

Rav Avraham Yitzhak Hacohen Kook

A VISION OF VEGETARIANISM AND PEACE

Edited by Rabbi David Cohen

Translated, with additional notes, by Jonathan Rubenstein
(from his unpublished rabbinic thesis)

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¹ From Bahya Ibn Pakuda's *Duties of the Heart*. See "Preface to the Translation," pp. 45-49.

² Leviticus 3:17: "It is a law for all time throughout the ages, in all your settlements: you must not eat any fat or any blood."

³ The mingling of wool and linen. See Leviticus 19:19; Deuteronomy 22:11.

⁴ See Section 22.

⁵ Fringes of the prayer shawl worn in morning worship and of the four-cornered inner garment worn by Orthodox Jewish men.

PREFACE TO THE TRANSLATION

"Hazon Hatzimhonut veHashalom" ("A Vision [lit. "The Vision..."] of Vegetarianism and Peace") is a compilation of excerpts from two of Rav Kook's early essays, "Afikim Banegev" ("Streams in the Desert") and "Talele Orot" ("Dewdrops of Light" or "Fragments of Light"). "Afikim Banegev" was first published, in serialized form, in a Berlin Hebrew monthly, HaPeles ("The Balance") in 1903 and 1904; "Talele Orot" originally appeared in 1910 in Takhkemoni ("Wise Counsel"), a student Hebrew periodical at the University of Berne, Switzerland. The complete essays appear in various later editions of Rav Kook's writings which are listed in the bibliography, along with the original publications.

Both of these essays include sections which deal with animals and the interpretation of mitzvot and other practices which concern animals; they are not, however, as one author states, "Kook's essays on vegetarianism and man's duties to the animal...",¹ for they deal in the main with broader concerns of which "vegetarianism" is but one aspect. Rav Kook's disciple, Rabbi David Cohen, collected this material and gave it the title, "A Vision of Vegetarianism and Peace." It was originally presented at a conference of religious vegetarians and was published in 1961 in a volume of essays in memory of Rav Kook's grandson, who drowned in 1959 at the age of twenty.² It appeared as a separate pamphlet in 1983.³

The editor divided the work into thirty-nine sections, of which the first thirty-two are excerpted from "Afikim Banegev" and the final seven from "Talele Orot." He also gives titles to each section which pertain to its particular content. It should be made clear that neither the divisions, nor the titles of each section, nor, for that matter, the title of the work as a whole, appear in the original essays. Therefore, while the sections do represent a structuring of the work according to its content, the beginning of any given section may logically or stylistically follow closely the ending of the previous section. The division of the text and the titles serve a useful purpose, but the reader should keep in mind that the work was written in a continuous form. In some instances, the editor skipped sections of the original essay, or the text departs from the original in some way; these instances have been indicated in footnotes.

The essay "Talele Orot" appears in English, in full, under the name "Fragments of Light: A

View as to the Reasons for the Commandments," in Ben Zion Bokser's fine collection and translation of Rav Kook's writings.⁴ Since the material which comprises the last seven sections of "A Vision of Vegetarianism and Peace" is included there⁵, the first thirty-two sections, which are taken from "Afikim Banegev," are presented here. (In general, the material from "Talele Orot" recapitulates in a briefer form themes which are developed more fully in the excerpts from "Afikim Banegev.") The first section of the work is found in English translation in Tree of Life, edited by Philip L. Pick, and brief excerpts are translated in Joe Green's "Chalutzim of the Messiah" (see bibliography).

Rav Kook's "inclusion of animals in the fullest unfolding of morality"⁶ can be attributed to various aspects of his personality and his thought. Certainly his self-described love for all existence, and his evident compassion for all of God's creatures, explain his concern for the conditions of animals and for the attitude of human beings toward them; but this is only a partial explanation. One commentator on Rav Kook's outlook and motivation puts it this way:

The excessive stress laid on Kook's emotional richness, his profound kindness and all-embracing love - true as it is - tends to obscure the fact that it was a strictly rational Halakhah that dictated his approach to the national renaissance and to his demand of unity among all forces in Judaism.⁷

This applies as well to his concern for the just treatment of animals. The fulfillment of what he sees as the ideal relationship between human beings and animals, when the craving for meat is diminished and no longer demands the slaughter of animals for food, and when all exploitation of animals and their natural possessions will cease, is the outcome of adherence to mitzvot and the recognition of the motivations and intentions of those mitzvot. This fulfillment, furthermore, is but one element of the larger realization of the Jewish role in history; this ideal relationship is a characteristic of the Messianic Age and, in Rav Kook's system, the recognition of and striving for this relationship is a means of bringing about that era of harmony and peace.

This interpretation of vegetarianism as an ideal is a well-established view in Jewish tradition. The Babylonian Talmud (Sanhedrin 59b) as well as many commentators, including Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Nachmanides, and Cassuto, make note of the fact that the permission to eat meat after the flood (Genesis 9:3) is a distinct departure from the original vegetarian diet which was intended for all creatures, including man and woman (Genesis 1:29-30).⁸ Nachmanides, Cassuto, and others share the view, which is elaborated upon by Rav Kook, that the permission to eat meat was granted as a

concession to human weakness and imperfection. And interpreters of Jewish practice from Maimonides, in the *Guide of the Perplexed*,⁹ to Dresner (*The Jewish Dietary Laws*¹⁰) recognize that shehitah (ritual slaughter) and kashrut (the dietary laws) represent the fundamental principle that while the eating of meat is permitted, "...we must learn," in Dresner's words, "to have reverence for the life we take."¹¹

Pinchas Peli puts it this way:

Accordingly, the laws of kashrut come to teach us that a Jew should prefer a vegetarian meal. If however one cannot control a craving for meat, it should be kosher meat, which would serve as a reminder that the animal being eaten is a creature of God, that the death of such a creature cannot be taken lightly, that hunting for sport is forbidden, that we cannot treat any living thing callously, and that we are responsible for what happens to other beings (human or animal) even if we did not personally come into contact with them.¹²

The ritualized and restricted practice of eating meat is seen as the "next best" alternative to vegetarianism.

The modern concept of ethical vegetarianism is echoed in the concept of tza'ar ba'ale hayyim - the avoidance or prevention of cruelty to animals. This is an established and essential principle for the Rabbis of the Talmud, who deem it to be a biblical ordinance even though it is not explicitly stated in the Bible.¹³ Adherence to this principle continues in medieval Jewish philosophy; it is found in the writings of Maimonides¹⁴ and, later, of Joseph Albo¹⁵, among others. The kabbalistic version of this doctrine often includes, along with the admonition against causing suffering, the belief that the animal soul is worthy of ascending to a higher level, and that in eating animal flesh a person does the animal a great service in elevating its soul.¹⁶

These foundations of the Jewish view towards animals - the humane basis of kashrut and shehita, the principle of tza'ar ba'ale hayyim, and other aspects of the relationship between human beings and animals - are well documented in Jewish sources, and many works which treat these subjects are listed in the bibliography. In "A Vision of Vegetarianism and Peace" Rav Kook incorporates all of these traditional views, synthesizes them, and goes beyond them.

For the most part, this work takes the form of an exposition of the reasons for the mitzvot. His motivation for engaging in this task is explicit:

On the face of it, it should be clear to us that Judaism's revival and revitalization, even its remaining firm in its present position, must be based on an inner light, on knowledge and

feeling, which distill love and give firmness to the actions that derive from them. Toward this end, the most important task is a popularization of the study of the reasons for the commandments in depth and originality.¹⁷

Rav Kook acknowledges his debt to Maimonides, who was the "first one to illumine our horizon by probing the reasons for the commandments..." In *Talelei Orot* (Fragments of Light) he compares his own affirmation and use of the theory of evolution (see Introduction, p. 30) with Maimonides' encounter with "...the Greek conception of the eternity of the universe,..[Maimonides] was very successful, not only in demonstrating a way of maintaining the divine idea on the basis of the belief in creation, but also by utilizing the ideology of the adversary." Maimonides' efforts in regard to seeking the reasons for the commandments, however, failed to "evoke any reaction." He identifies Maimonides' main objective to be the uprooting of idolatry; Maimonides' argment is therefore oriented to a "cultural force of the past" which, while it "continues to release an idealistic spirit...is bound to weaken, since its brightest epoch is the past. In truth, however, the basic principle immanent in the reasons for the commandments points to the future."¹⁸

According to Jacob Agus, "Maimonides was concerned with the justification of Judaism as a historical phenomenon of Divine Revelation," while Rav Kook's intention was

...to reinterpret Jewish ceremonials and rituals with the view of revealing their profound significance to modern Jews. In this colossal endeavor, the basic maxim was, "as there are laws to poetry, so there is poetry in laws." He expounded the whole regimen of pious Jewish practice as a kind of symphonic variation on the central themes of the love of God, the love of humanity, and the love of Israel.¹⁹

In Rav Kook's explanation of the deeper meaning of certain of the commandments, it is evident that one of these "variations" is the love of the living beings who serve humanity and who are "constantly bringing forth everything beautiful."²⁰

"A Vision of Vegetarianism and Peace" is Rav Kook's explication of those regulations which guide or restrict the human use of animals and of animal products, which he calls their "natural possessions." Kook addresses, in addition to the Noahide permission to eat meat in contrast with the original vegetarian diet (see above), these specific practices: the commandment concerning covering the blood of slaughtered animals, ritual slaughter (shehita), the prohibition of eating the fat of animals (issur chelev), the separation of milk and meat, the separation of wool and linen (shatnez), and the

prohibition of the eating of nevelah (carcasses) and terefah (animals that are torn or injured). He also addresses in more general terms the relations between human society and the animal world, and the progression of this relationship toward a Messianic ideal, explaining how this progression is reflected in the various practices and restrictions.

There are a number of particular stylistic and methodological characteristics in Rav Kook's writings which present a challenge to the translator, and to the reader of the translation.

Even the Hebrew reader often finds himself baffled by Rabbi Kook's unique style, which abounds in poetic imagery, in all kinds of allusions to Rabbinic, Kabbalistic, and Hasidic teachings. Like all mystics trying to communicate the ineffable, he uses a profusion of words but can only hint at his meaning, without giving it precise formulation.²¹

In the case of "A Vision of Vegetarianism and Peace," this "profusion of words" for the most part enhances the poetic quality of the work, rather than weighing it down. It does give rise, however, to a certain amount of repetition of terms and concepts, reflective of Rav Kook's philosophy, which are used frequently throughout the work, although in different contexts.

Another facet of Rav Kook's method which pertains to this work is that he "... frequently expounds a traditional concept in an altogether new direction, and then quotes a classic text which appears to confirm his meaning. But in such instances he has also expanded the sense of the text to bring the two meanings in conformity."²² In the translation which follows, such concepts and allusions to previous teachings are indicated and their sources given in footnotes.

There is one such concept, central to the work and used repeatedly, which merits discussion at this point. It is indicated by the Hebrew word ha'arah which means, according to Jacob Klatzkin's Otzar Hamunahim Hafilosofi'im (Dictionary of [Hebrew] Philosophical Terms)²³ "the urging or spurring on of intellect and mind (zeruz hasechel vehada'at). " Klatzkin refers to Bahya Ibn Pakuda's Book of Direction to the Duties of the Heart and, indeed, when Rav Kook introduces these terms (see Section 3 of the translation) he refers to this work of medieval Jewish philosophy.

