

## **"Do not contaminate yourselves through them lest you become contaminated through them." (11:43)**

The *Mesilas Yeshorim* explains that one who is lenient regarding *kashrus* laws in those areas where *Chazal* have indicated stringency is destroying his soul. The *Sifra* comments on the above quoted *posuk*, "*If you will contaminate yourselves through eating them, you will ultimately become spiritually defiled through them.*" This means that consumption of forbidden food brings impurity and dullness into the heart of a person to the extent that the *Shechina* distances itself from him. It may be suggested that the concept of "forbidden food" may take various forms.

The *Mishna* in *Pirkei Avos* states: "*If three have eaten at the same table and have not spoken words of Torah there, it is considered as if they have eaten of offerings to dead idols.*" (3:4) A table where Jews eat is likened to a sacred altar upon which sacrifices are offered. It is only through the proper intentions for eating, and by discoursing in words of *Torah* that this mundane act is elevated to sacred proportions. A meal in which these conditions are not met is devoid of holiness, and is thus likened to a meal of forbidden foods.

There is yet another form of food which may be likened to forbidden foods. The *Bnei Yisacher* relates in the name of his great teacher, *Rabbi Mendel of Riminov Zt"l*, the following: "We sometimes notice that children who, although endowed with a special charm and sweetness of personality in their youth, lose their charm as they grow older. Although this change can be attributed to a variety of factors, it may be seriously maintained that a prime factor is their likely consumption of "unkosher food", namely that which was purchased with money that was earned dishonestly. If a child is continually nourished on such food, as the years go by, more and more of this charm disappears. These are but two examples of "forbidden foods" and the profound effect they can have on one's spiritual development."