against slaughtering an animal and its offspring on the same day (Lev. 22:28)? Similarly, the inculcation of more refined values was held to be the basis for the prohibition against eating "swarming, crawling things." Dr. Samuel Belkin, in his essay "The Philosophy of Purpose," contends that "the religious philosophy of purposes teaches that certain foods are forbidden not primarily for reasons of health or hygiene [although these may be a beneficial by-product of their observance], but for a higher moral reason." The "unclean foods beset the soul, preventing its moral and spiritual virtues" is the way the Sforno commentary on the Torah puts it (Sforno on Lev. 11:2).

Critics of kashrut are heard to remark that "it's not what goes into your mouth that counts, but what comes out." I hasten to add that what comes out may very well be determined in the long run by what goes in. It may be that in the long run, the food people eat—or abstain from eating perhaps even more—does have an influence over the character of a people, some of their values, and moral-ethical sensitivity.

Jewish critics, particularly among the Reformers who have cast off the disciplines of kashrut together with all our other halakhic guidelines have criticized its observance on the grounds that it tends to separate us from other peoples and other faiths by making social intercourse more difficult. Yet in addition to whatever other merits or purposes kashrut may have, for all we know this too may be part of what the Almighty intended. For barriers to total social integration in a non-Jewish environment are also barriers to intermarriage and assimilation.

We find the connection between separation and kashrut even more

explicitly delineated in the following passage, "I am the Lord your God who have set you apart from the nations. You shall therefore separate between the clean beast and the unclean and between the unclean fowl and the clean . . ." (Lev. 20:24-25).

That the breakdown in kashrut observance has been a strong contributing factor to increased intermarriage and assimilation is all too evident. When the need to seek out kosher facilities is eliminated, especially when young people leave home for any length of time, the opportunities for meeting and developing camaraderie with fellow Jews needing the same facilities are reduced. Thus, by not asserting the distinctive Jewish norms on a day in, day out basis, the fertile conditions for assimilation are automatically set up.

While the strict observance of kashrut is not really a barrier to cordial relations with peoples of all nations and all faiths, it does provide perhaps just enough to enable Israel to remain its distinctive self. A small nation that is committed to its perpetuation and must always maintain the struggle against absorption and assimilation into larger groups should welcome observances and disciplines that set up some barriers to self-annihilation.

I like to compare kashrut to the foundations of a house. In and of itself, a foundation is not a house. One cannot take up residence there. But on the other hand, a house built without foundations or upon weak foundations has no permanence and can easily collapse upon the slightest pressure. Kashrut too, *by itself*, does not make for a Jewish home, nor for a Jewish life, nor for the holiness which is its primary purpose. But an attempt to build such an edifice without kashrut is to build weakly. The Sabbath, the festivals, the family life (the walls, the roof, the furnishings, etc., of our edifice) will be unsteady, and in danger of collapse without the proper foundation.

The religious training and the spiritual development of children is also endangered without kashrut. The non-kosher parent who thrills at the thought of a child coming home from Hebrew School capable of reciting a *brakha*, a blessing for food, may not be sensitive to the fact that the child may be thanking God for food which He commanded him not to eat. If the inconsistency and paradox is overlooked by the parents, it will soon enough become apparent to the child as he grows older. Except for the rare case, it's not the prohibited food he will give up, but the blessing that he will stop reciting. The early religious-spiritual awareness that the parents were so anxious for the child to have will become empty.

Nor does the "double standard" practiced by some Jewish families

promote all the spiritual goals and purposes with which kashrut is concerned. "Keeping a kosher home" is unfortunately no longer identical with "observing kashrut." Eating like a Jew at home and like a gentile outside the home leads to the ridiculous situation where some Jews are more particular about what goes onto their household dishes than what goes into their stomachs. In what other areas of life, we wonder, are our children led to believe that one set of standards exists at home and another outside. While I wouldn't condemn this as hypocrisy but regard it as an attempt to hold on to something—a little is better than nothing, it is true—none of the reasons for observing kashrut are met by this "double standard" of "keeping kosher" only at home.