For Bahya there are two sources of this urging or prompting: the intellect, and the Torah or revealed teachings (ha'arat hasechel and ha'arat hatorah). In Duties these terms are distinct, yet closely related. The purpose of this stimulation or prompting is

...to spur [the individual] on to his obligation to realize his obedience to God both in action and in the faith of the heart, so that he will not be left directionless until he understands it by

himself. This exhortation is of two kinds: the first, based on the mind, is rooted in man's discrimination and is impressed on him from his creation; the other is gained by way of tradition and is contained in the revealed law which the prophet [Moses] gave the people to direct them in the way of God's obedience obligatory upon them.²⁴

Bahya goes on to explain that because of three points of weakness of "the exhortation based on the mind," both kinds of "arousal" are necessary. As a result of these weaknesses,

...it is necessary to arouse man by the Law, which includes all the commandments imposed by both reason and revelation to arouse him to ascend to God's obedience, which is obligatory upon him also by way of logical demonstration. This obedience is the final purpose of the creation of mankind in this world.²⁵

Furthermore, the prompting of the Torah and of the intellect are characterized as "outside exhortation" and "inner exhortation," respectively; the external prompting of the Torah is "...the cause of the other, a step leading to the higher one... Submission through alertness of the mind and through logical demonstration is better in God's eyes, preferable to Him and more pleasing, for seven reasons."²⁶ Two of these reasons are particularly relevant to Rav Kook's work. One is,

...that obedience based on the Law comes only after man has been made to fear his punishment or wish for his reward, while the obedience based on the arousal of the mind springs from the soul's munificence and from its endeavor to concentrate all its efforts on God's obedience for His own sake, when it has known and understood it.²⁷

[Another] reason why obedience based on the mind is preferable is that the duties based on the Law are limited and finite in number, being six hundred and thirteen altogether, while the duties imposed by the mind are limitless. This is because every passing day increases man's knowledge of them, and the more he understands and discriminates of God's graces done to him, of His omnipotence and sovereignty, the more submissive and humble he grows before Him.²⁸

On the other hand, Bahya also lists seven advantages to the Torah's prompting. Again, two are particularly relevant to Rav Kook's concerns:

...the exhortation of the Law is an introduction and an initiation into the persuasion of the mind, and a direction to it, for a man in his youth is in need of education and management to help him overcome his desires until he grows up and his mind strengthens...[People] need a moderate rule, one they can bear without its being impossible for them to grasp.²⁹

The [next] reason is that the Law includes certain matters whose obligation cannot be grasped by the mind, namely, the duties imposed by revelation and some of the basic intelligible rules. This was made necessary by the condition of the people at the time when the

Law was revealed to them. They were ruled by their animal desires then, with mind and discrimination too weak to grasp most of the intelligible things. So the Law treated them in the same way, making both intelligible duties and those imposed by revelation equal in their force.³⁰

In using these concepts of Bahya's Rav Kook does not speak in terms of obedience to God and submission to God's authority; instead, he uses the term "morality." In Rav Kook's thought,

While the roots of morality are to be found in human nature itself, its fullest unfolding is dependent on the influences of the teachings and disciplines of religion and on the refining service of reason. The moral life expresses the highest response to God's existence.³¹

And, in an example of taking a traditional concept in a new direction, Rav Kook juxtaposes reason and revelation in a striking parallel to, and expansion of, Bahya's conception:

Understanding reached by one's own mind - this is the highest expression of spiritual progress. All that is learned by study is absorbed from the outside, and is of lesser significance as compared with what is thought through within the soul itself. All that is acquired by study is only a profound strategy as to how to draw on what is hidden in the heart, in the depths of the soul, one's inner understanding, from the knowledge within. Knowledge in our inner being continues to stream forth. It creates, it acts.³²

Yet we have seen (see Introduction, p. 29) that, for Rav Kook, the faculty of reason is inadequate for the task of reaching a true and comprehensive understanding of the nature of reality; the mystical vision plays an indispensable role. For him, then, as for Bahya, the characterizations of the relative merits of the intellectual prompting and the prompting of the Torah are by no means absolute.

In the translation of Duties of the Heart used here these two concepts, ha'arat hasechel and ha'arat hatorah, are variously rendered as "logical exhortation" or "the mind's arousal" and "exhortation used by Scriptures" or "persuasion of the Law," among other terms. Terms used to translate the word ha'arah by itself include "exhortation," "arousal," and "spurring on." In another translation³³ the concepts are translated as "the form which the Torah takes to arouse us" or "the urge of the Torah" and "the way in which our reasoning prompts us" or "the urge of the understanding;" terms used to render ha'arah by itself are "prompting," "arousing," "stimulation," or "calling attention," among others.

These terms are used, in different contexts, throughout "A Vision of Vegetarianism and Peace;" the phrases "prompting of the Torah" and "prompting of the intellect" (or "intellectual

prompting" when the usage in the Hebrew is adjectival), with quotation marks, have been used consistently throughout this translation. Where the word ha'arah appears independently, it has been translated according to its context, without the use of quotation marks.

Passages from other works which may serve to elucidate or augment the text are provided in footnotes. The editor's own references are included as well, and his notes, where they occur, have been translated. Discrepancies between the editor's reference and the available sources have been noted, and some references which the editor did not provide have been included.

Where literal translations of specific terms or phrases seem awkward, they have been rendered idiomatically, with the literal meanings given in brackets. Wherever possible, gender-neutral words are used for Hebrew terms which are grammatically masculine, such as ha'adam.

It is hoped that this translation will provide not only a glimpse of the man, his vision and spirit, but will also inspire a deeper understanding of an issue, the rights of animals, which has important practical and spiritual implications in our day and age. This will be discussed further in the conclusion.

Notes to the Preface to the Translation

1. Elijah Judah Schochet, Animal Life in Jewish Tradition (New York: Ktav, 1984), p. 293.
2. Lahai ro'i (Jerusalem: Boys Town Press, 1961).
3. Hazon hatzimhonut vehashalom (Jerusalem: Nezer David, 1983).
4. Ben Zion Bokser, Abraham Isaac Kook (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), pp. 303-323.
5. Kook, "Fragments of Light," in Bokser, pp. 304, 308-309, 317-323.
6. Bokser, p. 249.
7. Gershon Mamlak, "Abraham Isaac Kook: The Sacred Element in Zionism," Midstream (December, 1985), p. 25.
8. See "A Vision...", Section 2, Note 7.
9. The Guide of the Perplexed, III:48. Maimonides expressed the view that animal flesh was a natural source of human food that was necessary for health.
10. Samuel Dresner, The Jewish Dietary Laws (New York: Burning Bush Press, 1966).
11. Ibid., p. 27.
12. Pinchas H. Peli, "Why Kashrut?", Jerusalem Post International Edition, Week ending April 20, 1985, p. 10.
13. Shabbat 128b
14. Mishneh Torah, Nezikim, Hilkhoh Rotzeah Ushemiroh Nefesh, Chapter 13; Moreh Nevukhim 3:48; See "A Vision...", Section 14, Note 55.
15. Sefer Haikkarim, trans. Isaac Husik, Vol. III, Chapter 15. See "A Vision...", Section 12, Note 40.
16. Moses Cordovero, The Palm Tree of Deborah, trans. Louis Jacobs (London: Valentine, Mitchell, & Co., 1960), pp. 83-85.
17. Kook, "Fragments of Light," in Bokser, p. 303.
18. Ibid., pp. 303-306.
19. Jacob Agus, High Priest of Rebirth, p. 197- 198.
20. Kook, The Lights of Holiness, in Bokser, p. 223.
21. Bokser, "Rabbi Kook as a Mystic," Judaism, Vol. 24 No. 1 (Winter 1975), p. 119.
22. Ibid., pp. 120-121.

23. Jacob Klatzkin, Otzar Hamunahim Hafilosofi'im (New York: Philipp Feldheim, 1968), Vol. 2, p. 191.
24. Bahya Ibn Pakuda, The Book of Direction to the Duties of the Heart, trans. Menahem Mansoor (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 180-181.
25. Ibid., p. 182.
26. Ibid., p. 183.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., p. 184.
29. Ibid., p. 187.
30. Ibid., p. 188.
31. Bokser, Abraham Isaac Kook, p. 131.
32. Kook, The Lights of Holiness, in Bokser, Abraham Isaac Kook, p. 216.
33. Bahya Ibn Pakuda, Duties of the Heart, trans. Moses Hyamson (New York: Bloch, 1941), Vol. II, pp. 34ff.

Rav Avraham Yitzhak Hacoen Kook

A VISION OF VEGETARIANISM AND PEACE

1. Justice regarding animals

There is one essential branch of higher human progress which exists at this time, according to the present state of our culture, only as the appealing dream of certain radical idealists: namely, the natural moral aspiration, owing to the human sense of uprightness, to pay particular regard to the rights¹ of animals, in the fullest sense.

The cruel philosophies, especially those which are the most heretical [which have broken away most completely from the obligations of the Torah], each in its own way makes it easy for the human being to completely stifle the inner sense of what is right with regard to animals, in keeping with their view of human morality from the standpoint of general philosophy.² They have not managed, nor will they manage, with all their clever counsel, to change the character of the natural justice which the Creator has implanted within each individual. And even though, with regard to animals, this [sense of justice] is very much like the glow of a dim and smoldering ember buried beneath a great heap of ashes, nevertheless it is impossible to deny what is felt in every sensitive heart: that the failure of human nature to fulfill a fine and noble sentiment - refraining from taking the life of living beings for human needs and pleasures - is a universal moral shortcoming.

Our sages did not engage in this sort of clever philosophizing [like the heretical philosophers] but told, rather, the story of how our holy Rabbi [Judah Hanasi] was punished with suffering when he said to the calf, which was being led to the slaughter and which sought to hide

¹ The Hebrew word *mishpat* is singular, meaning also "justice" or "cause." In "Fragments of Light" Rav Kook uses the phrase "the claim of their rights (*zechuyotehem*) from mankind" in a similar context (in Bokser, *Abraham Isaac Kook*, p. 317).

² This may be considered as an expression of "...the anguish of the mystic who has discovered, through the trials of his own experience, the unity of existence. He knows the error of the different philosophies derived from following the different side roads of the truth, the basic truth not having been revealed to them - the certainty of God's presence in existence." (Bokser, p. xviii.)

behind his robe: "Go; for this you were created." And his healing came about because of a subsequent incident in which he showed compassion for weasels.³ Here they [the rabbis] did not act as the philosophers did in turning darkness into light in order to accommodate the practical demands of life. For it is altogether impossible to conceive of the Blessed Ruler of all creation, who is merciful to all creatures, praise God, imposing upon this most excellent creation an eternal decree such as this : that the human race would maintain its existence by going against its moral sensibilities through the shedding of blood, albeit the blood of animals.

2. Meat was not permitted to the first human being

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."⁴ - 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;"⁵ as it is said, "a world built on lovingkindness."⁶

Furthermore, the Torah has already testified that at one time all of humanity was encouraged to raise itself to this exalted moral state [of not shedding blood in order to obtain food], as our sages explained in their writings, which prove that the first human being was not allowed meat as food: "every tree yielding seed shall be yours for food."⁷ Only after the children

³ Baba Metzia 85b. (ed.)

⁴ Genesis 1:28. (ed.)

⁵ Psalm 145:9. (ed.)

⁶ Psalm 89:3 (ed.)

⁷ Genesis 1:29. The "writings of the sages" includes a passage in Sanhedrin 59b (ed.: 59a) and the commentaries of Rashi, Ibn Ezra, the Ramban, and Abravanel on the biblical verse. (ed.) All of the commentators note that meat was not permitted as food to the first human beings or to the animals; Ibn Ezra, the Ramban, and Abravanel point out the differences in the original diet of human beings and animals. The Ramban further states that the reason that the eating of meat was not permitted "is because all creatures who possess a vital [[lit. 'moving']

of Noah came, following the flood, was [the eating of meat] permitted to them: "As with the green herbs, I give you everything."⁸ And henceforth, is it possible to conceive that a highly valued moral virtue, which had already existed as a part of the human legacy, should be lost forever? Regarding these and similar matters it is said: "I will get knowledge from afar, and ascribe righteousness to my Maker."⁹ The future will broaden our steps [i.e.: give us grounds to proceed more confidently] and extricate us from this complex problem.

3. "The prompting of the Torah" and "the prompting of the intellect."¹⁰

Concerning humanity, the pious one [Bahya Ibn Pakuda, author of] Duties of the Heart,¹¹ has explained well that the ethical foundation is built upon the foundations of two sources of motivation: "the prompting of the Torah" and "the prompting of the intellect;" and "the prompting of the Torah" brings about "the intellectual prompting." When [the latter] is perfected in a person, that person continually walks the lofty and sublime path of righteousness because of it. The purpose of "the prompting of the Torah" is likewise to bring a person to the perfection of "the intellectual prompting." The same rule applies to both the individual and the group, the difference being that the way of the individual is short and straight, and the way of society is long and complicated. The Torah prepares one for "the religious prompting"¹², in a measure appropriate for each individual, according to the reckoning of the God of knowledge, the blessed Giver of the Torah, and in a manner whereby humanity in its group identity will also attain through it ["the religious prompting"] "the intellectual prompting," when [humanity] as a group will be fully ready

soul have a level of superiority with regard to their soul which is similar to those who possess a rational soul: they make choices concerning their welfare and their [means] of sustenance, and they seek to avoid [lit. 'flee from'] pain and death. Scripture says in this regard: 'Who knows if the human soul rises upward, and the soul of the animal sinks down into the earth.?'(Ecclesiastes 3:21)"

⁸ Genesis 9:3, and Rashi's commentary. (ed.) The verse begins: "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you." Rashi refers back to Genesis 1:29.

⁹ Job 36:3. (ed.: 35:3)

¹⁰ See "Preface to the Translation," pp. 45-49.

¹¹ *Duties of the Heart*, Gate of Service, end of introduction and Sections 1-5. (ed.) See "Preface," pp. 46-47, notes 25-31.

