

Singer-Jordan Edition
Re'eh

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The Torah mentions in three locations, including in this week's *parsha*, that we are not to cook a kid in its mother's milk. This is the Torah prohibition of *baser b'chalav*, which means that we are not allowed to cook milk and meat together; eat milk and meat that was cooked together; or even derive benefit from such a mixture.

This is a unique *kasbrus* prohibition because though we are not allowed to eat *treif*, we can cook it for or sell it to someone who can. *Baser b'chalav* is also unique since the milk and meat on their own were kosher before being combined. In fact, the Torah prohibition of *baser b'chalav* only takes effect if the milk and meat are kosher before being cooked together. If either the milk or meat is not *kosher*, then they do not result in the *issur* (prohibition) of *baser b'chalav*, though (they would still be forbidden as *treif*).

That's the easy part. There are technical issues to consider, such as what constitutes cooking according to the Torah, and what can be done if such a mixture occurs accidentally. There are also a considerable number of rabbinical laws to keep a Jew distant from the Torah *issur*.

Then there is the *balachab* of waiting between milk and meat meals. Since the Torah prohibition only begins if the milk and meat are cooked together, it is rabbinical that we do not eat them together *uncooked*. The Torah does not prohibit taking a cold piece of cheese and putting it on top of a cold burger and eating them together, but the rabbis have. Since the entire nation accepted this tradition, it cannot be undone.

The point that the Torah makes such a big deal about the combination of milk and meat, more so than many other *issurim* like *treif*, the rabbis felt it good practice to distance milk and meat as much as possible. Since dairy products tend to digest relatively quickly, a person can have a meat meal immediately after a milk meal if the cheese is not so hard as to take six hours to digest (my Danish friend used to bring

back cheese like that from Holland to *yeshivab*, and the smell cleared all of us, except for him, from the bench). You also have to make sure that you thoroughly clean your mouth and hands of all traces of dairy products before touching anything to do with the meal.

The reverse is not the case. Meat, because of its fatty nature can leave a taste of meat in a person's mouth for an extended time (*Rashi*), it takes longer to digest, and meat tends to get stuck between the teeth (*Rambam*). For these reasons, the rabbis instituted a time gap between the end of a meat meal and the beginning of a milk one of six full hours. This is the time for meat to become fully digested, and any meat stuck between the teeth to lose its status as food.

The six-hour waiting period is standard for all Jews (*Asbkenazim* and *Sephardim*), except those who have a *balachically* established tradition of less time. The *Zohar* says that a person should not eat meat within one hour of dairy, and some follow this tradition. The *Rema* explains that though the custom in his community (Krakow) was to wait an hour between meals, one should wait six hours. Nowadays, most Jews wait six hours, though Dutch Jews wait one hour, and German Jews wait three hours.

There is also an opinion that six hours does not mean six full hours, but rather *into* the sixth hour; that is at least five and a half hours. Even people who usually wait six full hours between their last bite of meat and a *milchig* meal will rely on this opinion in a time of necessity, like for a *mitzvah* such as *Seudas Sblisbis* on days when only five and half hours separate the two *Shabbos* days meals.

The *balachos* of running a *kosher* kitchen are many. Unfortunately, not enough people take the time to learn the intricacies, and either make mistakes or end up being overly stringent. I entered the *Smichab* Program to learn *kasbrus* because my wife and I thought that just mentioning milk and meat in the same sentence meant we had to *kasber* the kitchen!

Just kidding. We weren't that bad. But we did have *shaylos* (halachic questions) regarding situations that did come up, and it wasn't always convenient to ask someone when they did. So I dove into the *Shulchan Aruch* and learned the laws so that I could answer the more basic ones myself. But today, you can get the same information and so much more from one of the many books on the topic, or just from a *kasbrus* site. As people say, "You are what you eat," which means the care we take when it comes to eating *kosher* says a lot to God about what kind of Jew we are, and want to be.

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