In summary, let me say that kashrut in and of itself does not make for holiness, but as an integral part of an entire pattern that makes for a distinctive life and which includes the Sabbath and the festivals, which includes ethical and moral norms, which includes sexual disciplines and guidelines, the observance of kashrut is an indispensable element.

THE FORBIDDEN FOODS

Leviticus Chapter 11 and Deuteronomy Chapter 14:2-21 list those animals, fish and fowl which are permitted to be eaten and those which are forbidden to be eaten.

☞ Only animals that possess the dual characteristics of (1) cloven hoofs and (2) chewing the cud are permitted. All others are forbidden.

Lest the presence of only one of the characteristics be regarded as sufficient, those animals possessing only cloven hoofs or that are only cud-chewing are singled out by name as being forbidden. These include the camel, the pig, the hare, and the rock badger. Animals possessing the characteristics that designate them as "clean" are: sheep, cattle, goats, and deer.

☞ Only fish that possess the dual characteristics of fins and scales are permitted. All others are forbidden. The common seafoods are in this prohibited category. They include: lobsters, oysters, shrimp,

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clams and crabs. Swordfish and sturgeon have disputable scale characteristics and latter day Authorities have ruled against them.*

☞ Among fowl, no specific characteristics to distinguish the permitted birds from the prohibited ones are given in the Torah. Instead, they are identified by name and species, twenty-four in all. From those listed in the Torah, the Talmud deduced the characteristics of the forbidden birds. Mostly, they are birds of prey or ones that treat their food as do birds of prey. They include vultures, ravens, hawks, owls, ostriches, pelicans, storks, herons, etc. The permitted fowl have traditionally been identified. They are: chicken, turkey, geese, ducks, and doves.

☞ Amphibian creatures and insects are prohibited as are all living creatures that crawl or creep "upon the belly" (snake category); or that are "winged swarming things"; or that are in the rodent and lizard categories. "They are a detestable thing . . . you shall not defile yourselves with them . . ." (Lev. 11:42-43). Such gourmet "delicacies" as eel, snails, rattlesnakes, ants, and assorted insects are prohibited by the Torah.

☞ All creatures permitted as food are referred to in the Torah as *tahor*, pure or clean. These are kosher, which means fit or proper in accordance with the law. All forbidden creatures are referred to as *tamai*, impure, defiled or unclean; they are also referred to as *sheketz*, a detestable thing, and as *to-ayvah*, an abomination. These are the non-kosher creatures. The term *trefah* is, however, commonly applied to them, as to any meat that is not ritually fit to be eaten according to Jewish law. There is no way of making them kosher.†

☞ Products which come from non-kosher creatures are also not kosher. Eggs from non-kosher birds are forbidden. Milk from the non-kosher animals is forbidden. Oil from non-kosher fish is forbidden. The only exception is honey from bees which the Torah

* A list of commonly sold kosher fish is available upon request from the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, 84 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10011. There are seventy-five different varieties listed.

† Vegetable products or condiments processed in such a way as to provide an artificial flavor or appearance similar to a prohibited food have been known to appear on the market. Though these foods are kosher, the use of such terms as "kosher bacon" or "kosher shrimp" is objectionable to this writer. The terms are contradictory since nothing can be done to make true bacon or shrimp kosher. Its use is deceptive and misleading and should be avoided.

specifically allows. It should perhaps be clarified that bees produce the honey from the nectar of flowers.

☞ The Jewish religious code also includes some purely hygienic regulations. Any food known to be harmful to health must not be eaten even if permissible under all other kashrut rules. Such food is proscribed by the rabbis on the grounds of danger to one's well-being (*sakanah*). They base the prohibition on the Biblical passage that "for your sake, therefore, be most careful" (Deut. 4:15).

REQUIREMENT OF SHEHITAH

☞ The Torah prohibits the eating of any "clean" creature (in the animal and fowl categories) which died a natural death or which had been killed in any way other than by ritual slaughter—*shehitah*. "You shall not eat anything that has died a natural death . . ." (Deut. 14:21). Such carcasses are called *nevelah* or *trefah*. "You shall slaughter of your cattle and sheep . . . as I have instructed you, and you may eat . . ." (Deut. 12:21). What is slaughtered in accordance with such instructions may be eaten; what is not, is forbidden.

