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KEEPING UP WITH THE GOLDBERGERS: MAY ONE NEEDLESSLY DESTROY HIS BELONGINGS?

Adapted from the writings of Dayan Yitzhak Grossman

The *New York Jewish Week* reports:

Dining out in New York City is expensive—especially at a kosher restaurant. But Mocha Burger Lux, a forthcoming Midtown restaurant, is upping the ante with its “24K Gold Plated Golden-Burger,” which has an eye-popping price: \$175.

The 12-ounce short-rib burger is wrapped in leaves of real 24-karat gold. It’s grilled and topped with black Australian truffle, crunchy onions and chips, house-made sauce, and pickles. The dish is brought to the table in a custom hand-carved wood treasure chest, which will be opened at the table, triggering a smoke show and illuminating its contents.

“You’re not paying for the piece of meat,”

proprietor Naftali Abenaim told the *New York Jewish Week*. “You’re paying for the experience.”¹

Garnishing hamburgers with gold leaf is not a new idea. In 2014, the Honky Tonk restaurant in London introduced the “Glamburger,” with gold leaf and caviar. It billed the dish as the world’s most expensive hamburger and priced it at £1,100 (\$1,770).² Other burger gilders followed.

We will not discuss here the question of whether this sort of self-indulgence and conspicuous consumption are compatible

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¹ Risa Doherty. A new kosher restaurant in Midtown will sell a \$175 gold-plated burger. *New York Jewish Week*. <https://www.jwa.org/2023/06/20/nyla-new-kosher-restaurant-in-midtown-will-sell-a-175-gold-plated-burger>.

² Arjun Kharpal. Chef creates ‘Glamburger’ for \$1,770. *CNBC*. Oct. 7, 2014. <https://www.cnbc.com/2014/10/07/chef-creates-glamburger-for-1770.html>.

In memory of R' Zev Aryeh Solomon z"l
זאב ארי' בן יעקב שמואל ז"ל

נפטר ח' חשוון

Dedicated by
Rabbi and Mrs. Raphael Wurzburger

The Bais Hava'ad
on the
Parsha
Bring the Parsha to Life!

PARSHAS CHUKAS-BALAK

FOREIGN NATIONAL

Excerpted and adapted from a shiur by Rav Moshe Zev Granek

Moav said to the elders of Midian, “Now the congregation will chew up our entire surroundings, as an ox chews up the greenery of the field.” Balak, son of Tzipor, was king of Moav at that time.

Bemidbar 16:19

Rashi, quoting Chazal, says that Balak was actually from Midian and ineligible to be king of Moav, but fearing an imminent attack by the Jews, Moav appointed Balak king to replace the recently killed Sichon (Bemidbar 21:24). The Maharit asks that this contradicts the Gemara, which says (Sotah 47a) that Rus was a descendant of Eglon, king of Moav, a descendant of Balak, and says (Yevamos 76a) that Rus was only permitted to marry Boaz because the *issur* for a Moavi convert to marry into Klal Yisrael applies only to the males. If Balak was not actually a Moavi, why did Rus require that dispensation?

The Maharsha (Sotah 47a) answers that the two statements are indeed divergent views. The view cited by Rashi holds that Rus did not descend from Balak, but the Gemara in Sotah holds that she did, and that Balak was a Moavi.

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O&A from the
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Coat Check

Q My raincoat is missing from the shul coatrack, and the only one remaining is just like mine but bears someone else’s name. Since he apparently took mine, may I take his?

A The Shulchan Aruch (C.M. 136) says you may not. The Aruch Hashulchan (C.M. 136:2) says the minhag is that in places where large numbers of people gather, if A appears to have taken B’s item, B may use A’s, and A—even after noticing he has B’s—may continue to use it until they find each other and make the exchange. But that does not appear to be the minhag today.

Still, there are two bases to permit you to use the coat:

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with Torah values; we will rather focus on the question of whether eating gold violates various halachic imperatives against engaging in wanton destruction. In this article, we discuss the prohibition against feeding human food to animals, and in a follow-up, we will *iy"H* survey other halachic discussions of utilizing food and other resources in wasteful ways, and finally return to the case of gold-garnished hamburgers.

The Gemara relates:

Every Friday afternoon, Rav Huna would send an agent to the market, and any vegetables that remained, he would buy them and throw them into the river... Then let him throw them to animals? He held that food fit for human consumption should not be fed to animals.

Rashi offers two explanations for why it is better to throw human food into the river than to feed it to animals:

- Feeding human food to animals constitutes denigration of foods (*bizui ochlin*)—"he appears to spurn the good that Hashem has provided to the world."
- Feeding human food to animals constitutes waste, and "the Torah spares the money of the Jewish people,"³ whereas this way, the food will be found and eaten by people living downriver.⁴

Rashi is interpreting the prohibition against feeding human food to animals in two very different ways. According to his first explanation, the problem is not waste (which is presumably not an issue here because the alternative, throwing the food into the river, would be even more wasteful) but *bizui ochlin*. According to the second approach, the problem is indeed waste, because even the productive utilization of property (e.g., feeding human food to animals) may be considered wasteful if a superior use of the property (e.g., feeding people) is available.

