



Kosher Food

1. Midrash, Genesis Rabbah 44:1

Rav taught: The mitzvot were given only to purify people. Why would Gd care whether we slaughter an animal from the front or back of the neck? The mitzvot were given only to purify people.

2. Rabbi Shemuel ben Meir (11th-12th century France), Commentary to Leviticus 11:3

According to the straightforward text, and as we respond to the heretics, all of the domestic and wild animals, birds, fish, locusts and crawling creatures which Gd listed for the Jews [as non-kosher] are repulsive, and they corrupt and overheat the body.

3. Sefer haChinuch (13th-14th century Spain), Mitzvah 73

When tongs are strong and fashioned to hold vessels, the craftsmen will fashion good [vessels]. If the tongs are not good, they will never produce well-formed, attractive vessels. Similarly, when the body has a deficit of some kind, the intellect cannot function, according to that deficit. Therefore, our complete Torah distanced us from anything that could cause a deficit.

4. Rabbi Moses Maimonides (12th century Egypt), Guide of the Perplexed 3:48

The [forbidden] fat on the innards sates and damages digestion and yields blood which is cold and sticky. Burning it would be better than eating it. And blood and *neveilah* are hard to digest and provide poor nourishment...

5. Rabbi Moses Maimonides (12th century Egypt), Medical Aphorisms, Treatise 20 #16, #19 (Rosner tr.)

16: The most valuable and most appropriate bread for someone who performs no physical exercise or for the elderly is bread which has been well-baked in the oven and which contains a large quantity of sour-dough. However, matza bread in all its forms is not appropriate for any type of individual.

19. The most beneficial meat of living creatures who walk on all fours is pork meat. Next to this is kid meat and after that calf meat from a fat suckling (calf)...

6. Rabbi Moses Maimonides (12th century Egypt), Guide of the Perplexed 3:48

The Torah rejected [pork] largely because of [the pig's] great filth, and its diet being from revolting things. You already know how the Torah opposes seeing filth, even in the battlefield camp, and certainly among the nation. If eating pork were permitted, the markets and houses would be filthier than an outhouse, as is seen among the French today...

7. Talmud, Avodah Zarah 31b

Why did they prohibit the intoxicating drinks of idolaters? Rami bar Chama cited Rabbi Yitzchak: Due to marriage.

8. Rabbi Moses Maimonides (12th century Egypt), Guide of the Perplexed 3:48

The reason for prohibiting eating from an animal that was alive [when the part was severed from it] is because it invests and educates a person in cruelty.

9. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (19th century Germany), Horeb 463

The human meal, although in itself a physical function, is ennobled and elevated above other animal functions by the fact that the organ which serves it is at the same time the servant of the noblest human activity, of human speech.

The mouth of man is, on account of its functions, eating and speech, also the reconciling bond between spirit and animal. Therefore our Sages dedicated the meal as the first step towards the ennoblement of the animal in man ...That is why you should approach your meal as you would a holy activity.

10. Talmud, Yoma 39a

Sin obstructs a person's heart, as Leviticus 11:43 says, "Lest you be contaminated [תטמאו] by them, and you shall be contaminated [ונטמאתם] by them." Do not read it as ונטמאתם, but as ונטמאתם – 'you shall be obstructed'.

11. Rabbi Moses Maimonides (12th century Egypt), Guide of the Perplexed 3:46

The *Tzaba* believed that blood was most impure, but they ate it because they imagined that this would be food for the demons, and by eating it they would link themselves to the demons... Therefore the Torah, which is perfect in the eyes of those who know it – came to remove these sick, deeply rooted notions. The Torah forbade eating blood, and was strict in the prohibition exactly as it was strict regarding idolatry...The Torah only stated 'And I will place My face against such a person' regarding one who eats blood and one who gives his children over to the *Molech* idol...for eating blood brings one to a type of idolatry – the worship of demons.