☞ The details of this authorized method of slaughter, known as *shehitah*, were transmitted through the Oral Torah. It is the only method of slaughter by which "clean" animals or birds retain their kashrut and remain fit to be eaten.

☞ The requirement of ritual slaughter applies only to meat and fowl and not to fish. The Torah specifically excludes fish when it declares that "flocks and herds be *slaughtered* for them . . . the fish of the sea be *gathered* for them . . ." (Numbers 11:22).

☞ This method of ritual slaughter is designed to cause the least pain to the animal and to remove as much blood as possible. It consists of the rapid to and fro cut of the throat by means of a perfectly sharpened blade of adequate length that is free from the slightest nick or unevenness. The swift movement of the knife takes a fraction of a second and quickly severs the trachea, the oesophagus, the two vagus nerves as well as both carotid arteries and the jugular veins. All available evidence indicates that consciousness is lost almost immediately, within two seconds after *shehitah*; that the cut itself is painless (just as when an individual is cut by a razor sharp blade, no

pain is felt at the time and awareness only develops later when the blood is seen or when the wound is rubbed), and that there is no pain during the seconds that may elapse before consciousness is completely lost. The world's most eminent physiologists, pathologists and other scientists qualified to judge have declared the Jewish method to be absolutely humane.

Methods promoted by animal protection societies for stunning before slaughter would actually inflict injuries severe enough to render the animal *trefah*. While such stunning may be preferable to the cruelties and pain inflicted by most non-kosher slaughtering, in relation to kosher slaughtering, the *shehitah* cut itself may be regarded as an effective form of stunning because its effect is to produce immediate insensibility.

In addition to the humaneness of *shehitah*, the Jewish method carries with it another distinct advantage over most other methods. It ensures a complete and rapid draining of the blood from the animal rather than allowing the blood to congeal within the meat. This contributes to the keeping of the prohibition against the eating of blood. It is also undoubtedly true that the maximum blood drainage has many hygienic benefits.

The *shohet* is not just a Jewish slaughterman. He must be a pious person; he must possess a thorough knowledge of those portions of the Shulhan Arukh which detail the precise rules and regulations of *shehitah* as well as of the condition of the animal's organs which may render it *trefah*; he must pass a rigid examination and be duly certified by rabbinic authorities to exercise the functions of a *shohet*. Because of his piety, training and background, the *shohet* is often called upon, especially in smaller communities, to perform other duties of Jewish religious functionaries. The Jewish method goes back to the Biblical tradition (Deut. 12:21). Its details are elaborated upon in the Talmud (Hullin 1-2) and codified in the Shulhan Arukh (Yoreh Deah 1-28).

"KOSHERING" MEAT

Prohibition of Blood

☞ The Torah forbids the eating of blood even when it comes from kosher animals and birds. It does not apply to fish blood. "You must

not consume any blood, either of fowl or of animal . . . anyone who eats blood shall be cut off from his people" (Lev. 7:26-27; also 17:10-14).

☞ To avoid violating the prohibition against eating blood, it must first be removed from the meat by one of two methods:

- The method of "soaking and salting," (commonly called "koshering").

- The method of broiling over or under a flame or in an electric oven or broiler. In this process the flame or electric heat purges the blood so that it drips out.

☞ Either the process of broiling or that of "soaking and salting" is required for meat and fowl. It constitutes another step in rendering kosher animals and fowl that have been properly slaughtered fit to be eaten.

☞ Where meat or fowl—even from kosher creatures that have been kosher slaughtered—is cooked or otherwise prepared without the necessary pre-requisites regarding the removal of the blood in the required manner, it becomes trefah or not kosher. During the cooking, the blood of the meat seeps out and the meat stews in its own forbidden blood, thus making trefah and prohibited the entire contents of the pot or pan.

Koshering by Broiling

☞ The broiling must not be done in a pan, but on a grill that allows for the blood to drain off.

☞ The grill or spit on which the "unkoshered" meat is broiled should not be used for broiling meat which had already been "koshered."

