THE ART OF COMPASSIONATE FOOD:
ETHICAL EATING FOR 21ST CENTURY JEWS

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"To any individual or community, **food** is more than merely the fuel sustaining life and more than a matter of sensory stimulation. Culinary habits are an expression of a community's history & culture, an accumulation & expression of its environmental

influences, experiences, conventions, beliefs, aspirations and behavior. **Food is an enduring element of individual and collective memory.** Like its history & culture, each community's food is distinctive. It is part of and a window to who a community is, how that community came to be, how it

exists at a particular moment in time and what it values in the present and hopes for the future. No other aspect of existence more closely touches and reveals a community's life - both it's everyday routines and its period of celebration - than food. The contents of the dining table

"Whoever is in need, let him come and eat."[3]

"There can be no joy without food and drink."[2]

Engendered by a myriad of environmental, technological, demographic and cultural influences, bespeak the experiences, capabilities, and sensibilities of the population. **To know a community is to know its food.**[4]

INTRODUCTION

"Foodways are 'a whole interrelated system of food conceptualization and evaluation, procurement, distribution, preservation, preparation, consumption, and nutrition shared by all members of a particular society.' Ethnic foodways, however, post a slight problem for this definition…. No ethnic foods exist in a vacuum, nor are they preserved in a pristine state, uninfluenced by their surroundings."[4]

This capstone project explores three prevalent Jewish ethical values related to the foodways of Jews: compassion towards animals (*tzaar baalei chayim*), environmental sustainability (*shmirat ha'adamah*), and individual health (*shmirat haguf*). By looking at the history - in rabbinic and ethical texts - of each value I created a path by which I could find its contemporary interpretation in eco-Kashrut, vegan, and vegetarian Judaisms. Using this background, I showcase vegetarian and vegan recipes that align with these values. These recipes illustrate alternatives to traditional Jewish foods for holidays.

Like Jewish food practices, Jewish ethics evolved over time in relevancy and use. Whereas certain biblical texts about the earth pertained only to agricultural matters, today, these texts are used to explain our imperative to lessen our impact on the environment and arguments sustainability. Jewish food historian and cookbook author Gil Marks writes that "culinary habits are an expression of a community's history and culture, an accumulation and expression of its environmental influences, experiences, conventions, beliefs, aspirations, and behavior."[5] Indeed, what many call "Jewish food" tells stories about different Jewish communities' histories while expressing shared values and ethics. This project aims to interpret the evolution of ethics in Judaism as they relate to food and offer sustainable and humane alternatives to what may be described as staple Jewish foods. These staple recipes are the focus of the end of the project.

What some American Jews consider "Jewish food" may be borrowed food traditions from places American Jews have immigrated.[6] Whatever the origins, American Jews cook and serve a variety of foods such as challah, kugel, brisket, cholent, latkes, and more. Certain recipes remain attached to a Jewish holiday, such as hamentaschen for Purim, while others may be found on numerous brunch tables, such as cream cheese for bagels and lox. Most Jewish holidays are somehow connected

to food. Jews liken food, the sustenance used to fuel the body, to Torah, the spiritual sustenance used to fuel the soul.[7] Food is a cornerstone of Jewish gatherings and one of the ways Jews celebrate a *simcha* or comfort family and friends in mourning. Certain recipes retain symbolic meaning or significance rooted in the Torah, like matzah.

Food and Jewish Values and Ethics

Besides symbolism and holiday significance, food sustains us. Each day, people eat to live. In the rabbinic age, Jews knew the cow or chicken who ended up on the Shabbat dinner table. Designer food, prepackaged meals, and junk food simply did not exist. The Bible outlines directions for treating work animals and field workers with care, respect, and equality. The rules of *shechitah* detail the responsibility of butchers to kill animals as quickly and humanely as possible. Food ethics may have been much easier when the food system was much simpler!

As a whole, one could describe the modern American food system as broken and unethical. The facts of our food system evoke anxiety and worry about the health and wellness of all animals and humans involved in the production and consumption of food. Factory farms of animals for meat and dairy production house animals in cramped quarters with little to no sunlight exposure, increasing the likelihood of disease and illness. Farmers pump animals full of antibiotics that Americans later consume

along with animal meat. Regular artificial insemination of dairy cows results in overwork of animals and emotional strain that can be observed when offspring are taken away from mothers before they would otherwise naturally leave.[7] Scientists show that raising animals for meat and dairy production wastes natural resources like water and harms the environment with the amount of greenhouse gases emitted by animals.[8]

This project is not a direct call to veganism or a shirking of the entire American food production system. Rather, this work serves as a call to action to ensure that food production, purchases, and consumption align with Jewish values. Healthier and less negatively impactful recipes and ways of living are available. The American Jewish community has a lot of opportunity to grow into our religion's ethics. Future generations of Jews can learn that Jewish food could be humanely procured and produced and align with sustainable and ethical Jewish practices.

