

YOUR CAMP SHALL BE SACRED

THE CAUSES BEHIND OUR AMBIVALENT RELATIONSHIP TO THE OBJECT

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(Synopsis of Introduction: Translated from Hebrew)

Ya'akov and Lavan stand on opposite sides of the fence in their relationship to reality. Those who view reality as a relationship to an object cannot count many adherents among the Jewish philosophers. Among the Jewish sages, some perceive this "object" attitude to be egocentric, while others perceive it to be paganistic.

The ego-centrist relates to himself alone. Anything that does not concern "me" appears to have no value; it holds no lucrative interest. It is a mere object, though it may be a human being, an animal, a landscape, or an entire ecosystem. "Ecologies" do not concern him, whether they address environmental ecology, national ecology, historical ecology, or even religious ecology. This generous egoist only endows religion with value when it serves his interests. As such, he will crowd his pockets with amulets, Psalms books, and other religious rituals at times of trouble. He casts them aside when he feels they do not provide immediate results, just as one throws out an object that one no longer wants, or that is no longer useful.

The paganistic approach in principle, is no different from the egocentric approach, except for one extreme difference: The egoist establishes reality's center of gravity as being his own ego, whereas the pagan nullifies himself before the object that he adores, perceiving this object to be the center of power and the source of all experience. This object one cannot, and dare not, ignore. Best to accommodate it, to behave according to it, to never consider the price one must pay, both in values and in practical terms.

Any object can qualify for pagan worship. This includes even environmental conditions, concerns, and landscape; in short, everything that falls into the bag called – in post-modernist terminology – "nature:" Its sacrosanct status is accelerating at the same rate that the image of God in man is losing altitude. Darling household pets inherit millions, bequeathed to them by their loving, and bored, mistresses. They are interred in cemeteries, priceless gravestones are inscribed with phrases laden with love and devotion to a degree that, had it been lavished upon their own species the world would surely have looked a happier place. The prophet Hosea weeps over just this type of thing: (13:2.) "They sacrifice human beings, but kiss calves."

Meaning, when human beings are turned into mere objects of exploitation, the value of the calf rises. Destined by its created nature to serve man, as food, as offering, it is given the value of a "human" being, meriting a reciprocal attitude, a close relationship, and an intimate bond.

It is important to note that the Torah's attitude toward the eating of animal flesh tends to limit the legitimacy of eating meat for its own sake. We know that an extremely strict selectiveness permeates every discussion of the subject of animal use. Severe limitations are placed upon permitted animal

species (the kosher versus the non-kosher animal) and upon preparation requirements before kosher meat becomes permissible. (The prohibition against eating any part of a living animal, the stringent laws defining the kosher slaughtering method, the hours-long process of koshering the meat, the complex requirements of keeping all meat-related products and vessels completely separate from all milk-related products or vessels, etc.)

On top of this, the Sages of the Talmud issue a declaration that has no match, to effectively limit meat consumption: “An ignoramus is forbidden to eat meat.” How many can say of himself that he is not included in this prohibition?

In order to reassure those meat gorgers and gluttons among us, we will reveal this secret: An ignoramus is defined as a person whose behavior is not guided by value-oriented goals; whose actions are not “for the sake of mitzva.” After all, eating for the sake of a mitzva is a mitzva in itself.

The legitimization of gross eating for its own sake is foreign to the spirit of Judaism as mentioned. This can serve as a model for illustrating what is meant by relating to reality as to an object: Reality is seen as a thing, an object, as an instrument. The value of an instrument, even in instrumental terms, always decreases with time. It fades, one instrument is abandoned and thrown aside as soon as a newer instrument appears.

We see people change homes, professions, work places, and spouses, at increasing and disturbing speed. They leave behind furniture, photographs, and other personal items, as if they were tools that are no longer needed. They do not relate in a personal way to an object that has served them for years, be it a bed, a desk, a pen - this is the tissue culture - use it and trash it. Everything is a sort of “fast food,” which they have not troubled to prepare. It is a mindless technical digestive activity. No thought of causes and effects. There is no connection between the activity of stuffing-it-in / digesting and Divine Providence, and gratitude, and seeing the act of eating as the creation of Godly presence, justifying the blessing over food that comes before it, and the blessing of “He Who created” that comes afterward. All of this can be seen under the heading:

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