

1. Vayikra 17:11-14 (tr. Koren Jerusalem Bible, c/o sefaria.org)

(יא) כִּי נֶפֶשׁ הַבֶּשָׂר בַּדָּם הוּא וְאֲנִי נִתְּתִיו לָכֶם עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְכַפֵּר עַל נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם כִּי הַדָּם הוּא הַנֶּפֶשׁ וְכִפֹּר: (יב) עַל כֵּן אָמַרְתִּי לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כָּל נֶפֶשׁ מִמֶּנּוּ לֹא תֹאכַל דָּם וְהַגֵּר הַגֵּר בְּתוֹכְכֶם לֹא יֹאכַל דָּם: (יג) וְאִישׁ אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִן הַגֵּר הַגֵּר בְּתוֹכְכֶם אֲשֶׁר יִצּוּד צִיד חַיָּה אוֹ עוֹף אֲשֶׁר יֹאכַל וְשָׁפַךְ אֶת דָּמוֹ וְכִסְהוּ בַעֲפָר: (יד) כִּי נֶפֶשׁ כָּל בֶּשָׂר דָּמוֹ בְּנֶפֶשׁוֹ הוּא וְאָמַר לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל דָּם כָּל בֶּשָׂר לֹא תֹאכְלוּ כִּי נֶפֶשׁ כָּל בֶּשָׂר דָּמוֹ הוּא כָּל אֲכָלְיוֹ יִכְרַת: For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul. Therefore I said to the children of Yisra'el, None of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourns among you eat blood. And whatever man there be of the children of Yisra'el, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, who hunts venison of any beast or bird that may be eaten; he shall even pour out its blood, and cover it with dust. For the life of all flesh is its blood, on which its life depends: therefore I said to the children of Yisra'el, you shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is its blood: whoever eats it shall be cut off.

2. Devarim 12:20-25 (tr. Koren Jerusalem Bible, c/o sefaria.org)

(כ) כִּי יִרְחִיב ד' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת גְּבולֶךָ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר לְךָ וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲכַלְהָ בֶּשָׂר כִּי תִאָּהֵב נֶפֶשׁוֹ לֶאֱכֹל בֶּשָׂר בְּכָל אֹת נֶפֶשׁ תֹּאכַל בֶּשָׂר: (כא) כִּי יִרְחֹק מִמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ד' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׁוֹם שְׁמוֹ שָׁם וְזָבַחְתָּ מִבְּקָרְךָ וּמִצֹּאֲנֶךָ אֲשֶׁר נָתַן ד' לְךָ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָהּ וְאָכַלְתָּ בִּשְׁעָרֶיךָ בְּכָל אֹת נֶפֶשׁוֹ: (כב) אֲךָ כַּאֲשֶׁר יֹאכַל אֶת הַצִּבִּי וְאֶת הָאֵיל כֵּן תֹּאכְלֶנּוּ הַטֶּמָּא וְהַטְהוֹר יִחָדּוּ יֹאכְלֶנּוּ: (כג) בִּרְמֵז חֲזוֹק לְבַלְתִּי אֲכַל הַדָּם כִּי הַדָּם הוּא הַנֶּפֶשׁ וְלֹא תֹאכַל הַנֶּפֶשׁ עִם הַבֶּשָׂר: (כד) לֹא תֹאכְלֶנּוּ עַל הָאָרֶץ תִּשְׁפְּקֶנּוּ כַּמַּיִם: (כה) לֹא תֹאכְלֶנּוּ לְמַעַן יֵיטֵב לְךָ וּלְבְנֶיךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ כִּי תַעֲשֶׂה הַיֵּשֶׁר בְּעֵינֶיךָ ד':

When the Lord thy Gd shall enlarge thy border, as he has promised thee, and thou shalt say, I will eat meat, because thou longest to eat meat; thou mayst eat meat, to thy heart's desire. If the place which the Lord thy Gd has chosen to put his name there be too far from thee, then thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock, which the Lord has given thee, as I have commanded thee, and thou shalt eat in thy gates to thy heart's desire. Even as the gazelle and the deer is eaten, so thou shalt eat them: the unclean and the clean shall eat of them alike. Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayst not eat the life with the meat. Thou shalt not eat it; thou shalt pour it upon the earth like water. Thou shalt not eat it; that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the Lord.