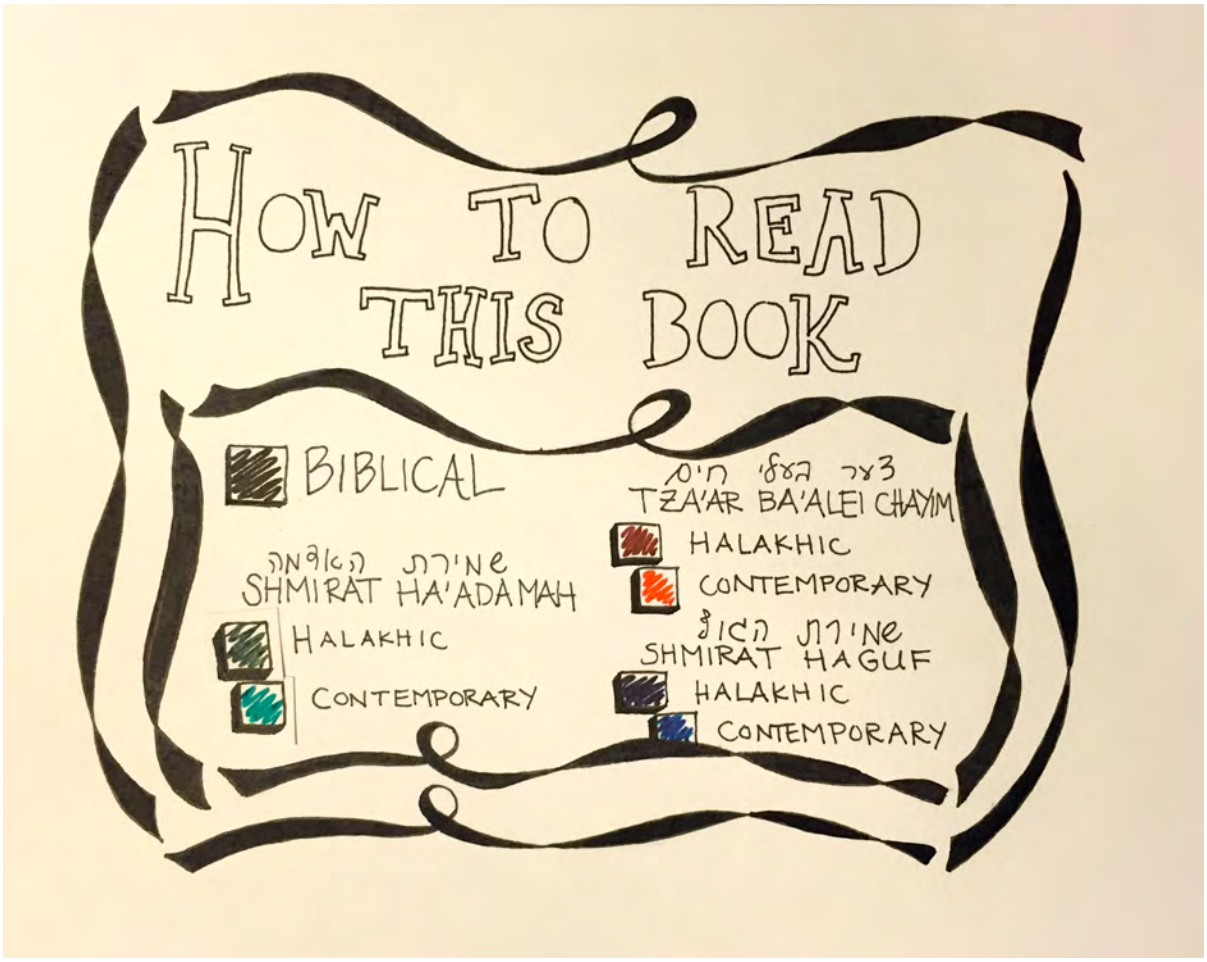
Progress in the World of Jewish Food

There currently exists a burgeoning community of Jews who think seriously about ethical issues pertaining to Jewish American foodways. Locations like Pearlstone Center (Kayam Farm) in Baltimore, Maryland, the Jewish Farm School (Eden Village) in Putnam Valley, NY and Urban Adamah in Berkeley, California have set up working farms and invite groups to visit

in order to educate Jews about Jewish environmentalism and the Jewish emphasis on thinking about where food comes from. Students on Alternative Spring Break trips, families looking for time away from urban settings, and people who want to connect to the land gather at these farms and tend the crops, harvest foods, learn about sustainable and organic farming and participate in preparing meals for attendees. Educators also teach participants about Jewish values and ethics relating to sustainable farming. The Jewish environmental organization Hazon works "to create a healthier and more sustainable Jewish community, and a healthier and more sustainable world for all," and holds conferences and educational programs around the country and in Israel.[8] Hazon leaders showcase what Jewish ethical food choices look like by serving only organic and humanely slaughtered meat at all Hazon events. Hazon conferences and educational programs offer a variety of modern interpretations of and concrete actions for creating personal ethical food practices.

This capstone project is born from my own concern about making my food choices compatible with my ethical values. As a guide to help Jewish Americans consider the food they choose to eat and the ethical considerations inherent in those choices, this project contextualizes compassion towards animals (*tzaar baalei chayim*), environmental

sustainability (*shmirat ha'adamah*), and individual health (*shmirat haguf*) from Jewish textual sources and in their contemporary usage and applications. Written as a cookbook, it provides a tool to use to reflect on personal values and practices. Food remains central to the Jewish experience. This cookbook brings together serious academic research and text study with my creative energy for a topic about which I am passionate. These recipes offer ethical food options for Jewish holidays and celebrations that align with these particular Jewish values and provide concrete actions for making positive food choices that are informed by Jewish tradition and contemporary interpretation.



I wrote and outlined texts throughout this cookbook in specific colors to help identify the origin of each text. The cookbook reads like a genealogical study of the evolution of three ethics: compassion towards animals (*tza'ar ba'alei chayim)*, guarding the planet (*shmirat ha'adamah)*, and guarding the body (*shmirat haguf)*. Texts written in black originate from Torah. Three other colors signify to which ethic a text relates. Darker colored texts denote more ancient commentary such as halakhic texts of Mishnah, Talmud, and commentary on the law originating in Torah. Lighter colored texts denote modern and contemporary commentaries.

Pairing of halakhic texts and modern texts helps explain the shifts in understanding these ethics from biblical times to today. My own commentary on these texts sheds light on this movement, further explaining where these ethics may have started and into what they have evolved.

Content

By discussing three specific Jewish ethical values this work locates their respective connections to historical Judaism, textual tradition, and contemporary understandings of eco-Kashrut. Included are contemporary Jewish interpretations of these ethics in relation to food and Jewish tradition. Each section introduces an ethic, its origin, and the texts that shape the ethic in ancient times and today. Each section weaves a story of the ethic from its origin in the Torah to contemporary Judaism and its meaning and relevance today.

Each section dives deeper into a practical appreciation of theory into practice by way of a Jewish recipe. These recipes highlight the interaction of Jewish ethics with Jewish tradition, history, and culture. Analysis of these Jewish foods, Jewish food culture, and ethics relating to food aid in linking ethical issues with Jewish recipes.

Challah

How does preparing and cooking one of Judaism's most iconic foods, challah, affect animals, the planet, and the physical body? Each time someone gathers ingredients for challah, or any recipe, she holds the power to affect positively or negatively the world around her. This sections sheds light on the effects of certain ingredients of challah on animals, the planet, and the body, as well as investigates the history and different iterations and recipes of challah around the world.

This section also includes an examination of the use of eggs in Jewish cooking and the ethical alignment of egg production and procurement with Jewish values. Recipes for eggless challah, hamentaschen, potato pancakes, and *sufganiyot* can be found following the text.

Kugel

Dairy may not have its place at every Jewish meal but certain dairy recipes seem iconically Jewish. What impact does dairy procurement and consumption have on animals, the planet, and the physical body? This section delves into how dairy intertwines with the three ethics, especially *tza'ar ba'alei chayim*, and implores the reader to consider alternative dairyless recipes for kugel, fried matzah or matzo brie, and cream cheese.