☞ The raw meat must first be thoroughly washed down. While on the fire, it should be lightly salted.

☞ After the meat is almost done, it must be washed off in cold water to remove the blood clinging to it. This satisfies the "koshering" requirement. It may then be reheated or the broiling continued to suit taste on another grill or spit reserved for the broiling of "koshered" meat.

☞ Liver, because it contains so much blood, can only be prepared by this method. The method of soaking and salting does not work on liver and may not be used on it.

Koshering by Soaking and Salting

☞ The meat must first be thoroughly washed down under running cold water and then placed in a pail of cool water and allowed to soak for half an hour. The meat must be entirely immersed in the water. This serves to soften the meat.

☞ Meat which became frosted during refrigeration should not be salted until it has been allowed to thaw to room temperature.

☞ After a half-hour period of soaking, the meat should be thoroughly covered on all sides (inside and out in the case of fowl) with a layer of medium coarse salt. Salt of the proper coarseness for this purpose is marketed in the United States as kosher salt. Ordinary table salt is too thin as it will tend to melt away and become absorbed into the meat instead of acting to absorb the blood from the meat.

☞ The salted meat or fowl is then placed on a flat surface which is kept inclined at an angle to allow the blood to drain off. If a perforated drainboard or one with openings like a grid to allow for the draining is used, it need not be inclined.

☞ The meat or fowl is kept in its salt for a period of *one hour*. (Under emergency conditions, the time may be reduced to a minimum of eighteen minutes.)

☞ After the hour, the salt should be thoroughly rinsed off under running water. The meat or fowl is now ready to be boiled, fried or baked. Broiling is done on a kosher grill or spit.

☞ The vessel or pail used for the soaking of the meat or fowl should not be used for any other purpose.

☞ Soaking and salting must take place as soon as possible after the meat is purchased. In any case, it should not be delayed more than seventy-two hours beyond the time of slaughter or since the last time it was washed down. (See pp. 111-112.) This information may be obtained from the butcher. If a delay is unavoidable, the meat should be washed down thoroughly with cold water before the seventy-two hour

interval elapses. This is to prevent the blood in the meat from drying up and congealing, which can make subsequent salting and soaking ineffective.

☞ Should meat be unavoidably kept beyond seventy-two hours without being washed down and without being "koshered," it may no longer be soaked and salted. The blood can then only be removed through broiling.

☞ An egg yolk found inside a chicken must also be soaked and salted. It should, however, lie in its salt apart from the fowl or at the upper end of the perforated board. Furthermore, such an egg yolk is not considered totally "parev" and may not be eaten together with dairy.

☞ Once the process of either broiling or soaking and salting has taken place, the excess blood has been removed. (That which still remains is regarded as "meat juice.") It is now ready to be boiled, fried, broiled, or otherwise prepared "rare" or "well-done" to suit taste.

☞ In recent years, most kosher butchers in the United States have been providing an additional consumer service. Upon request of the consumer, they will "kosher" (soak and salt) the meat for the customer. This recently introduced service eliminates much of the bother heretofore required of the housewife in the preparation of kosher meat. While in some places a small charge is made for such service, it is now generally rendered free of charge. But one must keep in mind that the butcher does not "kosher" the meat unless he is requested to do so, and that it is the duty of the housewife to do it if the butcher has not.

☞ Kosher-packaged fresh frozen meats are always soaked and salted at the processing plant and will so indicate on the package.

☞ It is advisable that all meat intended for the freezer be "koshered" by soaking and salting *before* it is frozen and stored away. This allows the housewife to prepare the meat immediately after defrosting in any way desired. If it was frozen without first being "koshered," it is best to broil the meat after defrosting.

☞ Ground meat must be "koshered" before being ground up. If meat is ground up before it is soaked and salted, it may not be eaten

and is no longer treated as kosher. If cooked in a pot or broiled in a pan, it renders that utensil or vessel trefah.

☞ The use of an egg with a blood spot is forbidden. Eggs used for cooking or baking should therefore be carefully checked for blood spots.