¹² *Haha'arah hatorit*.

for it. The same "intellectual prompting" which, at the time of the spirit's descent, is the possession of only a small part of humanity, from among its loftiest saints and sages, will become the way of the many,¹³ when that which is written comes to pass: "And all your children shall be taught of the Lord;"¹⁴ [and] "I will place my teaching into their inmost being, and inscribe it upon their hearts."¹⁵ We need, however, to look into those very impressions which the Torah gives, so that through them the divine intellectual light will come again.

It is understood that we can in no way set a time for this [spiritual and moral] elevation, and it is put in the same broad category which includes other lofty qualities which are distinct from one another: that is to say, the category of the future to come, which includes among its aspects the coming of the Messiah and the revival of the dead. We are not discussing here specific times and their characteristics, but the impressions laid down by the Torah, in which we find the progression of ideals [toward realization].

4. Meat of desire [to satisfy the appetite]

With the coming of the permission to eat meat, after the sacralization of the *mitzvot* by the giving of the Torah, [the Torah] qualifies [the permission], as suggested by the words, "[when] you say, 'I shall eat meat,' for you have the urge to eat meat, you may eat meat whenever you wish."¹⁶ There is here a wise yet hidden rebuke and a restrictive exhortation, namely, that as long as your inner morality does not abhor the eating of animal flesh, as you already abhor [the eating of] human flesh (in regard to which it is not necessary for the Torah to make an explicit prohibition, since one does not need an external warning when one has already acquired a certain

¹³ In *The Lights of Holiness* Rav Kook speaks of the joining of "the spirit of the masses with the aristocratic spirit that is characteristic of the elitist few." The elite, however, are in error when they think they can separate themselves from the masses. "...the basic moral sensibility...the religious sensibility, the feeling of the greatness of God, the sense of beauty, sensitivity - everything that pertains to a proper way of life, unfiltered in the murky vessels of knowledge and wisdom, is in a healthier and purer state among the masses." But the masses are unable to preserve their purity, to integrate all their feelings and thoughts, and to hold their own against "contradictory perceptions and feelings...For this they need the help of the great men of wisdom, to set straight for them the paths of their life." (In Bokser, pp. 224-225.)

¹⁴ Isaiah 54:13. (ed.)

¹⁵ Jeremiah 31:33. (ed.: 31:32) ·

¹⁶ Deuteronomy 12:20. (ed.)

concept [such as the revulsion for human flesh] naturally, as has been explained), then when the time comes for the human moral condition to abhor [eating] the flesh of animals, because of the moral loathing inherent in that act, you surely "will **not** have the urge to eat meat," and you will not eat it, since we know that [with regard to] "words of Torah, the positive is inferred from the negative and the negative from the positive."¹⁷

5. An *am ha'aretz* [ignorant or uncultured person] is prohibited from eating meat

Our sages noted that meat was permitted as a "permission on account of difficulty" [because prohibiting the eating of meat, while morally desirable, would have been untenable in practice], and said "an *am ha'aretz* is prohibited from eating meat, for it is said, 'This is the law [torat] of beast and fowl."¹⁸ Whoever engages in the study of the law of beast and fowl may eat meat."¹⁹ That is to say, the necessity to renew one's strength for intellectual endeavors, from which and through which a person is perfected, which is the same strength that is at work in the ascent of the creatures as well,²⁰ [that strength] is engaged in the [study of] "the law of beast and fowl." When the connections [among all existence] are realized, then the [corresponding] action [to be taken in regard to animals] will be brought to light.

¹⁷ Nedarim 11a; Palestinian Talmud, Nedarim 1:4; Mekhilta, Yitro, Bahodesh:8; Rashi's commentary on Exodus 20:12. (ed.) The wording here is according to the Mekhilta, where the phrase refers to Exodus 20:12: "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long." "If you honor them, then your days will be long; if not, then your days will be short...For the words of the Torah are interpreted so that the positive may be inferred from the negative and the negative inferred from the positive." In the Palestinian Talmud, the context is a discussion of the eating of consecrated and unconsecrated food; only the first part of the principle is stated: "you may infer a positive statement from a negative one." Rashi's comment on the verse in Exodus refers to the Mekhilta.

Rav Kook uses the principle here to infer a negative from a positive: since you will eat meat because you crave it, then when you no longer crave it you will not eat it.

¹⁸ Leviticus 11:45. The statement follows a lengthy and complex list of instructions.

¹⁹ Pesahim 49b. (ed.) *Afikim Banegev* adds the continuation of the Talmudic passage: "and whoever does not study the law of beast and fowl may not eat meat."

²⁰ See sections 31 and 32.

6. The permission [to eat meat] at the time of moral downfall

Animals, too, must pay the price of passage, even as human beings pay a great many taxes. On the human community's altar of compensation are sacrificed a great many human lives, but the glorious future will wipe away all tears. "The Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces."²¹

Indeed, after human dissolution has occurred, which is likewise a consequence of humanity's moral failing, the eating of meat is to be expected [lit. "appropriate"]. This being the case, it was already established, from the point of view of "the intellectual prompting" which is hidden in the depths of the Torah, that the very same permission to eat meat, granted after the flood, was not intended to be the actual practice for all time. For how is it possible for a lofty and enlightened moral condition, once instituted, to vanish [as though it had never been]?

On the contrary, the divine wisdom perceived that humanity had fallen from its [original] moral state, and that until it has risen to its [previous] stature, awakening to true moral cognition - until such a blessed and enlightened time, the high level of morality inherent in the recognition of the rights of animals is not expected of [lit. "appropriate for"] general humanity.

And just as it is the case with whoever hastily professes a level of piety so unsuitable that it only brings confusion to that person's thinking and way of life, so it is with humanity in general, in that it has fallen to the lowest level of moral decline, to the extent that the power which one human being exercises over another has become detrimental, and to the point where the basest kind of personal moral decline occurs. [Humanity] "is abominable and filthy, ... drinking iniquity like water."²² How ludicrous it would be if humanity, as long as its impurities are within it, would hypocritically [lit.: "remove its hooves," i.e. giving a false impression] turn to a farfetched way of righteousness, showing itself to be righteous [only] with regard to animals, as if all accounts between human beings, created in the divine image, had been settled, as if everything had already been set aright, and the rule of evil and falsehood had been banished; as if hatred between peoples, national rivalries, racial animosity, and family strife, which cause so many mortal casualties and spill so much blood - as if all these had already disappeared from the earth, and the only way left

²¹ Isaiah 25:8. (ed.: 25:36)

²² Job 15:16. (ed.)

in which to elevate human piety was to attend to the establishment of a moral foundation in regard to animals.

Therefore this is not a fitting standard for humanity in general as long as [humanity] remains in its [state of moral] baseness, except insofar as it does not overtax the capacity which it is possible for the force of human morality, in its weakened state, to sustain. 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.

7. A concession on the part of divine reasoning

As long as the human heart is not naturally set on good and just behavior; as long as the true divine knowledge of doing acts of lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness in the earth²³ is not universally inscribed in the human heart; as long as humanity requires external teachers in matters of moral duty and human uprightness; it will also require many limitations and precautions so that its system of behavior will not be disrupted, until such time as it will be fit to receive the desired guidance.

²³ After Jeremiah 9:23. Maimonides, at the end of the *Guide of the Perplexed* (III:54), describes these as the divine attributes which are to be known, imitated, and assimilated by the individual who seeks perfection.

And at times it will be necessary to concede an authoritative part of our moral practices, in order that this indulgence may in fact make humanity fit for its own higher moral standard; this very concession then becomes holy and exalted. It is not possible to determine these matters except through the mind of God, by the standard [lit. "coin] of divine knowledge which surveys and encompasses all. "I, God, am first, and I am the One who calls [even] the last generations from the beginning."²⁴

If we had started out with that which should properly have been delayed to a later time, then we would have lost everything.²⁵ Many deceptive notions which float about in the world, and many who act as agents on their behalf and on behalf of those who hold these views, came about only as a result of that exaggerated sense of aspiring which does not know that there is a proper time for every purpose and which knows no restraint or bounds. It does not possess enough intelligence to arrive at the wisdom hidden in pure faith, so as to know the power of the divine teaching [torah], whether in its compelling of humanity on towards a higher level, or in its taking humanity by the hand and gently leading it according to its capacity. "I draw them with human cords, with strings of love."²⁶

8. Our estrangement from animal society

Since human morality is still contingent upon weakness, humanity's animal-like self-love has the potential to take complete control, until all laws of justice and uprightness are destroyed, until the glory that is morality becomes a mere game. This being the case, it is clear that it is necessary for humanity to perceive itself as existing in a sphere far removed from the society of animals, which exists at a vast and profound distance below, so that people will not feel that they are simply one of them. For if this were the case, then the bestial habits which drag humanity's spirit down to the muddy depths of the animals, whose world consists of nothing more than natural sensory instincts, with their attending crude restrictions and limitations, would be impressed upon humanity.

²⁴ Isaiah 41:4. (ed.) The text here reverses the phrases as they appear in the Bible.

²⁵ i.e., if the rights of animals were of equal priority to those of human beings.

²⁶ Hosea 11:4. (ed.: 11:5)

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.²⁷

9. Preventing the debasement of the masses

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.²⁸ The end result would be the debasement of humanity to the level of the animals. We cannot depict how this would affect the those perfect individuals who are distinguished in each generation, since it is doubtful as to whether the human spirit, once it has descended into a crude intermingling with animals, would then be in any way equipped to produce individuals who manifest spiritual excellence. Its effect on the widespread debasement of the masses, however, can be easily imagined and understood by the intellect, in that it [the legislation of uprightness toward animals] would greatly diminish their [the masses'] moral worth.

Consider this holy and lofty biblical saying: "Be not like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding."²⁹ If this saying did not have the authenticity [lit. "naturalness"] that it has for us, what else in the way of a moral weapon could we bring to bear in order to teach a person of discernment to rise above the practices of the animals, who are immersed solely in the realm of the body and its demands. And to those³⁰ who belong to the masses, who relinquish the splendor of their soul for the sake of their own crude craving, and desire to descend even further into the

²⁷ Or "beasts of the field" (*bahamot sadai*). See Joel 2:22 and Psalm 8:8. *Sadai* is an archaic form of *sadeh*.

²⁸ A similar statement is made with respect to the *mitzvah* of covering the blood (see Section 14).

²⁹ Psalm 32:9. (ed.)

³⁰ The Hebrew text uses the singular.

ways of the animals in order to evade a multitude of moral reckonings, for the purpose of enjoying the crude sensual pleasures of the moment, [the above-mentioned saying teaches that] "what goes around, comes around" [lit. "as it goes, so it is found," i.e., whoever chooses the pleasures of the moment will suffer the consequences in the long run].³¹

Therefore we cannot imagine how wonderful is the overflow of the divine knowledge which precluded any relation between human beings and animals.³²

10. The triumph of moral truth

It was necessary to bring together [lit. "complete"] all of [the preceding concerns] under the exemption, which the Torah grants [to humanity], from many moral obligations which pertain to animals, allowing humanity to obtain what it desires even to the extent of taking their lives. On this account humanity will come to the profound recognition of its superiority in relation to [animals], so that its spirit will be elevated to the highest moral aspirations, which by their nature come with the elevation of the human spirit, by means of the sanctification [lit. "sanctity"] of actions and superior character traits. The final result will be the triumph of absolute moral truth, when the knowledge of God will truly be present throughout the earth, until humanity will no longer have any need for any moral concession,³³ and it will be possible for the standard [lit. "midah"] of justice to endure for eternity, as was originally intended "when God began creation."³⁴

³¹ Gittin 13a (ed.): *zila le shekhiha le* (Rav Kook's text reads *dezilan le*). The context is a discussion of the rights and benefits of slaves who run away or are freed. This phrase occurs in a tangential statement: "A slave prefers a common woman...she is at his beck and call..." (Soncino *Talmud*, p. 46.)

³² This would not be the case if, as stated in the first sentence, our obligations to animals were a matter of law.

³³ Such as the permission to eat meat. See Section 12.

³⁴ Genesis Rabbah 8:4 (Soncino Vol. I, p. 57) and 14:1 (p. 111), and Rashi's commentary. (ed.) The first passage recounts that God, in considering the creation of humanity, took into account the quality [or standard: *midah*] of mercy as well as the quality of justice; the quality of justice alone would not have permitted the creation of the wicked along with the righteous. The second passage cites Proverbs 29:4, "By justice a king establishes the land," as a proof-text for the claim that God created the world on the basis of justice.