Cholent

Some Jews insist that Passover only being Passover when Potato Chip Chicken or juicy brisket adorns the table. What role does meat play in Jewish holidays? How does raising animals for food affect the environment and the people who work with them? This section will explore some of the ways raising animals for meat interacts with the three ethics. Meatless recipes for cholent, gefilte fish, and chopped liver can be found at the end of the recipe.

צער בעלי חיים

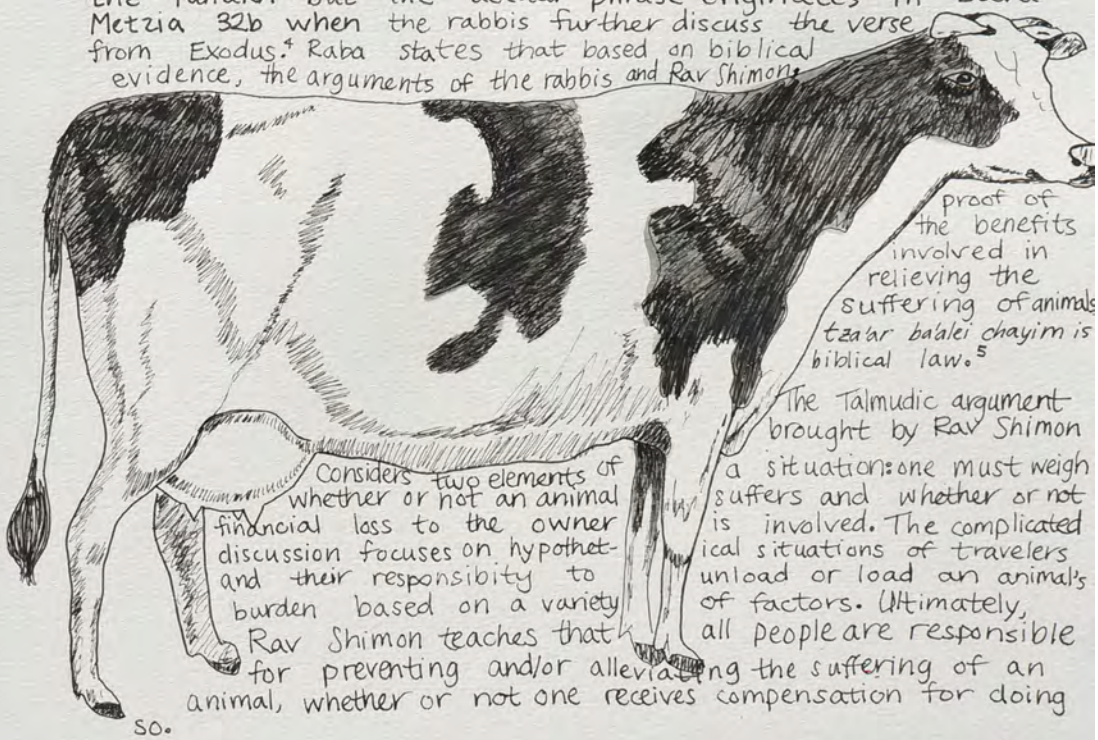
Compassion towards Animals

The relationship between humans and animals begins in the creation story. Biblical texts show that animals play various roles in Judaism and the lives of Jews. The Torah instructs the People Israel how they should treat animals generally, how to use them for food, and how to employ them for work. Based on these texts, as well as subsequent rabbinic texts and commentary, the guidelines for the Jewish responsibility regarding the welfare of animals are well established. And one can easily surmise that Jews have long been aware of humans' capability to mistreat animals and the need to prevent mistreatment in a variety of contexts.

Midrash
Exodus
Rabbah
2:2

While our teacher Moses was tending the flock of Jethro in the wilderness, a kid ran away from him. He ran after the kid until it reached Hasuah. Upon reaching Hasuah, the kid came upon a body of water and began to drink. When Moses reached him, he said, "I did not know that you were running because [you were] thirsty. You must be tired." He placed the kid on his shoulder and began to walk. The Holy one, Blessed be God, said, "You are **compassionate** in leading flocks belonging to mortals; I swear you will similarly shepherd my flock, Israel.

The Hebrew term *tza'ar ba'alei chayim* (compassion towards animals) may be explained as biblical in origin even though the term never appears in the Torah.[2] In Bava Metzia 32a, a lengthy discussion begins describing situations in which a person would be responsible to help load or unload burdens from an animal. This discussion stems from **Exodus 23:5** which teaches, "When you see the ass of your enemy lying under its burden and would refrain from raising it, you must nevertheless raise it with him."[3] Other texts that support *tza'ar ba'alei chayim* can be found throughout the Tanakh but the actual phrase originates in Bava Metzia 32b when the rabbis further discuss the verse from Exodus.[4] Raba states that based on biblical evidence, the arguments of the rabbis and Rav Shimon



proof of the benefits involved in relieving the suffering of animals *tza'ar ba'alei chayim* is biblical law.[5]

The Talmudic argument brought by Rav Shimon a situation: one must weigh suffers and whether or not is involved. The complicated ical situations of travelers unload or load an animal's of factors. Ultimately, all people are responsible

Considers two elements of whether or not an animal financial loss to the owner discussion focuses on hypothet- and their responsibity to burden based on a variety Rav Shimon teaches that for preventing and/or alleviating the suffering of an animal, whether or not one receives compensation for doing so.

Further; Ramban comments on Leviticus 22:28, "It is prohibited to kill an animal with its young on the same day, in order that people should be restrained and prevented from killing the two together in such a manner that the young is slain in the sight of the mother; for the pain of animals under such circumstances is very great. There is no difference in this case between the pain of people and the pain of other living beings, since the love and the tenderness of the mother for her young ones is not produced by reasoning but by feeling, and this faculty exists not only in people but in most living creatures."[6]

In the *Shulchan Aruch* Joseph Karo states even more decidedly, "It is forbidden, according to the law of the Torah, to inflict pain upon any living creature. On the contrary, it is our duty to relieve the pain of any creature, even if it is ownerless or belongs to a non-Jew."[7]

Compassion for animals even makes an appearance in the Ten Commandments as God instructs that no work should be done on the Sabbath, even by animals.[8] Another text relating to working animals instructs that no ox should be muzzled while treading out corn so as to not tempt animals with a food they love and not allow them to eat.[9] Talmud Bavli, Berakhot 40a explains that based on Deuteronomy 11:15, one must also feed and provide water for animals before sitting down to a meal.[10] Further, according to Talmud Yerushalmi, Ketubot 4:8, one should not even acquire a domestic animal before buying food for him or her! *Shulhan Aruch* beautifully explains another concept of a person's duty to working animals, "When horses, drawing a cart, come to a rough road or a steep hill, and it is hard for them to draw the cart without help, it is our duty to help them, even when they belong to a non-Jew, because of the precept not to be cruel to animals, lest the owner smite them to force them to draw more than their strength permits."[11] These texts prove that even if humans are allowed the concession to eat animals, they must

still treat the animals used for other purposes in a compassionate manner.

