

EIKEV (DEUTERONOMY 7:11-11:25)

Animal Wrongs

2002 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Sepowitz

G-d promises great rewards for following the Torah:

It will be that if you will listen to my Mitzvahs that I command you today...I will give rain for your Land in its proper time...you will gather your grain, grapes, and olives. I will give grass in your fields for your animals; you will eat and be satisfied. (Deuteronomy, 11:13-15)

Why does the Torah mention animals in the middle of a discussion about humans eating? It would seem more logical that after mentioning grain, grapes, and olives, the Torah should then say, "*you will eat and be satisfied.*" THEN, it should talk about grass for the animals. Why does the Torah interrupt a discussion of people food with a reference to animal food?

Before I answer the question, I would like to share with you a disturbing bit of news. The Rabbinical Council of America has asked that the following information be distributed to as many people as possible:

****Holland Bans *Shechitah*** The government of Holland has banned kosher slaughter, becoming the sixth European country to do so. The local Agriculture Ministry informed Jewish community leaders there that they would no longer be permitted to slaughter cows in a kosher manner [*shechitah*] because of its "cruelty" to the animals. Deputy Foreign Minister Rabbi Michael Melchior, the former Chief Rabbi of Norway, says he is not convinced that concern for the animals is the real motivation behind the new regulation: "They simply don't want foreigners and they don't want Jews. I won't say that this is the only motivation, but it's certainly no coincidence that one of the first things Nazi Germany forbade was kosher slaughter. I also know that during the original debate on this issue in Norway, where *shechitah* has been banned since 1930, one of the parliamentarians said straight out, 'if they don't like it, let them go live somewhere else.'" Melchior also says the cruelty accusations against *shechitah* are simply untrue: "The Torah forbids cruelty to animals, and the *shechitah* process ensures that the animal loses consciousness immediately. We have been dealing with this issue for many years, and there are many scientific studies that back us up." M.E., a religious Jew from Holland, does not appear worried: "The main concern is whether there is kosher meat in the store or not... Of course the principle of the matter worries me. But I have heard on the inside that it was not done as a matter of policy, but rather just a few individuals who were able to convince the government to make this decision..." Rabbi Melchior plans to

organize a Foreign Ministry campaign to respond to the European lies being disseminated about the so-called cruelty involved in *shechitah*. He will also have to respond to such accusations here at home; MK Avraham Poraz of the anti-religious Shinui party has congratulated Holland on its decision, saying that *shechitah* is cruel. Melchior said, "It is certainly infuriating to see a respected Knesset Member plays into the hands of Jewish enemies and thus cause harm to the Jewish community in Europe. The lie that ritual slaughter is cruel simply shows a hatred for Jewish life." PLEASE PASS THIS IS ON TO AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE, THIS MUST NOT GO UNNOTICED! Rabbinical Council of America 305 Seventh Avenue New York, New York 10001 212-807-7888 212-727-8452 Fax rabbis@rabbis.org www.rabbis.org**

Remember the question I asked above about the arrangement of the verses about food? In the middle of G-d's blessings of rain for our fields, and promises of ample produce, He mentions grass for our animals. Only then does the Torah tell us to eat and be satisfied.

Do you know why the Torah mentions animal food before it mentions people eating? The Talmud (Brochos 40a) tells us the answer: You are not permitted to eat until you have fed your animals! Once the animals have their grass to eat, only then does the Torah tell us to eat to our hearts' content.

Does this sound like a religion that would tolerate treatment of animals that is anything less than totally humane? Is the instantaneous death of a chicken a bigger cause for concern to the Europeans than the disintegration of innocent Israelis sitting on a bus?!! Perhaps the Europeans, most of whom did far too little to help their fellow human beings during the Holocaust, need to be a little less concerned about cows, and a little more concerned about people.

Have a great Shabbos.

Rabbi Yerachmiel Seplovitz

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