11. The Torah speaks with respect to the evil inclination

Furthermore, if the moral obligations of human beings towards animals were in frequent practice, but at a time characterized by a lack of moral perfection, there is another way in which these practices would cause many evils, and hinder the development of human morality. For there is a feeling of goodness and uprightness in the human being which seeks to carry out its task, and sometimes, even for the wicked of the earth, it knocks on the door of the heart, and they are compelled to seek some way of assuaging the natural hunger for justice, which is the basis of the powerful longing which upholds the world. And occasionally you find a thoroughly wicked person who chooses a moral issue and is more than willing to act justly, in order to assuage by this action the pangs of conscience and the natural remorse which at times exists within that person. And if kindly behavior towards animals were widespread owing to the desire for righteousness fixed within the human species, and if this were accompanied by the obligatory system of moral obligations pertaining to [animals], even if only of a negative nature, then we would find a great multitude of evil people who, seeking their prey like packs of wolves, would be mercilessly slaughtering human beings; and when their pangs of conscience would trouble them, they would be filled with relief by virtue of their kindness toward animals. For the causes which bring about abuses in the rule of human beings over each other, to their detriment, and which for the most part come about because of hatred, jealousy, and the like, are not the same in relation to animals, since animals are not included within the boundaries of either the food, the honorableness [lit. "honor"], or the cravings of these evil ones.

The perverse use of the human intellect for evil purposes in this situation finds ample opportunity [lit. "a wide field"] to generate contentiousness in thinking, and that critique which criticizes faults, while presenting rules which it finds [as applying] to human beings but which are not representative of animals, actually strengthens the hand of these evildoers, and it is impossible to measure the turmoil, deficiency, and distress, the delay of judgement and the perversion of justice, which have emerged³⁵ in consequence of these well-known approbations.³⁶

³⁵ *Afikim Banegev* shows "yotzim" in place of "motzim."

³⁶ In this difficult passage Rav Kook seems to be saying that the application of a set of rules of conduct towards animals which is different from that which is applied to humanity is a cause of the injustice and trauma which the animals suffer; in consequence, the evildoers have a good excuse to hypocritically devote themselves to the welfare

Therefore the divine approbation sees that only it is capable of paving the way within the conscience and the heart, of severing the cord which connects the human being to the animals, in order to focus the human moral core on its unique goodness. Then and only then will [that moral core] succeed in bringing about its [concomitant] happiness in the end of days.

12. The age of pure morality and peace

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 justice³⁷ in particular relation to [the animals]³⁸, 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,"³⁹ rather, they will walk the path of absolute good.⁴⁰ "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."⁴¹

of animals at the expense of human beings.

³⁷ See Section 10, particularly Note 34.

³⁸ This phrase, *b'yahas elav haprati*, is found in Afikim Banegev but not in the editor's text.

³⁹ Kiddushin 31b. (ed.: 31a) The context is a discussion of the taking of and cohabitation with female captives. "The permission to take a beautiful captive is a concession to human failings, which priests share equally with Israelites." (Soncino, p. 103, note 8.)

⁴⁰ The notion expressed in the last several sections, that the permission to eat meat was a part of the education of humanity as to its true, elevated moral nature (see p. 18 in particular), and that once this elevated state was realized the permission will no longer need to be in force, is also reflected in the thinking of the fifteenth-century Jewish philosopher Joseph Albo. His position, which is parallel to that of Rav Kook, is summarized as follows: "...it is necessary for man to view himself as being above the level of the animal. Otherwise he will sink to the level of the beast in moral and ethical behavior patterns. However, once man truly recognizes his elevated status and true spiritual essence, there is no longer any need for him to lord it over the animal kingdom, and surely no need for him to consume their flesh merely as a pedagogical device! For in reality, the killing of an animal is a cruel act and a dangerous habit for one to accustom himself to." (Schochet, p. 292.)

⁴¹ Hosea 2:20. (ed.: 12:20)

13. The mitzvot as windows to the light

In order to prepare for the sign of the moral outcome in the end of days, and to provide windows through which the light of the perfect "prompting of the intellect" penetrates, which follows "the prompting of the Torah," the mitzvot concerning the regulation of eating meat are brought to bear.⁴²

I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of precious stones, the whole encircling wall of gems. And all your children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children; you shall be established through righteousness. You shall be far removed from violence, and shall have no fear...⁴³ Have no fear, on account of⁴⁴ your exalted removal from violence - not only from human violence, but also from the violence of any creature, anything living. Your moral weakness, your terrible decline, will be transformed, as promised, into the fine and lofty moral fitness which was your original condition. "...And of destruction..."⁴⁵ you shall have no fear: of your faintheartedness and your soul's weakness, which affects the strengthening of [your] standard of morality to a greater extent than what is appropriate, according to the strength of the mental faculties of one who has received guidance; "...it shall not come near you."⁴⁶

[With regard to the mitzvot which pertain to eating meat,]⁴⁷ in general only those animals were permitted which are for the most part reserved for the human table, since they are closely akin [to human beings] in their nature; and they are in any case more suitable [for human consumption], since they will not corrupt the human character to the point where it comes to resemble [the character of] predators [since the permitted animals are not themselves predatory],

⁴² In *Afikim Banegev* this phrase ("the *mitzvot* concerning...") occurs at note 47.

⁴³ Isaiah 54:12-14. The editor summarizes the commentaries of Rashi and Radak on this verse: "Battlements" [*shimshotayich*]: windows through which the [light of the] sun [*shemesh*] enters. "Precious stones:" which shine the brightest.

⁴⁴ *Afikim banegev* shows "*pen*" instead of "*min*."

⁴⁵ Isaiah 54:14. This is the continuation of the passage quoted above.

⁴⁶ This is the conclusion of Isaiah 54:14.

⁴⁷ See note 42.

as was already made known to the first human beings, and as the elders had explained to Ptolemy, according to the testimony of Yosippon.⁴⁸

Indeed, it is precisely because of their close affinity [to us] that the feeling of pity is liable to be awakened in us to its fullest extent. This will not be built upon a momentary stirring of compassion, at a time when the general moral and material condition of life is not in accordance with [such a complete manifestation of compassion], for this mere stirring of compassion is in truth only weakness and faintheartedness; it is in itself that very "destruction" [referred to above].

Rather, in the fulfillment of the measure of justice - and every condition of life will correspond to the standard of absolute morality - this compassion is actually a decree, not a matter of doing good as a concession; it is a full-fledged right, a matter of law, a permanent decree and rule. "Whoever presents the attributes of God as [manifesting] compassion alone, that person is silenced, for they are actually decrees"⁴⁹ and righteous judgments, which will be revealed in all

⁴⁸ Reference is made here to "The Letter of Aristeas," to A. Kahana's *Hasefarim hahitzonim*, pp. 47-48, to Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*, and to the *Book of Yosippon* (Chapter 17). (ed.)

"The Letter of Aristeas" is a pseudepigraphic work which purports to tell of the circumstances surrounding the translation of the Hebrew scriptures into the Greek Septuagint. It contains much apologetic material on Jewish laws and customs, including the passage referred to here: "All these ordinances were made for the sake of righteousness to aid the quest for virtue and the perfecting of character. For all the birds that we use are tame and distinguished by their cleanliness, feeding on various kinds of grain and pulse....But the birds which are forbidden you will find to be wild and carnivorous, tyrannising over the others by the strength which they possess, and cruelly obtaining food by preying on the tame birds ...and so by naming them unclean, [Moses] gave a sign by means of them that those, for whom the legislation was ordained, must practise righteousness in their hearts and not tyrannise over anyone in reliance upon their own strength nor rob them of anything, but steer their course of life in accordance with justice....For since it is considered unseemly even to touch such unclean animals, as have been mentioned, on account of their particular habits, ought we not to take every precaution lest our own characters should be destroyed to the same extent?" ("The Letter of Aristeas," in R.H. Charles, ed., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), Vol. II, p.108.

"The Letter of Aristeas" is included in Kahana's Hebrew edition of the *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*. Much of the letter (although not the passage quoted above) is included in Josephus' account of the origin of the Septuagint (*Antiquities*, Book 12, Chapter 2 (ed.: Book 14)), and it is referred to in *Sefer Yosippon*, a tenth-century history, in Hebrew, of the Second Temple period, the primary source of which is Josephus.

⁴⁹ Berachot 33b. (ed.) Maimonides (*Mishneh Torah*, Ahavah, Hilchot Tefillah 9:7) summarizes and interprets the Talmudic passage thus: "Whoever says in his supplications, 'He that dealt mercifully with a nest of birds, forbidding the taking of the mother-bird together with the nestlings and the slaughter of a beast and its young in one day... may He have mercy upon us,' or offers petitions of a similar character, is silenced; for these precepts are divine decrees set forth in Scripture and have not been ordained in a spirit of compassion. Were this the motive, the slaughtering of all animals would have been prohibited." (Quoted in Schochet, p. 199.) In *Moreh Nevuchim*, however, Maimonides rejects this view. (III:26, 31, 48; see Section 14, Note 55.)

Rav Kook's view is that when the time comes for justice to extend to all the animals and their killing will no longer be permitted, it will have the force of a divine decree, and not be a result of "mere" human-like compassion.

their perfection when the time comes, precisely according to the guidance of the Torah, given at the wise discretion of the God of knowledge.

14. The mitzvot of covering the blood and shehita [ritual slaughter].

Covering the blood of beast and fowl is a kind of divine protest against the permission [to eat meat], which is fundamentally conditional upon the corrupt state of the human soul: "... for the inclination of the human heart is evil from its youth."⁵⁰ This is the soul which says, "I will eat meat, because of the craving ... to eat meat,"⁵¹ and even eats meat "as much as it pleases,"⁵² without any concept of inner opposition owing to an awareness of what is good and just. The Torah, however, declares, "Cover the blood;"⁵³ hide your shame and your moral weakness, even though humanity has not yet reached the level which it is capable of reaching, nor given this elevated morality any real influence in [lit. "access to"] practical living; and even though it has not hitherto tested the limits of piety which comes from "the prompting of the intellect," which understands and senses full well that one should not take the life of any living, sentient being out of necessity or craving. Indeed, the divine acts - the mitzvot - make their own way so as to produce the moral preparation which will be actualized when the time comes.

Accordingly, the very act of slaughtering for food [shehita] needs to be sanctified by means of a special characteristic, "...as I have commanded you;"⁵⁴ that is, through minimizing the suffering of the animal in order to implant in the human heart, through this [special characteristic], the awareness that this is not an encounter with some ownerless thing, which consists of nothing but automatic reflexes, but rather with a creature which lives and feels, and whose senses and even whose emotions, including sentiments for the life of its family and compassion for its offspring, must be taken into consideration. This is evidenced in the Torah by the prohibition of

⁵⁰ Genesis 8:21. (ed.)

⁵¹ Deuteronomy 12:20. (ed.)

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ After Leviticus 17:13: "And if any Israelite or any stranger who resides among them hunts down an animal or a bird that may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth."

⁵⁴ Deuteronomy 12:21. (ed.)

killing a domesticated animal and its young on the same day,⁵⁵ by the commandment to wait until the eighth day before separating the young from its mother,⁵⁶ and by the commandment to send the mother bird away from the nest when taking her young.⁵⁷

When these very considerations [lit. "this account in itself"] have been nourished by the divine holiness of [the divine imperative], "as I have commanded you,"⁵⁸ it will bear its own fruit for the sake of the universal "prompting of the heart," at the time appointed for it.

And this wonderful thought, too, hangs in the balance on the scales of justice: even though the domesticated animal is in every case dependent upon its owner, the owner cannot begin to realize even the slightest shadow of shame in slaughtering the animal for food without first caring for it and seeing to its needs. And if the mitzvah of covering the blood were in force also in regard to [the killing of] domesticated animals,⁵⁹ then the awakening of the moral stimulus would already have surpassed the level which the divine measure had intended for humanity, according to the number of blows which every such action must strike on the door of the human heart, which remains closed until opened by such means. "I am asleep but my heart is awake; the voice of my beloved persists: 'Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one.'"⁶⁰

All this is reckoned well in the mind of the God of knowledge, who creates the human spirit. The strict prohibition of blood is sufficient to awaken within us the notion that the shedding of blood is on no account a fitting moral standard for a human being. If the [feeling of] shame began to be impressed upon us with regard to the slaughtering of domesticated animals [for food],

⁵⁵ Leviticus 22:28. Referring to this verse, Maimonides writes: "For the suffering of animals [tza'ar ba'ale hayyim] in this regard is very great; there is no difference between the suffering of human beings and the suffering of the other animals in this respect. For a mother's love and compassion for her child is not derived from the intellect, but from the action of the imaginative faculty, which is found in most animals as it is found in humanity.... This is also the reason for the commandment of sending [the mother] away from the nest..." As for the Talmudic passage cited in Section 13 (see Note 49), Maimonides says that this is not a valid objection to the views stated here. (Moreh Nevuchim III:48.)

⁵⁶ Exodus 22:29; Leviticus 22:27.