THE ROLE OF THE SHOHET AND KOSHER BUTCHER

☞ Although this book does not include them, the kosher consumer should be aware that there are many other complex laws regarding conditions that would make trefah a kosher animal that was properly slaughtered. The shohet and the rabbis who supervise him must have a thorough understanding of these laws.

☞ The shohet is required to carefully examine the lungs and the other internal organs of the animal after it is slaughtered, especially if there is reason to suspect that they may not meet all the many and complex criteria for sound health as set forth by the Jewish Codes of Law. Discoloration, disease, internal injuries, limb fractures, etc. will often render an animal trefah from the point of view of Jewish law.

Although the United States Government has its own set of standards and criteria for passing on the fitness of meat, and kosher slaughtered meat must also pass Government inspection, it is quite possible that meat which meets United States Government standards could be ruled trefah and unfit according to the Jewish law.

☞ The kosher butcher must also possess some special skills and take special precautions if the kashrut of the meat delivered to him is to be preserved.

Fresh meat, for example, that has not yet been soaked and salted cannot be kept after slaughter for longer than seventy-two hours without being washed down. If kept for longer periods, the washing down must be repeated every seventy-two hours. This is to prevent the blood from drying up and congealing, thereby rendering useless any subsequent soaking and salting.

Unless a butcher has sold his meat within the specified time period,

he must be conscientious about the washing. He must also possess the butchering skill to purge or excise certain blood vessels and fat sinews that may not be eaten; this must be done before the meat is "koshered." The butcher must be relied upon to perform such responsibilities not only skillfully but honestly.

The consumer must, therefore, be assured that the kosher butchers from whom he buys are under reliable rabbinic supervision, usually guaranteed by a "Certificate of Endorsement" that ought to be prominently displayed.

☞ Frozen kosher meats or other processed meat products may be bought in general unsupervised food markets *only* if they come completely wrapped and packaged, and the package bears a legible endorsement of the kashrut of the product by a reliable rabbinic authority or kashrut board.

ON MEAT AND MILK MIXTURES

☞ From the thrice-stated commandment in Scripture that "You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk"* (Exodus 23:19, 34:26; Deut. 14:21), the Oral Torah derived the prohibition against cooking meat and milk together, against eating such a meat and milk mixture, and against deriving any benefit from such a meat and milk mixture.

(Although milk that comes from a kosher animal is permitted, it is precisely this kosher milk which, when mixed with the meat of kosher cattle, sheep, or goats that the Torah forbids. Rabbinical ordinances were enacted as "fences" to safeguard the observance of this commandment, and these are reflected in the practices followed in a kosher household.)

☞ Although fowl was not included in the Biblical prohibition, rabbinical decree extended the prohibition of meat-milk mixing to include fowl as well. Use of the term *meat* therefore refers also to fowl in all instances.

* Onkelos, who usually keeps close to the Hebrew text, rendered this as "You shall not eat flesh and milk."

The Dietary Laws: A Diet for the Soul

☞ The terms *meat* (Yiddish: *fleishig*; Hebrew: *basar*) or *dairy* (Yiddish: *milchig*; Hebrew: *halav*), for the purpose of these religious laws refer not only to the actual meat and milk, and to products containing meat or milk ingredients, but also to meat and milk fats and products made from them.

A food product containing neither meat nor milk, nor derived from either is *neutral*. The Yiddish word *parev* (*parve*) or the Hebrew word *stam* is used to describe this third category. The neutral (*parev*) category includes (1) everything which grows from the soil: vegetables, fruits, nuts, coffee, spices, sugar, salt, (2) all kosher fish, (3) eggs, and (4) items manufactured from chemicals. Parev foods may be eaten or cooked with either dairy or meat products.

☞ Meat and dairy products may not be cooked or served in the same vessels even if not at the same time.

☞ Any vessel which has been used for the preparation of both meat and milk, even if not at the same time, (and has thus absorbed minute quantities of both meat and milk) is rendered non-kosher. It is therefore necessary to maintain separate cooking and eating utensils (dishes, tableware) for meat and dairy dishes. These must be properly marked or easily distinguished one from the other by color, design, form, or size.

☞ Kosher food—meat or dairy or parev, cooked in vessels that were used for both meat and dairy—becomes non-kosher and is prohibited.

