

## But an ox or a sheep, you may not slaughter it and its offspring on the same day. (22:28)

While the Torah uses the masculine pronoun *oso*, “his,” as opposed to “its” (offspring), this prohibition applies only to the mother and child. In his *Moreh Nevuchim*, the *Rambam* posits that the reason for prohibiting *oso v’es beno*, the slaughter of a female cow or sheep and its young, is to prevent the mother’s suffering in seeing her child killed. This *halachah* holds true even if the mother does not actually see its young being slaughtered.

The *Rambam* explains that a mother’s compassion for her child is instinctive – not cognitive. Otherwise, animals would not have this sensitivity, as they lack the necessary cognition. This explains why some humans who have lost their sensitivity to their young feel no compassion. They have lost the innate characteristic that is found even in animals. The sense that a mother loves her child is applicable only when a mother feels that she is a mother. When a mother loses her complete sense of direction, her focus in life, she exists purely as a creature, not as a mother.

Why are the cow and sheep singled out from among all other animals? Do they not have compassion? The *Rambam* distinguishes between animals that separate from their young when the nursing period is over, and cows and sheep, which are domesticated and therefore remain with their young on the owner’s estate. For this reason, their filial bond continues unabated.

Perhaps domestication allows for a greater sense of motherhood to develop. A mother that is with a child for only a short span of time does not develop the usual sense of love that accompanies motherhood. She feels used rather than loved, which precludes the development of any extended sense of compassion.