⁵⁷ Deuteronomy 22:6. Rav Kook refers to the practices mentioned in these three biblical verses in a kind of rabbinic shorthand, as "oto ve'et beno, mihoser zeman, veshiluah haken" (lit. "it and its young, insufficient time, and the sending away [from] the nest").

⁵⁸ See note 54.

⁵⁹ As it is for wild animals; see Note 53.

⁶⁰ Song of Songs 5:2. (ed.)

it would cause an effect quite the opposite of what was intended,⁶¹ and we would get used to acting contrary to our inner moral sensibility [of which the feeling of shame is a manifestation]; this effect will counteract the positive purpose which the feeling of shame should serve in overcoming the formidable obstacle we will face in the end of days.⁶²

15. The limits of [spiritual] ascent

We do not know, nor can we know, the limits of [spiritual] ascent, or their particulars in terms of when they will occur [lit. "their times"] and the methods of reaching them. We know no reliable or conclusive details of any consequence in regard to these matters. They are, then, among God's hidden mysteries; but we can know, in principle, and we are able to understand, that there are higher and higher levels, and that the highest elevation - if we may speak in such terms - is not realized to its fullest value all at once. Our sages, of blessed memory, already hinted at this in their reference to the harp made of seven strings, then of eight, then of ten in the time to come.⁶³ And the sages of the Kabbala depicted a higher level being attained, and holiness enhanced, every thousand years; and every seven thousand years, an even more perceptible stride is taken: [the creation of] the world, cycles, shmittah, and so on up to the years of jubilee.⁶⁴

⁶¹ A similar statement is made at the beginning of Section 9.

⁶² It is difficult to translate this last sentence literally. Rav Kook is saying that the covering of the blood, where it is required, reminds us of the shame involved in the act of hunting down wild, free animals for food [see Sections 16 and 17]; consequently, this is not a common activity (or, conversely, the prohibition applies in this case because it is not a common activity). If the covering of the blood were required also for the slaughter of domesticated animals, which is a routine matter, then we would become inured to the reproach that is inherent in the mitzvah, and, in effect, our capacity to respond to the feeling of shame, when it really mattered, would be diminished.

⁶³ Numbers Rabbah, Beha'alotecha XV:11 [on Numbers 8:6]; Tanhuma [Beha'alotecha; on the same verse]; Yalkut Shimoni, Psalm 6; Pesikhta Rabati 21. "Rabbi Yehudah said: There were seven cords in the harp [upon which the Levites played];... and in the days of the Messiah [there will be] eight,... and [there will be] ten in the future to come." (ed.)

⁶⁴ The editor refers here to Sefer hatemunah. The main importance of this "highly cryptic" early Kabbalistic work (c. 1250) lies in its articulation of the theory of shmittot or "cosmic cycles." According to Gershom Scholem, this theory "was based on a fixed periodicity in creation." There is a cosmic cycle (shmittah) parallel to each of the days of creation; each such cycle is bound to one of the Sefirot and lasts six thousand years. "In the seventh millenium,... the Sabbath-day of the cycle, the sefirotic forces cease to function and the world returns to chaos. Subsequently, the world is renewed through the power of the following Sefirah, and is active for a new cycle. At the end of all the shemittot there is the 'great jubilee,...' The basic unit of world history is therefore the 50,000 year jubilee,... According to [this theory], the laws in the Torah concerning the sabbatical and the jubilee years refer to this mystery of recurrent creation." (Scholem, "Kabbalah," Encyclopedia Judaica (Jerusalem: Keter, 1972), Vol. 10,

16. Changes in our relations with wild animals, fowl, and domesticated animals.

It is our purpose to understand that if humanity rises first to this level, so as to understand and recognize, from the standpoint of the level of perfect piety, and on the strength of the impression given by the fulfilled "prompting of the intellect," that [in the case of] the animal which is not dependent upon human beings for sustenance, but which is attacked and hunted - as "[anyone who] hunts an animal or bird that may be eaten"⁶⁵ - it is an injustice to take this animal's life for our needs. It is fitting for humanity to be ashamed of this moral baseness, whereby it has descended so low that this cruel state characterizes its practical conduct, no less than it is ashamed of every other natural baseness. This state will prevent humanity from attaining the moral sensitivity which is much more elevated, through which it will provide for the animal which is dependent upon it, the domesticated animal, even, according to this general standard, when the animal reaches old age and can no longer perform its work. For the moral recognition will flow from the knowledge of God's ways, filled with justice and truth, until the life of the animal, which has performed its work for so many years and has become accustomed to the domesticated way of life, will be spared for its own sake. This will almost be perceived in the heightened "prompting of the intellect," which spreads out from the trunk of the divine "prompting of the Torah."

Therefore the impact of slaughtering an animal or bird which is for the most part hunted cannot be the same as that of slaughtering a domestic animal, which is for the most part consigned to its stall and is sustained by the labor of its master, and which then becomes a burden in its old age when it is no longer fit for eating. And therefore the covering of the blood cannot be the practice with regard to domestic animals, [in regard to the blood of whom scripture says] "...you shall pour it upon the ground like water [and not cover it]."⁶⁶

pp. 581-582.)

⁶⁵ Leviticus 17:13. (ed.) The verse continues: "...shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth." (See Section 14, Note 53.)

⁶⁶ Deuteronomy 12:24. (ed.)

17. The prohibition of fat.⁶⁷

Indeed, the prohibition of the fat will come to teach, when the time comes for "the prompting of the intellect" to be revealed, that even with regard to this animal, which is dependent upon its master, the prompting will come at an early time. In any case, there is no reason to take its life unnecessarily, except that human beings crave rich delicacies, "the fat of ox, sheep and goat."⁶⁸ And if the moral decline causes the weakening of humanity's physical capacities to the point where it also becomes impossible for it to develop by virtue of its physical strength, which is properly related to a higher development consisting of the elevation of the soul,⁶⁹ it is due to the eating of the flesh of animals. Therefore in preventing the eating of fat by a strict prohibition, without which humanity would still be able to endure by the strengthening of its powers, and whose only advantage lies in [the gratification of] a sensual desire, namely, the eating of the fat which is so loved by the gluttonous palate - this prohibition underscores distinctly that the basis of the permission [to eat meat] is due to necessity and is problematical,⁷⁰ to the extent that along with the prohibition of the fat, the very blood which is poured out upon the ground like water⁷¹ will cry out to the human species, when the time of its elevation arrives, so that it will be raised up from these disgraces.

Thus too for animals which are hunted, both beast and fowl, in which case the exhortation [ha'arah] which accompanies their slaughter, through the covering of the blood, is more keen, taking the form of the recognition of humanity's shame and the reproach of its moral baseness. Again, regarding these animals there is no need for the exhortation inherent in the prohibition of the fat, since it addresses a need, for it would serve to diminish the impact of covering the blood,

⁶⁷ Leviticus 3:17: "It is a law for all time throughout the ages, in all your settlements: you must not eat any fat or any blood."

⁶⁸ After Leviticus 7:23.

⁶⁹ In The Lights of Holiness Rav Kook writes: "When spiritual decline sets in because of a deterioration in one's bodily state, it is necessary to deal with it on the basis of its cause: to mend one's bodily state, according to a definite regimen and with firm understanding. Through the mending of the bodily condition the spiritual damage will be repaired." (In Bokser, p. 225.)

⁷⁰ See Section 5.

⁷¹ See Section 16, note 66.

which expresses the feeling of deep shame over the general spilling of blood, whether it is done for enjoyment or to alleviate starvation.⁷² In these cases one does not apply the specific exhortation regarding the fat, and therefore the fat of these animals is permitted.

Furthermore, these matters point to another fundamental principle in the manner in which they act upon the emotions. According to the natural condition of a people which inhabits its own land, whenever they hunt down an animal or bird in order to eat it, they spill out the blood there, far from their own dwelling, in the place where these free creatures live. In this way the sight of the blood will arouse the human heart a little, and awaken the human being to the fact that these deeds are not seemly. But surely the hunter will wander far from the place where the blood was spilt, and by what means then shall the impression remain in order to bear its fruit as a morally inscribed law which becomes more profound in each succeeding generation, like water which erodes the flinty rock drop by drop? Only through the active performance of the divine mitzvah - which contains within itself a fundamental principle for strengthening the desired exhortation - [namely,] through [the act of] "covering," naturally effected; and the Torah's point of view is that [the "covering" applies] to every instance of moral disgrace and shame that occurs in human nature.

The manner of conduct with regard to domesticated animals, however, is the opposite [of that stated above]. For the most part, it is slaughtered in the vicinity of a person's habitation, in a place which is frequented [lit. "where his feet are found"]; therefore the opposite should take place: one should not cover the blood, so that the eyes see at every turn that blood has been spilt, that "the blood cries out against [the perpetrator] from the ground."⁷³ And this voice, which arises through a "still, small voice"⁷⁴ indeed, will be heard by the human ear only when the time comes for it to be heard, the time when the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf shall be opened, that excellent time which is promised, when "... I will remove the heart of stone from their bodies and give them a heart of flesh."⁷⁵

⁷². Literally "corn of famine." See Genesis 42:19.

⁷³. After Genesis 4:10.

⁷⁴. After I Kings 19:12.

⁷⁵. Ezekiel 11:19. (ed.)

18. The preparation for the covering [of the blood]

The exhortation inherent in the covering of the blood of animal and bird, because it is seen to be prior and more pronounced, is also distinguished in a such a way as to testify to the essence of this particular deed, "by placing dust beneath" the blood, according to the tradition of the sages.⁷⁶ In other words, in regard to a matter which recalls such shame, preparation even prior to the action is called for, forewarning the practitioner to be penitent and remorseful, and to recognize that it is not fitting to harm a living being. "For God is good to all, and God's mercy extends to all creation."⁷⁷

19. The law of the use of milk and wool.

[In regard to] the use by human beings of things which naturally belong to animals, even when one is not taking the animal's life [lit. "removing its life from the world"], such as [the use of] the milk from an animal which is ordinarily milked, or the wool from an animal which is sheared: Now, seeds of light are sown in the divine Torah, seeds which will come to fruition as a result of [or "at the time of"] the more refined "intellectual prompting." For in these actions [the taking of milk and wool], too, there is a necessity for manifestations of guidance and worthy moral sentiments, signifying that life is so exalted and holy, so fine⁷⁸ and perfect, that the excessive arrogance, devoid of any feelings of justice or morality, exceeding all bounds, with which the human being in the weakness of self-love approaches the hapless cow and the mute sheep, taking from the one its milk and the other its wool - [that this arrogance] is incompatible with the "intellectual prompting" which results from the fulfillment of the "religious [Toraitic] prompting," and which will appear in the world as a result of the strength which comes from the recognition of God's ways and the revering of God's name, arising through the power of pure and holy love.

⁷⁶. Hullin 83b. (ed.) This phrase is used as part of an argument which establishes that covering the blood applies only to wild animals and birds. The practice of placing dust beneath (as well as over) the blood is also noted in Betza 7b and in the Shulhan Aruh, Yoreh Deah, Hilkhos Shekhita 28:5.

⁷⁷. Psalm 145:9.

⁷⁸. Afikim banegev shows "adinim" instead of "atzumim."

Surely it is appropriate to recognize that it is not a moral wrong to take wool from the sheep when the wool's owner, the sheep itself, would be relieved by its removal, or in any case, when to do so would neither distress it nor harm it. It is indecent, however, to take [the wool] for one's own benefit when the true, natural owners, the sheep themselves, are in need of it. So it is fitting to see this case, from the standpoint of "the intellectual prompting," as a perversion of justice which consists of a physical attack upon a weaker being. And the case is the same with the milk of the animal which is milked. It is appropriate, too, to make room [for the idea], which will emerge in its properly appointed time, that there is indeed a correlation between the taking of milk from an animal and the taking of its life and its flesh, namely, at a time and in a manner which causes it to suffer, when its own natural well-being and benefit, to which it is entitled, is denied to it.

20. The milk exists for the kid.

According to the comprehensive view,⁷⁹ which is filled with God's compassion and goodness over all creatures, humanity will acknowledge the principle of the existence of the milk in the teats of the mother, who does not live so that people, simply by their right of ownership, can exploit [the milk] for their own [purposes], but rather so that she can suckle her tender young, the kid which is dear to her, with the milk of her teats. The kid, by virtue of its character and its nature, is also entitled to the love of its mother's teats. But the cruelty in the human heart, which emerges from physical and moral weakness, changes and distorts these principled views.

Thus the tender kid, according to the evaluation of humanity's lower morality, is entitled neither to nestle against its loving mother, nor to enjoy the wonder of life, but only to be slaughtered and to be food for the stomach of gluttonous humanity, for its debased soul which says, "I will eat meat."⁸⁰ This being the case, what then is the purpose of the milk if not to cook in it the slaughtered kid? For does not the combining of these two essentials, the milk and the tender kid which is entitled to be nourished precisely from it, seem so natural?

