

MUST WE SACRIFICE PLEASURE?
ON KOSHER “CHEESEBURGERS”

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THE QUESTIONS WE WILL TRY TO ANSWER

- 1) Consider food that is entirely kosher, but looks and tastes non-kosher (e.g. an Impossible Burger with Swiss cheese melted on top, cooked in a kosher kitchen):
 - Should we be concerned that it looks like a cheeseburger?
 - Should we be concerned that it tastes like a cheeseburger?
 - In general, do we care about appearances—and if so, why?
- 2) How might these answers shed a little light on the basic purpose of *kashrut*?

THE BASIC CONCEPT OF *MAR'IT HA'AYIN*

- 1) A Biblical source used to support being concerned about perceptions
Moses said to them, “If you do this—if you go to battle as shock-troops, on the LORD’s behalf, and every one of you shock-fighters crosses the Jordan on the LORD’s behalf, until the LORD has dispossessed God’s enemies away, and the land has been subdued, on the LORD’s behalf, and then you return—you shall be clear before the LORD and before Israel (וְהָיִיתֶם נְקִיִּים מֵה' וּמִיִּשְׂרָאֵל), and this land shall be your holding under the LORD.

Numbers 32:22

2) A case from the Mishnah in which we are concerned about misperceptions

מי שנשרו כליו בדרך במים מהלך בהן ואינו חושש. הגיע לחצר החיצונה —
שוטחן בחמה, אבל לא כנגד העם.

Someone whose clothes fell in water while walking (on Shabbat) may walk while wearing them without being concerned (about wringing them out, which is prohibited). Upon reaching the outer courtyard, s/he may spread them out in the sun (to dry), but not in view of the public.

Mishnah Shabbat 22:4

3) A *halakhic* source limiting how much we need to worry about perceptions

הגה: ונהגו לעשות חלב משקדים, ומניחים בה בשר עוף, הואיל ואינו רק מדרבנן. אבל בשר בהמה, יש להניח אצל החלב שקדים, משום מראית העין.

Rabbi Moshe Isserles: It has become customary to make “milk” from almonds, and place poultry in it, since [milk and poultry] is only prohibited rabbinically. But with meat from flock or herd (i.e. beef, lamb, etc.), one should place almonds next to the milk, because of perceptions.

Shulhan Arukh Yoreh De'ah 87:3

4) A source from the Talmud: How are we to view the forbidden?

רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֲזַרְיָה אוֹמֵר: מִנֵּין שְׁלֹא יֹאמֵר אָדָם, "אִי אֶפְשִׁי לְלַבּוֹשׁ שְׁעֵטְנִיז, אִי אֶפְשִׁי לֶאֱכֹל בֶּשֶׂר חֲזִיר, אִי אֶפְשִׁי לְבַא עַל הָעֶרְוָה," אֲבָל, "אֶפְשִׁי, וַיְמָה אֶעֱשֶׂה וְאָבִי שֶׁבְּשָׂמַיִם גָּזַר עָלַי כִּךָ?" תְּלַמּוּד לֹאמֵר: 'וְאַבְדַּל אֶתְכֶם מִן הָעַמִּים לְהִיּוֹת לִי'—נִמְצָא פּוֹרֵשׁ מִן הָעֲבֵרָה וּמִקְבֵּל עָלָיו מַלְכוּת שָׁמַיִם.

Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah says: How do we know that a person shouldn't say, "I don't want to wear *sha'atnez* (clothing made of linen and wool), I don't want to eat pork, I don't want to sleep with someone forbidden to me," but [instead should say] "I want to, but what can I do—my Heavenly Parent prohibited these things to me?" From the verse, "I have separated you from the nations to be Mine" (Lev. 20:26)—so one is supposed to separate from transgression and accept the kingship of heaven.

5) A fascinating source on desiring the forbidden

Yalta said to her husband Rav Naḥman: Since, for any item that the Merciful One prohibited to us, God permitted to us something similar—

God prohibited eating blood, and allowed us to have liver...

prohibited eating the suet fat of a domesticated animal, but permitted the suet fat of an undomesticated animal;

prohibited to pork, but permitted the brain of a *shibuta* fish...

prohibited sexual relations with the wife of another man, but permitted one to marry a divorced woman while her previous husband was still alive...

—I would like a food that tastes like meat cooked in milk.

Rav Naḥman said to his cooks: Roast udders on a skewer for her.

Massekhet Hullin 109b

6) What's it all about?

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: דַּבֵּר אֶל-כָּל-עַדְת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם
קְדוֹשִׁים תִּהְיוּ, כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי ה' אֱ-לֹהֵיכֶם:

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the whole Israelite community and say to them: You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy. (NJPS)

Leviticus 19:1-2

6) On Holiness: What *and* How We Eat

You shall be holy. ... The Torah warned about sexual immorality, and about forbidden foods, and permitted sexual relations between a husband and wife, and consumption of meat and wine. If so, a person with great appetites could find room to be awash in promiscuity with his wife, or with his many wives, and to be among “those who guzzle wine, or glut themselves on meat” (Proverbs 23:20), and to speak as foully as he wishes, for that prohibition (against foul speech) is not mentioned in the Torah. And thus, he would be a pig/glutton with the permission of the Torah... It is with reference to these and similar matters that this general commandment [*You shall be holy*] is concerned.

Ramban on Leviticus 19:1-2