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**Why Kosher?**

**By David Lawrence**

Why Kosher – "You will be to Me a Kingdom of Cohanim, and a Holy Nation"

Most likely, if you ask the average American Jew who doesn't keep kosher why the Torah has dietary laws, he'll tell you that the reason is because Moses didn't have USDA supervision to ensure that pigs are healthy and don't have trichinosis. Many modern Jews think that the laws of Kashrut are simply primitive health regulations that have become obsolete with modern methods of food preparation. But then, one wonders, observant Jews do eat only kosher food, and are very strict about it. As much as to go through arduous procedures to maintain their kosher diets. Is this because they are primitive?

Why do Jews keep kosher?

The answer is but one: Because God so ordered and that the kosher laws are part of the covenant between the Creator of the world with the Jewish nation signed 3316 years ago, Shabbat morning, 6 Sivan, in Mt. Sinai. To find Kashrut obligatory and meaningful, one has to be convinced that God created this world and cared to reveal us the reason and goal of His creation in the Torah He gave us then, the Written and Oral.

Torah laws fall into two main categories: Mishpatim and Chukim. The first includes the laws that even if not given by God, man could deduct them from his own reason. Like: Do not murder, Do not steal etc. The second consists of laws that man couldn't have figured out by himself was it not for God's decree. Kosher laws fall into the second category.

Nevertheless, after decreed by God, Jews must study their meaning. The Torah can be understood on various levels. First is the ordinary one. In this level, kosher laws, as well as all other, are aimed to impose rules on what one can and cannot do, in order to train him in self-control, requiring us to learn to master even our most basic, primal instincts. To distinguish us from beasts by exercising our free choice to realize the image of God in us. A beast eats what it likes whenever it likes in what manner it likes. A man who doesn't want to succumb to his beastly instincts does even this basic action of eating with restrictions. He first examines whether this food is allowed to be eaten, namely, if it's kosher, he then takes care to cook it in the rightful manner, then he doesn't just devour it, but makes a blessing.

## Why Kosher?

"A person shouldn't say: I don't want to eat pig meat or wear shatnez (a forbidden mixture of wool and linen). Rather he should say: I could do these things, but what can I do – my Father in Heaven ordered me not to do them." (Sifra, Kedoshim, 10).

There is a higher level of comprehension of God's law. A Jew, whether he knows the deeper meaning of every commandment or not, knows however that by executing them he materializes his role as God's so called partner in maintaining creation and bringing it to its goal. The Torah calls the Jews a "holy people" and hence imposes on them a kind of life that complements their task to be holy. Of course, for very superficial people who react only to material stimulus, the mere existence of the soul is something to doubt. For more advanced human beings however, by tracing the implications of the simple assumption that we have souls, it is easy to reorient ourselves from a perspective where we viewed the Torah's edicts as senseless acts to a new vantage point where it is perfectly reasonable to understand them as sensible and vital.

To the superficial observer who watches the numerous restrictions, Torah life imposes on the observant Jew – including the kosher diet – it must appear that he leads a severely confined existence. His life is governed by rules and regulations that regiment the minutest aspects of every sort of human behavior – thought, speech and action. But the superficial glance only encompasses life on the surface, the physical world. It is quite true that physically the observant Jew is more constrained than other people. However, the observant Jew is aware that the body is but a vessel, a dress, that confines the human spirit and is but a temporary abode until he finishes to serve his term in this mundane world and returns to the true home, the infinite world of the soul.

Pertaining to kosher laws, since the Torah calls the Jews a "holy people" it prescribes a holy diet (see Deut. 14:2–4). You are what you eat. Kosher is God's diet for spirituality. The Torah teaches that non-kosher food blocks the spiritual potential of the soul.

So, next time when you invite a yarmulke wearing Jew to a juicy Texan steak, don't offhandedly dismiss his refusal as another sign that those ultra-orthodox guys don't know what's "good life". It might as well be that his very refusal to your kind offer stems exactly from the fact that he is the one who knows what is good life.

Written by David Lawrence, founder of Kosher Expeditions (

<http://www.kosherexpeditions.com>

), a

kosher travel company, providing kosher vacations of the highest quality to exotic destinations worldwide.

**Kosher Food Popular With Health Conscious Of All Faiths**

**By Miklos Margaretten**

## Why Kosher?

Until recently, it was close to impossible for the kosher or health conscious traveler to keep his religious or healthy meals while in transit. Now developments in the kosher food industry are making this challenge much easier.

The health conscious and dieters are finding Kosher food is better for you and offers a very wide range of items and dishes, and this trend is spreading rapidly.

Keeping kosher means following dietary laws handed down through the centuries among the Jewish faithful. Kosher has its roots in the Old Testament. Kosher laws are generally more strict than U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) standards.

Religious inspectors also rule out sick or injured animals that would be normally be accepted in non-Kosher markets.

In our modern world where most animals are often treated roughly, keeping Kosher means eating a much healthier grade of meat.

Kosher tradition features a major group of foods known as Parve. Parve includes a huge variety of fruits, vegetables, and grains in their natural, unprocessed state. This is exactly what many people who are trying to eat a healthier, low-fat, high-fiber diet are looking for.

These days Kosher food is widely available and often can be ordered pre-packaged via the Internet or mail. This makes a perfect option for anyone who wants to try Kosher, eat Kosher occasionally, or needs a stash of good Kosher meals when traveling.

Options include a wide variety of vegetables and salads along with meat, chicken, and fish dinners. Also available are salt-free meals and veggie dinners for people with special dietary needs. You can chose from menu items with traditional Jewish names to items that might seem to come from your average neighborhood restaurant. The difference is that everything is prepared with very high Kosher standards for ingredients and preparation.

People everywhere are starting to view Kosher certification as a mark of a food's superior quality, cleanliness, and healthfulness.

Miklos Margaretten is the owner of Kosher Meals To Go in New York. His site features a very wide variety of fine Kosher meals pecially insulated double-wrapped packages that can be ordered y anyone, including travelers and people on the go. See

<http://www.bestkosherfood.com>

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