

Reasons for Kosher

Apparent reasons given from the context of Parashat Shemini, Leviticus 11, the conclusion of the kosher laws (no pig, split hoof, chewing cud etc..)

אַל־תִּשְׁקְצוּ אֶת־נַפְשֵׁיכֶם בְּכָל־הַשָּׂרֵץ הַשָּׂרֵץ וְלֹא תִטְמְאוּ בָהֶם וְנִטְמַתֶּם בָּם:

You shall not draw abomination upon yourselves through anything that swarms; you shall not make yourselves unclean therewith and thus become unclean.

כִּי אֲנִי יי אֱלֹקֵיכֶם וְהִתְקַדַּשְׁתֶּם וְהִיִּיתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים כִּי קָדוֹשׁ אֲנִי וְלֹא תִטְמְאוּ אֶת־נַפְשֵׁיכֶם בְּכָל־הַשָּׂרֵץ הָרֹמֵשׁ עַל־הָאָרֶץ:

For I the LORD am your God: you shall sanctify yourselves and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not make yourselves unclean through any swarming thing that moves upon the earth.

כִּי אֲנִי יי הַמַּעֲלֶה אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְהִיִּיתְכֶם לְאֱלֹקִים וְהִיִּיתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים כִּי קָדוֹשׁ אֲנִי:

For I the LORD am He who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God: you shall be holy, for I am holy.

זֹאת תּוֹרַת הַבְּהֵמָה וְהָעוֹף וְכָל הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַחַיָּה הָרֹמֶשֶׁת בַּמַּיִם וְלִכְל־נֶפֶשׁ הַשָּׂרֶצַת עַל־הָאָרֶץ:

These are the instructions concerning animals, birds, all living creatures that move in water, and all creatures that swarm on earth,

לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַטָּמֵא וּבֵין הַטָּהוֹר וּבֵין הַחַיָּה הַנֹּאֲכָלֶת וּבֵין הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר לֹא תֹאכַל: (פ)

for distinguishing between the unclean and the clean, between the living things that may be eaten and the living things that may not be eaten.

***Try to develop the themes of holiness, distinguishing, havdalah, defiling, abomination...
What do they mean and how do they relate to Kosher laws?***

What reasons emerge from the verses in Deuteronomy 14, introducing the same laws?

בְּנִים אַתֶּם לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם לֹא תִתְגַּדְדוּ וְלֹא תִשְׁיִמוּ קִרְחָה בֵּין עֵינֵיכֶם לְמֵת:

You are children of the LORD your God. You shall not gash yourselves or shave the front of your heads because of the dead.

כִּי עַם קָדוֹשׁ אַתָּה לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּבְךָ בָּחַר יְיָ לְהִזּוֹת לּוֹ לְעַם סִגְלָה מִכָּל הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה: (ס)

For you are a people consecrated to the LORD your God: the LORD your God chose you from among all other peoples on earth to be His treasured people.

לֹא תֹאכַל כָּל-תּוֹעֵבָה:

You shall not eat anything abhorrent.

Later on in the same chapter...

לֹא תֹאכְלוּ כָל-נִבְלָה לְגֵר אֲשֶׁר-בְּשַׁעְרֵיךָ תִּתְנֶנָּה וְאָכְלָהּ אוֹ מִכֹּר לְנִכְרִי כִּי עַם קָדוֹשׁ אַתָּה לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא-תִבְשֹׁל גְּדִי בְחֵלֶב אִמּוֹ: (פ)

You shall not eat anything that has died a natural death; give it to the stranger in your community to eat, or you may sell it to a foreigner. For you are a people consecrated to the LORD your God. You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

Commentaries on Leviticus

Ramban

ולא תטמאו בהם ונטמתם במ (מד) כי אני ה' אלהיכם, והתקדשתם. אל תטמאו בהם באופן שתהיו טמאים ומטומטמים במ, וזה יקרה באכילתם. כי אמנם בהיותי אלהיכם חפצתי שתתקדשו ותכינו עצמכם אל הקדושה:

ולא תטמאו בהם כי אני ה' אלוהיכם והתקדשתם,

do not contaminate yourselves in a manner that will make this contamination really serious, i.e. by eating these creatures or parts of them. Seeing that I am your G'd I desire you to sanctify yourselves so that you will be in a state capable of absorbing holiness on an ongoing basis

Shadal, Shlomo David Lutzatto, 19th cent. Italy

נטמתם במ: מן נטמינו בעיניכם (איוב י"ח ג') (כפירוש י"א שהביא ראב"ע), הוא שאמרתי למעלה שאכילת המאכלים המשוקצים מביאה פחיתות בנפש, וכאילו היא יורדת ממעלת האדם למדרגת הבהמה, וכמ"ש מדוע נחשבנו כבהמה נטמינו בעיניכם.

You will be defiled with them... eating abominations brings a lowering of the soul, as if it goes down from the level of man to animal, as it says in Job 18, 3: Why are we thought of as animals, Regarded by you as impure/ignorant?

Hizkuni

Some say impure means ignorant.

Rabbeinu Bahyay

והכוונה במאמר הזה כי על ידי המצות יחליש כח התאוות ויתגבר כח השכל שבשבילו נברא האדם.