12. Philo (1st century CE), The Special Laws, IV 18 – www.earlyjewishwritings.com

[A]s the animal which chews the cud, while it is masticating its food draws it down its throat, and then by slow degrees kneads and softens it, and then after this process again sends it down into the belly, in the same manner the man who is being instructed, having received the doctrines and speculations of wisdom in at his ears from his instructor, derives a considerable amount of learning from him, but still is not able to hold it firmly and to embrace it all at once, until he has resolved over in his mind everything which he has heard by the continued exercise of his memory (and this exercise of memory is the cement which connects ideas), and then he impresses the image of it all firmly on his soul. But as it seems the firm conception of such ideas is of no advantage to him unless he is able to discriminate between and to distinguish which of contrary things it is right to choose and which to avoid, of which the parting of the hoof is the symbol; since the course of life is twofold, the one road leading to wickedness and the other to virtue, and since we ought to renounce the one and never to forsake the other.

13. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (19th century Germany), Horeb 454

The body should be subservient to the mind. From this point of view the ideal quality of the body would be utter dependence on the mind and a kind of quiescent neutrality... Bearing in mind this function of the body and also the fact that the physical structure of man is largely influenced by the kind of food he consumes, one might come to the conclusion that vegetable food is the most preferable, as plants are the most passive substance; and indeed, we find that in Jewish law all vegetables are permitted for food, without discrimination. Next in order of desirability as human food would come those animals which are herbivorous and therefore nearer the vegetable world.

14. Mysticism and Kashrut – our March 2019 series

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/919734/>

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/920410/>

Vegetarianism

15. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (19th century Germany), Horeb 415

There are probably no creatures that require more the protective Divine word against the presumption of man than the animals, which, like man, have sensations and instincts, but whose body and powers are nevertheless subservient to man.

We began as vegetarians

16. Genesis 1:29

And Gd said: Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with fruit of the tree bearing seed, to you it shall be for food.

17. Genesis 9:3

All that crawls that is alive will be for you to eat; like vegetation, I have given you all.

18. Deuteronomy 12:20-21

When Gd broadens your borders, as He has told you He will, and you will say, "I will eat flesh," for your spirit will desire to eat flesh, at every desire of your spirit you shall eat flesh. When the place Gd will choose to place His Name will be distant from you, and you will slaughter (וּזְבַחְתָּ) of your cattle and sheep, which Gd has given you, as I have instructed you. You shall eat it in your gates, at your every desire.

19. Rabbi Moses Nachmanides (13th century Spain), Commentary to Genesis 1:29

Moving, living spirits have a soul of some degree, in which regard they resemble thinking spirits. They can make choices to help themselves and to feed themselves, and they flee from pain and death... When they sinned, and all flesh warped its path on earth, it was decreed that the animals should die in the flood. For Noach's sake some of them were saved to maintain their species, and so Gd gave humanity permission to slaughter and eat animals; the animals were only maintained for Noach's sake.

But how can you do that?

20. Rabbi Moses Maimonides (12th century Egypt), Laws of Kings 6:8

...One who cuts down a fruit tree in a destructive manner receives lashes. However, one may cut down a tree that harms others' trees or fields. One may also cut down a tree which has valuable wood. The Torah only forbade cutting down a tree in a destructive manner.

21. Talmud, Shabbat 140b

Rav Pappa said: One who could drink beer, and instead drinks wine, is violating the prohibition, 'Do not destroy.' But this is not so – the concern for destroying one's body is greater.

22. Talmud, Bava Metzia 85a

What action caused his suffering? A calf was being brought for slaughter, and it hid its head under Rabbi Yehudah haNasi's garment. It was crying. Rabbi Yehudah haNasi said, "Go; you were created for this." In Heaven they said, "Since he does not have mercy, let suffering befall him."

And via an action, the suffering left. One day, Rabbi Yehudah haNasi's maid was sweeping out the house. She swept out some rodents. Rabbi Yehudah haNasi said to her, "Leave them be, for it is written, 'His mercy is upon all of His creations.'" In Heaven they said, "Since he displayed mercy, We will have mercy upon him."

23. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (19th century Germany), Horeb 416

Man becomes the torturer of the animal soul, which has been subjected to him only for the fulfillment of humane and wise purposes; sometimes out of self-interest, at other times in order to satisfy a whim, sometimes out of thoughtlessness – yes, even for the satisfaction of crude satanic desire.

Behold! Here you are faced with Hashem's teaching, which obliges you not only to refrain from inflicting unnecessary pain on any animal, but to help, and, when you can, to lessen the pain whenever you see an animal suffering even through no fault of yours...

Above all, those to whom the care of young minds has been entrusted, see to it that they respect both the smallest and the largest animal as beings which, like man, have been summoned to the joy of life and have been granted sensitivity. And do not forget that the boy who, in crude joy, finds delight in the convulsions of an injured beetle or the anxiety of a suffering animal will soon also be dumb towards human pain.

24. Exodus 23:5

When you see your enemy's donkey sprawled beneath its load, shall you abstain from aiding him? Aid him!

25. Talmud, Berachot 40a

Rav Yehudah taught, citing Rav: One may not eat until he has first fed his animal; it is written (Deuteronomy 11), 'And I will put grass in your field for your animal,' and then, 'And you shall eat and be sated.'

26. Rabbi Moshe Isserles (16th century Poland), Code of Jewish Law Even haEzer 5:14

For medical benefit or other benefit, there is no problem of painning animals. Therefore, one may pluck a live goose's feather [to use as a quill] without concern for painning animals - but we do not do this, for it is cruel.

The Philosophy of Rabbi Avraham Isaac Kook – "A Vision of Vegetarianism and Peace"

27. There is a natural drive for righteousness, and this will return - Paragraph 1

It would be a desecration for this enslavement [of animals] to be imprinted eternally upon the world of Gd, who is good to all and whose mercy is on all of His creations... Especially, when the Torah has already testified that there was a time when Mankind, as a whole, aspired to be elevated to this high ethical level.

28. Our sins have dragged us down – Paragraphs 3 and 4

3: There is here [Deuteronomy 12:20-21] a hidden rebuke by the wise, and a boundary-setting alert. It is as if to say that so long as your inner ethic is not repulsed by eating animal flesh in the way that it is repulsed by human flesh [you shall eat animal flesh]... For when the time comes that human ethics are revolted by animal flesh because of the ethical revulsion involved, then you will not desire at all to eat any flesh, and you shall not eat it.

4: After the [physical] weakening of the human, flowing from his ethical fall, it became appropriate to eat flesh.

29. And so we may eat meat, to survive while we grow – Paragraphs 2 and 1

2: The Torah prepared its illumination in the measure appropriate for Man – with the calculation of the Gd who knows all, giver of the Torah – such that through this Man will also come to intellectual illumination.

1: There is no doubt for any intelligent, thinking person, that the reign mentioned in the Torah, "And they shall rule over the fish of the sea, etc." does not refer to a tyrannical ruler's reign, exploiting nation and servants only to execute his personal wishes.

30. Taking on vegetarianism prematurely would be catastrophic – Paragraph 4, 6

4: How absurd it would be... being generous with animals as though one had already completed his accounts with human beings, created in the image set by Gd...

4: Without doubt, this would cause great damage. When animal lust to eat flesh grew, it would not distinguish between human and animal flesh, since this [vegetarianism] would prohibit animal flesh with a legal prohibition. Murder and slaughter of people, for consumption of their flesh, would be widespread.

6: The human sensitivity for the good and the just seeks to fulfill its task; it also knocks, at times, on the doors of the heart of the wicked, forcing them to seek to quiet their natural hunger for righteousness... Sometimes you will see a cruel, wicked person choose an ethical path, rejoicing to do something righteous to quiet the rebuke of his innards and the natural regret which beats in his heart...

31. Spiritual growth should bring us to illumination – Paragraphs 7-8

7: Our holy Torah is named "Torah [guide]". Its nature is to guide us on the path of life and goodness.

8: Covering the blood of beasts and birds is a kind of Divine protest... The Torah says, "Cover the blood, hide the source of your humiliation, and your ethical weakness."...