☞ A specified time period must elapse after one has eaten meat before one may eat a dairy product. There are different opinions in the Codes as to the length of this waiting period. Acceptable practices range from a three-hour to a six-hour waiting period. (The reason for the waiting period is to allow time for deterioration of the fatty residue which clings to the palate and does not easily rinse out, and of the meat particles lodged in the crevices of the teeth.)

☞ The reverse is not necessary. After one has eaten dairy, one may rinse his mouth with water, eat some neutral solid such as bread, and then proceed to a meat meal. (The reason is that dairy products do not possess the fatty qualities of meat or become lodged between the teeth in the same manner. Should there be a dairy product of which this is not so, such as some hard cheeses, then the same waiting period after dairy is also required.)

☞ A person who is ill (or a very small child) is permitted to shorten his waiting period to one hour, if necessary, provided that care is taken to cleanse the mouth and teeth thoroughly, and provided the final grace after the meat meal is said, thereby clearly designating that the second eating period is not just a continuation of the meat meal.

☞ A parev food cooked in a meat vessel must be served in a meat dish and *may not* be eaten *together* with dairy. One does not, however, become fleishig with it and it is permissible to eat dairy immediately afterwards.

☞ The kitchen sink (unless there are two separate ones) actually becomes a non-kosher vessel as it absorbs the remnants of both meat and dairy. Dishes—meat or dairy—should therefore not be soaked directly in the kitchen sink, or in the same basin. This may make the dishes non-kosher, even if the meat and dairy dishes are not soaked together at the same time. Separate basins that fit into sinks ought to be used for soaking dishes. Similarly, different colored plastic grills upon which to stack dishes in sinks should be used.

☞ The same dishwashing machine may be used for meat and dairy dishes if one acquires another set of racks that actually hold the dishes and utensils, reserving one rack for the meat dishes and the other for the dairy dishes, and allowing the machine to run through once while empty between meat and dairy use and vice versa. The empty run does not require a full cycle; a rinse and hold cycle using a detergent is sufficient. (Other rabbinic authorities have ruled differently and do not permit the use of the same machine even under the conditions specified.)

☞ It is common practice to designate towels of one color or design for the meat dishes, and towels of another color or design for the dairy dishes. This is the proper practice to follow, as it prevents a dish towel that was used for drying meat dishes from being mistakenly used the next time for dairy, and vice versa. If necessary, any cleanly-laundered dish towel may be used for meat or dairy.

☞ Where one person is served a meat meal and the other a dairy meal at the same table, a clear-cut distinction should be made between them, such as using a tablecloth or place mat (or a different tablecloth or place mat) for one of them.

☞ Use of butter and milk substitutes with meat: The development of pure vegetable products which "look and taste" like the dairy products they are intended to substitute (butter, cream, ice cream or sherbet, etc.) has increased the variety possible in the preparation of kosher meals. There are no halakhic objections to their use in cooking or eating with meat meals. But since they may be mistaken for their dairy counterpart and it is important to avoid what the Sages call even "the appearance of transgression," it is proper for purposes of identification that they be kept and served in the wrapper or container in which they come, or in any container which clearly designates the contents as parev.

☞ Not all coffee creams labeled "non-dairy" are in fact non-dairy, according to the rules of kashrut. Some contain sodium caseinate, which is derived from milk, making it a dairy product which should not be used at a meat meal.

☞ Glass under ordinary use has been confirmed as a non-absorbing material. Therefore, its occasional use for serving either meat or dairy is not prohibited. However, to use one set of glass dishes as a substitute for the traditional practice would be wrong and should not be permitted as a matter of policy.

☞ Water glasses may be used either at dairy or meat meals.

☞ Pyrex or similar glassware used for baking or cooking may not be used interchangeably for meat and dairy. (The presence of intense heat makes it susceptible to absorption.)