⁷⁹. See the "Introduction," pp. 26-27.

⁸⁰. Deuteronomy 12:20. See the beginning of Section 14.

But humanity, let your ears hear something close behind you, the voice of God which forcefully calls out to you: "You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk."⁸¹ No, the purpose of the kid is certainly **not** to be food for your sharp teeth, which are sharpened and polished⁸² as a result of your baseness and your gluttony in eating meat; and the milk is manifestly not intended to be a condiment for you with which you satisfy your base craving.

21. The prohibition of meat [cooked in] milk during the transitional period.

When you recognize that [the cooking of] meat in milk is so foreign to the improvement of your eating habits, and so abominable that it is prohibited to [use them in combination] for enjoyment, for cooking, or for eating,⁸³ then you will know, when the time comes, that the life of the animal was not created in order to satisfy your lustful appetite, and that the milk was principally intended to be nourishment for the one whom nature conceived to fulfill its role, just as the milk of your mother's breasts was vouchsafed for you when you were nursing.

The prohibition of combining the meat with the milk intensifies the moral impact, the effect of which will be progressively legislated from the period of transition as well, during which the light that is sown for the future has not yet flourished.⁸⁴

And still incomplete is humanity's instruction in being prepared for that prompting of the heart which will, in good time, easily enable "the intellectual prompting" to appear. For then not only will it be fitting that the eating of meat will be prevented, from the lofty standpoint of pure morality, when it arises into consciousness, but also [it will be understood that] there is a measure of sin and robbery, morally speaking, even in the extraction of the milk, when it is taken in a manner similar to the taking of meat: by causing suffering or loss to the animal by means of

⁸¹. Exodus 23:19, 34:26; Deuteronomy 14:21. (ed.)

⁸². See Ezekiel 21:14-16.

⁸³. Hullin 115b and Mekhilta, Mishpatim 20: "'You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk,' is found three times [in the Torah; see Section 20, note 81]: one is a prohibition against eating it, one is a prohibition against enjoying [or benefitting from] it, and one is a prohibition against cooking it." (ed.)

⁸⁴. Rav Kook believed that the present age is the one which immediately precedes the Messianic Era. (See the "Introduction," p. 19.) It is a time of transition from a past characterized by imperfection and fragmentation to a future which will see the development of a perfected universal culture.

preventing the enhancement of its offspring's well-being. It will then be acknowledged, due to the opening of the gates of righteousness in the world to the indisputable owners of their natural possessions, that [their offspring] are for them an esteemed gift from God. This is the light which will shine through precisely because of the prohibition of eating meat with milk, with all its ramifications and in all its strictness, teaching the value of its cherished purpose.

The divine purpose which is hidden in all this, [and which is made manifest] only through practical behavior performed only for the sake of serving God and observing God's laws, in order to enlarge upon the thoughts of God's pure mind, serves to refine [all] creatures from one generation to the next.⁸⁵

22. The reason for the prohibition of shatnez⁸⁶

Wool is customarily used for human clothing, in keeping with the situation of Israel in its own land, and it is in large measure the natural⁸⁷ possession of the animal. Corresponding to it, in the category of plants, is linen. This gives rise to the statement of "the Tanna of the school of Rabbi Ishmael, [who said,] when the Torah mentions garments, without further specification, ... they are assumed to be of wool and linen."⁸⁸

The use of linen will enable humanity, according to the most perfect "intellectual prompting," and at the time of the more sublime manifestation of the knowledge of righteousness, to extend the desire for it and the use of it, when the sound reasoning behind it and its aesthetic sense are learned. Then the heart will have no cause to persist in saying that some sinful offense is being committed. Wool, however, is an entirely different case, in that it is taken from the animal; so there is a long-standing requirement [lit. "already requires"] for some sort of limitation with regard to its use in the name of "the intellectual prompting," which flows from the divine justice [inherent in] "the prompting of the Torah," [to the effect that] one should not exploit [lit. "take from"] a living being in a way that causes it suffering and disfigurement. Therefore it is

⁸⁵. See Section 27, Note 108.

⁸⁶. The mingling of wool and linen. See Leviticus 19:19; Deuteronomy 22:11.

⁸⁷. This word, tiv'i, found in Afikim banegev, is omitted in Hazon.

⁸⁸. Shabbat 26b; Yevamot 4a. (ed.)

unthinkable that wool and linen be regarded in the same category in assessing value and relationship. And in order to prepare the human inclinations to emerge fully in their proper time, they [these inclinations] will utilize the guidance provided by the laws of the prohibition of milk and meat and of the prohibition of "shatnez: wool and linen together."⁸⁹

23. The permission of shatnez⁹⁰ in tzitzit⁹¹ and in priestly garments.

It is particularly salient that in the matter of divine service, the purpose of which is so exalted as to raise the offering of life in all its aspects to its preeminent value -teaching that for human beings, in relationship to their possessions, this is the fitting and upright rule which is to impress upon them the honoring of the God of wondrous majesty, and by which rule they stand ready, "with all their being,"⁹² to be commanded - [in this instance] there is no room for limiting an explicit awareness of the possessions of animals [vis-a-vis those of human beings].

Therefore there is no value in instituting the prohibition of shatnez - combining wool and linen - regarding either tzitzit or priestly garments. These two instances have the effect of reversing the rigorously observed mitzvah of shatnez; [they put in a new light] the notions of reverence for all life and of what is a fittingly heartfelt offering when the natural possessions of their [animal] owners are taken, without limit or restraint, in order to facilitate the general uplifting of humanity.

For the hidden mystery of the service of God is such that it is proper for [the animals] too to happily make their offering, so as to partake of the worthy objective⁹³ [of serving God. This objective] emerges from humanity's revelation, which joins with the totality of existence, that [human beings] also are themselves animals, in a universal sense.

⁸⁹. Deuteronomy 22:11.

⁹⁰. See Section 22.

⁹¹. Fringes of the prayer shawl worn in morning worship and of the four-cornered inner garment worn by Orthodox Jewish men.

⁹². A reference to Deuteronomy 6:5, part of a prayer recited in Jewish worship three times daily.

⁹³. This follows Afikim banegev which shows "takhlit hatov" instead of "takhlita hatov."

24. The body of laws faces the future

The fundamental principle of this mitzvah is deeply imbedded in the most distant future, which will see enrichment in the spirit of all life to a level more wondrously exalted than we can presently imagine.

The whole body of laws anticipates [lit. "faces"] the future, which is their primary objective. In the present, these laws are made holy in terms of this objective in the form of sowing seeds and preparing for the future. Thus those whose domain is only the present, [i.e.] "the evil inclination and the foreign nations, object to these laws, and appraise [Israel] by them."⁹⁴

The waves of a raging sea of vast waters, waves of false imaginings from depictions of the present, which is limited to itself alone, with no trace of a connection with the source of the future; waves of a vast, roaring, human sea, a realm of tyrannical nations, who sanctify the present as though it were something which constitutes the wholeness of life; these waves rise to sink the fragile ship floating on the face of the waters, like delicate angels in a swift boat made of reeds; this is the ship of the community of Israel, straining to reach its home port [lit. "rowing to sanctuary (huppah)"], [seeking] to emerge out of the struggle with the sea of the present and its waves. Indeed this is the ship which subdues the sea "with clubs upon which are written ehyeh asher ehyeh [I am who I am],"⁹⁵ and which serves as a connection to the future through the observance of laws that are planted there. [This is in keeping with the] response of tradition: "I have decreed it, and I have made it a statute; and you have no right to criticize it."⁹⁶ For by whom is the future anticipated in all its particulars? Only by the Lord of all worlds, who from the beginning declares the end.

⁹⁴. Torat Cohanim [Sifra], Ahare, 13:9; Rashi on Leviticus 18:4 and Numbers 19:2; Tanhuma, Bamidbar, Hukkat 3; Bamidbar Rabbah 19; Yoma 67b. (ed). In each of these the law of shatnez is mentioned as one of a number of examples of laws to which the evil inclination and the gentile nations object. In conjunction with the passage cited at the end of the next paragraph (see Note 96), the objection seems to be based on the fact that there is no apparent rational explanation for these laws; they are decrees of God which must be taken on faith.

⁹⁵. Baba Batra 73a (ed.: 73b), referring to Exodus 3:14. This tangential anecdote, one of many in this section, occurs in a discussion of the selling of a ship: "Rabbah stated: Sailors have told me that a wave which sinks a ship comes with a white fringe of fire at its crest; it subsides when it is stricken with clubs upon which are written 'I am who I am, Y'ah, the Lord of Hosts, Amen, Amen, Sela.'"

⁹⁶. Even if it appears to be arbitrary or without rational explanation (see Note 94). The editor lists the same references as in Note 94.

Only when the blessed time comes will it be known and sensed by sight how great is the measure of benefit that belongs to the children of this marvelous nation. None among all the peoples under the heavens can compare to them, who erect before all the inhabitants of the earth well-guarded gates which are set up over all existence and which open to the most holy and exalted temple of human perfection.

25. "The words of the scribes are pleasing"

The judges and counselors who will return to us as before, "from Zion, perfect in beauty,"⁹⁷ from "the place which God will choose,"⁹⁸ in their explanation of the Torah and its motives, will find our people already fit and prepared to take these sacred buds [of teaching] and bring them to fruition. Then, in terms of the oral law, which, in its totality, consists in obeying [lit. "hearkening to"] the words of the scribes, the centralized Great Court of Law which will be established for Israel "is none other than the judge that is in your days."⁹⁹ With their interpretations as well as their decrees, by means of these [latter-day judges] the light will spread throughout the world, among the whole people, in the form of commandments and decrees which are "the words of the scribes," and which will have a full effect on "the intellectual promptings," and will be fulfilled through them. Then will be fully understood the declaration of the Congregation of Israel [to God]: "'For your beloved ones are more precious than wine;' the words of the Scribes are more pleasant than the wine of Torah."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷. Psalm 50:2.

⁹⁸. Deuteronomy 12:11, and many subsequent verses.

⁹⁹. Rosh Hashanah 23b and Sifre, Shoftim, 159 (ed.:149). The discussions referred to here are based on Deuteronomy 17:9: "You shall come to the levitical priests or to the judge that is in your days." The phrase "in your days" is taken to imply that any latter-day court will have the same stature and authority as the greatest of Israel's ancient judges.

¹⁰⁰. The author combines two references: Avodah Zarah 35a and Song of Songs Rabbah on Song of Songs 1:2. ("The meaning of these spoken words is that this is the eternal Torah which can never be changed or replaced, and the Torah permits [the eating of] meat. The sages, however, and a Great Court which [administers] justice from on high, may, when the great future arrives, in the complete fulfillment of their good attributes, add [to the Torah] and legislate, as Oral Law, from the words of the scribes, and institute restrictions to prevent large-scale slaughter for secular purposes [for food]. In this way the 'words of the scribes' will be more precious than the words of the Torah.") (ed.)

And that people which is elevated through a natural psychic [or spiritual (nafshi)] fitness, through the qualities of "mercy, modesty, and benevolence, which are the three distinguishing characteristics of this nation"¹⁰¹ - when those qualities emerge, realized in their fullest sense, according to the guidance found in the Torah, and when their righteousness and saving power shine forth like a torch aflame, then that nation must truly be "a light unto the nations."

26. The compassion reflected in the prohibition of nevelah (carcasses) and terefah (flesh from injured or torn animals)

Of particular significance is the rightful [or "statutory" (*mishpatit*)] compassion, intended to be put into effect out of pure emotions and to spread from humanity to all living beings, which lies hidden in the prohibition of eating *nevelah* and *terefah*.¹⁰²

The unfortunate *terefah* is more fully deserving of feelings of compassion, just as a person will naturally feel more compassionate toward one who is ill or a victim of suffering than toward one who is healthy. The admonition inherent in the prohibition of terefah, is accepted as bringing out the application [lit. "relation"] of the mitzvah of bikur holim (visiting the sick) to animals, in the fulfillment of "the intellectual prompting." [This mitzvah] brings a feeling of succor in regard to the unfortunate among [the animals], just as [the mitzvah of] covering the blood is related to the imprinting of a natural prohibition against murdering them.¹⁰³ An awareness of the consequences of murder and bloodshed is thereby effected, just as the prohibitions of [mixing] meat and milk and of shatnez gives rise to the awareness of the right of [animals] to their [natural] possessions and [their right] not to be robbed of what belongs to them.¹⁰⁴

The commonality found in the feelings of compassion, which will produce its effect when the time comes, combines with a spiritual and physical hygiene that is inherent in it [to deter human beings] from being associated with predatory animals [which do eat terefah],¹⁰⁵ since it

¹⁰¹. Yevamot 79b; Numbers Rabbah, Naso 8; Deuteronomy Rabbah, Ekev 3; Midrash Samuel, end of Section 28. (ed.)

