

# SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



## Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 20

*Breishis, Sicha 2*

### The Context:

After the Torah describes the creation of the animal kingdom, of humankind, and its mandate to “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over... all the beasts...,” the narrative then interjects with two verses about the diet of the newly created beings:

“And G-d said, “Behold, I have given you every seed bearing herb, which is upon the surface of the entire earth, and every tree that has seed bearing fruit; it will be yours for food. (Bereishis 1:29) And to all the beasts of the earth and to all the fowl of the heavens, and to everything that moves upon the earth, in which there is a living spirit, every green herb to eat,” and it was so. (Ibid, 1:30)

### The Rashi:

It will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth — He equated cattle and the beasts to them [to man] regarding the food [that they were permitted to eat]. He

did not permit Adam and his wife to kill a creature and to eat its flesh; only every green herb they were all permitted to eat equally. When the sons of Noah came, He permitted them to eat flesh, as it is said (below 9:3): “Every creeping thing that is alive...like the green herbs,” which I permitted to the first man, I have given you everything.

### Rashi’s Question:

Rashi’s comments address a fundamental problem with these two verses. What relevance does the diet of animals and humans have to the basic narrative arch of the creation story? All the previous details offer necessary insight into the process and hierarchy of creation. Humankind’s mandate to procreate explains how creation perpetuates itself beyond the first creative act of G-d; and the mandate to “subdue the earth” clarifies the place humankind has within creation, and their mission. But what does diet have to do with this narrative?

### The Explanation:

In his introductory citation, Rashi combines the end of verse 29 and the beginning of

verse 30, "It will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth." With this he means to demonstrate that the Torah is equating the diet of human beings with the diet of the animals, as he continues, "He equated cattle and the beasts to them [to man] regarding the food." This equivalence is not for the sake of clarifying what humankind can and cannot eat. That is accomplished fully in verse 29, "I have given you every seed bearing herb... every tree that has seed bearing fruit; it will be yours for food." If only the vegetative is permitted, obviously meat is not.

The purpose of the equivalence, then, is to qualify and mitigate humanity's place in the hierarchy of creation. Having just stated that humankind is given "dominion" over all of creation, we might think that we have free reign to do with it as we please. The Torah therefore equates humanity's diet with the animals, to underscore that human beings are creations just like animals, and are subject to the same obedience to G-d as Creator. Just because G-d has given humanity dominion, it does not mean we can kill and consume according to our whim. That dominion is curbed by G-d's command, we can eat only vegetation, just like the animals.

Rashi then addresses the current reality of our carnivorous diet and explains that in the time of Noah, humanity was granted permission to consume meat. But Rashi's formulation clarifies that this permission was given out of recognition for humankind's nutritional needs, "He permitted them to eat flesh, as it is said (below 9:3): "Every creeping thing that is alive...like the green herbs," that is, just like vegetation was permitted because it was necessary for humanity's health, so, too G-d now permitted meat for the same reason.

### **The Lesson:**

The Torah's discussion of humanity's diet reminds us of our own humility. We are essentially equivalent to animals, we are created beings just like them. Only we have been given the opportunity to "dominate" the world by G-d, so that we can elevate its materiality for spiritual purposes. The Hebrew word for "dominate" is related to the word for "fall." If we do not exercise our responsibility toward the world properly, then we risk falling within the trap of materialism. Only by approaching the world with a sense of refinement and responsibility, will we make good use of the world given us by G-d.

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