does god want you to be a vegetarian?

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Congregation kins

פרשת נח תשפ"ג



### how do we know what god wants anyway?

# what does chumash say?

## bereishit 1:26-31 & 2:16-17

## bereishit 8:19-9:7

## bemidbar 11:4-34

## vayikra 17:1-14 & devarim 12:13-28

# Is there a mitzvah to eat meat?

## shulchan aruch orach chaim 250:2

(ב) יַרְבֶּה בְּבָשָׂר וְיַיִן וּמִגְדָּנוֹת כְּפִי יְכָלְתּוֹ.

One should have much meat, wine, and delicacies, as much as he is able.

## Rambam hilchot yom tov 6:18

(יח) כיצד, הקטנים, נותן להן קליות ואגוזים ומגדנות, והנשים, קונה להן בגדים ותכשיט כפי ממונו, והאנשים, אוכלים בשר ושותין יין, שאין שמחה אלא בבשר, ואין שמחה אלא ביין.

What is implied? Children should be given roasted seeds, nuts, and sweets. For women, one should buy attractive clothes and jewelry according to one's financial capacity. Men should eat meat and drink wine, for there is no happiness without partaking of meat, nor is there happiness without partaking of wine.

## rambam sefer hamitzvot Aseh 56

היא שצונו לאכול כבש הפסח בליל חמשה עשר מניסן בתנאיו הנזכרים והוא שיהיה צלי ושיאכל בבית אחד ושיאכל עם מצות ומרורים, והוא אמרו ואכלו את הבשר בלילה הזה צלי אש ומצות על מרורים יאכלוהו.

That is that He commanded us to eat the lamb of the Pesach-offering on the night of the fifteenth of Nissan according to the stipulations mentioned - and that is that it is roasted, that it is eaten in one house and that is eaten with matzah and bitter herbs (maror). And that is His saying, "They shall eat the meat that night; they shall eat it roasted with fire, with matzah and with bitter herbs" (Exodus 12:8).

# Is eating meat “Good”?

## terumat hadeshen 105

אם למרוט נוצות לאווזות חיים, אי דומה לגיזת כבשים או אי הוו צער בעלי חיים?

גם לחתוך לשון העוף כדי שידבר, ואזנים וזנב מכלב כדי ליפותו, נראין הדברים דאין אסור משום צער בעלי חיים אם הוא עושה לצורכיו ולתשמישיו. דלא נבראו כל הבריות רק לשמש את האדם...

Regarding plucking the feathers of live geese, is it comparable to shearing sheep or is it a problem of causing pain to animals?...

Even cutting the tongue of a bird so that it speaks, and the ears and tail of a dog to make it beautiful, it seems that there is no prohibition of *tza’ar baalei chayim* if he does it for his needs and uses, since animals were only created to be used by humans.

## R’ Yosef Albo, Sefer HaIkkarim 3:15

The explanation of all this is, I think, as follows: In the killing of animals there is cruelty, rage, and the accustoming oneself to the bad habit of shedding innocent blood, but the eating of the flesh of some animals produces besides, coarseness, ugliness and stupidity… This is the reason why, though the flesh of certain animals is good food and suitable for man, God chose to deprive him of the slight good of eating the meat, in order to prevent the much greater evil which might result therefrom. This is why he forbade Adam the eating of animal food. He made up for this loss of good food by assigning to Adam vegetable food which was very good and nourishing, like wheat, barley, and the other seed-bearing plants that can be sown, also all those trees which bear fruit having seed in them. To other animals he gave for food all green grass that has no seed that may be planted. **The purpose of this was to show the superiority of the human species to the other animals.**

When Cain and Abel were born and saw their father Adam laboring in the tillage of the ground and planting wheat and barley and other grains, and nourishing himself by eating the plants, each one of them chose his own way, indicating his purpose and ideas in his practice. **Cain took to tilling the ground because he thought that the only superiority of man to the animals consisted in his ability to till the ground and live on the choice plants. Seeing that Adam lived on plants like the animals, he thought that the spirit is the same in all and that all die alike.** Therefore he brought an offering of the fruit of the ground, to thank God for the superiority He gave him over plants. He did not bring an animal offering, because he did not think that his superiority to them in the ability to till the ground was important enough to warrant bringing an offering…