The Role of Meat and Animal Products in Judaism

In Judaism, food represents more than just fuel for our bodies. Animals and animal meat play integral roles throughout Jewish history acting as ritual sacrifices, vehicles through whom Israelites could transfer individual and communal sins, and community celebratory meals. Animal skin also provides material for parchment on which holy texts are written as well as the material for the ritual objects like tefillin. These uses do not fully encompass the role of animals and animal products in Judaism, however, they offer glimpses into the complex and rich tradition of Jewish customs, rituals, and practices that may lead to unnecessary harm or suffering of animals.

In the Torah, the broad Hebrew term for sacrifices is *korbanot*, whose root comes from k-r-v, to bring near.[19] "To bring near" could be "that which is brought near to God by presentation upon the Temple altar" or "that which brings the giver closer to the presence of God."[20] Laws of animal sacrifices comprise a large portion of Leviticus and teach Jews about the importance of animal sacrifice as a mode of worship. Yet a variety of types of sacrifices - including bread and wine - exist in the Torah, which makes it difficult to discern the exact intent of animal

sacrifices. Ritual sacrifices also consisted of other food items like wine or meal offerings but the "most important sacrifices were those of animals.[21] No evidence exists in the Torah that these sacrifices were to cause undue harm to animals or to elevate the animals' place in the world. In their work *After Noah: Animals and the Liberation of Theology*, authors Andrew Linzey and Dan Cohn-Sherbok explore the variety of theories associated with the purpose of sacrifices: animal offerings were highly significant and covered a range of purposes such as "an act of expiation, as a means of spiritual communion, and as a gift to God."[22] Linzey and Cohn-Sherbok summarize the procedure for sacrificing animals as involving "laying hands upon the animal, slaughtering it, collecting its blood and pouring it on the altar: this was followed by the aspersion of the blood and the burning of dedicated portions."[23] Depending on the type of sacrifice, either the owner of the sacrifice or the priest would eat the flesh of the animal after the blood had been drained, the choice parts separated, and both had been offered to God. Collection of blood signified the seriousness of surrendering a living being's life.[1] The intention was not to inflict suffering upon an animal but rather to sacrifice an animal in service to God. The Torah contains no guidelines or recommendations about how to lessen or minimize the amount of suffering caused during these procedures.

Why sacrifice animals at all? Louis Berman offers two facts about ancient Israel to help better understand why animal sacrifice became important in Jewish life: "the tribes of Israel were a pastoral people and therefore a flesh-eating people, and they inhabited a world in which blood sacrifices, both animal and human, were widely practiced."[24] Further, Berman proposes that elevating animal sacrifices to a cult ritual allowed the people to confront an internal, ethical struggle between the human appetite for flesh and "God's designation of life as something sacred."[25] Returning the blood, the essence of life" to God as well as the choices bits of the carcass signified a compromise between the vegetarian Edenic ideal and human appetite for flesh of animals.[26] In *Judaism and Vegetarianism*, Richard Schwartz argues that Jews sacrificed animals because worship by means of sacrifices was typical practice among the nations that surrounded Israel.[27] Schwartz describes Maimonide's viewpoint that God allowed sacrifices to take the place of idolatry which Abarbanel also supports by citing a *midrash*: "Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, said "Let them at all times offer their sacrifices before Me in the Tabernacle, and they will be weaned from idolatry, and thus be saved."[28]

Animal sacrifices abruptly ended with the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. Since sacrifices were closely tied to the Temple, the rabbis of the Talmud "debated about whether to prohibit the eating of

meat and the drinking of wine as a sign of mourning for the destruction of the Temple," but the rabbis ultimately decided that since Judaism is a "religion of life," Jews should not deprive themselves of living life and eating meat.[29] Instead of making meat-eating into a forbidden act, the rabbis created a structure of rituals and guidelines for slaughtering and eating meat. They assigned a community *shochet*, ritual slaughterer, to replace the Temple priest-slaughterer, and "set forth in great detail the subtle and complex rules of animal slaughter which had been practiced by the Temple priests."[30] Jewish dietary laws set forth in the Talmud "gave every Jew a role in sanctifying the everyday acts of food preparation and eating."[31] The Jewish ideals of meat consumption moved from non-existent (in the Eden narrative) to purposeful (after the Noah narrative) to ritualistic (in the Temple periods) to communal and formative (in the exilic period).

The rabbis of the Talmud took care to outline detailed rules for *shechitah*. The knife used for *shechitah*, known as *halaf*, must be smooth and clean, without dents and must be examined before and after the slaughter.[32] *Tzaar ba'alei chayim* is a driving force behind the rules of *shechitah*, and teaches anyone becoming a *shochet* that the ritual act of slaughter should be completed not just to honor God but to honor the life of the animal, which God created. Louis Berman argues that the

complex rules of *kashrut*, Jewish dietary laws, were created by the rabbis "to further undo the moral wrong that is committed by taking an animal's life for food purposes."[33]

Besides ritual slaughter in the Temple and ritual slaughter for food, animals may also be used as a vehicle through whom humans transfer or absolve sins.[34] On the day before Yom Kippur, some Jews take part in a ritual called *kapparot* in which verses from Psalms and Job are recited and either a rooster (for a man) or hen (for a woman) is swung around the head three times.[35] The person requests in a formalized statement that the animal symbolically take on the person's sins and dies so the person can live a long and peaceful life.[36] Then, custom dictates that the animal is slaughtered and given to the poor or money is given to the poor in its stead. The Torah and Talmud do not include *kapparot* and the *geonim* (Jewish leaders from the early medieval era) first mention the ritual in writing.[37] "No animals used in sacrificial rites could serve similar purposes outside the Temple" so instead, hens and roosters became the typical animal of choice.[34] Nachmanides and Josef Caro called the ritual a "stupid custom" but kabbalists placed an emphases on *kapparot* and the ritual became popular.[38]

Today, many communities swing bags of coins over their heads and donate the money to the poor when finished.[39] While only a small number

of Orthodox Jews participate in *kapparot* with chickens today, *kapparot* inflicts unnecessary pain and suffering on the chickens.[40] Besides the trauma of being swung above someone's head, the chickens are often kept cramped in small cages, stacked high upon one another, outside in the heat. In 2012, the Los Angeles Department of Sanitation picked up just under 20,000 pounds of dead chickens.[41] Rather than donating the chickens, as stated by the ritual's organizers, thousands of chicken carcasses were left outside in garbage bags and thrown away.

