

A PARASHA THOUGHT

Doing What We Know

Although Yitzchok intended to bless Eisav, Yaakov managed to receive the blessings instead. When Eisav realized that his blessings had been taken, the Torah tells us, "[H]e cried out an exceedingly great and bitter cry."

In light of what we know about Eisav, this reaction is startling. The Torah depicts Eisav as a cunning hunter, with little interest in anything divine. So small was Eisav's value for spirituality that he sold his birthright, with its tremendous spiritual opportunity, for a bowl of lentils. Chazal (our Sages) describe Eisav as an idolater, adulterer, and murderer. A seemingly G-dless man, why was Eisav so troubled by his loss of the blessings?

Rabbi Aaron Kotler explains that attaining true holiness requires effort, and while Eisav did intellectually appreciate the importance of spirituality, he was unwilling to adapt his lifestyle to reflect those ideals. The blessings presented Eisav with the possibility of spiritual benefit without the work, and upon perceiving that he missed such an opportunity he mourned its loss. Eisav's head meriting burial in *Maaras Hamachpela* reflects this idea that only his head understood the value of closeness to Hashem. As an individual, Eisav allowed his spiritual potential to remain dormant, limiting his greatness to nothing more than theoretical.

Generally, significant spiritual achievement comes through a constant struggle to do what is proper. A person will always have a choice between right and wrong, and growth stems from making the right decisions. What makes life so challenging is that choosing good

often seems to come at the expense of personal pleasure. Additionally, the greater an individual is, the stronger the pull to evil will be. As he attains spiritual greatness, a man's evil inclination will likewise increase. Our job is to continuously strive to implement that which we hold in high regard, even in the face of adversity. Inspiration and mental appreciation are important tools to be utilized in the service G-d, but they are not an end unto themselves. Rather, we are to employ these tools when necessary, using them as a springboard to a substantial and sustained Torah lifestyle. Recognizing that the struggles we face in *Avodas Hashem* (serving G-d) are signs of progress should encourage us to stay in the fight and help us realize that challenge is not a license for mediocrity, but a key to greatness. 🕊

RABBI
YEHUDA
LEVI



LEARNING WITH THE KOLLEL (BASAR B'CHALAV II)

WITH

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

The Gemara (Talmud) Yerushalmi (*Kesuvos* 4b) states that before acquiring an animal, one must be sure he will be able to properly provide for it. Certainly, the owner must also know the applicable *halachos* that are relevant to having a pet. In regard to food, even though animals don't need to eat only kosher food, *halacha* clearly instructs people regarding what to feed them.

For the most part, non-kosher foods may be fed to animals without hesitation since it is permissible to derive *hano'oh* (benefit) them. The problems arise with cooked meat and milk mixtures which one may not benefit from. One who feeds his pets these foods has *hano'oh* since he need not feed it any other food. For meat and milk to be prohibited in *hano'oh*, there are a few conditions that must apply. The prohibition must be on a *de'Oraisa* (Biblical) level. This means that both the meat and milk come from a kosher species and were actually cooked together.

In practice, dog and cat food are the most common pet foods which present this concern, so let's take a look at the manufacturing process. The base of the food is usually grain, meat, fish, or chicken, which is mixed with other ingredients. For dry food, hot water is added. The food is then subjected to high heat and pressure and then dried. Canned food is mixed, cooked, canned, and sterilized. Sometimes, the food is cooked in the can itself. In general, since dog and cat food is cooked, this presents a potential *basar v'chalav* (meat and milk) concern. As we mentioned earlier, only a beef and milk mixture is forbidden to feed to animals. However, it would be permitted to feed

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LEARNING WITH THE KOLLEL (BASAR B'CHALAV II)

CONTINUED

animals a combination of chicken or pork and milk, even if the mixture is cooked, since they are only forbidden on a Rabbinic level.

In regard to these *halachos* (as opposed to *chometz* on Pesach), the *Poskim* rule that one can rely on the labels on the package since the US government strictly regulates the labels on pet food. However, the label is not always clear. If the package states "meat" (or "animal fat") as an ingredient, the source can be cattle, goat, or pork. Since the type of meat and milk is unknown to the consumer, then if it is mixed with milk (or casein or whey), the pet food should not be fed to animals. If labeled "horse meat," then it would be fine.