Abel held that man has superiority over the animals and controls them, and is allowed to kill them for God—an opinion which is likely to lead to a recognition of the general superiority of man over the animals. Also he recognized the greatness of the Lord and brought of the first-born of his flock and of their fat ones. Hence God had respect unto Abel and his offering, because it was nearer the truth than the opinion of Cain, but He did not have respect unto Cain and his offering, because he was very far from the truth…

When Noah, after leaving the ark, brought an animal offering to God because he knew that man is superior by virtue of his reason and can know his Creator and serve Him better than the animals and can be thankful to God for this privilege, his offering was accepted with favor, as is said, “And the Lord smelled the sweet savour.”… Immediately after the offering, He hastened to permit the killing of animals and the eating of their flesh, “As the green herb have I given you all.” The meaning is that as even Cain admitted that man is superior to the plants, since they are created for man, so all the animals are also for the sake of man, who is superior to them, and there is not the same spirit in all. For this reason He prohibited the shedding of human blood, giving as a reason that the spirit of man is not like the spirit of the animal, for in the image of God made He man, i.e. man has a rational form which is nobler than the spirit of the animal.

## the view of rabbi avraham yitzchak ha-kohen kook (as summarized by rabbi gil student)

R. Kook advances his thesis that Vegetarianism is the human ideal. We were vegetarians in the Garden of Eden and will eventually return to this state. Many of the commandments surrounding food–kosher slaughter, covering blood, separating meat and milk, etc.–are intended to sensitize us to the problematic nature of animal consumption.

R. Kook consistently maintains this message in the second selection, brilliantly offering further details of how the commandments awaken in us an awareness of animal consumption. He makes here substantive contributions to the literature of ta’amei ha-mitzvos, explanations of the commandments. Covering the blood is a divine protest that an animal is a living, feeling creature. Kosher slaughter minimizes pain, a reminder that we must be concerned with animals’ pain. The forbidden fat (cheilev) is a reduction in the choicest area of the animal, a part that is only eaten out of desire and not necessity, highlighting that people eat animals out of lust and not need…

But R. Kook cautions against a looming moral hazard. When human morality progresses to a natural revulsion from eating animals, Vegetarianism will be universally appropriate. But in this unredeemed world, adopting this stringency is wrong and dangerous. It demonstrates a moral confusion, a failure to distinguish between people and animals. When people created in the divine image are suffering, R. Kook asks, how can we focus our energies on animal rights? It is “as if we have already corrected everything, already removed the reign of wickedness, falsehood, hatred and jealousy of nations, racism and tribal fighting that leads to so many deaths and the flowing of rivers of blood — as if all this disappeared from the land and there is nothing left with which this ‘human’ moralist to become righteous other than upholding ethics with animals” (p. 23).

R. Kook adds that if Vegetarianism is adopted inorganically, if the desire for meat is willfully suppressed rather than erased, then a terrifying danger exists. When the desire for flesh overwhelms someone, he will not distinguish between killing animals and humans. If all killing is equally wrong, if eating all living animals is equally wrong, then cannibalism becomes a real possibility.

Vegetarianism risks erasing the distinction between man and beast. Animal rights are important but human rights moreso. Additionally, if animal rights are raised as a priority, some people will satisfy their instinct for generosity with animals while treating fellow people cruelly. We would find horrible humans who think they are righteous because of their kindness to animals.