Slaughterhouses (kosher and otherwise) and *shechitah* practices have been criticized for not aligning with the important notion of *tza'ar ba'alei chayim*. Activist Shmuly Yanklowitz leads *Shamayim v'Aretz* Institute, "a Jewish animal welfare organization that educates, trains leaders, and leads campaigns for the ethical treatment of animals."[42] Yanklowitz notes that even though one full decade has lapsed since *The New York Times* admonished a kosher slaughterhouse for using the "shackle-and-hoist" method, conditions for animals have not improved.[43] He writes:

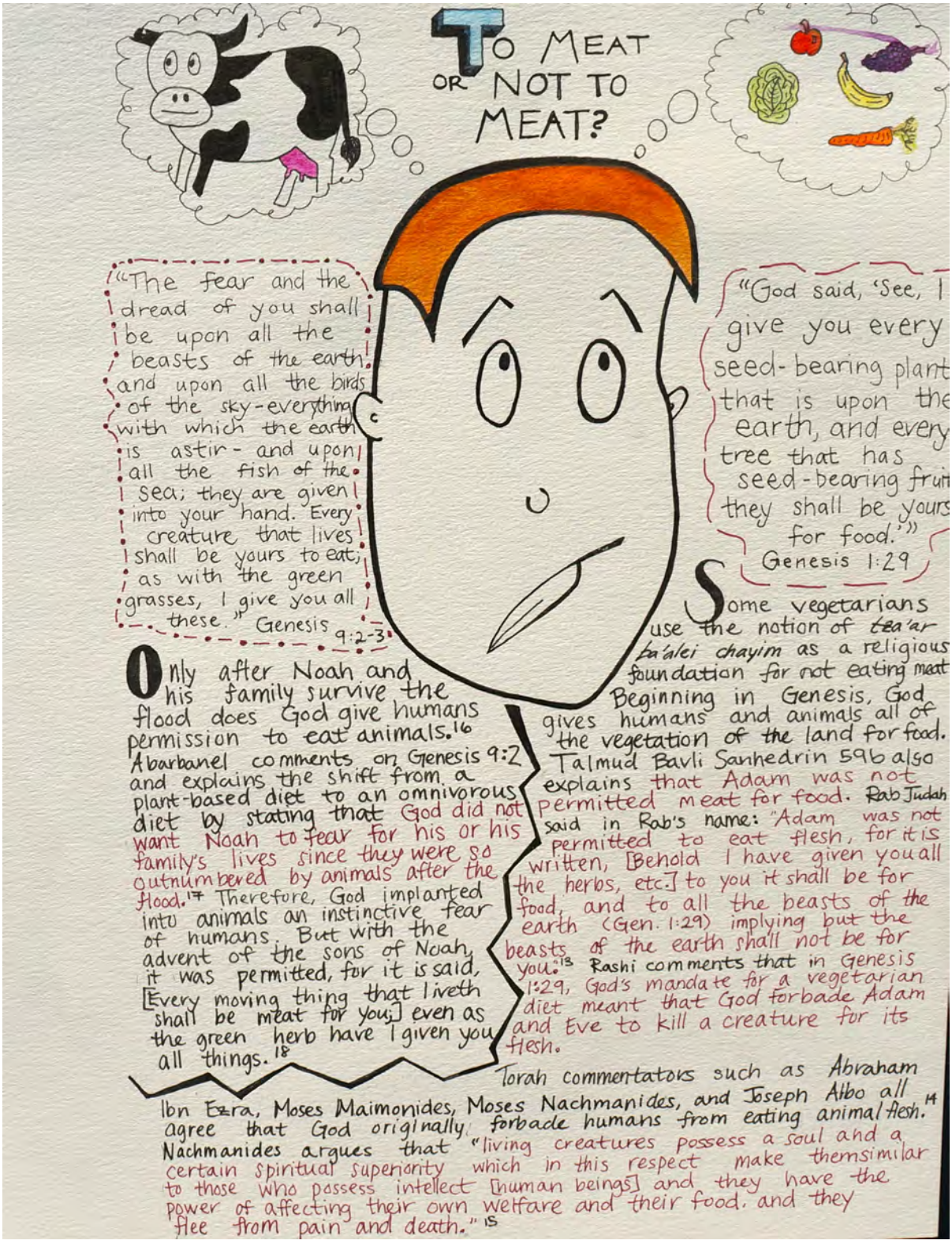
> "One particularly disturbing loophole in USDA regulation that was brought to light in late 2013 relates to the horrible mistreatment of sick and injured calves. Downed calves, or calves that are too sick or injured to rise to their feet, should be immediately euthanized,

rather than being brought to slaughter, according to the USDA. However, some slaughterhouses have exploited a loophole in the regulation by shocking, kicking, lifting calves by their tails and ears, or dragging the calves by chains to bring them to slaughter. The Humane Society of the United States filed a legal complaint and forced the USDA to investigate this cruelty, after taking a video at a slaughterhouse—one that does kosher slaughter—in New Jersey. It is time the USDA starts forcefully regulating this industry to prevent these cases of shocking and violent cruelty."[44]

In his book *Masterplan: Judaism, Its Programs, Meanings, Goals,* Aryeh Carmell argues that, "[it] seems doubtful from all that has been said whether the Torah would sanction 'factory farming,' which treats animals as machines, with apparent insensitivity to their natural needs and instincts."[45] *Kapporot* and *shechitah* are small, yet significant, times animal cruelty is found in Jewish tradition. On a broader scale, animal cruelty takes place in our factory farming and animal agriculture businesses worldwide. The practices of these systems are shocking and sad. Animals may be constrained to tiny cages for their whole lives, which are almost always much shorter than the possible natural lifespan. Babies are weaned from mothers too early and some animals never experience sun

shining on his or her face or the prickly feeling of grass beneath his or her feet.[46]

Genesis 1:26 depicts God creating humans in God's image and giving rule over all the birds of the sky, the fish of the sea, and the creatures of the earth. The responsibility remains in human hands to ensure humane treatment of all those creatures.