¹⁰². Exodus 22:30; Leviticus 17:15; Deuteronomy 14:21.

¹⁰³. See Section 14.

¹⁰⁴. See Sections 19 to 22.

¹⁰⁵. See Section 13.

carries with it the obligation to act toward [the unfortunate ones] for their benefit, to treat them well and with intelligence. So how can people eat the terefah found in the field, appearing to divide the spoils and thereby obscuring their inclinations [towards goodness and compassion]?

Indeed, the ramifications of what constitutes terefah, as expounded in the words of the scribes, to the effect that there is no difference between an animal lying torn in the field and a person suffering from a fatal disease, point directly to the feeling of compassion, which ought to arise at the outset with regard to the unfortunate and the outcast. All the more so will the nevelah, which died of itself [not due to human intention], prepare the heart to direct itself to the feeling that it should have no desire to exploit the misfortune of the animals in the event of their deaths. This signals sentiments of comradeship and commiseration, entering into the realm of the inner feelings of their world [i.e. empathy with their situation].

In this way will "the intellectual prompting" be strengthened through the recognition of an innate [lit. "imprinted"] law [which requires us] to distance ourselves from committing any iniquity upon these our fellow creatures [lit. "friends"], since we come from the hand of one common Creator, the Lord of all creation.

27. Towards the improvement of the animals' lot

Thus will humanity expand the limits of righteous behavior. Once the gates of righteousness are opened, the light will continue to spread, "ever brightening until the height of noon,"¹⁰⁶ until within the parameters of human righteousness the demand will arise, valid and enduring, to take counsel in seeking ways to improve the lot of these animals, who exist at a lowly and humble level of creation in terms of their material and moral status. Then the "dominion" of which the Torah speaks¹⁰⁷ will be established according to its purpose and its value, as it was intended to be understood.

And certainly, when this noble vision is fulfilled; when this recognition is put into effect in its entirety by means of these impressions left by the Torah, its laws and mitzvot,

¹⁰⁶. Proverbs 4:18. (ed.)

¹⁰⁷. See Genesis 1:26,28.

"which serve to refine [all] creatures;"¹⁰⁸ when [these laws and mitzvot] are repeatedly put into practice in the life of each successive generation of a humanity filled with the knowledge of God, deriving from conceptions of what the essence of the higher morality is, which continually flows forth from the light that is hidden within these prohibitions and laws; [when this comes to pass] then humanity will no longer be able to in any way brandish its sword over [animal] life, but they will dwell in safety together, and savor the splendor of life.

28. Just laws for the future to come

When the divine meaning [underlying the mitzvot], which is indeed precious and deep-seated in this world [the present] but "of little account,"¹⁰⁹ trivial and superficial, in the world to come, is actualized, [it will be] because of the ritual preparation which made all living souls fit for those holy guideposts [the mitzvot]. [For those same guideposts], built on the foundation of these lofty aspirations, [will enable them] to sense well how to elevate life as a whole and all its conditions to a level of great value, so that such moral [teachings] as these [that have been discussed] will be appropriate to them. Then the objective which is derived from this scripture will be realized: "For you are a holy people unto the Lord your God."¹¹⁰

And when all the peoples hear of these laws and of the practice [of these laws], they will surely say,¹¹¹ "That great nation is a wise and discerning people.' ... for it has laws and rules as just as all this teaching that I set before you this day."¹¹² "This day" [is a time] when humanity is still so far from having sublime aspirations such as these, when the road to the actualization of these

¹⁰⁸. Genesis Rabbah 14:1; Leviticus Rabbah 13:3; Tanhuma, Vayikra, Shemini: "The mizvot were given only for the purpose of refining [all] creatures." (ed.)

¹⁰⁹. Pesahim 50a; Numbers Rabbah 19:6; on Zachariah 14:6: "On that day there shall not be light, but heavy, thick clouds." The editor summarizes the Midrashic passages thus: "Things which are hidden from you in this world will be revealed to you in the future world to come." The Talmudic passage reads: "This means, the light which is precious [yakar] in this world, is of little account [kapuy] in the world to come."

¹¹⁰. Deuteronomy 14:2. This is followed by the prohibitions of forbidden foods. (ed.)

¹¹¹. This phrase which introduces the biblical passage is based on the verses (Deuteronomy 4:5-6) which precede the quote.

¹¹². Deuteronomy 4:6-8. (ed.)

aspirations is so distant. But see, "I set before you" these "laws and rules...this day," for the sake of the quality [lit. "fitness"] of the distant future.

"Laws and rules as just as" these are suitable only for a great nation, "a wise and discerning people," which is able to devote itself entirely to high and exalted ideals, the high value of which corresponds to the remoteness of the means to [their realization]. A great people, filled with strength and with a wonderful knowledge of its own essence - only such a people is properly suited to work toward [lit. "not to neglect"] wonderful ideals such as these, which are cached in these "just laws and rules," to the point that they will perfect and actualize them.

29. The peak of perfection for humanity

But what form does life take, if it is suited to such moral characteristics as these, if such glorious ideals as these are not to be considered as a leap outside the system, or as entering the realm [described by these words of scripture]: "Do not be overly righteous, nor act too wise"¹¹³

It is obvious that these moral standards are not appropriate for humanity until it is perfected in all its aspects to the peak of its perfection, when the poor will have ceased from the land: "There shall be no needy among you...,"¹¹⁴ when abject hunger will no longer be found: "They shall not hunger or thirst, hot wind and sun shall not strike them."¹¹⁵ No deficiency of knowledge will exist, because all of them will be "taught of the Lord,"¹¹⁶ filled with the spirit of wisdom which flows unto all flesh. The learning of wisdom, of artistry, and of all skills will be made much more simple when human abilities are developed to their full extent, and the natural life, wholesome and pleasant, will return to its pure, natural splendor, in "the time to come when all who practice a craft shall stand upon the firm ground."¹¹⁷

¹¹³. Ecclesiastes 7:16. (ed.)

¹¹⁴. Deuteronomy 15:4. (ed.)

¹¹⁵. Isaiah 49:10. (ed.)

¹¹⁶. Isaiah 54:13.

¹¹⁷. Yevamot 63a (ed.), referring to Ezekiel 27:29. The Talmudic passage is interpreted to mean that all who practice a craft will take up agriculture.

30. Universal peace

And how can these human abilities fail to become well developed, and the rest of the human spirit fail to be uplifted, when, in place of war among peoples and national rivalries, which serve only to make the yoke of life borne by all humanity even more burdensome, universal peace will rule: "And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks."¹¹⁸

In the absence of strife and contention, all labor and practical abilities will be directed toward uplifting oneself ever higher, toward desiring in the most determined way to increase the [number of] deeds performed out of compassion, righteousness, and knowledge of God. The cycle of life will turn not by force of jealousy between people, but by force of the power of the love of God and God's ways: "They shall march behind the Lord, who shall roar like a lion."¹¹⁹

31. A new world

Then humanity will search with inner thirst for a plot of space wherein it can do acts of justice, and water it out of the full spirit of lovingkindness, but it will not find any, for all humanity will by then be so blessed as to be living a life of pleasure, contentment, and good fortune; materially, morally, and intellectually.

Then with its resources of wisdom, information, and experience, the human species will turn to its lowly brothers and sisters of the animal world, mute and miserable, and will find the means and the resourcefulness to greatly improve their lot, by training them and teaching them step by step, according to their worth. There is no doubt that humanity can achieve a great deal [lit. "enlarge his works"] in this way, when the proper time comes for it to turn to this task. And it is beyond any doubt that humanity will "magnify and make glorious the teaching"¹²⁰ of the enlightenment of the animals and their material advancement and even more so their moral and

¹¹⁸. Isaiah 2:4. (ed.) The verse continues: "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation; they shall never again know war."

¹¹⁹. Hosea 11:10. (ed.)

¹²⁰. After Isaiah 42:21.

spiritual advancement, to a level so high that it will be altogether impossible for us to imagine it in terms of the present situation, which is full of baseness and muddy thinking, and all [the animals] will receive a new and higher form; [it will be] a new world: "If the righteous so desired, they could [by virtue of their perfect righteousness] create a world."¹²¹

32. The elevation of animal life in the future to come

And according to the worthiness of their heightened rank in the course of this development, resulting from the general spiritual elevation which influences the emotions and the senses with the effect of sharpening and clarifying them, here the true form will emerge, "And the cattle and the asses that till the soil shall partake of salted fodder that has been winnowed with shovel and fan."¹²² For their sense of taste will develop in proportion to the uplifting of their souls, in a delicate manner that corresponds to the measure of [development of] the other aspects of their souls.

And in "a still, small voice"¹²³ does the wisdom of Israel speak through the Kabbalah: "The level which animal life will attain in the future will be like the present standpoint of the speaker [i.e. humanity] because of the ascent of the worlds."¹²⁴

121. Sanhedrin 65b. (ed.) The context is a discussion of various mystical and magical occurrences, including conjuring, soothsaying, and the creation of weird beings.

122. Isaiah 30:24. (ed.)

123. I Kings 19:12.

124. *Sha'ar hamitzvot* of R. Hayyim Vital, pp.98-99. This particular statement was not found, but the editor includes this passage from page 99: "Adam selected all the souls of the animals, and therefore was not permitted to eat them... And know that the animals which were selected at the time of the six days of creation were on a higher level than that of human beings at the present time, after having sinned... Thus we should not be surprised by the ass [of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair], who perceived what the sages did not perceive. [Hullin 7a; the ass refused to eat until it was tithed.]"

The editor also brings in this passage from Vital's Etz Hayyim, Gate 49:3: "The first human being, who selected all the animals, was permitted to eat only plant food. After sinning - and the animals, too, sinned - the clean animals become purified by means of eating them, and in the future they will be purified [to the level of] the highest mountains."

The editor refers to these other Kabbalistic works which include material on this same theme: Sefer Mishnat Hasidim of Immanuel Hai Ricchi, a topical exposition of Lurianic Kabbalah; Sefer Siah Yitzhak of Isaac ben Hayyim Halberstam, comprising commentaries on the weekly Torah portions; and Siddur Sha'ar Hashamayim of Isaiah Halevi Horowitz, a prayerbook with mystical commentary.

(continued...)

¹²⁵And this is the glory of the picture portrayed for us by the prophets regarding the enlightened condition of [even] the predatory animals:

The cow and the bear shall graze,
Their young shall lie down together;
And the lion, like the ox, shall eat straw.
A babe shall play over a viper's hole,
And an infant pass its hand over an adder's den.
In all of My sacred mount
None shall hurt or destroy
For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God
As the waters cover the sea.¹²⁶

(...continued)

The editor also makes reference to Rav Kook's Orot Hakodesh (The Lights of Repentance), [Unit 1,] "The Wisdom of Holiness," Part 2, "The Universal Vitality," Section 24, "The Source of Abilities [kishronot]." Here is that passage, which in the original consists of one sentence:

"All of those wonderful abilities which are found in animals and by which, at times, we are amazed - a human being cannot even begin to approach the imitation of [those abilities] except after a long and arduous training [lit. "great and long study"], and even then is able only to approximate the desired level of [the animals'] abilities. [These abilities] come to them because, [regarding] all of the levels of the animals according to their species, the lights of life which exist within them are fragments of a great, higher soul, full of [the ultimate] wisdom and ability, [a soul] which has been divided into many parts. And each part illumines, according to its capacity, each luminous aspect of the great soul, the possessor of the ultimate wisdom and ability. If [a certain part] is of very small measure, like a drop from the ocean, even so the essential impression of the [central] point, since it comes out of the entirety of the foundation of a mighty and exalted wisdom and ability, is not obscured [lit. "blotted out"], and it brings its ability to realization, by virtue of the profundity and greatness of its wisdom, and by virtue of the same quality which was acquired along with it in its being bound and connected by the bond of perfect life in the perfect source. This was the master plan of perfect wisdom, set in order by the precise reckoning of the higher [divine] wisdom."

125. In Afikim banegev this paragraph comes at the beginning of this section.

126. Isaiah 11:7-9. (ed.)

CONCLUSION

In "A Vision of Vegetarianism and Peace," Rav Kook's concern for animals is combined with his interpretation of the moral implications of a diet which includes meat. His vision is of a moral state in which the craving for flesh will no longer be the primary motivation of human attitudes and actions with regard to animals. An improvement in the treatment of animals, and a recognition of their rights, is a part of the process of the perfection of the world. Through the observance of the mitzvot, which manifest "the prompting of the Torah," Rav Kook contends that humanity will eventually become open to "the prompting of the intellect" by means of which it will come to understand the reasons and motivations behind those mitzvot.

