

The chemical knowledge of bezoar goats



The Bezoar goat can climb up sheer rock faces. The bottoms of its hooves are rough, and the soft pads under its feet let it move with great agility. The name Bezoar actually stems from a Farsi word meaning medicine, and these goats are experts at treating themselves— thanks to this species' astonishing knowledge of chemistry.

When a Bezoar goat is bitten by a snake, immediately it begins eating one of the species of Euphorbia which grow around.

This is a most astonishing behavior, because these plants contain euphorbon, a substance that neutralizes the venom in the goat's blood system. ("Iste Doga" (*This is Nature*), *Bilim ve Teknik (Science and*

Technology Magazine), TUBITAK, January 1992, no. 25, vol.290, p. 49)

What allows these goats, who do not even touch Euphorbia in their day-to-day grazing, to use these plants as a medicinal treatment? How do they know that they need this plant because the chemicals in the plant are an effective antidote against snake venom?

It's impossible for them to find the one plant effective against snake venom by trial and error. A goat starting to test all the hundreds of kinds of plants growing around will have no time to try more than a few. Even if it is successful once, the goat will still have to make the same correct decision in the future, every time it is bitten. For the moment, let's assume that a single goat does manage to do this. Yet all its members need to display this behavior in order for the entire species not to become extinct.

Therefore, the first successful goat has to pass on its experience to others. But it is not possible for a living thing to pass on the acquired traits to succeeding generations. To use an analogy; imagine someone who graduates from university with honors. None of the knowledge he's gained or efforts he's put in will be of any use to his children or grandchildren. Any knowledge or behavior that the individual acquires will die with that individual. It's not possible for "know-how" to be injected into the genes of a living thing so that it may pass on its experience to subsequent generations. Every generation has to re-acquire the same information, directly right from scratch.

Deep consideration of examples like these is enough to show that living things' behavior cannot come about by chance. Through being inspired and taught by God, living things acquire all the knowledge they need. God leaves no living thing unguided and at the mercy of so-called chance. In one verse of the Qur'an, God reveals that He has complete control of and dominion over living things:

I have put my trust in God, my Lord and your Lord. There is no creature He does not hold by the forelock. My Lord is on a straight path. (Surah Hud: 56)

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