



**BELSIZE SQUARE
SYNAGOGUE**

Ethics of Eating Meat

Prepared by Rabbi Gabriel Botnick

Under the assumption that eating meat is permissible, we will discuss whether or not Judaism offers a more ethical way to eat meat.

Can We Eat Just Any Meat?

Leviticus 22:8

You shall not eat carrion or befouled meat as there's ritual impurity in it, I am Adonai.

נְבֵלָה וְטֶרֶף לֹא יֵאָכַל
לְטִמְאַתָּהּ כִּי אֲנִי ה' :

The Torah does not always distinguish between *Treifah* and *Neveilah*, both of which can refer to an animal that died naturally.

Leviticus 17:14

You shall not eat the blood of any meat because the soul of all flesh is its blood, anyone who eats it will be cut off.

דָּם כָּל-בֶּשֶׂר לֹא תֹאכְלוּ כִּי
נַפְשׁ כָּל-בֶּשֶׂר דָּמוֹ הוּא כָּל-
אֲכָלְיוֹ יִכָּרֵת:

Exodus 22:30

And you shall be a holy people unto Me, and you shall not eat carrion in the fields - throw it to the dog.

וְאַנְשֵׁי-קֹדֶשׁ תִּהְיוּ לִי וּבֶשֶׂר
בַּשָּׂדֶה טֶרֶף לֹא תֹאכְלוּ
לְכָלֵב תִּשְׁלַכּוּן אֹתוֹ:

What do you think is the connection between holiness and dead animals / blood?

Limiting Our Consumption

Deuteronomy 12:20

When Adonai your God expands your borders as promised to you, and you say "I will eat meat," for your soul desires to eat meat, with all your soul's desire may you eat meat.

כִּי-יִרְחִיב ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת-גְּבוּלְךָ
כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּר-לְךָ וְאַמַּרְתָּ אֶכְלֶה
בֶּשֶׂר כִּי-תִאָּוֶה נַפְשְׁךָ לֶאֱכֹל בֶּשֶׂר
בְּכָל-אֹתוֹת נַפְשְׁךָ תֹאכַל בֶּשֶׂר:

What does it mean for your soul to desire meat?

How is this desire connected to expanding borders?

Deuteronomy 12:15

With all your soul's desire, you shall sacrifice and eat meat.

בְּכָל-אֹתוֹת נַפְשְׁךָ תִּזְבַּח וְאָכַלְתָּ
בֶּשֶׂר

Deuteronomy 12:22

However, just as the deer and gazelle are eaten, thus you shall eat meat.

אֲדָ בַּאֲשֶׁר יֹאכַל אֶת-הַצִּבְי וְאֶת-
הַאֵיל בֵּן וְתֹאכְלוּן

How do you think deer and gazelle are eaten?

Kli Yakar on Deuteronomy 12:20

If a person could only eat [meat] if they had to trap wild animals and birds in forests and the wilderness, a process which involves danger and great effort, then their desire [to eat meat] might diminish since eating [meat] is not worth the pain and struggle.

Babylonian Talmud, Hullin 84a

Why does scripture state "one who traps"? The Torah is teaching proper behavior: that a person should only eat meat when they catch it themselves. The rabbis taught: "when God expands your borders" – The Torah is teaching that a person should only eat out of desire.

Is It Really a Mitzvah to Eat Meat?

Yalkut Yosef, Yoreh De'ah 1:2

There are those who say that the commandment of slaughter is not like the other 613 commandments, which we are required to uphold. Rather, slaughter is optional, that is if one wishes to eat [meat] they must "shecht" before doing so...and there are those who say that even though kosher slaughter is an optional commandment, if one were to "shecht," they would be performing a commandment from the Torah.

Follow these Leaders...Be a Conscientious Carnivore!

Mishneh Torah, Hilkhos De'ot 5:10

It is sufficient for a person to eat meat only on the Shabbath. And if one is wealthy enough to eat meat every day, the sages ruled that such a person should always eat less meat than their means allows.

Arukh HaShulchan 604:11

There are those who vow to eat meat only on Shabbat, Yom Tov, and days on which we don't recite "Tachanun."

אם לא יאכל עד אשר יצוד
ביערות ובמדברות ציד חיה
או עוף שיש לו סכנה וטורח
גדול לצודם אז תשקוט
תאוותו כי אין האכילה
שה בגודל הצער והטורח

מה ת"ל אשר יצוד - למדה
תורה דרך ארץ, שלא יאכל
אדם בשר אלא בהזמנה
הזאת. ת"ר: וכי ירחיב ה'
אלהיך את גבולך - למדה
תורה דרך ארץ שלא יאכל
אדם בשר אלא לתאבון.

יש אומרים שאין מצות
השחיטה ככל תרי"ג
מצוות שיש מצוה לקיימן,
אלא השחיטה היא רשות,
שאם בא אדם לאכול צריך
לשחוט קודם
אכילתו... ויש אומרים
דאף שאין המצוה חיובית,
מכל מקום אם שוחט
מקיים מצוה מן התורה.

דיו לבריא לאכול בשר מערב שבת
לערב שבת, ואם היה עשיר כדי
לאכול בשר בכל יום אוכל, צו
חכמים ואמרו לעולם יאכל אדם
פחות מן הראוי לו לפי ממונו

אם נדר שלא לאכול בשר רק
בשבת ויו"ט... דהנהוגים שלא
לאכול בשר רק בימים שאין
אומרים תחנון

Kli Yakar

A Torah commentary by
Rabbi Shlomo Luntschitz,
(16th Century Ashkenaz).

The Babylonian Talmud

A central Jewish text, this
collection of rabbinic
commentaries on the
Mishnah was compiled
between 300 and 600 CE

*Would you ever be able to
trap and kill your own food?*

*Would such a requirement
affect how often you would
eat meat?*

Yalkut Yosef

A modern compilation of
former Chief Rabbi Ovadia
Yosef's legal rulings - by his
son, Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef.

*If we're not actually
commanded to eat meat,
should we even be allowed to
do so?*

Mishneh Torah

The Rambam wrote this
law code while living in
Spain and North Africa
during the 12th century.

Arukh HaShulchan

A 19th century Lithuanian
code of law written by Rabbi
Yechezkel Epstein.

*How can eating less meat
change our relationship to
food and/or the calendar?*