3. Bereishit 9:1-4 (tr. Koren Jerusalem Bible, c/o sefaria.org)

(א) וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת נֹחַ וְאֶת בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ: (ב) וּמִזֵּרְעֵכֶם וּחְתֹּמֶכֶם יִהְיֶה עָלַי כָּל חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ וְעַל כָּל עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר תִּרְמַשׁ הָאָדָמָה וּבְכָל דְּגֵי הַיָּם בֵּינְכֶם נִתְּנוּ: (ג) כָּל רֶמֶשׂ אֲשֶׁר הוּא חַי לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָהּ כִּי־יִרְקַע עֲשׂוֹב נִתְּנִי לָכֶם אֶת כָּל: (ד) אֲךָ בֶּשָׂר בְּנֶפֶשׁוֹ דָּמוֹ לֹא תֹאכְלוּ:

And Gd blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every bird of the air, upon all that moves upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with its life, which is its blood, you shall not eat.

Three perspectives on eating meat

4. Bereishit 1:29

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה נָתַתִּי לָכֶם אֶת כָּל עֵשֶׂב זֶרַע אֲשֶׁר עַל פְּנֵי כָל הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת כָּל הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ פְרִי עֵץ זֶרַע לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָהּ:

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.

5. Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Deiot 5:10

תלמיד חכם מכלכל דבריו במשפט, אוכל ושותה וזן את אנשי ביתו כפי ממונו והצלחתו, ולא יטריח על עצמו יותר מדאי, צוו חכמים בדרך ארץ שלא יאכל אדם בשר אלא לתיאבון, שנאמר "כי תאוו נפשך לאכול בשר", דיו לבריא לאכול בשר מערב שבת לערב שבת, ואם היה עשיר כדי לאכול בשר בכל יום אוכל, צוו חכמים ואמרו לעולם יאכל אדם פחות מן הראוי לו לפי ממונו וילבש כראוי לו ויכבד אשתו ובניו יותר מן הראוי לו.

A Torah scholar manages his affairs judiciously. He eat, drinks and supports his household according to his wealth and success, and he does not burden himself too much. The Sages instructed regarding personal conduct that one not eat meat other than to fill hunger, as it says, "When your spirit desires to eat meat." It is sufficient for a healthy person to eat meat [once] from Friday to Friday. If he is wealthy enough to eat meat daily, he may eat it. Our sages have instructed, saying that one should always eat less than suits him according to his funds, dress as suits him, and honour his wife and children more than suits him.

6. Ramban, Commentary to Bereishit 1:29

שבעלי נפש התנועה יש להם קצת מעלה בנפשם, נדמו בה לבעלי הנפש המשכלת, ויש להם בחירה בטובתם ומזוניהם, ויברחו מן הצער והמיתה... וכאשר חטאו, והשחית כל בשר את דרכו על הארץ, ונגזר שימותו במבול, ובעבור נח הציל מהם לקיום המין, נתן להם רשות לשחוט ולאכול, כי קיומם בעבורו:

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.

7. Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, חזון הצמחונות והשלום (tr. mine)

3: There is here [in 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 being, which flowed from his ethical fall, it became appropriate to eat flesh.

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

4: How absurd it would be, if while his impurity was in him he would extend his hooves and turn to this distant righteousness, being generous with animals as though he had already completed his accounts with human beings, created in the image set by G-d...

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, and 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...

8. Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Shechitah 4:17-18

כשהיו ישראל במדבר לא נצטוו בשחיטת החולין אלא היו נותרין או שוחטין ואוכלין כשאר האומות, ונצטוו במדבר שכל הרוצה לשחוט לא ישחוט אלא שלמים שנאמר... אבל הרוצה לנחור ולאכול במדבר היה נותר. ומצוה זו אינה נוהגת לדורות אלא במדבר בלבד בעת היתר הנחירה, ונצטוו שם שכשיכנסו לארץ תאסר הנחירה ולא יאכלו חולין אלא בשחיטה...

When Israel were in the wilderness, they were not instructed to *shecht chullin*; they would *nocheir* or *shecht* and eat like the other nations. And they were instructed in the wilderness that anyone who wished to *shecht* should only *shecht* a *shelamim*, as it says... But one who wished to *nocheir* and eat in the wilderness could *nocheir*. And this mitzvah does not apply across generations, but only in the wilderness, when *nechirah* was permitted. They were instructed there that when they would enter the land, *nechirah* would be prohibited, and *chullin* would be eaten only with *shechitah*.

