



Written by [Bruce Walker](#) on June 23, 2011

The Party for Animals Takes on Jewish and Muslim Law

Should people of faith be allowed to practice their beliefs without the interference of government? Christians in America have been wondering about that for several decades now. When a crèche cannot be shown in the public park, while a menorah can and when a voluntary school prayer before a football game is outlawed by federal judges, then Christians have to wonder just how far their right of faith extends.



During Prohibition, wine — the modest consumption of which is central to the practice of Judaism as well as communion in many branches of Christianity — was allowed in prescribed amounts precisely because outlawing religious practices was understood to offend the First Amendment. These days in Europe the press of Islam into the blasé agnosticism of nominally Christian nations — England, Scotland, Denmark, and Norway, for example — has found easy paths because so many older Europeans simply do not take their faith as seriously as the new Muslims.

Sometimes, though, the pseudo-religion of politically correct thinking runs into the respected beliefs of real religions. An excellent example can be found in the ongoing Dutch wrangling over whether to ban or to regulate the traditional and religiously-directed method of slaughtering animals for human consumption.

The Netherlands has long been revered by Sephardim Jews who came in large numbers five centuries ago to settle in the tolerant communities of Amsterdam and the rest of the United Provinces. Synagogues were formed. Other Jews also came to be in a land safe for them. There is little doubt that Jewish enterprise in trade, finance, diamond cutting and other fields greatly enriched the Dutch nation. These Jews, of course, followed the laws of Kashrut prescribed in the Torah.

Some of these laws — such as refraining from certain types of animal flesh, or keeping dairy and meat separate — reflect more than anything else simple obedience to God. There is also little doubt that much of Leviticus sets out rules that make dining safer from contamination, and revisionist Jews have sometimes defined these laws in terms of health alone.

Then there are some laws that have not only follow divine instructions but also provide practical benefits. The Kosher slaughter of animals, for example, many would say makes the meat consumed safer and purer — and the fact that the method of slaughter has to be supervised by rabbinical



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authorities helps insure that this benefit is not just theoretical. The [Kosher killing of animals](#) also is relatively painless for the slaughtered animal.

What is true of the Kosher slaughter of animals is also, generally speaking, true of the [Halal](#) slaughter methods of Islam. A single quick and sharp cut of a main artery is a much more merciful death than an animal would suffer when killed by impersonal nature.

Animal rights groups, however, have begun to work to ban Kosher and Halal slaughter of animals and require that the animal first be stunned. [The Party for the Animals](#) — the first parliamentary party in the world whose entire agenda is animal rights — is pushing this cause in the Netherlands. The Dutch Labor Party is attempting to craft legislation that will please this party and also maintain Labor Party ties to Muslim immigrants.

Banning the Kosher killing of animals has an unsavory historical pedigree. Such present-day laws in Europe relate back not to the rise of the animal rights movement, but to the anti-Semitic laws of Nazi Germany, and those European nations eager to placate the Nazis. Britain's Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks observed of changing Kosher slaughter: "If pre-stunning were made compulsory under Dutch law, Jews would be unable to practice a central element of Jewish life which has been continuously practiced for over 3,000 years." Without Kosher meat, a Seder at Pesach would be difficult if not impossible, and the [Jews of New Zealand](#) are confronting that right now.

Aside from that, meat that was not butchered in the Netherlands according to the requirements of religiously serious Jews and Moslems would have to be imported into the country from neighbors like Belgium or Germany, which allow the religious slaughter of animals. Aside from the economic harm to Dutch farmers and the greater costs of imported meat, the animals slaughtered under the rules of Kashrut would cease to be under the control of Dutch law. What is the ultimate motive? It would seem to be this: induce Jews and Moslems to abandon laws which they believe God gave to them and to accept, in place of those laws, the humanistic mandates of an increasingly godless Europe.

Just as we posted online, the Associated Press reported that a compromise had been reached in the Dutch legislature, amending the legislation to allow for the possibility of a religious exemption. The exemption, however, places the burden of proof on those engaged in slaughter adhering to traditional religious principles. The report quoted legislator Stientje van Veldhoven who said the amendment gives religious groups "a chance to go and investigate what is possible instead of just telling them what they can't do."

"The law as it was presented ... ruled out any possible future development," Van Veldhoven was quoted by Dutch national broadcaster NOS. "It ruled out that there could be a method other than stunning first that could prevent animals suffering."

The report also quoted Ronnie Eisenmann, identified as a member of the Amsterdam Jewish Community, who expressed outrage:

"This is a crazy way of making laws — that we have to go and prove what we have long believed. I think this has just opened the door to more discussion and uncertainty."

A final vote on the intrusive legislation will occur in the latter part of this week or early next week.

Illustration: A 15th century depiction of shechita — the ritual slaughter of mammals and birds according to Jewish dietary laws



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