

# WHO DO YOU TRUST?

*by Rabbi Raymond Beyda*

The laws of kosher food are presented to the Jewish people by Moshe Rabenu in his final days of leadership to highlight their importance to the holy status of our people. Throughout the generations Jews have observed these complex laws to insure that all that they ingest is in accordance with the commandments of our Torah. Many who have no idea at all as to what the Torah demands are aware of the fact that the Jewish people observe a unique set of dietary rules.

In today's world of mass produced packaged foodstuffs and processed products that require preservatives and extra ingredients to extend their shelf life supervisory agencies have become the buzz with the kosher consumer. The question is: with so many competing organizations with such a wide range of standards who do you trust before partaking of the product offered to whet your palate and satisfy your hunger? Restaurants also pose the problem as to who is reliable and who is not trustworthy. Many places "look" kosher, while others claim to be and some present an assortment of customers who look observant. Who do you trust?

Rabbi Yisrael Salanter was one of the giants of European Jewry 150 years ago. He is known as the one who popularized the study of "mussar" - Jewish ethics to the Torah Jew. One time he entered a shul in a town where he was not known. A man in the shul approached him and revealed that he was having guests and requested that Rav Yisrael do the shehitah - the complex ritual slaughtering required to make the chickens he wanted to serve kosher. The Rabbi asked that the would-be host wait until the next day before he would respond.

The next day - before the man could ask for his decision - Rav Yisrael asked the man: "Could you lend me 50,000 rubles?"

"50,000 rubles ", the man screeched in response, "I hardly know you. How do I know I could trust you for such a large loan?"

"You don't know me? You seem to know me well enough to trust my skill at slaughtering your chickens. You, therefore, certainly should trust me with your money", was the wise man's quick rebuttal.

The nature of people is to accept doubt and proceed into dangerous territory when the matter in question is in the realm of the spiritual. On the other hand, most people are very cautious when faced with a potential loss of material capital. This is really the reverse of how we should be. The Kabbalah teaches that all unkosher foods that are ingested besides being forbidden attach an

impure spirit to the one who ingested the unkosher item. This harmful consequence takes place whether the food is eaten intentionally or in error, knowingly or not. Every person has a responsibility to himself or herself to guard the purity of the holy soul Hashem has implanted within the body. Sometimes the protection of oneself is just a matter of "Whom do you trust?"

Shabbat Shalom

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