## yeshayahu 11:5-9

וְהָ֥יָה צֶ֖דֶק אֵז֣וֹר מׇתְנָ֑יו וְהָאֱמוּנָ֖ה אֵז֥וֹר חֲלָצָֽיו׃ וְגָ֤ר זְאֵב֙ עִם־כֶּ֔בֶשׂ וְנָמֵ֖ר עִם־גְּדִ֣י יִרְבָּ֑ץ וְעֵ֨גֶל וּכְפִ֤יר וּמְרִיא֙ יַחְדָּ֔ו וְנַ֥עַר קָטֹ֖ן נֹהֵ֥ג בָּֽם׃ וּפָרָ֤ה וָדֹב֙ תִּרְעֶ֔ינָה יַחְדָּ֖ו יִרְבְּצ֣וּ יַלְדֵיהֶ֑ן וְאַרְיֵ֖ה כַּבָּקָ֥ר יֹאכַל־תֶּֽבֶן׃ וְשִֽׁעֲשַׁ֥ע יוֹנֵ֖ק עַל־חֻ֣ר פָּ֑תֶן וְעַל֙ מְאוּרַ֣ת צִפְעוֹנִ֔י גָּמ֖וּל יָד֥וֹ הָדָֽה׃ לֹא־יָרֵ֥עוּ וְלֹֽא־יַשְׁחִ֖יתוּ בְּכׇל־הַ֣ר קׇדְשִׁ֑י כִּֽי־מָלְאָ֣ה הָאָ֗רֶץ דֵּעָה֙ אֶת־יְהֹוָ֔ה כַּמַּ֖יִם לַיָּ֥ם מְכַסִּֽים׃

Justice shall be the girdle of his loins, And faithfulness the girdle of his waist. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard lie down with the kid; The calf, the beast of prey, and the fatling together, With a little boy to herd them. The cow and the bear shall graze, Their young shall lie down together; And the lion, like the ox, shall eat straw. A babe shall play Over a viper’s hole, And an infant pass his hand Over an adder’s den. In all of My sacred mount Nothing evil or vile shall be done; For the land shall be filled with devotion to the LORD As water covers the sea.

## rav aharon lichtenstein, “Glatt kosher hedonism”

I mention this point particularly to an American audience. In recent years, one observes on the American scene a terribly disturbing phenomenon: the spread of hedonistic values, but with a kind of glatt-kosher packaging. There was a time when the problem of hedonism for religious Jews didn’t often arise, because even if you wanted to have the time of your life, there wasn’t very much that you could do. The country clubs were all barred to Jews, there weren’t many kosher restaurants, there were no kosher nightclubs, etc. In the last decade or two, a whole culture has developed geared towards frum Jews, where the message is enjoy, enjoy, enjoy, and everything has a hekhsher (kosher certification) and a super-hekhsher.

The message is that whatever the gentiles have, we have too. They have trips to the Virgin Islands, we have trips to the Virgin Islands. Consequently, there has been a certain debasement of values, in which people have a concern for the minutiae of Halakha (which, of course, one should be concerned about), but with a complete lack of awareness of the extent to which the underlying message is so totally nonhalakhic and anti-halakhic.

Don’t misunderstand me—I am not opposed to people enjoying themselves to some extent. I am not arguing for a totally ascetic approach to life; I don’t live that way myself, and what I don’t practice I certainly am not going to preach… The question is not whether there is room in human life for a person to have a certain measure of pleasure. Rather, the question is what is his basic perspective? How much does he involve himself in this? Does he see himself as basically being born to enjoy or to work?

## yerushalmi kiddushin 4:12

רִבִּי חִזְקִיָּה רִבִּי כֹהֵן בְּשֵׁם רַב. עָתִיד אָדָם לִיתֵּן דִּין וְחֶשְׁבּוֹן עַל כָּל־מַה שֶׁרָאָת עֵינוֹ וְלֹא אָכַל. רִבִּי לָֽעְזָר חֲשַׁשׁ לְהָדָא שְׁמוּעָתָא וּמַצְמִית לֵיהּ פְּרִיטִין וַאֲכִיל בְּהוֹן מִכָּל־מִילָּה חָדָא בְשַׁתָּא.

Rebbi Ḥizqiah, Rebbi Cohen in the name of Rav: Every person will have to justify himself for everything his eye saw and which he did not eat. Rebbi Eleazar took note of this statement and saved coins from which he ate every kind once a year.