

## Noach 5781 – To eat meat or not, that is the question

### Bereshit 6:12

וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָרֶץ וְהִנֵּה נִשְׁחָתָה כִּי-הִשְׁחִית כָּל-בְּשָׂר אֶת-דַּרְכּוֹ עַל-הָאָרֶץ: (ס)

When God saw how corrupt the earth was, for all flesh had corrupted its ways on earth,

### Bereshit 7:21-23

וַיָּגֵעַ כָּל-בְּשָׂר וְהָרַמְשׁ עַל-הָאָרֶץ בְּעוֹף וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל-הַשָּׂרִץ הַשָּׂרִץ עַל-הָאָרֶץ וְכָל הָאָדָם: כֹּל אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁמַת-רוּחַ חַיִּים בְּאֶפְיוֹ מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּחַרְבָּה מֵתוֹ: נִימַח אֶת-כָּל-הַיְקוּם וְאֲשֶׁר וְעַל-פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה מֵאָדָם עַד-בְּהֵמָה עַד-רֶמֶשׂ וְעַד-עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיִּמָּחוּ מִן-הָאָרֶץ וַיִּשָּׂאֵר אֶדְ-נֹחַ וְאֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ בַּתְּבֵּה:

And all flesh that stirred on earth perished—birds, cattle, beasts, and all the things that swarmed upon the earth, and all mankind. All in whose nostrils was the merest breath of life, all that was on dry land, died. All existence on earth was blotted out—man, cattle, creeping things, and birds of the sky; they were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark.

### Bereshit 6:11

וַתִּשְׁחַת הָאָרֶץ לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וַתִּמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ חֲמָס

The earth became corrupt before God; the earth was filled with lawlessness.

### Rashi Bereshit 6:11

**ותשחת**. לשון ערוה וע"ז (סנה' נ"ז) כמו פן תשחתון (דב' ד'), כי השחית כל בשר וגו': **ותמלא הארץ חמס**. גזל:

*was corrupt*: Heb. וַתִּשְׁחַת is an expression of immorality and idolatry. (other editions add: immorality, "for all flesh had corrupted (השחית) its way," and idolatry), as in (Deut. 4:16): "Lest you deal corruptly (תשחיתון)." - [Sanh. 56b, 57a]

*and the earth became full of* Heb. חמס: robbery

### **Bereshit 9:1-3**

וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-נֹחַ וְאֶת-בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ: וּמִוֹרְאֵכֶם וּחַתְּכֶם יְהִיָּה עֲלֵי כָל-חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ וְעַל כָּל-עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם כָּכֹל אֲשֶׁר תִּרְמָשׁ הָאֲדָמָה וּבְכָל-דְּגַי הַיָּם בְּיַדְכֶם נִתְּנוּ: כָּל-רֶמֶשׂ אֲשֶׁר הוּא-חַי לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָהּ כַּיְנָרֵךְ לְעֹשֶׂב נִתְּתִי לָכֶם אֶת-כָּל:

God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, “Be fertile and increase, and fill the earth. The fear and the dread of you shall be upon all the beasts of the earth and upon all the birds of the sky—everything with which the earth is astir—and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hand. Every creature that lives shall be yours to eat; as with the green grasses, I give you all these.

### **Bereshit 1:29-30**

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה נֹתְתִי לָכֶם אֶת-כָּל-עֵשֶׂב וְזָרַע זָרַע אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת-כָּל-הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ פְרִי-עֵץ זָרַע זָרַע לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָהּ: וְלְכָל-חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ וְלְכָל-עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּלְכָל הַרֹמֵשׁ עַל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה אֶת-כָּל-יִנְרֵךְ עֵשֶׂב לְאֹכְלָהּ וַיְהִי-כֵן:

God said, “See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food. And to all the animals on land, to all the birds of the sky, and to everything that creeps on earth, in which there is the breath of life, [I give] all the green plants for food.” And it was so.