A helpful website on this topic is "Understanding Pet Food Labels," Purina Office of Affairs. As always, when in doubt, your Local Orthodox Rabbi should be consulted. 🐾



A SHINING EXAMPLE

Michael had been attending a weekly beginners' class on Judaism for some time already when he happened to meet Cathy at a park on a Friday afternoon. Cathy had two kids with her and had forgotten drinks for them, and so she asked the next person she saw, who happened to be Michael, if he happened to have a water bottle to spare. Before they went their separate ways, "Shabbat Shalom" blurted out of Michael's mouth, and to his great surprise, Cathy responded with a "Shabbat Shalom" as well! "One second, are you Jewish?" asked Michael. "No," answered Cathy, "and I actually wanted my kids to be brought up Jewish, but my husband would have no part in it." Cathy ended up sharing a little more of her life story with Michael. Her husband was an alcoholic and she had recently run away with the kids. At the end of the conversation, Cathy asked if Michael could start teaching her kids. "I only started learning myself recently," Michael demurred at first, but finally agreed to teach Cathy's kids. As Cathy's kids learned with Michael, Cathy also began exploring Judaism and made a decision; she wanted to be Jewish too. When she broke the news to the grandmother that had raised her after her mother died, she heard something that she never expected. "I need to tell you something Cathy. I am Jewish. I have been hiding it since the Holocaust. I was afraid it could happen again, so after I left Europe, I told no one I was Jewish. You don't need to convert." Cathy walked out of there in a daze, but exhilarated with her discovery. Excitedly she threw herself into learning more about her heritage. Then one day, things went awry. Michael was going about his day when he got a call from Cathy. "My husband took the kids!" cried Cathy into the phone. "They are at his parents' house in Sacramento." Michael had been teaching the kids about Chanukah, which was coming up, and had been practicing the blessings on the lighting of the *menorah*. "Cathy, maybe the grandparents, in the holiday

A BA'AL HATURIM FOR YOU

Rashi tells us that even though Eisav was expressly commanded by Yitzchak to hunt ownerless game, Eisav went out with the intention of stealing an animal to serve his father. Ba'al Haturim points out that the Torah hints to this with the words the Torah uses to tell us that Eisav went out to hunt, "*Latzud tzayid l'havie*" to catch game to bring. The numerical value of "*latzud*," to catch, is the same as "*Min Gazel*," meaning, from theft. While "*l'havie*," meaning to bring, has the same numeric value as "*Big'zailo*," with his theft. 🐾

spirit, will let you at least see them on Chanukah!" Michael followed up on his idea, called the grandparents and implored them to come let them visit the kids on Chanukah. The grandparents finally acquiesced, but said they could only be there for fifteen minutes and no more. On the agreed upon night, Cathy and Michael showed up with a little *menorah* and candles. The scene of the grandparents' house was quite a shock to Michael though. The house was festooned with lights and there was a tremendous evergreen resplendently decorated in the living room, and to top it all off, grandad himself was dressed up as Santa Claus. Michael quickly got the *menorah* set up and he was happy to see that the kids were still excited to light the *menorah*. They proceeded to sing all the blessings together, slowly and meaningfully, followed by the traditional songs sung after the lighting. As the children finished, Michael could not believe his eyes. Santa Claus was not wearing his hat or beard anymore. There were tears in his eyes. Grandma as well was looking a little misty. Even the father himself seemed to be moved. "Cathy," said the father, "that was beautiful. I think I see why you want to raise our kids Jewish. Maybe that is a good thing." 🐾

THE LEGENDARY GOLEM OF PRAGUE (PART V)

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

Sefer Choshen Ha-mishpat relates the following story. In 1590, the Maharal was informed that the stones of the *Choshen Ha-mishpat* (the Breastplate of the Kohen Gadol), which had been taken to Rome following the destruction of the Second *Beis Ha-mikdash*, were on display in the Bellmore Street Museum in London. The Maharal was subsequently informed that the stones were stolen from the museum. The Maharal travelled to London where he posed as a collector of precious gems and eventually made contact with the thief, Captain Wilson. The two met in downtown London and settled on an exorbitant sum for the twelve precious stones. At the end of the meeting, the Maharal requested two weeks to gather the funds. During these two weeks the Maharal used *kabbalistic* measures to torture the soul of Captain Wilson. After the two-week period, the Maharal and Captain Wilson met again and Captain Wilson begged the Maharal to take the stones from him. The Maharal took the stones and returned them to the Bellmore Street Museum and healed Captain Wilson of his sickness.

The problem with believing the story recorded in *Sefer Choshen Ha-mishpat* is as follows. There never was a museum in London called the Bellmore Street Museum. Moreover, the story itself appeared in a magazine in London authored by the British writer Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, author of Sherlock Holmes. The story, titled *The Jew's Breastplate*, was printed in 1899, fourteen years before the publication of Rabbi Rosenberg's *Choshen Ha-mishpat*. All of Conan Doyle's books were translated into Russian, a language Rabbi Yudel Rosenberg had learned in order to be able to become a district rabbi recognized by the Russian government.

The book *Choshen Ha-mishpat* was certainly a creation of Rabbi Yudel Rosenberg, a mystery novel which he adapted for Jewish readers. His goal was to provide kosher entertainment for the Jews of Poland at a time when secular reading material was quite harmful to the religious Jew. If *Choshen Ha-mishpat* was a fiction in nature then perhaps *Niflaos Maharal* was as well. A close examination of the historical accuracy of *Niflaos Maharal* may provide a clue.

To be continued... 🐾