☞ When purchasing food or preparing meals, it is important to take note of ingredients, and to be fully certain as to the kashrut of the product, and as to whether it is milchig, fleishig, or parev. Food processing has become highly sophisticated today and labeling practices may be misleading to the kosher consumer. For example, mono- and di-glycerides or emulsifiers may be manufactured from either vegetable or animal fats. They may be kosher or trefah. Lactose may be manufactured from milk or from molasses. It may therefore be dairy or parev. The word "shortening" alone almost always indicates lard or other animal fats. That is why it is increasingly important to look for a reliable kashrut endorsement. While it is not the only kashrut symbol—there are some reliable local groups too—the ☺ symbol of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America

is nationally the best known and easily the most recognized in the field.

MISCELLANEOUS PROHIBITIONS

☞ Forbidden by Torah is the sciatic nerve, known in Hebrew as the *gid hanashe*, which runs through the hind quarter of the animal. When this sinew and its adjoining blood vessels are removed, the hind quarter of the animal may be eaten. The cutting out or purging of this sinew was done in some Jewish communities throughout history and is done in Israel today. In the United States it is not economical for the meat industry to invest many man-hours on the purging of this sinew (a time-consuming task). There are not many butchers who possess the special skills required for the task, and a vast market for non-kosher meat exists. Thus, the whole hind quarters of kosher-slaughtered animals are cut away in the packing houses and sold with non-kosher slaughtered animals. But a Jew is forbidden to eat the hind quarter of a kosher animal only when the forbidden sinew has not been removed.

☞ Also forbidden by the Torah is the fat known as *helev*. (This is removed from the animal by the kosher butcher.) "You shall eat no fat of ox, of sheep, or goat" (Lev. 7:23-24). This forbidden fat surrounding the vital organs and the liver is distinguished from the permissible fat around the muscles and under the skin which is known as *shuman*. Although the Torah doesn't specify why there is this distinction between fats, it is interesting that recent bio-chemical researchers have also noted a distinction between these two kinds of fat.

☞ Torah law prohibits the drinking of wine that had been used in connection with idolatry. Such wine is called *yayin nesech*. Mere contact by an idolator with the wine at any stage of its preparation was sufficient to prohibit it. Aside from the fact that anything used for idolatrous ceremonies became prohibited to the Jew, the additional purpose of weaning the Jew away from convivial contact with non-Jews was also a factor in the prohibition.

While Jewish law today does not regard wine with which a non-Jew comes in contact as *yayin nesech*, rabbinic ordinances extended the prohibition to ordinary non-Jewish wines, *stam yainam*. This re-

striction is lifted, however, if the wine is pre-boiled. Wines not made from the grape, but which are fermented from various fruits or grains are not included in any of the restrictions, either Biblical or rabbinic.

KOSHER FOOD IN NON-KOSHER VESSELS: ON "EATING OUT"

☞ Any kosher food item that is boiled, baked, grilled, fried, or broiled in a trefah utensil which had been used for non-kosher meat, fowl, or fish, or which had been used indiscriminately for meat and dairy is rendered non-kosher itself and may not be eaten.

☞ Any kosher food, properly prepared in a kosher vessel, that is served hot in a non-kosher dish previously used for non-kosher meat, fowl, or fish, or used indiscriminately for meat and dairy is also rendered non-kosher and may not be eaten.

The basic principle of law followed in the above cases is that in the presence of heat, the kosher food absorbs traces of the absorbed forbidden food, even from an otherwise clean vessel. Though the Sages of the Talmud lived long before chemistry became a science, and before chemical theories were advanced, their ruling is today substantiated by the fact that chemical reactions and the activation and interaction of molecules of different bodies takes place only in the presence of heat.

☞ The above principle of law is also the basis for the ruling that when cold kosher food comes in contact with a cold and clean non-kosher utensil, the food does not become contaminated by the prohibited substances. It remains kosher and may still be eaten. (The only exception occurs when the kosher food consists primarily of very "hot" condiments such as mustard, etc.)

☞ This leniency provides eating opportunities for observant Jews who find themselves away from home or from any kosher restaurant or hotel or who may be invited to non-kosher homes. One may eat cold kosher food items that have not been boiled, baked, fried, or grilled on non-kosher utensils. These may be eaten even if served in non-kosher utensils.

(A possible menu in this category may include cold fruits, fresh vegetables, canned fruits, canned kosher fish such as tuna or salmon,