

IN RESPONSE TO MICHAEL ROSEN'S COMMENTS IN FRONT PAGE MAGAZINE.

I want to thank Michael Rosen again for his willingness to engage in respectful dialogue. Replying to Mr. Rosen is an interesting exercise, since he appears to support the exact resolution that we support where AgriProcessors and *shechita* in general are concerned.

What do PETA and others who are concerned that Jewish and federal law have been violated at AgriProcessors want? We want AgriProcessors to be subjected to unannounced audits for basic humane standards. Mr. Rubashkin has gone on record as saying, "What you see on the video is not out of the ordinary. ... Nothing wrong was, or is being done. There is nothing to admit."

Mr. Rosen, on the other hand, states that "the video raises important questions and any shortcomings in the *shechita* process at AgriProcessors must vigorously be addressed. The plant appears to be making improvements but must take special care to ensure the highest standards of humaneness."

As noted, 100 percent of experts who watched the video (every single one—as I mentioned in my previous article—including Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb of the OU, who called the trachea-ripping "especially inhumane") agree that the footage shows serious violations of the prohibition of *tza'ar ba'alei hayyim*. Only Mr. Rubashkin and his lawyer deny this.

What else does PETA want? We would like for the Orthodox Union to take its own commitment to a "painless" slaughter seriously—to codify this commitment as written standards for humane treatment that are enforced as diligently as all other kosher certification requirements—and to make the commitment an example to the world by publicly proclaiming it and making the standards available.

Mr. Rosen does a good a job in his first article of explaining why Judaism is the envy of other monotheistic faiths where commitment to compassion for animals is concerned. I believe that we agree entirely on this point. In fact, it is my own faith, my own Jewish upbringing, that has led me to PETA and the life's path that I've chosen.

My rabbi has told me many of the same things that Mr. Rosen states—that Jews are prohibited from hunting, that animals also rest on the Sabbath, that (to quote Mr. Rosen), "The profound esteem in which Judaism holds all life emerges in the laws of *shechita*, which aim primarily to minimize the animal's suffering."

It is an unfortunate fact that animals on factory farms are never allowed to enjoy anything that G-d designed for them, never allowed to fulfill any of their desires (e.g., for sunlight, fresh air, families), and that they are treated in ways that would warrant felony convictions if dogs or cats were treated so horribly (e.g., mutilations without pain relief and breeding programs that cause them to become crippled beneath their own weight).

As just one example—and this is true both for kosher and nonkosher meat—chickens are bred and drugged so that their upper bodies grow more than six times as quickly as they did just 50 years ago, with the result that their hearts, lungs, and limbs can not keep up. Those who survive this live mired in their own excrement, suffering from ammonia burns and barely able to move from their artificially massive bulk. Although we wish we could draw attention to this—a clear abdication of our responsibility to be humane stewards—without controversy, we do what we have to do in order to generate discussion and thought.

On the issue of banning *shechita*: We're an animal rights organization, so of course we feel that the high Jewish standards of compassion are best met by putting an end to all slaughter, but we don't have a particular disdain for *shechita* and in fact, the ritual and commitment to compassion of kosher slaughter make it—as we've said consistently—better than nonkosher slaughter in the United States. So of course we're not going after kosher slaughter first. Those who want to stand up for *shechita*, however, are doing their efforts a disservice by defending the horrors that we documented at AgriProcessors. In fact, I can't imagine anyone disagreeing with the fact that defending kosher slaughter will be easier if slaughterhouses abide by a uniform set of guidelines that have been endorsed by Jewish leaders.

PETA has been entirely honest and is always entirely honest. You may take issue with some of our specific campaigns, but we do not (and I do not) deceive. I take the Torah very seriously, as does Mr. Ronnen (an Israeli citizen who did not misrepresent himself to Rabbi Cohen—and Rabbi Cohen has never claimed otherwise), and I would not be a part of an organization that did not have the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

We also wish that we could grab a bit of our tabloid society's attention without resorting to controversial campaigns. But our mission—to speak up for animals who have no voice at all and who are treated in horrific ways—demands that we do what we can, with a very limited budget relative to the abusers, to place animals' suffering onto the tableau of moral concern.

Readers who would like to learn more about why many Jews have turned to vegetarianism—both because it is G-d's ideal and because we don't wish to support the horrible treatment of G-d's animals today—can visit JewishVeg.com or GoVeg.com or call 1-888-VEG-FOOD for a free DVD and information. Mention this article and we'll also send you a booklet on Judaism and vegetarianism.

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