



Managing Your Mitzvos Class #13 Maintaining a Kosher Home – Part V



Maintaining a Kosher Home – Part V:

6 – Non-Jews & the Kosher Home:

It is important to realize that having Non-Jewish help [live in or live out] working in your home can potentially create many Halachik and Hashkafik issues within your home. A Jewish home is a 'miniature sanctuary' and must maintain the high spiritual standards that have been established. One should consult a Rabbi and familiarize oneself with all the issues and hazards involved before employing a Non-Jew. It is optimal to have observant Jewish help in your home that is thoroughly knowledgeable of Jewish law.

There are many stories of people who were surprised to find out how the Non-Jewish help made their homes treif and fed non-Kosher food to their children. This is not an issue to be treated lightly. Since the average non-Jew is not sensitive to the issues of Kashrus, they can not be trusted in this area.

1. Initially, it is forbidden to leave a Non-Jewish babysitter or cleaning lady alone in your home, even for only a few hours and even if she is not in charge of the cooking, for the following reasons:
 - She may bring non-Kosher food into your house and cook it for her own consumption.
 - She may cook for the children/family and not be careful regarding the separation between meat and dairy.
2. If you must leave them alone in the house, make sure to do at least one of the following:
 - You must inform her that either you or a neighbor will be “popping in” from time to time during the course of her stay. [and you indeed do come in and out]
 - Convincingly warn her that should she cook anything or handle any food without your permission she will be fired! [you must mean this]
 - Lock up all your food or put signs on the doors, drawers, etc, that will let you know if the food has been touched by her.
 - Turn the power off to the stove, oven, microwave, etc. and turn off the hot water to the kitchen.
3. If a person was not aware of these laws and is concerned about the status of one's dishes, we can rely on a lenient opinion that will not require you to kosher the utensils. You may use the utensils after not using them for a 24 hour period. This leniency is only given for the first time that you became aware of these laws.

Wine [Stam Yaynom]:

1. If a Non-Jew merely touches an opened bottle of wine, moves a bottle, or pours it, the wine is forbidden to drink.
2. Although you may not drink it, you may derive benefit from it and give it away or sell it to a Non-Jew.
3. Cooked wine – “Mevushal” does not fall under the above prohibition.
4. A sealed bottle of wine does not fall under the above prohibition.
5. Grape juice has the same status of wine.
6. Liquors, whiskey, and wine-vinegar do not fall under this prohibition.

7. One should not leave an opened bottle of wine in an area where a Non-Jew may come in contact with it. [e.g. opened bottles in the refrigerator on a day that the cleaning lady is at your home] Any opened bottles should be locked up.
8. If you have left an opened bottle of wine out and you are not sure if the Non-Jew has touched it – consult your Rabbi.

Cooking [Bishul Akum]:

1. It is forbidden to eat food **cooked** by a Non-Jew. This prohibition applies only when the non-Jew performed the **entire** cooking process.
2. The prohibition applies regardless if the Non-Jew cooked the food for a non-Jew or for a Jew.
3. There is no prohibition involved in the food preparation process.
4. If the Non-Jew performed the entire cooking process, the food is rendered to a non-Kosher status, and the utensils which were used may need to be koshered. However, you may derive benefit from it and give it away or sell it to a non-Jew.
5. If a Jew [even a minor or a secular Jew] participated in some way in any one of the activities of the cooking process, then the cooked food does not become prohibited. Such activities include:
 - Turning on the appliance. Even leaving it on all day or setting a timer for turning on the appliance.
 - Putting the food on the fire at the beginning, or even removing it in the middle of the process and then putting it back on the fire.
 - Increasing the heat; or shutting off the heat and turning it back on.
 - Stirring the pot where it hastens the cooking process.
6. All types of cooking are prohibited, which includes: roasting, frying, any electric methods, microwaves, etc.
7. There is no prohibition for the reheating of completed cooked foods, even if they are presently in a frozen state.
8. There are two criteria that both must be met in order for food to fall under this prohibition:
 - Foods which are usually not eaten in their raw state and are usually eaten cooked.
 - Foods that are significant enough to “grace the table of king.” This is generally defined as food you would serve to invited guests.
9. The second criterion is subjective, depending on customs, circumstances, and places. Consult your Rabbi to determine which foods fall under this category.
10. There is no prohibition for foods not falling under both of these criteria.
11. Some examples of foods that may not be cooked:
 - Eggs, noodles, meats, pastry, blintzes, latkes, sweet potatoes, mushrooms, and rice.
12. Some examples of foods that may be cooked:
 - Corn, popcorn, hot cereals, most raw vegetables, potatoes, applesauce, and French fries.
13. If the Non-Jew did perform the entire cooking process, there are still leniencies that can be employed under certain circumstances that will correct the prohibition. Consult your Rabbi when this occurs.
14. If a person was unaware of these laws, there are lenient opinions for this first time, and all the food which was cooked remains kosher and there is no need to kosher the utensils. This leniency is only given for the first time. In addition, one should wait 24 hours before using the utensils again.
15. Allowing the Non-Jew to cook with their own utensils for their own consumption is not a practical solution, unless they have their own private kitchen and/or stove.

