



There's No Such Thing As "Glatt" Kosher Eggs

Recently, I ordered glatt kosher meals on a trans-Atlantic flight. When I received a double-wrapped, heated omelet for breakfast, the label professing it to be glatt almost made me refrain from eating it, for the simple reason that an omelet — at least a non-meat one — cannot possibly be glatt kosher.

Among the food-related laws in the Torah is the seemingly inapplicable "Do not eat meat from an animal torn [*treifah*] in the field; you should throw it to the dogs" (*Shemos* 22:30). The Rambam, in one of his most beautiful and logical derivations (*Maachalos Asuros*, 4:6-11), develops the connection between that seemingly obscure occurrence and the daily issues of *treifah*, which is where "glatt" comes in.

The Rambam explains that a torn animal refers to an animal attacked by a lion or leopard, or a bird attacked by a hawk, that did not die. If it had died, there would be no need for the law of *treifah*, because the animal would already be prohibited because of *neveilah*, which refers to an animal that died any way other than by *shechitah*. Furthermore, it cannot be referring to a kid that a wolf had grabbed by the tail that was then saved by the shepherd, for the Torah would never refer to such a healthy animal as meat fit for dogs. It must therefore refer to an animal that was mortally wounded by a predatory animal and was then properly *shechted*.

Even though such an animal was *shechted*

properly before it died, the Torah prohibits it as a "*treifah*." The Rambam explains that just as it is irrelevant how an animal dies — if it is not through *shechitah*, it is a *neveilah* — so too is it immaterial how it received its wound, whether from an attack by a lion, a fall from a roof, or an arrow to the heart; the animal is still forbidden as a *treifah*. Thus, any animal with a physical wound from which it cannot recover (as opposed to being old and weak) is considered a *treifah*. Therefore, only animal products can be *treifah*; *pareve* chewing gum cannot technically be "*treif*," although it can certainly be nonkosher.

It would seem that most animals are healthy; they do not regularly die in the fields, and are thus not *treifos*. Chazal agreed with that assessment and therefore did not mandate an inspection to look for *treifus* in every animal (Rashi, *Chullin* 13a, d.h. *Pesach*). Regular inspections for *treifus* would not only raise the cost of kosher meat astronomically, it would be nearly impossible to look for every one of the possible defects that can render an animal a *treifah* in thousands of animals on a consistent basis.

This does not imply that a questionable *treifah* may be ignored. Harav Moshe Feinstein, zt"l, for example (*Igros Moshe*, YD 1:19), required that fowl be opened by a Jew who is at least cognizant of the laws of *treifus*, although not necessarily an expert, so that he will know to ask about any problems

he may see.

If, however, there were a particular *treifah* that occurred more frequently, there would indeed be a requirement to inspect for it. Rashi already notes the practice, accepted in all Jewish circles, to inspect the lung of every mammal (not fowl) to look for *sirchos*, adhesions, because they are more common than other forms of *treifus*. A hole in the lung renders the animal a *treifah*, and therefore *sirchos* — pathologically arising attachments between different sections of the lung, or between the lung and the thoracic cavity — are problematic either because they indicate the presence of a perforation that has been insufficiently sealed (Rashi) or because they can become loosened due to the constant expanding and contracting of the lungs, thereby causing a hole to develop (*Tosafos*, *Rambam*).

The Rashba, who considers the obligation to check the lungs a rabbinic *takanah*, applied to one who purposely neglects the inspection the verse "One who breaks fences shall be bitten by a snake" (*Koheles* 10:8), and the Rema ruled that even if the lack of inspection was due to an accidental loss of the animal's lung, the animal is in general forbidden.

In order to comply with this, all kosher meat productions employ a *bodek*, an inspector, to work alongside the *shochet*, each of whom is usually trained in both tasks and is thus known as a *shochet u'bodek* (*SHu'B*). Before the animal is cut up, the

bodek performs a *bedikas penim*, an internal inspection of the *in situ* lungs, by sticking his hand through a cut in the abdominal wall and through the diaphragm into the thoracic cavity to perform a tactile examination. He can thereby determine if there are any adhesions, and if yes, to where on the lung or in the thoracic cavity those adhesions are connected. This is generally noted in a diagram of the lungs that accompanies the animal as it is processed. The lung is then carefully removed for a *bedikas chutz*, where it is visually inspected and then inflated to test for any holes.

