



A Taste of Torah

Animal Rights and Wrongs

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

What does the average American think about animal sacrifices? Well, I'm still waiting for Reuters or Rasmussen to do a poll, but I can guess that most people would be pretty turned off by the idea. Even if it's for religious purposes. (And even if they're not PETA members.) But hey, you know what?!? The Torah isn't beholden to anyone's opinion (regardless of whether my guess is correct or not). And the Torah mandates that in the Tabernacle and Temple, sacrifices - animal sacrifices, among others - must be brought.

Nonetheless, we can still try to understand some of the ideas behind sacrifices. Much ink has been spilled on the subject through the ages, but I'd like to focus on a particular detail: What does the cow (or goat or sheep) get out of the deal? Seemingly, this is the end of the road; a premature, though perhaps somewhat glorious, death as a sacrifice for G-d.

Ah, the Western mindset. We immediately assume that Bessy's paradise is a big, open meadow full of grass. Slaughtering the animal, then, is an injustice, a denial of the basic animal rights every creature is endowed with from the moment it enters this blessed world.

Sorry, verdant meadows don't make the cut. The ultimate nirvana for any creature (including humans) is to be a vehicle for glorifying G-d. That is the *sole purpose* of any creation in this world. As G-d says, "It is for my glory that I have created it, formed it, made it." (Isaiah 43:7) When a part of creation is used to serve G-d, it thus achieves its purpose, as it reveals G-d's existence in the world. It's also wonderful for the creature that caused that to happen, since it is brought

nearer to G-d through its achievement.

When a person brought a sacrifice in the Temple, it wasn't mere ritual. It was a means of achieving closeness to G-d; the individual was offering his possessions to the One Who created him. Sure, G-d doesn't need cows, goats, or sheep, but we need to connect to Him, and offering of what we possess is a means of coming close to Him. The animal is thus a means of achieving closeness to G-d; it has glorified G-d's Name! Its purpose has been fulfilled! What a favor the owner has done for this animal by sacrificing it.

Today, we don't have a Temple in which to offer sacrifices. But the idea that everything has the potential to bring greatness to G-d continues. Every time we properly partake of the pleasures of this world, we have an opportunity to recognize that this enjoyment comes from G-d, thus connecting the item we are using back to Him. When a Jew eats an apple, he makes a blessing, recognizing that G-d has bestowed the world with such enjoyments. If done properly, this brings perfection to the apple, as it now glorifies G-d. If someone indulges in a steak dinner, but does so intending that the enjoyment he has will allow him to be in a state to better serve his Creator, the cow from whence the steak came has fulfilled its purpose.

We are given countless opportunities, on a daily basis, to bring perfection to G-d's world. If we abuse Creation, we drag it down with us. But if we use it properly, we can achieve greatness, both for ourselves as well as for the world we inhabit.

Stories For The Soul

The Power to Soar

It is said that when G-d created the world, he created birds without wings. The birds complained saying, "L-rd of the Universe, You have put us at a disadvantage compared to all the other animals. They have powerful muscular legs, enabling them to run fast and far. We have only these scrawny bird legs. The other animal predators can easily pursue us and feast on us."

Hashem performed a miracle and gave them an amazing gift - wings.

Now the birds really complained, "*Ribbono shel Olam*, it was bad enough before when we had to evade our pursuers with our scrawny bird legs. Now You have made things much worse by giving us these huge clunky things on our sides. Now we can barely waddle, much less run. All the other animals will prey on us, catch us and kill us."

Hashem replied, "My dear children, these wings are not a burden, nor an impediment. You just don't understand how to use them. If you utilize these wings properly, you will be able to soar to the greatest heights. You will achieve that which was thought to be unachievable."

The word *korban*, offering, comes from the word *karov*, close. When we bring offerings to the Temple, it brings us closer to Hashem. The *korbanos* have many seemingly daunting details, but we can never lose sight of the big picture. The *korbanos* offer us an intensity of closeness that is otherwise unimaginable; they enable us to soar to the greatest heights.

Adapted with permission from *Shul-Week* by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.

Kollel Happenings

INTO THE ALEPH-BAIS

There is a unique fascination with the Hebrew language and the aleph-bet. Mystical sources explain that the letters of the aleph-bet are the building blocks of the whole world. Discover the world of the aleph-bet with Rabbi Heyman in this informative, dynamic class.



A DEEPER LOOK

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion, and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issues, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Sunday nights 7:40-8:30 pm at the Kollel, 1516 Xavier, and Tuesday nights at Aish Denver 8-9 pm.



TRUST THY FATHER

Join Rabbi Schachne Sommers for "Trust Thy Father," a series based on Chovos Ha'Levavos/ Duties of the Heart. Discover and delve into the vital Jewish concept of bitachon. The classes take place on Tuesdays, from 7:55-8:25 a.m. at Aish. For info email info@denverkollel.org or call

Interpersonal Issues

Items Found on Private Property

A common scenario is when one's coat, tallis, etc. is mistakenly switched. It is permissible to use the item left behind, assuming there is no reason to believe the owner would object to the

item being used, such as an expensive coat.

Adapted with permission from "The Halachos of Other People's Money" by Rabbi Pinchas Bodner (Feldheim Publishers)

Ask the Rabbi

Waiting Tables

From: David Walles in Australia
Dear Rabbi,

We were sitting in a restaurant and some older people walked in as they had a booking. The management confused the booking and there was no space for them. They were angry that we, as the younger generation, did not show "derech erez" by offering our table. We were surprised, and my question is, is there an obligation to get up for older people in a commercial setting where we are paying customers like all others?

Dear David Walles,

First of all, let's not confuse "old" with "sick." The Torah teaches us to honor the elderly even if they are healthy, and to help sick people even if they are young. So as not to confuse these issues, let's assume we are talking about healthy 70-year-olds who need no physical assistance. You then were not obligated to give up your table. Depending on the situation, however, it may have been a good thing to do.

The Torah says, "Rise before an old person, and honor the presence of a sage." The Shulchan Aruch defines "old" as age 70. If a 70-year-old walks by, you must stand. This is not to offer him your seat, but rather as a way of showing honor by recognizing his presence.

The obligation to show honor is not limited to standing up, but can also

involve giving your seat, helping with a package, or otherwise offering assistance. However, one is not required to incur a financial loss as a result. Since there is a definite monetary value in having a seat in a restaurant, you were not required to offer your seat. Although the same argument can be made for a bus seat, as you have paid for the right to sit (again, assuming the older people are physically able to stand in relative comfort), nevertheless, one should stand for an elderly person on a bus or subway.

That having been said, keep in mind "derech erez kadma l'Torah" - good manners and character traits are a prerequisite to observing the Torah. Depending on the situation, simple etiquette and common sense may require you to stand. This is especially true if you wear a yarmulke, because people tend to generalize about others based on their dress; therefore, you are "Judaism's ambassador" and must keep to a higher standard than the letter of the law requires.

Sources: Leviticus 19:32 and Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 244:1.

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