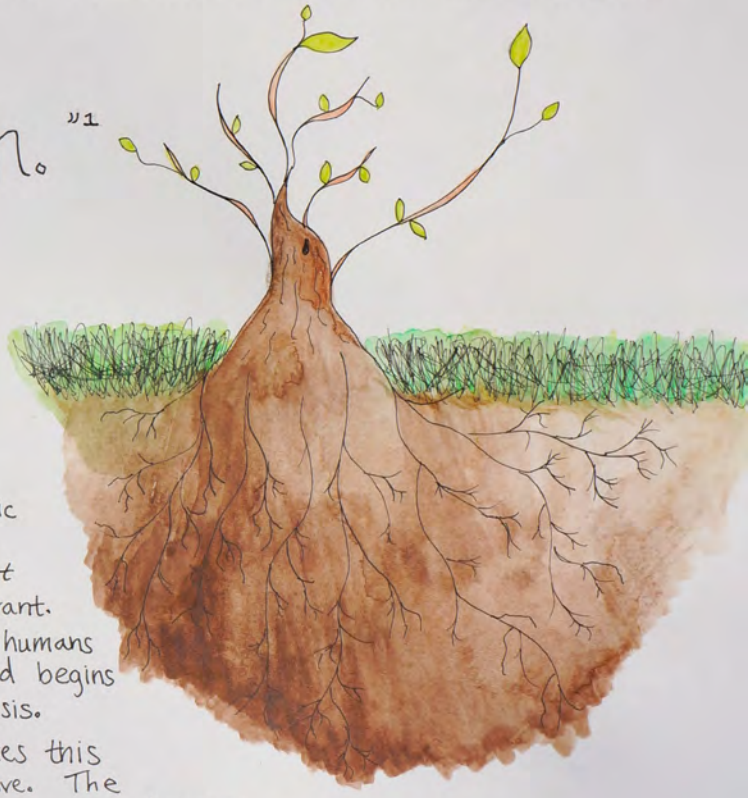

TO MEAT OR NOT TO MEAT?
"The fear and the dread of you shall be upon all the beasts of the earth and upon all the birds of the sky-everything with which the earth is astir- and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hand. Every creature that lives shall be yours to eat; as with the green grasses, I give you all these." Genesis 9:2-3
"God said, 'See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit they shall be yours for food.'" Genesis 1:29
Only after Noah and his family survive the flood does God give humans permission to eat animals.[16] Abarbanel comments on Genesis 9:2 and explains the shift from a plant-based diet to an omnivorous diet by stating that God did not want Noah to fear for his or his family's lives since they were so outnumbered by animals after the flood.[17] Therefore, God implanted into animals an instinctive fear of humans. But with the advent of the sons of Noah, it was permitted, for it is said, [Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you;] even as the green herb have I given you all things.[18]
Some vegetarians use the notion of tza'ar ba'alei chayim as a religious foundation for not eating meat. Beginning in Genesis, God gives humans and animals all of the vegetation of the land for food. Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 59b also explains that Adam was not permitted meat for food. Rab Judah said in Rab's name: "Adam was not permitted to eat flesh, for it is written, [Behold I have given you all the herbs, etc.] to you it shall be for food, and to all the beasts of the earth (Gen. 1:29) implying but the beasts of the earth shall not be for you."[13] Rashi comments that in Genesis 1:29, God's mandate for a vegetarian diet meant that God forbade Adam and Eve to kill a creature for its flesh.
Torah commentators such as Abraham Ibn Ezra, Moses Maimonides, Moses Nachmanides, and Joseph Albo all agree that God originally forbade humans from eating animal flesh.[14] Nachmanides argues that "living creatures possess a soul and a certain spiritual superiority which in this respect make them similar to those who possess intellect [human beings] and they have the power of affecting their own welfare and their food, and they flee from pain and death."[15]

שמירת האדמה

Protecting the Earth

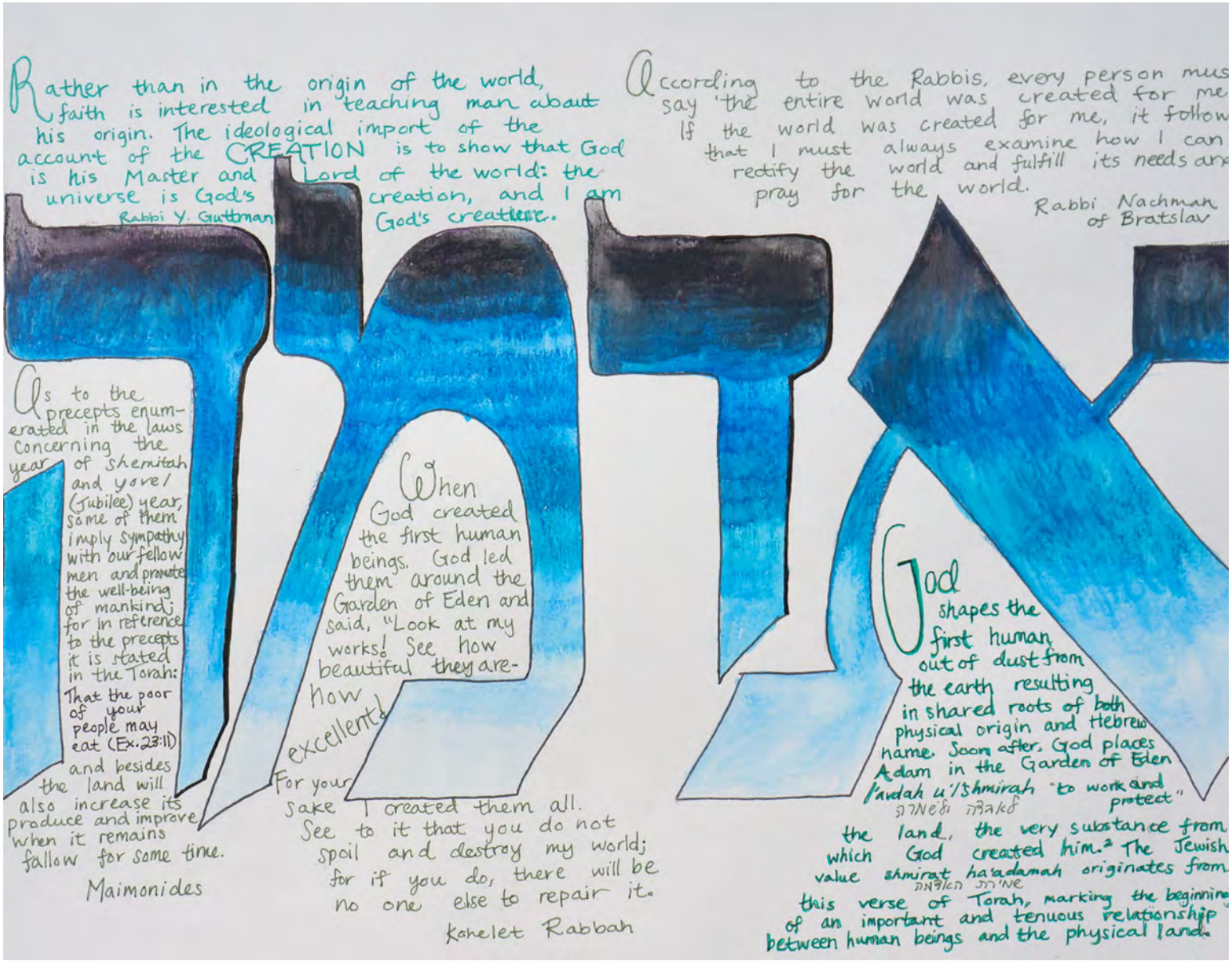
"Perhaps the most profound Jewish statement about the relationship between human beings and the earth is bound up in the words of Hebrew - two words that do not even need a sentence to connect them:

