

Pretending to be Asleep

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

Eating Animals is Jonathan Safran Foer's remarkable new book. In it he describes what has happened to the way we raise animals for food in our country. With wit and power Foer lays out before us what it means to consign billions (yes, billions) of animals to horrific suffering so we can eat the antibiotic laden meat and feed it to our children.

Of course we know this. Despite the skill with which Foer lays out the sometimes shocking particulars, and the cumulative effect, the basics are unsurprising. Yet, as he notes, "It's always possible to wake someone who is asleep, but no amount of noise will wake someone who is pretending to be asleep."

This observation is not only true with regard to animals. We are aware of the needs of those around us. None of us is ignorant of the waste, indifference and profligacy that mark our lives. But we pretend to be asleep.

The shofar on Rosh Hashana is intended to wake us up to a life of goodness, of care, of compassion. Perhaps it is intended not only to wake the sleepers, but those of us who are only pretending to be asleep.