

Kashruth as a Way of Life

Long ago, in the early ^{of the human race,}
~~There used to be a time in history when~~ the eating habits of
man^{from}kind were radically different and much less complicated than
they ^{now are.} Prior to the Great Flood in Noah's days, man was
a vegetarian. ^{He was forbidden to take a life,}
~~edible that derived from animal life was permissible~~
~~to him, and to eat flesh was forbidden, whether it be that of man or~~
animal.

Such a state of affairs, ^{prohibitory} ~~avoiding~~ the spilling of innocent
blood, would seem to be the ^{morally} ~~usually~~ acceptable one. Nevertheless
Scripture records that ^{in God permitted} man to adopt a new way,
^{involved a reorientation towards}
one that ~~would~~ allowed the animal world. We shall here try to

understand some Rabbinic thoughts on just why this change of ~~face~~
occurred, and how some of the principles involved can be better

appreciated, ^{for their significance to us. These insights are}
^{garnished from a number of commentators, both ancient and modern}

The Talmud records that the Holy Rabbi ^{Judah} ~~Yehuda~~ once sent a calf
^{when the calf proved reluctant,}
to slaughter and commented "go, for this was the purpose for which you
^{punishment for this apparent callousness,}
were created." As ^a ~~a~~ result he was terribly afflicted with physical

He continued for a long time. His own troubles did not cease pain and suffering, until, one day, he demonstrated sensitivity to

This story, recorded in the Talmud, is fully in animal-suffering. Only then did his own affliction cease. The

spirit of Judaism ^{which} insists that all of creation be respected, that no plant be needlessly uprooted, no animal be killed at random. ^{We must be sensitive to pain in a full of compassion for all of God's vast creation.} The only

time that we are permitted to take animal life ^{or} at its products (milk, eggs) ^{only} is if in the process we elevate it from the mere status of animal to that of being part of a human, a change that is ^{from} lower to higher, from less holy to more holy.

Why, in that case, one may ask, was flesh permitted at all?

Would it not have been far simpler to retain the ^{on carnivorousness} animal prohibition?

The answer given by Tradition is a profound one: As long as man will not have perfected the ^{no} moral-spiritual fibre of his being, so long will

he have to make compromises to satisfy his animal desire to eat flesh.

For were all flesh to be denied him, who knows ^{but that in the heat of his passions} if he would not be

^{ignore} driven to judge the difference between human and animal flesh? ~~in the~~ ~~best of his drive.~~ And while vegetarianism may be admirable for a

few ^rhardy individuals, it would never do as a ^sman's diet. Too many people would, instead of learning greater respect for animal existence, regard both animal & human life by reckless destruction.

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That this concession is a temporary one, is confirmed by the Jewish ^{when it teaches} Tradition ~~that states~~ that at a future time (presumably Messianic), mankind ^{Amos & Isaiah prophesied that} would again be vegetarian ~~at a time~~ when man will be ^{mor} usually unified and uplifted, ^{vegetarianism will re-emerge as the norm for all mankind.}

A second reason that flesh was permitted after the Flood was that it was necessary to make a clear distinction between man and animal.

Antediluvian man degenerated to the level of the animal in the absence of this distinction and so the Torah is careful to point out that man, in contradistinction to the animal, is the possessor of a soul and a moral conscience, unlike the simple material existence of the animal. ^{→ None of this from previous page ←}

^{morally beneficial in that it averts a far worse bestiality.} It appears then, that the act of eating flesh is sublimely ^{it} ~~uplifting~~, for it affects a sublimation of man's basest drives; it teaches him to be more human; it ^{acts as} ~~is~~ a safety valve; and at the same time ^{a medium of} transforms the animal flesh itself to a higher destiny.

In this light we can approach the specific laws of Kashrut in an attempt to understand some of ^{its} ~~their~~ significance.

Kosher meat has two qualities: a) It must come from a ^{member of} "pure" ^(ritual slaughter) species; ^{carnivore} animal b) the animal must be killed through Shechitah. In examining the ^{permitted species,} ~~for the former~~ ^{we} find that no ^(flesh-eating animal) is included, for indeed such an animal has itself violated the principle of transforming its food to a higher level - only the ^{herbivorous} ~~vegetarian~~ beast can be said to have done this. As for the ^t later requirement (kosher slaughter), the Jew is ^{thereby} ~~being~~ reminded that this flesh is not his by ^{divine gift} ~~right~~, but by ^{natural} ~~privilege~~; that all of life must be spared every ounce of suffering, that even animals have feelings ^{which must} ~~to~~ be considered. And therefore the Torah chose Shechitah as the most painless and efficient means possible to that end. This regards for the feelings of the beast is like ^{it} ~~is~~ wise reflected in the prohibition of removing the young from before the helpless and loving mother-bird, for thereby we cultivate a healthy respect for the ⁿ ~~material~~ instinct. (It is most interesting that the reward of a long life occurs only in the commandments of parental honor and the removal of the mother-bird. ^{Only} ~~Why~~ by honoring the feelings of parents ^{-- human and animal --} ~~and elders~~ does one ^{earn} ~~cash~~ the rights to old age!)

The products that ~~have~~ come from an animal while yet alive, such as milk and wool, are only permissible to the Jew if by his severing them from the animal there is a direct benefit to the animal itself. But for the Jew to remove the wool while it is needed for warmth, or milk when it is required to suckle the young - this is ~~forbidden~~ prohibited.

For man to take ~~that~~ milk, that is specifically meant to nourish the young animal, and to ^{frustrate} ~~prevent~~ its use by doing just the opposite and cooking ~~the~~ flesh in ~~that~~ milk - this the Torah cannot sanction. It considers it sacrilegious. For this natural affinity of animal to milk to be ^{in this manner} ~~thus~~ exploited is ~~is~~ ^{not} sacrilegious. Hence, ^{may} ~~And thus~~ not only ~~is~~ such a mixture ^{cooked, or to} ~~forbidden~~ to be eaten, but it is also forbidden to the Jew to benefit or gain any recompense by its existence. And ~~It~~ is the purpose of ~~the~~ all the

intricate detailed laws appertaining to the ^x ~~milk~~ing of meat and milk to teach the Jew just this: never make the mistake of thinking ^{you may eat the animal because you thereby elevate it to serve a human function. But life has its own, innate value as well. Hence, your} that animal life has value only when utilized by man. ~~Your~~ freedom

to take advantage of the animal world is not absolute, but conditional, ^{It is} sometimes and tenuous. Never must it feed your arrogance & desensitize you.

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