### **Rashi Bereshit 1:30**

לכם יהיה לאכלה. ולכל חית הארץ: השווה להם הכתוב בהמות וחיות למאכל, ולא הרשה לאדם ולאשתו להמית בריה ולאכול בשר, אך כל ירק עשב יאכלו יחד כלם, וכשבאו בני נח התיר להם בשר, שנאמר (להלן ט ג) כל רמש אשר הוא חי וגו' כירק עשב שהתירתי לאדם הראשון, נתתי לכם את כל:

*it will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth:* He equated cattle and the beasts to them [to man] regarding the food [that they were permitted to eat]. He did not permit Adam and his wife to kill a creature and to eat its flesh; only every green herb they were all permitted to eat equally. When the sons of Noah came, He permitted them to eat flesh, as it is said (below 9:3): “Every creeping thing that is alive, etc.” Like the green herbs, which I permitted to the first man, I have given you everything. — [from Sanh. 59b]

### **Bereshit 9:5-6**

וְאֵף אֶת-דַּמְכֶם לִנְפֹשְׁתֵיכֶם אֲדַרְשׁ מִיַּד כָּל-חַיָּה אֲדַרְשֶׁנּוּ וּמִיַּד הָאָדָם מִיַּד אִישׁ אֶחָיו אֲדַרְשׁ אֶת-נַפְשׁ הָאָדָם: שֹׁפֵךְ דָּם הָאָדָם בְּאָדָם דָּמוֹ יִשְׁפֹּךְ כִּי בְצַלְמֵ אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֶת-הָאָדָם:

But for your own life-blood I will require a reckoning: I will require it of every beast; of man, too, will I require a reckoning for human life, of every man for that of his fellow man! Whoever sheds the blood of man, By man shall his blood be shed; For in His image Did God make man.

## Rav Kook selections from "A Vision of Vegetarianism and Peace"

There is no doubt in the mind of any enlightened thinker that the "dominion" spoken of in the Torah - "They shall have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky and over every living being that moves on the earth. 114 - cannot refer to the dominion of a tyrannical ruler who treats both subjects and servants cruelly in order to satisfy his personal, arbitrary desires, It is unthinkable that there should be an institution of servitude as ugly as this, stamped with an eternal seal in the world of a God who is good to all, whose "compassion extends to all creatures" (Psalm 145:9) as it is said, "a world built on lovingkindness" (Psalm 89:3)

...

There is no doubt that if the prohibition of the killing of animals was made known as a religious and moral pronouncement issuing from the untainted sensibility of divine justice, whose nature it is to radiate out to all creatures and to instill the recognition that the holiness of God's gifts suffuses all living beings, and all humanity - (if this prohibition were in force) while at the same time the general moral condition were still impaired, and the spirit of impurity had not yet passed from the world, there is no doubt that this circumstance would result in many impediments (to spiritual progress). When the animal-like craving to eat meat would become overpowering, it would then make no distinction made between the flesh of human beings and the flesh of animals, since in any case the (eating of the) life (nefesh) of the animal (as well as of the human being) is proscribed as a prohibition and a violation of law, and the killing and sacrificing of human beings in order to eat their flesh would become a widespread phenomenon. The eating of human flesh would become so natural that, once the wide gap between human beings and animals, in terms of the relative value of their lives, has been breached, there would no longer be any trace of (lit: "any way to find") the natural abhorrence (to this practice), which humanity in its improved state possesses at the present time.

...

If the obligation of righteousness with regard to animals were established as a practice, as it is with regard to interpersonal relations, it would greatly hinder both the elevation of the spirit of human uprightness, and those noble ideas which that elevation has engendered. For it is quite necessary for humanity to advance toward this elevated state and away from the lowly habits of the rest of the animals, whose universe is comprised solely of their stomachs and physical gratification; (for to sink to this level) would be liable to cause people to forget their superiority as human beings in relation to animals, (and cause people) to be thought of as nothing more than wild beasts... To impose the obligation of uprightness toward animals upon humanity as a matter of law would have an effect which is completely opposite from the intent. The end result would be the debasement of humanity to the level of the animals.

...

When humanity arrives at its goal of happiness and complete freedom, when it reaches that high peak of wholeness which is the pure knowledge of God and the sanctification of life fulfilled according to its nature, then the age of "the prompting of the intellect" will arrive, like a structure built on the foundation of "the prompting of the Torah," which is prior for the whole of humanity. Then human beings will recognize their relationship with all the animals, who are their companions in creation, and how they should properly be able, from the standpoint of pure morality, to combine the standard of mercy with the standard of justice in particular relation to the animals, and they will no longer be in need of extenuating concessions, like the concessions (referred to in the Talmud by the phrase:) "The Torah speaks only of the evil inclination;" (Kiddushin 31b) rather, they will walk the path of absolute good. "I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; I will also banish bow, sword, and war from the land." (Hosea 2:20)