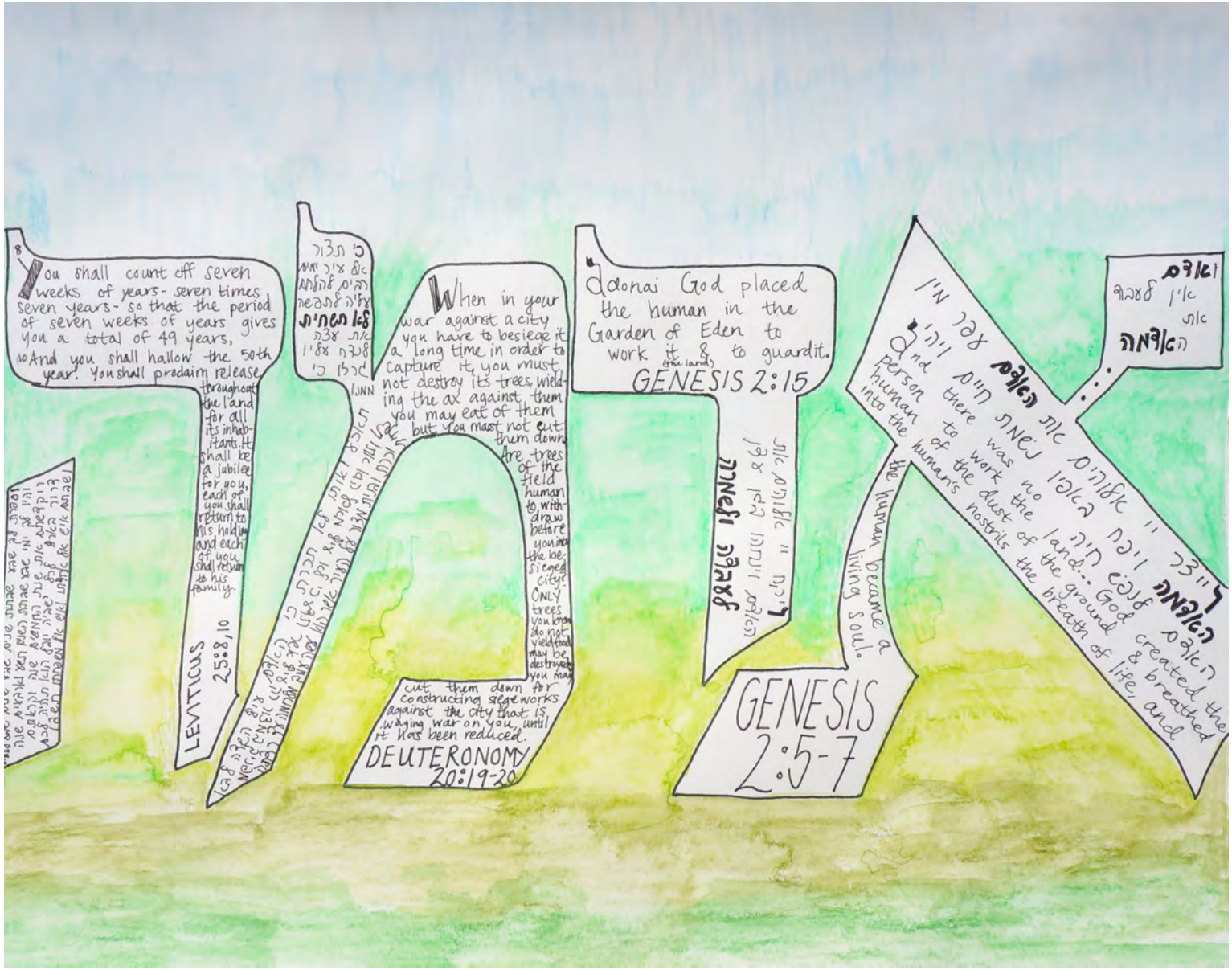
Adam.
Adamah."[1]



Though Jews of the 21st century connect to the land in different ways than in rabbinic times, the value to guard the earth (*shmirat ha'adamah*) remains relevant. A strong link between humans and the physical land begins in the book of Genesis.

Arthur Waskow states this concept beautifully above. The similarities between the two Hebrew words *adam* אָדָם for human being and *adamah* אֲדָמָה for earth (as in the dirt physical land is comprised of) denote a significant connection between the two entities.


Rather than in the origin of the world, faith is interested in teaching man about his origin. The ideological import of the account of the CREATION is to show that God is his Master and Lord of the world: the universe is God's creation, and I am God's creature.
Rabbi Y. Guttman
According to the Rabbis, every person must say 'the entire world was created for me.' If the world was created for me, it follows that I must always examine how I can rectify the world and fulfill its needs and pray for the world.
Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav
As to the precepts enumerated in the laws concerning the year of shemitah and yovel (Jubilee) year, some of them imply sympathy with our fellow men and promote the well-being of mankind; for in reference to the precepts it is stated in the Torah: That the poor of your people may eat (Ex. 23:11) and besides the land will also increase its produce and improve when it remains fallow for some time.
Maimonides
When God created the first human beings, God led them around the Garden of Eden and said, "Look at my works! See how beautiful they are- how excellent! For your sake I created them all. See to it that you do not spoil and destroy my world; for if you do, there will be no one else to repair it.
Kohelet Rabbah
God shapes the first human out of dust from the earth resulting in shared roots of both physical origin and Hebrew name. Soon after, God places Adam in the Garden of Eden l'avdah u'l'shmirah "to work and protect" לְעָבְדָהּ וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ the land, the very substance from which God created him.[2] The Jewish value shmirat ha'adamah originates from this verse of Torah, marking the beginning of an important and tenuous relationship between human beings and the physical land.