Study of Torah and performance of its commandments strengthens the forces of our intelligence and weakens our tendency to indulge our various cravings. It is a well known fact that these cravings are a constituent part of our psyche and initially are more powerful drives than our intellect.

Question: Is it a matter of hygiene, morality, nationality (keeping to ourselves), mystical, or is it a matter of discipline?

Abarbanel rejects the medical reasons;

God forbid that I should believe such a thing! If that were the case then the Torah of the Lord would be no more than an insignificant and overly concise medical treatise. This is not the way of the Torah of the Lord or of its profound objectives. BESIDES, WITH OUR OWN EYES WE SEE HOW THE NATIONS THAT CONSUME THE FLESH OF THE PIG, DETESTABLE THINGS, THE MOUSE AS WELL AS THE OTHER IMPURE BIRDS, LAND ANIMALS, AND FISH, ARE ALL ALIVE AND WELL, STRONG AND NOT AT ALL FEEBLE OR FRAIL...ALL OF THIS IS A CLEAR INDICATION THAT THE DIVINE TORAH DID NOT COME TO HEAL THE BODY OR TO PROMOTE PHYSICAL HEALTH BUT RATHER TO FOSTER THE HEALTH OF THE SOUL AND TO HEAL ITS AFFLICTIONS. Therefore, the Torah forbade these foods because they have a deleterious effect on the pure and intelligent soul, breeding insensitivity in the human soul and corrupting its desires. This causes the formation of an evil nature that breeds a spirit of *tuma* (impurity) and banishes the spirit of *tahara* (purity) and holiness, concerning which David implored: "Do not take Your spirit of holiness from me!" (*Tehillim* 51:13).

Recanati, Italy, 13th cent.

Even as a craftsman cannot do his work without proper tools, so the soul cannot fulfill its task without a cooperating body. As it makes a great deal of difference for any precision work whether a craftsman possesses fine tools or not, so it is of great importance for the

human soul whether the body consists of fine or of coarse material. Ever the light shines the brighter through a good lamp, and the same trees yield different fruit according to the soil in which they are planted. (*The Jewish Dietary Laws*, p. 22)

Akeidat Yitzchak, Italy, 16th cent.

God forbid that we should imagine that the prohibition of foods is dependent on hygienic considerations. If that were the case, the Torah, far from being the work of the living God, would be no better than any medical treatise. Furthermore, THE SO-CALLED HARMFUL PHYSICAL EFFECTS OF SUCH FOODS COULD ALWAYS BE COUNTERACTED BY VARIOUS DRUGS. ANTIDOTES COULD ALWAYS BE DISCOVERED, RENDERING THE PROHIBITION NULL AND VOID AND THE WORDS OF THE TORAH OF NO LASTING VALUE. Not to mention the fact that the non-Jews suffer no ill effects from their eating of these forbidden foods, living to a good old age on the flesh of swine and other foods abominated by the Torah.

The real reason is quite different. The dietary prohibitions are motivated by spiritual prohibitions, to keep the soul healthy and pure and preserve it from being defiled and tainted by unclean and abominable passions, thoughts and ideas. To this the psalmist King David referred when he stated, "And Your holy spirit, take not from me," and, "A pure heart He created for me and an upright spirit He renewed within me." The foods permitted and prohibited by the Torah are termed respectively "clean" and "unclean" on this very account, in order to imply that the reason for the prohibition lies in the evil and immoral passions that eating them gives rise to ...

However, in addition to the spiritual dimensions, the *Akeidat Yitzchak* adds a further explanation as to the prohibition's motive:

It was not that their consumption was detrimental to the soul of man but rather that abstention from them was conducive to self-control and discipline in life. Self control... is the distinctive feature marking man as superior to animal. By not being allowed to eat just anything that comes to his mouth or that he fancies, he will be disciplined, from his childhood, to exercise the same self-control that he is called upon to display in the dietary field in other fields, in accordance with the

thought expressed at the end of the daily *Shema*, in the paragraph concerning the wearing of *tzitzit*: "That you not go astray after your own heart and after your own eyes." (Nechama Leibowitz expanding upon the *Akeidat Yitzchak*, Studies in the Weekly Sidra, First Series, *Parashat Shemini*)

Dr. I. Grunfeld, England, 20th cent.

In reality, the prohibition of meat and milk belongs to the category of laws that forbid a mixture of species as contrary to God's order of creation.... When God created His world, we are reminded again and again with grave solemnity, every creature was created in accordance with the law of its own species and it is intended to develop forever in the rhythm of this law. (*The Jewish Dietary Laws*, p. 16)

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, 19th cent. Germany

The human body is destined to be the instrument of the soul and is meant to implement its aims of holiness and moral freedom. Hence, the more passive and submissive the body is, the more it will yield to the dictates of the soul as man's higher nature. To condition man to be passive and submissive so as to maximize his sensitivity to the impulses of moral life, the Torah imposed the laws of *kashrut*, which represent these ideals. Vegetables and fruits are all permissible because they are the most passive substances. Those creatures that are herbivorous are certainly more passive than the more aggressive carnivores. Animals that chew their cud and have split hooves, such as the sheep, the goat and the ox, are, as a rule, herbivorous and relatively docile and passive, and they are thus permissible to eat. Carnivores, in general, do not possess the characteristics of kosher animals and may not be eaten. Likewise, aggressive and carnivorous birds of prey may not be eaten.