Eating Blood

9. Sefer haChinuch, Mitzvah 147

היה מחסדי הקל הגדולים עלינו, אנחנו עמו אשר בחר, להרחיק ממנו כל מאכל מזיק אל הגוף ומוליד בו ליחות רעות. It was one of Gd's great kindnesses to us – us, the nation He chose – to distance us from all foods which harm the body and produce bad fluids in it.

10. Ramban, Commentary to Vayikra 17:11

ועל הדרך היוני שיראוהו חוקריו, מן השכל הפועל התנוצץ זיו וזוהר צה מאד ובהיר וממנו יצא נצוץ נפש הבהמה... מן הידוע עוד, כי הנאכל ישוב בגוף האוכל והיו לבשר אחד, ואם יאכל אדם נפש כל בשר והוא יתחבר בדמו והיו לאחדים בלב תהיה עובי וגסות בנפש האדם, ותשוב קרוב לטבע הנפש הבהמית אשר בנאכל...

As in Greek thought as seen in its scholars, the Active Intellect produced a spark and shining that was very pure and clear, and from it came the spark of the animal spirit... It is further known that that which is eaten becomes one with the body that eats it. If a person eats the spirit of all flesh and it is joined with his blood and they become one in the heart, there will be thickness and coarseness in the human spirit, and it will become close to the animal nature of the food...

11. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Commentary to Vayikra 17:10-12 (R' Haberman tr. in Feldheim ed.)

The very nature of blood and its close relationship to the soul – which make animal blood fit to *symbolize* the human soul – are themselves the reasons that prohibit the *actual*/assimilation of blood into the human body, which is the physical aspect of the human soul. This prohibition apparently stems not only from the danger to man's *consciousness* – that he not be swayed by the symbolism of the offerings to identify the human soul with the animal soul – but also from the *actual danger to the character of the human soul*...

12. Sefer haChinuch, Mitzvah 148

ואפשר לומר בדם עוד כי מלבד רוע מזגו שהוא רע המזג, יהיה באכילתו קצת קנין במדת אכזריות, שיבלע האדם מבעלי חיים שכמותו בגוף, אותו הדבר שבהם שהחיות ממש תלוי עליו...

One could say further regarding blood, that aside from its bad nature - for it is of bad nature - eating it also brings some acquisition of cruelty, when a person swallows from a living thing, which resembles him in body, that which its actual life depends upon...

13. Rambam, Moreh Nevuchim 3:46, Friedlander tr. (<https://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/gfp/gfp182.htm>)

Although blood was very unclean in the eyes of the Sabeans, they nevertheless partook of it, because they thought it was the food of the spirits; by eating it man has something in common with the spirits, which join him and tell him future events, according to the notion which people generally have of spirits... The Law, which is perfect in the eyes of those who know it, and seeks to cure mankind of these lasting diseases, forbade the eating of blood, and emphasized the prohibition exactly in the same terms as it emphasizes idolatry: "I will set my face against that soul that eateth blood" (Lev. xvii. 10). The same language is employed in reference to him "who giveth of his seed unto Molech"; "then I will set my face against that man" (*ibid.* xx. 5). There is, besides idolatry and eating blood, no other sin in reference to which these words are used. For the eating of blood leads to a kind of idolatry, to the worship of spirits. Our Law declared the blood as pure, and made it the means of purifying other objects by its touch. "And thou shalt take of the blood . . . and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him. And he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons," etc. (Exod. xxix. 21). Furthermore, the blood was sprinkled upon the altar, and in the whole service it was insisted upon pouring it out, and not upon collecting it. Comp. "And he shall pour out all the blood at the bottom of the altar" (Lev. iv. 18); "And the blood of thy sacrifices shall be poured out upon the altar of the Lord thy Gd" (Deut. xii. 27)...

14. Ramban, Commentary to Vayikra 17:11

והנה התיר גופם אשר הוא חי בעבור האדם, שיהיה להנאתו ולצרכו של אדם, ושתהיה הנפש שבהם לכפרה לאדם, בקרבים לפניו יתברך, לא שיאכלוהו. כי אין לבעל נפש שיאכל נפש, כי הנפשות כולן לקל...

It permitted their body, which lives because of the person, for the person's benefit and need. Its *nefesh* is for atonement for the person, when brought before Gd – not for eating. For a being of *nefesh* should not eat the *nefesh*; all *nefashot* belong to Gd...

Review Questions

- What are the three perspectives we presented to explain why we may eat meat?
- If we eat meat for sustenance, why not eat blood?
- If we eat meat for emotional balance, why not eat blood?
- If we eat meat for a korban experience, why not eat blood?