

CONSERVATION LEGISLATION & YOU

*So rarely does one come across a genuinely even-handed article dealing with an emotional issue like the animal rights debate, that when I did, I felt that I had to pass it along to the readers of this column. It is entitled "Jewish Law and Animal Rights - Debate," is written by Jewish Telegraphic Agency correspondent Debra Nussbaum Cohen and has appeared in several Jewish weekly newspapers around the country. The one I say was published by the **Pittsburgh Jewish Chronicle** on Sept. 22 and reads:*

The Torah mandates the humane treatment of animals. Dozens of biblical and rabbinic laws detail the ways in which respect for animals is to be extended.

But debate rages among the authorities as to whether the prohibition against cruelty to animals means they have the right not to be used for medical experimentation or whether the very notion of animal rights is antithetical to Jewish law.

"It is absolutely a misreading of Torah literature to speak of animal rights," said Rabbi Moshe Tendler, professor of Talmudic law and chairman of the biology department at Yeshiva University, and a leading expert on Jewish medical ethics.

"Animals were given in this world to serve man, and that hierarchy is a fundamental belief in Torah Judaism.

"There are no animal rights, but human obligations which are to use animals for the benefit of man according to prohibitions against causing animals pain and against wastefulness," said Tendler.

Regarding the use of animals in medical experimentation or organ transplant, Tendler said emphatically: "The greatest *mitzva* [good deed] a person can do is to use an animal to save a human life."

He said the conditions under which animals are kept and used in medical research laboratories today fulfill Jewish injunctions about the humane treatment of animals. Others disagree.

"In the Jewish view, dominion is an issue of stewardship, not a license to exploit. The relationship between humans and animals in the Bible is one of symbiosis in a respectful way," said Dr. Stephen Kaufman, an ophthalmologist who co-chairs an antivivisection organization of doctors called the Medial Research Modernization Committee.

"I have not met one scientist who is a vegetarian, which you would think would be a moral imperative for anyone who claims to kill animals only when necessary, even if they believe in experimenting on animals to save human lives," said Kaufman.

According to Richard Schwartz, founder of Jewish Vegetarians of North America and author of *Judaism and Vegetarianism*, animal experimentation is not in concert with the kindness toward animals illustrated often in traditional Jewish literature.

"There is a *midrash* [Biblical explanation] that our greatest leader, Moses, was chosen because he showed compassion to a lamb," said Schwartz. "The test for choosing a spouse, for kindness, was demonstrated when Abraham's servant Eliezer went to find a wife for Isaac and she (Rebecca) gave water to his animal; That story is told four times," he said, underlining the emphasis Torah places on the kind treatment of animals.

Roberta Kalechofsky, founder and president of Jews for Animal Rights, said, "Animal research has done more harm than good. It leads to research on human beings, like in the concentration camps, "[Ms. Kalechofsky either does not know or ignores the fact that one of the first decrees by the Nazis after they assumed power was to outlaw any medical experimentation on animals, HF]

According to Kalechofsky, other methods of scientific inquiry, like epidemiology, which is the study of patterns of disease in populations, and use of computer modes, can today effectively replace the use of animals in medical research.

Tendler disagreed. "Anyone who studies clinical medicine realizes it is necessary to use animal experimentation. Without it we could not have developed many areas of medicine," he said.

"No one (in medical research today) uses animals when there is another alternative," said Tendler. "nobody wants to use live animals because it's too darn expensive. When you can use tissue culture to test microbes, you do," he said.

According to Dr. Fred Rosner, an international authority on Jewish medical ethics, "Animal protection groups say that all experimentation is not necessary, and that's not true." For example, he said, "many trials need the use of mice and rats

for tests of chemotherapy. We start with tissue culture, then go to mice and rats and then to humans. It would be wrong to follow the animal rights groups advice and go from tissue culture to human beings and kill human beings."

Rosner is director of the department of medicine at Mt Sinai services at Queens hospital center in new york and professor of medicine at Mt. sinai School of medicine.

"Until genetic engineering became available in the last decade or so, all insulin was made from pork and beef pancreases. Should we have let people die instead?" Rosner asked.

Animal experimentation is very clear from a Jewish perspective. We are required to use plants, animals, anything God put on this earth to find cures for human illnesses and to prolong life," he said.