Not all adhesions render the animal a *treifah*. A complex section of the *Shulchan Aruch* describes many types of adhesions in intricate detail (YD 39:4-13), explaining which are kosher and which are not. The Mechaber rules that *sirchos* that come off with an extremely gentle touch may be permitted.

The Rema refers to a slightly less gentle method of testing adhesions and also mandated that all lungs be checked by inflation. The Rema's method of testing was controversial, and the Rema himself expressed hesitation about aspects of this leniency. However, because it had already gained wide acceptance and did have a firm basis, he ruled that it may be followed. But he cautions that the testing must be performed by an exceedingly G-d-fearing individual.

A less gentle system of checking the lungs, involving peeling *sirchos* off the surface of the lung, developed subsequent to the Rema and engendered even greater controversy. The Chasam Sofer (YD 39) rules that if the peeling is done by an expert, G-d-fearing *shochet*, then "*yochelu anavim v'yisba'u* — let the humble eat and be satisfied" (*Tehillim* 22:27).

Nonetheless, he advises that a *shomer nafsho*, a religiously scrupulous person, should distance himself from this practice. In most prewar European cities, the Rav of the city was in charge of determining which *sirchos* disqualified an animal from being kosher. This method of peeling became standard in almost all European communities.

So where does "glatt" enter the picture? Because inspecting the lungs in order to

declare an animal kosher was difficult and required a Rav to decide dubious cases, some preferred to eat only animals about

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which there was no need for a rabbinical *psak* or decision regarding the lungs. "Glatt," the Yiddish term for smooth, describes a lung without any major adhesions that will feel relatively smooth to the *bodek* and will sail through the inspection process.

In theory, non-glatt meat, if inspected properly, is one-hundred-percent kosher for Ashkenazim, although many Ashkenazic authorities were of the opinion that they should be stringent if possible. Today, for a variety of reasons related to changes in production methods, most U.S. kashrus-certifying organizations will only certify meat that is glatt. An important postscript is that the Rema's testing leniency is not applicable to young, tender animals such as a lamb, kid, or calf (YD 39:13), and thus all lamb chops, veal, or other meat from young animals must be "beyond" glatt and have no adhesions at all.

Because the slightly less gentle method of checking lung adhesions is approved by the Rema but not by Rav Yosef Karo, Sephardim, who follow the rulings of Rav Karo, eat only "Beit Yosef" meat, named after Rav Yosef Karo's extensive commentary on the *Tur*. The "Beit Yosef" standard followed today by most kosher meat production plants follows the Rema in that all *sirchos* require checking, but only allows *sirchos* that come off with the extremely gentle method described by the Mechaber. Several Moroccan communities, and Yemenites, practice certain other leniencies different from those of Ashkenazim regarding *sirchos*.

Following the example set by the *Rishonim* regarding checking for infrequent but more common *treifos*, modern kashrus organizations have instituted additional checks. For example, it is not uncommon for cattle to ingest sharp metal objects that can cause holes in the second stomach

compartment (the *beis hakosos*). This has prompted farmers to feed their cattle large magnets that can attract and isolate the

danger, and has led to having a *bodek* check all *beis hakosos* walls in meat processing plants where the problem is common.

Chickens in Israel (but not in the U.S.) not infrequently have problems with their leg tendons, the *tzomes hagiddin*. This has led to the institutionalization of inspections of the *tzomes hagiddin*, either by visual and tactile examination of the closed leg (non-*mehadrin hashgachos*) or by opening the leg (*mehadrin hashgachos*).

There are also *treifos* that apply to the lungs of fowl. These predominantly relate to the color and texture of the lungs, but because chicken lungs do not have the same structure as mammal lungs and do not "hang" in the thoracic cavity, the *treifos* associated with them do not relate to *sirchos*. Most Israeli slaughterhouses have adopted a policy of inspecting all fowl lungs to look for these *treifos*, while in the U.S. only spot checks are performed. Because these defects do not relate to *sirchos* and the method by which they are checked, a kosher chicken lung cannot be technically be termed "glatt."

From all this, it is clear that referring to chicken, fish, or dairy products as glatt is a misuse of the term in the original sense. In addition, even when referring to meat, it attests only to the status of the lung but makes no comment about the standards of the *shechitah*, inspection for other *treifos*, or any other aspect of the meat's kashrus. Colloquially, however, it has taken on the meaning of a product about which there was no need for a rabbinic ruling, just as "*treif*" has taken on the meaning of something that is not kosher at all. [M](#)

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