



# SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM

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**THANK G-D FOR VEGANS!**

**A PROJECT OF THE SHLUCHIM OFFICE**

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Sponsored by Shimon Aron & Devorah Leah Rosenfeld & Family

In loving memory of

Emil W. Herman אה ז"ל ר' מנחם זאב בן פנחס ז"ל  
who loved and supported Torah learning.

## **RE'EH**

### **THANK G-D FOR VEGANS!**

Years ago, in order to get Kosher meat, you had to visit your local butcher. If there was none in your town, you would have to travel for miles to find kosher meat. Today it's a different world – Kosher meat and poultry can be found all over – even in many supermarket chains.

In this week's Torah portion, Re'ei, the Torah defines what is permitted and what is forbidden to be eaten.

As a general rule, the entire concept of kosher food applies primarily to animals. Regarding vegetables and things that grow from the ground, there are almost no kosher problems, especially anywhere outside the Holy Land of Israel. An apple is an apple and a tomato is a tomato. But when it comes to animal-based foods, it's a whole other story.

For starters, fish can only be eaten if they have fins and scales.

With birds, there are several specific species that are permissible to eat, and in general, "birds are eaten by tradition"—meaning that Jews only eat birds on which we have a tradition of permissibility.

As for animals, the Torah tells us that only animals that chew their cud and have fully split hooves can be eaten. These only amount to a small percentage of the entire animal kingdom. But even after we know what kind of animal is permitted to be eaten, the story only begins. As we learn in this week's parshah, "And you shall sacrifice as you were commanded," on which Rashi comments, "This refers to the laws of slaughtering that were given to Moshe at Mt. Sinai." This tells us that we can't just kill an animal any old way we want—it tells us that kosher animals must be slaughtered in a very specific manner.

To be a shochet, or kosher slaughterer, is to have a skill set just like any other. One needs to learn the many rules of shechitah, and additionally and most importantly, the shochet needs to undergo lengthy training until he receives his certificate establishing him as a certified shochet.

Now, the animal must be slaughtered specifically at the neck, and specifically with a special shechita knife that has no dents or nicks along its blade whatsoever, and many more exacting rules.

But that's just the start. After the slaughter, the inspection of the carcass begins.

First, the animal's belly is opened. All the internal organs are examined to see if the animal was sick or if there is any hole in its intestines, lungs or other organ. If there is, the animal is not kosher.

I heard from a shochet that out of every 200 slaughtered animals, only 20 are found to be kosher after inspection. The rest are sold to the non-kosher market.

And even then, the kosher animal is not completely eaten. Only certain parts may be eaten.

Then, the animal's flesh must be soaked in water for at least 30 minutes, after which it is removed and the salting process begun.

Salting is done with what is called "kosher salt" in America: coarse-grain salt. This is because this is the salt used to kosherize meat. After the meat has been coated in salt inside and out for one hour, one can see the salt turning red as it draws all the blood out of the flesh. After that, the flesh is rinsed thoroughly, and only then is it permitted to be eaten.

One might ask: Why did the Torah create so many hindrances and obstacles to eating meat?

When we look at the long process that meat must undergo until we can actually eat it, one cannot be free of the feeling that the Torah wasn't interested in Jews eating meat—which is why G-d made it as burdensome as possible.

Where do we see that G-d didn't want Man to eat meat? We learn this from the story of Creation. When G-d created Adam, the first man, the Torah portion of Bereishis immediately tells us: "And G-d said, 'Behold, I have given to you every seed-bearing grass... and every tree with seed-bearing fruit, shall be unto you to eat.'" On this verse, Rashi comments, "He did not give Adam and his wife permission to kill a creature so as to eat its flesh."

Thus, G-d's initial plan for Creation was for mankind not to eat meat but rather, to be vegan and only eat plant-based foods, not any animal products. And that's how things were the first 1,656 years of life on Earth.

Then along came the Flood, of “Noah and the Ark” fame. After the Flood, we read about a critical change. In the Torah portion of Noach, G-d tells Noach, “All swarming things that live, to you shall be to eat—like the grass, I have given to you all.” Here, the Torah permits Man to eat meat.

Now, what happened? Why such a radical change? Why was the flesh of living creatures now permitted for human consumption?

In Judaism, there are the concepts of “initially” and “after the fact.” (This concept can be found in the text of the Torah itself.) What this means in plain English is “Plan A” and “Plan B”— what was supposed to happen, and what actually did happen.

That’s why there are those who explain that permission to eat meat was part of the degeneration of the generations. Initially, G-d wanted Man to be the crown of Creation, the ideal species, a being that never killed any other living being for the purposes of eating. In G-d’s perfect universe, there would be no place for killing any living creature.

But after “the world filled with violence,” as we read in Parshas Noach, after the world was dominated by the taint of murder and all things forbidden, G-d saw that when you forbid human beings from doing anything, they go to the opposite extreme and even end up murdering each other.

That’s why G-d permitted the eating of animal meat “after the fact”—because that way, humans would satisfy their urges for meat and not be reduced to even worse things. But that’s not the way it was supposed to be.

As the Torah tells us in this week’s parsha, “at every occasion of your soul’s desire you shall eat meat.” This is referred to as “lust meat,” or meat that is eaten because of Man’s base desires, and not necessarily due to Man’s G-dly or spiritual side.

Lately, we see a growing trend of more and more people becoming vegetarians, and even more becoming full vegans, who don’t eat anything animal-derived whatsoever.

The Rebbe often explained, that the closer we get to the coming of Moshiach, the world slowly recovers its original plan of creation.

We see this clearly. Before the Flood, people lived for hundreds of years and were strong and healthy. After the Flood, however, there began a process of physical degeneration, and the quality and quantity of life declined from generation to

generation. As Rashi tells us, “In Abraham’s days, years had already been minimized and a loss of strength had come to the world.”

But today, in recent generations, we are witness to increasing life spans, with each generation living longer than the one before. People are even taller than previous generations, and certainly healthier. Why? Because the universe is slowly reverting to the way it was “before the Sin.”

We see the same thing with regards to eating meat. We see how people are going back of their own accord to the way the world was when it was created.

There’s an expression, “G-d works in mysterious ways.”

As mentioned before, the Torah tells us that a Jew must eat kosher. But to our great pain, there are many Jews in our generation who don’t even know that they must do this.

So along comes G-d and put a new craze in people’s heads: veganism. Whenever anyone tells me he or she is a vegan, I’m thrilled, because I think one thing to myself: this Jew certainly eats only kosher.

So when Jews don’t want to keep kosher, or don’t know about it, G-d sees to it that their sons or daughters come back from college with the vegan craze in their heads—and their kids then indoctrinate them too so that they also end up not eating meat.

So one thing is for certain: by hook or by crook, G-d reaches His goals and ultimately, every Jew, aware of it or not, does what G-d wants of him.

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