

When we discuss keeping a Torah obedient home, the first thought that comes to mind is kosher. As wives and mothers it is our responsibility to ensure that our kitchens conform to at the least, Biblical kosher standards.

The center of the Jewish home is the kitchen. It is where the weekly Shabbat and moedim meals are prepared. The table (kitchen/dining room) is where the moedim begin, and is a place of fellowship and worship.

Cleanliness

Everything that may abide the fire, you shall make to go through the fire, and it shall be clean; nevertheless it shall be purified with the water for impurity: and all that doesn't withstand the fire you shall make to go through the water. B'midbar 31:23

In the book of B'midbar (Numbers) YHWH instructed the children of Israel to make war on the Midianites. Afterward in chapter 31 they were instructed on how to cleanse themselves and any spoils taken.

Moving into the dietary obedience does not require that you get all new pots, pans, dishes, utensils and appliances, however they can all be cleansed thoroughly to initiate this step into obedience.

If your oven is self-cleaning, the heat from the oven would be sufficient to cleanse it.

If you move to a home which had previous owners or tenants, and you are not sure if they kept a kosher kitchen, you should clean the appliances thoroughly. If you move into a home that has new appliances that have never been used this will not be necessary.

Food

The instruction as to what The Eternal decreed as food and what is not can be found in Vayikra (Leviticus) 11. They are pretty simple instructions, however man has made it more difficult to do. When first starting out in dietary obedience, a person would not think they would have to check certain foods, that is until you research how it is processed or until you look at the ingredients. In these times keeping a kosher kitchen is a never-ending process. For instance, part of the "purification" process for cane sugar is to pass it through activated charcoal. This source of the charcoal can be from plant, mineral or animal. Very often the marrow of swine is used. Of course this is not going to be listed on the ingredients, so you must look for the kosher symbol on the packaging.

Kosher symbols

When any food item contains the kosher certification symbol it is considered fit for consumption. It is a good idea to familiarize yourself with the symbols. A few years ago I thought the little "k" on the Kroger gallon of milk meant it was kosher, but it probably just stood for "Kroger". The following website has a list of International symbols used in different countries that certify

kosher. Look for the symbols on the food packages. Just click the flag of your country. They also have a printable version that you can take with you for reference. It may seem like a lot, but I can assure that after a while it will become a habit and something you will do automatically as part of your routine.

http://www.hanefesh.com/edu/kosher_Food_Symbols.htm

What if a package does not contain a kosher symbol?

The word kosher means fit or appropriate (for consumption), but does this mean that if a product does not have one of the approved symbols, it is not kosher? No, the product may still be fit to eat. This is where you have to check the labels. If a product contains any ingredient or was processed with anything that The Eternal has told us is unclean (Vayikra 11) then it is UNFIT for consumption.

Let's discuss gelatin. Gelatin is used in a lot of foods, and also capsules for medicines. (one reason I switched to regular tablets). I am not going to get into the whys and wherefores, but you will see it listed in quite a few products, such as gum, candy, gravies, marshmallows, gummy bears, desserts, vitamins, etc. Long story short, it is a protein which is derived from collagen extracted from the bones, organs, intestines, and connective tissue of domesticated cattle, pigs, and horses. Obviously gelatin taken from pigs and horses would not be fit for consumption. How can you tell if gelatin is listed in the ingredients and there is no kosher symbol whether it is fit to eat? My method is to assume it is unfit until I can prove otherwise. These days that is very simple. It usually only takes a phone call or an email to the company. We can not assume that a can of beef gravy is fit because the label says "beef". Other ingredients may have been added to it which would make it unfit.

Another excellent website to help you is The Clean and Unclean Products List, <http://www.theisraelofgodrc.com/CUPL.html> This list contains actual product names and is classified for easy product lookup. They have done the emailing and phoning for you. The list is always being updated so give it a try. It is very helpful when making a grocery list or when you don't have time to check labels.

Meat

If you live near a kosher butcher and can afford to buy your meats from one, then that is a blessing, however, most of us don't and/or can't afford it. If we are doing our upmost to abide by the dietary instructions, but can not afford or get meat from animals that have been slaughtered in the kosher manner, called "shechita", I believe that The Eternal gives us grace concerning this, however we should be diligent in removing as much blood from the meat as possible. This process is called "kashering".

~If you are going to grill or broil your meat, kashering is not necessary.~

Kashering Meat (takes approximately 90 minutes)*

You will need a deep bowl, for soaking, coarse kosher salt, (I use Morton's), and an inclined board.

1. Rinse thawed meat thoroughly and put it in the bowl and add enough cold tap water so that the meat is covered. Allow to soak for 30 minutes. This softens the tissue in the meat.
2. After 30 minutes remove the meat from the water**, and lay it on an inclined board, so that the blood will be able to drain away from the meat.
3. Lightly salt the meat on both sides, including nooks, crevices, and caverns the meat might contain. The salt will draw the blood away from the meat.
4. Let the meat drain untouched for 1 hour. At the end of the hour rinse the salt from the meat thoroughly.

* When preparing chicken that has been cut up for frying, or baking, I put all the pieces in a bowl, cover with tap water, sprinkle in a little coarse salt and allow to sit for 1 hour. Then rinse thoroughly before cooking.

**Devarim (Deuteronomy) 15:23 says Only you shall not eat its blood; you shall pour it out on the ground as water. My grandmother used to do this, and when I started kashering my own meat, I also took the bloody water after soaking the meat and poured it on the ground as well.

Liver Lovers

The Liver is the organ that filters the blood, so it is filled with it. There is a special way to kasher the liver. Rinse it thoroughly. Score it in different directions. (Using a knife cut lines in the meat in a crisscrossing pattern). Lightly salt the liver on both sides, and cook on a broiling pan. The blood will drip into the pan away from the liver.

Salt free diet?

Any meat you broil or grill does not need to be kashered. When broiling use a regular broiling pan, (a shallow pan that has a lid with slates or holes) The meat is placed on the lid and during cooking the blood drips into the pan beneath it.

Meat & Dairy

It is the Jewish tradition not to mix meat and dairy. This not only means that they can not be cooked together, but they also may not be stored together. Many religious Jews have separate refrigerators and stoves. You must also wait a certain period of time before consuming dairy if you have had meat, and vice-versa.

This practice comes from the instructions not to cook a kid in it's mother's milk. Shemot (Exodus) 23:19; Devarim (Deuteronomy)14:21. In ancient times this dish was part of a fertility

ritual. The Eternal has told us that we are not to learn the ways of idolaters.

In these days most of our meats come from meat farms, and our milk from dairy farms. The likelihood that the source of your meat and the source of your dairy is mother and child is very very small, unless you raise your own livestock.

The official MONJA position is that meat and dairy together are fine, but please make sure that your meat is thoroughly cooked (well done) before adding the dairy for example as in stroganoff, pizza or a cheeseburger. Also, please be considerate of those who do not mix the two during times fellowship so that we do not offend one another.

Fish

According to Biblical instruction only fish that has both fins and scales are considered fit to eat. Years ago, in my bk (before kosher) days I ate crab and went into anaphylactic shock. The reaction was so severe, that I am now unable to eat fish at all. It could kill me. I share this because eating outside of Biblical instructions could kill us slowly or quickly. Please do not cast the dietary instructions aside!

I know that this all may seem like a lot, especially if you are just starting out, but rest assured that it doesn't take long to become a natural habit. We are obeying The Eternal in everything and when we take time to do these things we are in effect, remembering Him, worshipping Him and giving honor to Him.