7 – Eggs:

1. Jewish custom is to visibly check every egg for blood spots. You do that by cracking each egg into a small glass dish, and inspect it from on top and underneath.
2. If you find a blood spot in the egg, throw out the entire egg or give it to a Non-Jew.

3. If you neglected to check the eggs for blood spots and have subsequently mixed the eggs with other food to the point where you can no longer recognize where the egg is, you may eat the food.
4. In the case above, if you do notice that one egg had a bloodspot and that the egg is inseparable from the others, consult your Rabbi.
5. One should never boil one egg by itself in a pot. Always boil with at least 3 eggs or more in the pot. When the eggs are boiled, cool them off together. Do not remove any eggs from the pot until they have cooled off. Do not remove **hot eggs** from the pot one at a time with a utensil.
6. If after cooking some eggs and you do notice that one egg contains a bloodspot, throw out that egg and then consult your Rabbi.
7. One is not required to check eggs before eating them, if they were not opened before cooking.
8. Whenever you have a question for the Rabbi let him know if the eggs were “Natural Eggs” or regular eggs.

8 - When to call the Rabbi:

In the course of maintaining your Kosher home, it is inevitable that situations will arise where you are not sure what to do or that you have made a mistake and is not sure if you have made some food or utensil treif. Therefore, it is important to establish a relationship with a Rabbi that knows you and that you are comfortable asking questions to. Without consulting a Halachik authority you may be either unnecessarily stringent or you may have a home that is becoming treif. The following is a partial list of situations where one should call a Rabbi:

1. Dairy and Meat food were mixed together.
2. Dairy / Pareve utensils were used with Meat products [or vice versa].
3. Dairy / Pareve / Meat utensils that come in contact with each other.
4. Pareve food was used [or will be used] with a Dairy utensil and you want to eat it with Meat or Meat utensils [or vice versa].
5. Dairy food that falls or splatters or steams onto Meat / Pareve utensils [or vice versa].
6. Cooking Pareve / Dairy in an oven / microwave that was used for Meat [or vice versa].
7. Dairy / Pareve utensil washed with Meat or falling in the Meat sink [or vice versa].
8. Food or utensils coming into contact with the stove top, counters or tables.
9. What items need to go to the Mikveh?
10. A Non-Jew cooked food for you in your home.
11. You inadvertently used non- Kosher food with your utensils.
12. How to Kosher utensils that have inadvertently become treif.

It is important to be aware of the following details when asking your question:

1. Were the food, utensils, water, etc. hot [yad soledes bo] or not?
2. Which utensils in question were used hot with Meat / Dairy in the previous 24 hours before the incident in question?
3. What is the ratio between one type of food with another [i.e. Meat and Milk] when they inadvertently were mixed together?
4. What is the size of the utensils in question?
5. What material was the utensil made out of?
6. Was the food involved spicy like an onion, etc?
7. Do you follow Ashkenaz or Sefard custom in your home?