

## **Message from the Rabbi on Earth Day** **Rational religion is needed to save our planet and to solve our problems**

We recently collaborated with Jewish Veg to host a fascinating discussion about Judaism and Vegetarianism. The large crowd who attended enjoyed the stimulating discussion, the tasty vegan food and the making of new friends.

The otherwise pleasant evening was briefly interrupted by an outburst by the visiting rabbi who took umbrage at the sharing of a rational perspective about the Torah. In response to repeated questions from the attendees asking the rabbi to explain how the Torah is consistent with veganism and compassion towards animals, when the Torah is replete with animal sacrifices, commands to eat meat and fish on holidays and the blood of animals spilled across the Torah, the rabbi offered tortured explanations in a vain effort to reconcile his view that the Torah was authored by an inerrant God with its commands to kill a massive number of animals as the cornerstone of Jewish practice.

Seeing that many people appeared as befuddled and perplexed as I was by this response and would perhaps conclude that vegetarianism is inconsistent with Judaism, I offered a rational perspective that simply points out that there is an alternative point of view to the divine authorship of the Torah. Thus, I shared that L'Dor Va-Dor offers a view, consistent with science and reason that the Torah was not written by an infallible God, but rather was written by our Jewish ancestors who did their best to launch the Jewish people on a path towards Jewish ideals and compassion but reflected our first such effort not our last. I explained that rather than try to rationalize the irrational and justify the unjustifiable massive slaughter of animals in the Torah, we should repudiate animal sacrifice as wrong and replace it with the sacrifice of our time and energy to worthy causes like animal welfare.

This presentation of a rational view was too much for the Orthodox rabbi to bear and he insisted that if I did not refrain from offering my views in a discussion held by our synagogue, that he would leave and end the discussion. I welcome you to watch the discussion and invite your feedback at this link.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AsZmtnCbTW0>

As for me, I shall never refrain from sharing a rational view towards religion, especially at events hosted by us, as the antidote to the world's ills. With Jewish ideals mediated and interpreted in a rational manner, we can help unite our people and all of humanity so that religion can knock down walls of separation built upon blind faith and build bridges of understanding among all people.

At Congregation L'Dor Va-Dor, we heed the call of the prophet Isaiah "Come let us reason together". We also note that the Talmud, which is revered by the Orthodox, consists of rabbis offering contrasting points of view as the path to ascertain Emeth Va-Tzedek (Truth and Righteousness).

As usual, Carl Sagan has some wonderful insights to share about the need to share a rational view of religion and to challenge religious dogma. He also shares brilliant insights in 1985 in his testimony to Congress about climate change. As we approach Earth Day, I highly recommend these videos.

**Carl Sagan testifies about Climate Change to Congress in 1985**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wp-WiNXH6hI>

**Carl Sagan on religion and the need to question Orthodoxy**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ADqBLaTpAKM&t=260s>

At our Shabbat celebration tonight April 21, 2023 at 6:45 pm ET, at the West Boynton Park at 6000 Northtree Blvd., Lake Worth, FL 33463, and on zoom, I will address the need for rational faith as essential to the religious mandate to save our planet. I hope you will join us and participate in this important discussion.

Please feel free to share your thoughts and views about these and any other topic with me any time. I can be reached at [barryboca@aol.com](mailto:barryboca@aol.com) or (561) 302-1818.

Warm Regards,

Rabbi Barry Silver