The Meat of the Matter

Part 3

**Checking The Lungs:**

We mentioned in the previous articles in this series that, according to the letter of the Torah law, once an animal is slaughtered properly it need not be checked for treifos. Although the Mishnah (Chullin 83) delineates 18 types of treifos that render an animal non-kosher, and the Rambam adds more details – and comes up with a total list of 70 types of treifos – the accepted ruling is in accordance with the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 39:1) that, “In regular cases, one need not check for treifos, with the exception of the lung of domestic and wild animals, which one must check for “sirchos” (adhesions).”

From the commentators on the Shulchan Aruch, it is clear that not only does one not need to check for treifos, we actually do not know how to do check for treifos at all because we have no tradition in this area. Thus, if something would seem wrong with a part of the animal which would necessitate it to be checked, we would be unable to determine that it is kosher because we lack this expertise, and we would have to dispose of the entire animal.

The reason we have to check the lungs specifically is because it is quite common to find sirchos on them. As we explained in the previous articles, this is known as a “mi’ut hamatzui”, a minority that is common, and, in such cases, we rule that examination is required as a stringency. In such cases, even though it is true that we lack expertise in how to check, since this examination is a stringency, rather than a necessity to eat the meat of the animal, we do rely on whatever expertise we do have. For this reason, we are accustomed to check the lungs of birds as well, and also to check the gullet (food pipe) of fattened hens, as these also are common areas for problems to be are found.

In recent generations, it has also become customary to check the “tzumas hagidin” (place where the sinews meet) of fowl. This is because it has become quite common for various aviary diseases to cause tears in the sinews. In various countries, other types of animal diseases which cause various kinds of treifos have also become common, and, in such instances, leading sages of those places have ruled that additional checking is required. An example of this is in South Africa, where rabbinic authorities ruled that the stomach must be checked.

**How To Check A Lung:**

The checking of the lung consists of two steps: The bedikas p’nim (inner checking) and the bedikas chutz (outer checking).

The inner checking is done as follows: The belly is cut open, beginning with the digestive organs, including the stomachs and intestines. Behind them, towards the top of the animal, are the respiratory organs (organs used for breathing) and organs used for blood transmission, including the lungs, heart, liver, and kidneys. Between the digestive organ and respiratory organs is a partition known as the diaphragm. Chazal refer to this partition as the “tarpash”. Once the diaphragm is cut open, the respiratory organs are visible.

Since one must check all around the lungs to make sure that they never had any tears, they may not be removed from the animal before the bedikah is made. This bedikah consists of the examiner placing his

hands inside the chest cavity and carefully feeling the lungs. Although holes and tears cannot be felt in this manner, the examiner will be able to feel any adhesions that may be there.

There is a dispute between Rashi and Tosfos as to why an adhesion on the lung renders it a treifah. Rashi says it is because this demonstrates that the lung once had a tear that was subsequently covered by the adhesion. Tosfos says it is because the adhesion would have eventually torn off as a result of the animal’s breathing and caused a tear. Even though the animal was slaughtered before the adhesion tore off, the animal is considered non-kosher since it ultimately would have developed a tear. There are many practical differences between the two opinions, and we are stringent and uphold both views.

The lungs are divided by two “unos” (literally ears, known in English as cranial lobes)), lobes of flesh that look like ears; three “umos” (literally mothers, known in English as caudal lobes), larger lobes of flesh; and one smaller lobe of flesh that resembles a rose that is known as the “inanusah d’varda” (known in English as the intermediate lobe).

When the examiner places his hands into the chest cavity, he must make sure that the “unos” and “umos” are in the right places and have not shifted or moved. He also must make sure the lungs have the right amount of “unos” and “umos”. He further must make sure that there are no adhesions connecting any of them together or to the actual lungs or diaphragm.

If the examiner does find an adhesion, he must mark its place to be rechecked later. The lungs are then removed from the animal for the bedikas chutz. The lungs are blown up before the bedikas chutz, which allows for them to be examined extremely thoroughly to see whether or not there truly are any tears in them at all.

**The Bais Yosef’s View:**

The Bais Yosef is of the opinion that one should be stringent and not eat any meat from an animal that has any adhesions, even tiny adhesions (which are referred to by Chazal as “ririn”). There are various traditions as the exact intentions of the Bais Yosef, and the large kashrus agencies have different standards used to determine if an animal passes muster to be considered kosher according to the Bais Yosef.

In this series so far, we have merely touched the surface of the complexities of determining an animal’s kashrus. One who wishes to delve deeper into this topic should study the Shulchan Aruch, Simanim 35-39.

Once an animal is determined to not be a treifah, what else needs to be done to make an animal’s meat ready to eat for a kosher consumer? In the final part of this series, we will discuss the next steps.