

Beware the Carnivore (Toldot)

Nothing will benefit human health and increase the chances for survival of life on Earth as much as the evolution to a vegetarian diet. -Albert Einstein

I have a confession to make. I like meat. There is something particularly savory about the smell and taste of freshly grilled meat. However, Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim of Prague, the *Kli Yakar* (1550-1619) on Genesis 27:3, seems to frown on the practice.

There are other Rabbinic commentators who give us a *carte blanche* on the consumption of (kosher) meat. They have no ethical or legal concerns with the use of animals for anything that benefits humanity, whether it's for food or labor. As long as we are not unnecessarily cruel to animals, which is a different biblical prohibition, we are allowed to use and consume animals for our own needs. The *Kli Yakar* on the other hand seems to have had clear vegetarian inclinations.

He starts with an analysis of Isaac requesting meat from his son Esau to accompany the meal for the blessing he wanted to impart to him. The *Kli Yakar* claims that the eating of meat was a rarity, reserved for holidays and special occasions. He then explains what is wrong with the regular consumption of the dead flesh of animals.

Only predatory animals eat meat. Predatory animals have the traits of savagery, viciousness, and callousness to the loss of life. The *Kli Yakar* argues that if we eat too much meat, we may also develop such traits.

He then quotes the prophet Isaiah, who predicts that in the End of Days, the very nature of the world will change, and we will all, predators included, no longer seek meat:

“And the lion as the cattle shall eat straw.” (Isaiah 11:7) for there shall be peace in the world amongst all creatures.

May we enjoy our steaks and meat alternatives, when and where appropriate.

Shabbat Shalom,

Ben-Tzion

Dedication

To all those who participated and supported the March for Israel in DC and similar events all over the world. Thank you.