



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem



This Issue Contains:

1. World Wide Wabbit Season
2. A-Fishing We Won't Go
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< ABubbe@aol.com > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
 A friend told me they were amazed to learn that there is a Jewish law against hunting. I could not explain this to them properly. Is there a law? Where is it? I realize the Kashruth implications, but what are the other implications and sources for this? Thank you. I will pass your answer on to him as well as gain knowledge myself.

Dear ABubbe@aol.com,

Jews have never been known to be hunters. Here are several reasons why.

The Torah commands us to *alleviate* pain from a suffering animal. This is derived from the verse "If you see your enemy's donkey buckling under its load — and you're tempted not to help him — you must help him unload it" From here we see the commandment to help a suffering animal.

All the more so is it forbidden to *actively* inflict pain. The Torah wants us to act with mercy, not cultivate cruelty as a character trait.

Besides the pain, killing animals purely for sport is an act of wasteful destruction. Such an act is forbidden by the verse "Do not destroy."

In context, the verse says "When you besiege a city many days to make war upon it, **do not destroy** its trees..." Even in times of war and bloodshed, when one's lower instincts are likely to emerge, the Torah commands us to keep a higher standard of behavior, not to destroy for destruction's sake.

Hunting can be dangerous. Every year, people die in hunting accidents. I even read about someone who shot a huge elk on a cliff above him, and the elk fell on him!

Two people in the Torah are described as 'hunters': Nimrod and Esau. Although they started with animals, their obsession for hunting led ultimately to a career of 'head-hunting.' They became notorious for their deceit and cruelty towards humans.

We — the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — should not follow the ways of these people who lacked mercy towards humans and animals. We should emulate the ways of our righteous fathers and mothers who strove to fill their lives with noble character traits.

Sources:

- Exodus 23:5
- Deuteronomy, 20:19
- Rema, Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat 272:9
- Responsa Noda B'Yehudah, Tinyana, Yoreh Deah #10
- Aruch Hashulchan 272:2
- Sefer HaChinuch Deut. 20:19

Morris Oliitsky < MrStats@aol.com wrote > :

May I assume that fishing for sport is prohibited but that fishing for food is acceptable? Shalom

Dear Morris Oliitsky,

You're right. Only fishing for food is permitted according to Halacha.

While it's considered 'sportsman-like' to put the fish back in the water, the Torah outlook is exactly the opposite. Do the fish a 'favor': Eat it for Shabbat!

Jon Subar < JONSUBAR@aol.com > wrote:

Isaac sent Esau out to catch 'some game' before planning to give him his blessing. What is 'game'? Doesn't sound very kosher to me because it wasn't ritually slaughtered. Didn't the Patriarchs keep kosher even though it was before Sinai, before the Torah was given?

By the way: At work we tried to get a windshield put in a truck Friday. The biggest glass company in Grand Rapids, Michigan — who always does that for us — couldn't do it for us on Friday. Half of their service technicians had the day off...opening day of deer season of course!

Dear Jon,

Did you say 'deer' Jon? I ask you this because the Midrash says that Esau ran and caught deer for his father.

The Hebrew word 'hunt' — 'tsad' — also means 'trap.' Hence, Esau may have trapped the animals with a net, snare, or even his bare hands. After all, his brother Yaakov was so strong he was able to lift a giant stone from the well, a stone requiring many men to budge.

Why then did Yitzchak tell Esau, "Sharpen your weapons, your sword and your bow?" The sword was in order to ritually slaughter the animal. The bow was to protect himself from wild animals, or in order to disable the animal — but in a way that would not render it unkosher.

The Talmud says that one of the Sages was able to ritually slaughter a bird in flight with a sharp arrow. Perhaps Esau, renowned for his hunting prowess, was equally skillful. (According to Japanese sources a martial-arts expert in archery would be able to do this as well.)

Sources:

- Midrash Tanchuma, Toldot 11
- Tractate Chullin 30b
- Genesis 27:3, Rashi and Sifei Chachamim

Acquittal Riddle:

You are one of the judges in a Jewish court in a capital case. It is your turn to state your opinion. If you say, "I find the defendant innocent," then the defendant receives the death penalty. But if you say, "I find the defendant guilty," he goes 'scot-free.' What is the case?

Answer next week...

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Ask The Rabbi is written by Rabbi Moshe Lazerus, Rabbi Reuven Subar, Rabbi Avrohom Lefkowitz and other Rabbis at Ohr Somayach Institutions / Tanenbaum College, Jerusalem, Israel.

General Editor: **Rabbi Moshe Newman**
 Production Design: **Lev Seltzer**

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22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel
 38 East 29th Street 8th floor, New York, NY 10016, USA

972-2-581-0315
 1-212-213-3100

972-2-581-2890
 1-212-213-8717

ohr@virtual.co.il
RZCorlin@aol.com or estern@Aol.com

613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada

1-905-886-5730

1-905-886-6065

Somayach@MSN.com

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