

VAEIRA (EXODUS 6:2-9:35)

Sorry, PETA, Pig's Feet Aren't Kosher!

2005 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Sepowitz

[Please note that there is no connection between my defense of AgriProcessors in this article, written in 2005, and more recent issues in which the company has been allegedly involved. Regardless of the current issues, which I do not defend, I stand by what I wrote in this article.]

You cannot reason with people who are unreasonable.

Moses told the king of Egypt, “*Let my People go.*” Pharaoh refused. G-d unleashed a barrage of plagues against the Egyptians to make them comply.

Pharaoh now wanted to make a deal.

Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Serve your G-d here in the land.” (Exodus, 8:21)

Sounds like a reasonable compromise. However, Moses didn't go for it.

Moses responded, “...if we sacrifice the deity of the Egyptians (i.e., lambs) before their very eyes, they'll stone us!” (verse 22)

Moses knew where Pharaoh was coming from. He was an Egyptian king with Egyptian values. He despised everything Moses stood for. The very thought of an Israelite slaughtering a lamb in service of G-d was an anathema to everything he stood for. But he was willing to compromise. For now. If keeping his slaves from leaving Egypt meant tolerating Jews eating lamb chops, he was willing to make the tradeoff. For now.

Sounds a little like PETA.

PETA, (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) has taken on the largest Glatt Kosher meat producer in the world and the Orthodox Union (OU) who approves them. A hidden camera recorded what PETA claims to be abuse of animals. PETA tells us at its website that “Kosher slaughter, done correctly, is kinder and quicker than standard slaughter methods in the United States.”

An initial reading of PETA's position on the situation seems reasonable. PETA isn't trying to ban *Shechita* – Kosher slaughter. Oh, no! Its only concern is over the fact that “what PETA's investigator documented at AgriProcessors does not follow OU's dictates.”

Just follow OU dictates, says PETA. Who can argue with that? In a letter to the OU, PETA requests that the OU “issue an official policy statement on *Tzaar Baalei Chayim*. “ (Loose translation – “Cruelty to animals”)

Apparently, PETA accepts Kosher slaughter as a reality. Just do it right. It sounds like we’re all on the same page. Except for one problem. It’s all a sham.

Go to PETA’s website. Keep your eyes open. Despite PETA’s claim that all it wants is for Kosher slaughter to follow “OU dictates,” its true agenda shows through, loud and clear.

The people at PETA do not want Kosher slaughter regulated. They want it ELIMINATED.

The website that carries the AgriProcessors controversy is called, strangely enough, “GoVeg.com.”
[Follow-up note, written in 2013 -- apparently, this website has been shut down.] Doesn’t that say it all?

Under the heading, “Eating Meat Supports Cruelty,” the website tells us that “Every day, hundreds of animals endure unimaginable cruelty at this AgriProcessors slaughterhouse. Maybe after seeing the fear and pain on the faces of the animals we captured on videotape, you will go vegetarian and persuade family and friends to join you.”

A spokesman for one Jewish group, quoted at PETA’s website, said in reference to the AgriProcessors video, that “the suffering of these animals during slaughter is sickening. Death is neither quick nor merciful.”

If you will go to the OU’s website and read their response, you will see that the critics don’t know what they’re talking about. Animals move after slaughter! (The proverbial chicken without a head!) Those movements are involuntary reactions of muscles and nerves. (I, for one, have been in a slaughterhouse where I saw a severed cow’s head twitching. Would PETA perhaps maintain that the cow was still aware and feeling pain?!)

When so-called “experts” on Kashrus state that the video “should be regarded as a welcome, though unfortunate service to the Jewish community,” they are simply playing into the hands of PETA’s deception.

I must confess that I, too, was taken in at first. I found some of the videos at PETA’s various websites to be very disturbing. Even if we forget about Kashrus concerns, there are some very valid points. Much of what goes on in the meat industry is unconscionable. KFC should never mistreat chickens, and pigs should never be abused. I even considered joining PETA’s boycott of Australian wool.

After further reflection, however, I decided that nothing that PETA says can be relied upon.

In a letter to the Jewish Press, PETA claims that no experts are “willing to defend the ... practices” at AgriProcessors. The letter quotes Dr. Temple Grandin as calling the video “disgusting.” However, that letter ignores experts cited by the OU, who actually VISITED the facility, rather than just watching PETA’s movie. Those experts, including one recommended by Dr. Grandin, found the facility’s practices to be acceptable.

In view of the fact that PETA was less than honest about AgriProcessors, why should we believe them about everybody else? Why should we assume that a few repulsive occurrences chronicled at its website represent the norm? How much credibility can we grant to an organization that advocates vegetarianism for cats and dogs??!!

Let there be no mistake. PETA is not a rational group of well-meaning citizens concerned about unnecessary cruelty to animals. They are a radical gang of activists who are out to eventually shut down ALL meat production. They want to burn your wife’s fur coat and destroy your leather shoes. And they’ll start by regulating Shechita!

The king of Egypt knew that he couldn’t prevent Moses from worshipping G-d, so he cut a deal. “Kill your lambs here in Egypt,” the king said. Moses, however, knew what the Egyptians really thought. He knew that they would never accept lamb slaughter.

The Egyptians had an interesting set of priorities. According to the Talmud, the king of Egypt used to bathe in Jewish blood. That was okay. Just make sure you don’t kill any lambs! They were, after all, the gods of Egypt.

PETA considers you and me to be no different than animals. We, as equals of the “other” animals, have no right to eat cows, lambs, and chickens. That’s why PETA thinks it can get away with calling chicken slaughter a “Holocaust.” Isn’t it interesting, that if you do an Internet search using the words “Tsunami” and “PETA” you will find NOTHING? If we are all animals, how about a little aid from PETA to assist the scores of thousands of “two-legged animals” who are suffering so greatly?

Could it be, perhaps, that PETA doesn’t consider animals and humans to be equals at all? Perhaps, like the Egyptian lambs, the animals of the world are PETA’s “gods,” to be treated BETTER than humans? Is that, perhaps, why PETA strenuously objected to Palestinian use of donkey suicide bombers?! *[Follow-up, written in 2013. I originally had a link to PETA’s letter to Arafat. Apparently, even they realized how ridiculous it was, so they took it down. I found the letter quoted here.]* (Go ahead, kill as many Jews as you want, but how dare you harm an innocent donkey?—Makes you wonder who the REAL jackass is! :-))

Our Sages tell us that the reason that the Torah emphasizes that the pig is not Kosher is that it sits on its haunches with its front paws pushed forward. These “*Chazer Fieselach*,” pig’s feet, stick out as if to say, “Look at me! I have split hooves! I’m kosher!”

Therefore, the Torah goes out of its way to point out, “NO! You are NOT Kosher. You don’t have all the requirements to be Kosher. You don’t chew your cud.”

PETA does the same thing. It cries out against *Tzaar Baalei Chayim*. It calls upon the OU to follow Halachah.

PETA pretends to give a Kosher message. However, it is clear for all to see that that message is, ironically, “Chazer Treif.”

Have a great Shabbos.

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