

YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

by Rabbi Raymond Beyda

The laws of kosher food are introduced to the Jewish people in this week's Parasha. All the commandments must be performed simply because God has commanded us. However, the Torah concludes its presentation of dietary laws with a strict warning of another reason not to partake of "taref." "Do not contaminate yourselves through them lest you become contaminated through them" [chapter 11, verse 43]

Messilat Yescharim explains: "Forbidden food brings impurity into the heart and soul of a person--literally--until God distances Himself from the one who ate them... Forbidden foods are worse than other sins because they actually enter a person's body and become a part of his flesh."

In more contemporary terms "you are what you eat!" When Moshe was rescued from the Nile by Par-oh's daughter, he would not nurse from the Egyptian woman. Rashi explains that the mother's milk has in it the elements of the food's she has consumed, therefore Moshe, who was to converse with God, could not partake of such impurity. Mother's milk, which is merely a byproduct of what she has eaten, has in it the potential "dull the heart and instill a bad nature in the infant." [Rama/Yoreh Deah 81:7]

There was once a great sage named Elisha ben Avuyah. He was the teacher of Rebbe Meir! He became a heretic denying the truth of our Holy Torah. In attempting to explain the cause of this dramatic turnaround, Rebbe Nattan said, "When Acher's mother was pregnant with him, she passed before a place of idol worship and smelled the aroma of the forbidden offerings. She then ate of that food and it seeped into her like snake's venom." Astonishing! The food eaten by an expectant mother resulted in her child, a Torah giant, to years later completely abandon the ways of our fathers.

Today eating kosher is not as difficult as it was just a few years ago. The availability of foods and restaurants that can satisfy even the most diverse and discriminating palates has flourished and now encompasses a broad range of choices. We should all take advantage of this situation and guard ourselves from the spiritual dangers of non-kosher food consumption. Text Copyright © 2007 by [Rabbi Raymond Beyda](#) and **Torah.org**.