The halacha in this case is a matter of dispute. The Elyah Rabbah suggests that the prohibition, attributed by the Gemara to Rav Huna, may not actually be normative (although he is unsure of this);⁵ the Magein Avraham apparently accepts the prohibition

3 Menachos 76b.

4 Rashi ibid.

5 Elyah Rabbah siman 171 ibid. s.k. 1. The Chida makes a similar suggestion in Pesach Einayim Ta'anis end of 20b. Hagahos Chasam Sofer to Shulchan Aruch ibid. se'if 1 inclines to this view as well.

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The Piskei Tosafos answers that Balak's daughter married a Moavi, and because lineage for non-Jews

follows the father, Eglon and Rus were Moavim.

The Yikra Deshichvi answers that although lineage for non-Jews generally follows the father, neither a patrilineal nor a

as understood by Rashi in his first approach;⁶ and the Machatzis Hashekel, noting the common practice to feed human-grade bread to chickens, suggests that the minhag follows Rashi's second approach, so in the absence of animal food, they may be fed human food.⁷

The Ksav Sofer maintains that the prohibition against feeding human food to animals applies only to animals that are not one's own, but he may feed human food to his own animals. He seems to distinguish between one's own animals and others in two slightly different ways:

- Feeding other animals is not his responsibility, while feeding his own animals is (*mezonoseihem alav*).
- Feeding other animals does not provide him any benefit, while feeding his own does.

Feeding human food to a pet would certainly be permitted according to the first distinction of the Ksav Sofer, and perhaps even according to the second, if the value of the pet is somehow improved by being fed. (The Ksav Sofer does not seem to hold that keeping the animal alive and healthy, as opposed to improving its value, constitutes human benefit, although it is unclear why not).⁸

In light of the above, some contemporary authors oppose feeding human food to zoo animals, since there is certainly no need to do so, as the animals are provided with all the food they need by their caretakers.⁹

R' Mordechai Kamenetsky relates:

[The students of Yeshiva Kfar Chassidim] scoured the rubbish piles of the city and brought a stray cat back to the campus. Every day it would play in the yard, and each evening they would bring it back to the basement, where it would earn its keep, receiving room and board simultaneously. Within a few weeks, there was not a rodent to be found. But the cat remained. The boys lapsed in their commitment to its welfare and even forgot to feed it.

6 Magein Avraham ibid. s.k. 1, but see, however, Baishavaad cited below, who concludes that even the Magein Avraham does not really consider this prohibition to be normative, but is merely recommending stringency when there is no need for leniency.

7 Machatzis Hashekel ibid. Mishnah Brurah ibid. s.k. 11 mentions the comments of both Elyah Rabbah and Machatzis Hashekel. Cf. Shu"t Baishavaad Y.D. cheilek 1 siman 79 osios 1-2.

8 Shu"t Ksav Sofer O.C. siman 33. Cf. Shma'ata Amikta gilyon 238, Chayei Sarah 5776, Ha'im Mutar Leha'achil Ma'achal Adam Livheimah? Nesinas Ocheil Leva'alei Chaim Lesheim 'Sha'ashua' (Da'as-Limudei Yehadus Be'or HaChassidus).

9 Piskei Teshuvos siman 171 n. 41 pp. 497-98; R' Azariah Ariel, Ha'achalot Ba'alei Chaim Be'acheil Hara'ui Le'adam. Cf. Bizui Ochlin-Ha'achalot Ma'achal Adam Livheimah (Din-She'al Es HaRav).

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- The Kessef Hakadashim (136) writes that if you would suffer if you didn't use the item (e.g., it's raining heavily), you may use it, because it can be assumed that the owner wouldn't want you to suffer and would want you to use it, and he's not worried that he won't get it back, because he has yours as collateral.
- The Pis'chei Choshen (*Aveidah* 4, footnote 45) writes that after the found item has sat long enough that you can assume the owner realizes what happened (maybe two weeks), you can use it.



DAYAN YEHOSHUA GRUNWALD

One evening it scratched on the screen door of the aged Mashgiach Hagaon Reb Elya Lopian's home..."Are there still mice?" asked Reb Elya. "No," exclaimed [one of the younger students], "there hasn't been a rodent in days!" Then he smiled while looking down at the cat and added, "Thanks to this fellow." "And since there are no mice, what has he been eating?" The boy just shrugged. He simply did not know. "Ahh," sighed the sage. "You have been lax in your responsibility and gratitude. I will show you how to feed a cat." With that, Reb Elya, a man in his eighties, went into his kitchen, poured milk into a saucer, and placed it down for the hungry feline.

At that moment a young student named Kavinsky captured the moment on film. The picture of the white-bearded Torah giant bending down and feeding a cat remains one of the most popular pictures among thousands of youngsters in America and Israel.¹⁰

According to the Ksav Sofer, feeding the cat milk would have been justified on the grounds that the cat had become the property and responsibility of the students.

10 R' Mordechai Kamenetsky, Animal House-Parshas Vayishlach, 5778/2017.

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