

### Vegetarian Mummies (Vayigash)

***“It is useless for the sheep to pass resolutions in favor of vegetarianism, while the wolf remains of a different opinion.” -W. R. Inge***

In more than one place, the Torah recounts that it was repulsive for the Egyptians to eat with the Hebrews. Setting aside any specific bigotry, we see that the Egyptians were otherwise quite happy to be ruled by Joseph and even invited his brothers into positions of leadership. So why the abhorrence of eating together?

Another clue to the Egyptian distaste for the Hebrews is the fact that the Hebrews were shepherds, and the Egyptians wanted no shepherds, and presumably no sheep, around them. The Ibn Ezra, commenting on Genesis 46:34, states that the Egyptian problem was simply that they were vegetarians at the time. They did not eat meat at all. They had nothing to do with meat products. They could not even sit at the same table as a meat eater.

This may help explain a curious verse in Genesis 39:6, which describes Joseph’s master, Potiphar, as pleased with everything Joseph does except for the “lehem” he eats. “Lehem” is conventionally translated as bread, but it can mean food more generally. In this case, Potiphar may simply have disapproved of the meat that was part of Joseph’s Hebrew diet.

May everyone eat good, healthy, nourishing food and not become overly obsessed with someone else’s diet.

Shabbat Shalom,

Ben Tzion

#### *Dedication*

*To the Israel, Greece, Cyprus trilateral summit:*

<https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-881024>