Specifically, the herbivorous nature of the permitted animals is intended to impress upon humanity the value of non-violent and non-predatory behavior toward all living beings (Section 13); covering the blood, shehita, and the prohibition of eating the blood are reminders of the gravity of the act of killing animals for human needs, and the shame involved in this practice which, in moral terms, is not a fitting one for humanity (Sections 14, 16, and 18); the prohibition of fat teaches that one may kill for food only out of strict necessity, and even then the shame and injustice of the act are not diminished (Section 17); the laws governing the use of milk and wool, which should only be obtained in ways which do not cause pain or trauma, emphasize the right of animals to their own natural possessions and encourage respect for their sentient natures (Sections 19-22); the prohibition of terefah and nevelah instills feelings of compassion and empathy for fellow creatures (Section 26). Furthermore, while the permission to eat meat is meant to establish, through the strict separation of human beings and animals, the distinctive moral stature of humanity, once that stature is attained "the prompting of the intellect" will enable the human species to transcend that separation and embrace with justice its companions in creation (Section 12).

Rav Kook thus goes beyond the traditional application of the principle of tza'ar ba'ale hayyim. He claims, in effect, that animals have a right not only to their own lives, but also to their own basic natural possessions: the sheep its wool, the kid its mother's milk, the parent animal its offspring. This right is prior to the human right to the use of these products and it is ideally not subject to the terms of human dominion over animals. In addition, animals are clearly seen as having inherent value as part

of God's creation, as being entitled to respect and to consideration of their needs, and as deserving of justice. The animal offspring, like human children, are precious gifts from God (see Section 21).

While Rav Kook's views are based on accepted biblical and rabbinic concepts, it cannot be said that these positions comprise a normative Jewish attitude toward animals and diet. In fact, to raise the possibility of vegetarianism as a Jewish ideal is to confront a fundamental paradox inherent in the tradition. On the one hand, biblical and rabbinic teachings allow that the ideal human state, both at the beginning of creation, before humanity's moral downfall, and in the culmination of the Messianic Age, is characterized by an absence of the use of violent means to obtain human needs, and therefore by a vegetarian diet. Furthermore, the obligation to alleviate the gratuitous suffering of all living beings is considered to have the force of biblical law. On the other hand, recognizing the imperfect and, to some extent, the hedonistic nature of human beings, Judaism permits the slaughter of animals for food, albeit with many restrictions. While shehita is widely interpreted as a humane method of slaughter, there seems to be no explicit connection in Jewish law between the idea of killing for food and the principle of tza'ar ba'ale hayyim. On the contrary, the causing of some suffering is allowed if its aim is human benefit. In fact, there is an expression of a rabbinic bias for the eating of meat in the Talmudic statement, "there is no joy without meat,"¹ from which some derive that eating meat on the Sabbath and festivals is actually an obligation.²

Rav Kook's method for countering this bias is in his explication of what he views as the deeper meaning of the mitzvot, the underlying reasons which have, for him, a didactic, edifying purpose. Even though this approach is not original to Rav Kook - Maimonides' use of it is perhaps the best known example³ - the idea of looking for meaning in the mitzvot is in itself a controversial one, reflected in the Talmudic passage referred to in Section 13, which states, in effect, that it is practically heresy to impute motives of compassion (or, presumably, any other motives other than pure will) to God's laws.⁴ This point of view would maintain that it is presumptuous to make assumptions about the reasons behind the mitzvot; that God's motives cannot be known and should not be investigated, for to investigate is to question God's absolute authority.

Rav Kook realizes, however, that this latter approach does not appeal to the vast number of Jews who he feels are searching for a way back to Judaism. His concern is "... with strengthening Judaism, on the ideological and the practical levels..."⁵ His position, like Maimonides, is that it is

necessary to address and to reconcile the contending ideological forces of his day.⁶ And he does so within a framework of pious acceptance of divine authority.

Rav Kook's vegetarianism is a part of his larger Messianic vision of unity and harmony. This presents a problem to the modern Jew (or, for that matter, to anyone) who does not share his confident and fervent Messianic faith. Phrases like "the time will come," "humanity will then realize," and "the future will bring" are part of his description of and prescription for this new age. For those who see themselves as working for the improvement of the world without expectation of supernatural redemption, this hope can be seen as an obstacle, an excuse to withhold efforts which are only due to be superceded in some miraculous future.

Rav Kook's Messianism, however, is not passive, nor does it depend upon supernatural intervention. Rather, it places a high value on individual human efforts not only to aspire to, but also to strive to put into practice, the ideals which will be fully realized in the Messianic Era (see the "Introduction"). Of course, as Rav Kook points out, efforts to redefine and change the attitudes and behavior patterns of human beings toward animals are meaningless and futile if they are divorced from, or divert attention from, efforts which address the crying needs of human society and, in his terms, the perfection of the world in general.

Along these same lines is the problematical nature of Rav Kook's seemingly naive optimism, his faith in the inevitable progress of humanity and of all existence toward perfection. He lived at a time when the events surrounding the emancipation of the Jewish people and the reestablishment of the Jewish nation in its homeland seemed cataclysmic and exhilarating. These events had effects and ramifications which, in the short term, were both positive and negative; but for one who possessed Rav Kook's sensibilities, it appeared to be the very dawn of the Messianic Age⁷. He died in 1935, and, like so many others, did not foresee the impending holocaust.

Yet it is fruitless to speculate about what his response would have been. Many have lost their faith in God and in humanity in response to less all-encompassing tragedies; others found their resolve to work for "Messianic" ideals strengthened in the face of an incomprehensibly overwhelming brutality. In any case, neither faith in the advent of the Messianic Age, nor an unbridled optimism with regard to the efficaciousness of human efforts at tikkun, are necessary for one to qualify as Rav

Kook's spiritual ally, according to the pattern that he established during his career as Chief Rabbi in Palestine.⁸

While it may be possible to identify with many of Rav Kook's ideals, especially those which emphasize universalism, it is another matter for the non-traditional Jew to accept some of the particular aspects of Rav Kook's orthodox pronouncements. For example, while he was able and willing to make alliances with the secularist, socialist settlers, he may have been motivated purely by the desire to establish a state where orthodox authority would rule. After all, he constantly admonished the secularists to realize the divine motivation behind their efforts and expected their ultimate return to the fold of traditionalism.⁹

In fact, Rav Kook serves as the inspiration for extremists and moderates alike in contemporary Israel. The former point to his undiminished hope for the rebuilding of the Temple as well as to his other fundamental orthodox beliefs. Yet he made room within his strict orthodoxy for universal and humanistic ideals, and was known for his lenient rulings and his tolerance of diverse points of view; it is hard to imagine that these attitudes, and his apparently genuine affection for all kinds of people, would have been altered by the official establishment of the state.

In addition to the difficulties with regard to some of Rav Kook's views which arise from within the variegated layers of Jewish tradition, certain approaches to the problem of human obligations toward the animal world which exist outside the realm of traditional Judaism, and outside of any religious framework, present other challenges. One discussion in modern philosophical circles concerns the problem of what is called "speciesism." According to the view of the philosophic proponents of animal rights, speciesism, for want of a better term, "... is a prejudice or attitude of bias toward the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of other species."¹⁰ This view suggests that "the principle of equal consideration of interests" which applies to relations among human beings also applies to relations between human beings and other species (hence the link between racism, sexism, and speciesism).

... this principle implies that our concern for [other human beings] ought not to depend on what they are like, or what abilities they possess [it] also implies that the fact that beings are not members of our species does not entitle us to exploit them, and similarly the fact that other animals are less intelligent than we are does not mean that their interests may be disregarded.¹¹

The view expressed here challenges a strict hierarchy like Rav Kook's, in which there is a wide gap between the human species and the rest of the animals. Rav Kook is not the first to distinguish between the elevated moral stature of which humanity is capable and the "lowly" level of the "beasts." Even so, Rav Kook's hierarchy is not absolute: again, the strict distinction is made in order to inspire humanity to ultimately realize the true unity that exists among all species (see Section 12).

In other respects, too, Rav Kook shares many of the assumptions of the animal rights advocates. The philosophers of animal rights have an understanding similar to Rav Kook's as to the nature of meat eating. According to them, the suffering and slaughter which are the lot of domesticated animals serve nothing more than to cater to the pleasure of gratifying our tastes; "...our practice of rearing and killing other animals in order to eat them is a clear instance of the sacrifice of the most important interests of other beings in order to satisfy trivial interests of our own."¹²

While maintaining the validity of making distinctions between human beings and animals, Rav Kook holds that the dietary laws and shehita are intended to remind us that the animals which we prepare for our consumption are not valueless, soulless beings, but have thought processes and emotions similar to those of people, and are deserving of consideration and compassion. Similarly, one of the philosophers says, "No harm can be justified...if it contravenes the respect principle, treating the harmed individuals as mere receptacles of value or as things whose value is reducible to their utility relative to the interests of others."¹³ Rav Kook's sensitivity to the injustice suffered by the animals who provide us with warmth and sustenance corresponds to the rational analysis of the philosophers; moreover, his religious approach is perhaps more accessible to those who turn to Jewish tradition in particular, and religion in general, for guidance on moral issues.

While it is clear that Judaism allows the eating of meat, the restrictions surrounding that practice, and the interpretations given to those restrictions, express an ambivalence with regard to the taking of animal life for food. The permission is seen as a matter of necessity, a concession to a craving which exemplifies the imperfection and weakness of human nature. The restrictions are intended to focus attention on the value of the life being taken.

In general, the thrust of Jewish tradition points, if not to vegetarianism, then at least to the notion that human beings, as caretakers of and partners in God's creation, have an obligation to

prevent and to alleviate the unnecessary suffering of all creatures, human and otherwise, who share in the beauty and bounty of that creation. Jewish rituals and customs, particularly the dietary laws and the observance of the Sabbath, serve to reinforce the notion of reverence for life and to continually reaffirm other universal values, including an appreciation of the holiness and unity of creation.

Today, many people are calling for a reevaluation of human attitudes and practices with regard to animals in light of conditions which seem contrary to the spirit of some aspects of traditional Jewish teachings. The farm animals which end up on Sabbath and festival tables endure great suffering and trauma; other species are selectively bred or caught in cruel traps to provide fur for clothing which is considered fashionable; the number of pets is proliferating so that tens of thousands of unwanted animals are put to death each year by the very institutions which are charged with caring for them; uncounted numbers of creatures undergo painful, debilitating experiments for questionable scientific and industrial purposes; and human beings have pushed to the brink of extinction, and over the brink, species whose trophies they prized or which stood in the way of their technological vanquishing of nature.

For those who seek to address these issues Jewish tradition can provide guidance, though it cannot be said to uniformly endorse the rights of animals. The message of Rav Kook, however, is that animals can be included in a circle of love and concern which encompasses all of suffering creation. With Rav Kook as a guide and an example, Jews who choose vegetarianism as an expression of that love and concern can do so knowing that their position is firmly rooted in ground hallowed by tradition, and is an expression of the noblest spirit of that tradition. It is the same spirit which speaks through the prophetic voice sounded by Rav Kook at the end of "A Vision of Vegetarianism and Peace:"

None shall hurt or destroy in all My sacred mount;
For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God
As the waters cover the sea.¹⁴

NOTES TO CONCLUSION

1. Pesahim 109a

2. While the Talmudic statement is the basis for deriving this obligation, the passage includes the opinion that rejoicing with meat applied only while the Temple was standing; since its destruction, "there is no rejoicing without wine." For references to responsa which offer exemptions from this obligation, on the basis that one cannot rejoice through eating meat if one has an aversion to it, see Richard Schwartz, Judaism and Vegetarianism (Smithtown, N.Y.: Exposition Press, 1982), p. 68f.

3. See the "Preface to the Translation," p. 43.

4. Maimonides discusses these two approaches in Moreh Nevukhim III:26, 31, 48. See Section 13 of "Vision," Note 49.

5. Kook, "Fragments of Light," in Bokser, Abraham Isaac Kook, p. 303.

6. See "Preface to the Translation," p. 43.

7. See the "Introduction," p. 19.

8. See the "Introduction," p. 4.

9. See the "Introduction," pp. 20-21.

10. Peter Singer, Animal Liberation (New York: Avon Books, 1975), p. 7.

11. Singer, Practical Ethics (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 49.

12. Singer, "All Animals Are Equal," Philosophical Exchange 1, No. 5 (Summer 1974); reprint in Animal Rights and Human Obligations, ed. Tom Regan and Peter Singer (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976), p. 155.

13. Tom Regan, The Case for Animal Rights (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1983) p. 265.

14. Isaiah 11:9.