8 You shall count off seven weeks of years- seven times seven years- so that the period of seven weeks of years gives you a total of 49 years,
10 And you shall hallow the 50th year. You shall proclaim release throughout the land for all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, each of you shall return to his holding and each of you shall return to his family.
LEVITICUS 25:8,10
When in your war against a city you have to besiege it a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its trees, wielding the ax against them. You may eat of them but you must not cut them down. Are trees of the field human to withdraw before you into the besieged city? ONLY trees you know do not yield food may be destroyed you may cut them down for constructing siegeworks against the city that is waging war on you, until it has been reduced.
DEUTERONOMY 20:19-20
Adonai God placed the human in the Garden of Eden to work it & to guard it.
GENESIS 2:15
GENESIS 2:5-7
the human became a living soul.
and there was no person to work the land... God created the human from the dust of the ground & breathed into the human's nostrils the breath of life, and

Shmirat Ha'adamah

Bal Tashchit

Many other sections of the Tanakh instruct, remind, and admonish Jews about how to protect the earth and refrain from destruction in various ways. For example, Deuteronomy 20 explains the mitzvah of "do not destroy" (*bal tashchit*) when referring to instructions of war. In Deuteronomy 20:19-20, God commands the Israelites, "When in your war against a city you have to besiege it a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its trees, wielding the ax against them. You may eat of them, but you must not cut them down. Are trees of the field human to withdraw before you into the besieged city? Only trees that you know do not yield food may be destroyed; you may cut them down for constructing siegeworks against the city that is waging war on you, until is has been reduced."[8] The Israelites may cut down trees to form structures that aid in winning a battle and they may eat the fruit yielded by fruit-bearing trees. The hypothetical question posed highlighting the inanimate nature of trees and therefore their inability to retreat from an opponent's ax may conjure striking mental images of trees uprooting themselves and running behind the safety of besieged walls. This line reminds us that though God shaped and formed *adam* from the *adamah*, humans still remain more powerful over other products of the earth. The

land that humans must protect includes trees. An important component of *shmirat ha'adamah*, *bal tashchit* reminds us that part of protecting the land means refraining from destroying unnecessarily.

In *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides expands the parameters of the mitzvah of *bal tashchit* to household goods, buildings, springs, wasteful consumption of almost anything else and most importantly to our study, food.[9] Lawrence Troster explains, "The underlying idea of this law is the recognition that everything we own belongs to God. When we consume in a wasteful manner, we damage Creation and violate our mandate to use Creation only for our legitimate benefit." In fact, whatever humans believe they "own" actually belongs to God in all manners of speaking. Midrash Kohelet Rabbah 7:28 also depicts the *mitzvah bal tashchit*; "When God created the first human beings, God led them around the Garden of Eden and said: 'Look at my works! See how beautiful they are—how excellent! For your sake I created them all. See to it that you do not spoil and destroy My world; for if you do, there will be no one else to repair it.'"[10] This reminder and admonition urges humans to consider and marvel at God's beautiful creations and thus follow the commandment *bal tashchit*. This text also warns humans against destroying God's works since "there will be no one else to repair it." Kohelet Rabbah knew what we

now know to be true: we must not destroy our planet because no other beings have the ability to fix our mistakes.

Shmitah / Yovel

In another attempt to urge humans to enact *shmirat ha'adamah*, the book of Leviticus details God's commandments of two types of sabbath for the earth, "When you enter the land that I give you, the land shall observe a sabbath of the Lord. Six years you may sow your field and six years you may prune your vineyard and gather in the yield. But in the seventh year the land shall have a sabbath of complete rest, a sabbath of the Lord."[11] Those who normally work the land to produce food also experience rest from work during these years. The land must not be sown but the people may eat whatever the land produces on its own. In addition to this shabbat shabaton, "shabbat of rest," an additional jubilee year must be observed by all the people during the 50 year of the cycle. The jubilee year includes similar restrictions of refraining from sowing the land and trimming the vineyards.[12] Interestingly, both these types of sabbath for the land also involve an aspect of release of debt, tying the notion of *shmirat ha'adamah* with justice and kindness towards fellow human beings. During the seventh year release, or *shmitah*, "every holder of a loan shall release what he was lent to his neighbor."[13] In Leviticus 25:8-10, God commands that one should be kind to one's neighbor

when selling property by only charging for the time remaining before the next jubilee or only collecting for the time lapsed since the last jubilee.

If the people follow God's commands to protect and guard the earth through the observance of *shmitah* and *yovel* (jubilee), then God promises great things for the Israelites such as peace in the land, rain, and bountiful crops for the year or years of rest.[14] God even connects the covenant between God and the people directly to the observance of these years of rest, promising to be "ever present" in the people's midst.[15] If, however, they scorn these commandments, many horrific events will occur in the land and the people will have terrible experiences, such as enemies slaying them and a prevalence of fever and consumption.[16] Twenty-nine verses detail these horrific events, emphasizing the incredible importance of following the rules of sabbaths of the land.

Food Offerings

When the worship of Israelites became centralized in one location, the Temple in Jerusalem, food offerings became a vital method for Jews to practice *shmirat ha'adamah*. Waskow describes the importance of offerings: "the Temple offering was the context in which the love between *adam* and *adamah* must be expressed and heightened. Through these offerings, God became most constantly apparent, most fully One."[17] Tithing 10 percent of crops allowed Israelites to show their devotion to

God and constantly reminded them that though they may use the fruits of the land as sustenance, ultimately, all of creation belonged to God.[18] Similarly, refraining from eating fruits of a newly planted tree during its first five years of growth denote respect. The fact that during the first three years of a tree's growth, it remains in a state of *orlah*, "uncircumcision," due to respect for its divine potential, teaches that trees were somehow considered as taking part in the covenant between God and the Israelites.[19] Only after offering the tree's first fruits in the fourth year could the tree's fruit be considered for tithing, harvesting and consumption during the fifth year.[20]

Until the time of the Babylonian exile, tending to the land and upholding *shmirat ha'adamah* in a hands-on way provided a mode of connection to God. The agricultural rhythm of the land dictated when farmers needed to focus on their crops and when they could spend time studying during the sabbatical year. Today, instead of a focus on agriculture like the Israelites of the Torah, Americans mostly disconnect from the agricultural process of food and even agriculture in general. God's words of Leviticus 25:23 reminds us that humans remain merely strangers and sojourners, temporary inhabitants, in this world of God's creation and as Jeremy Benstein explains, "Whether the Earth belongs to God or simply to itself, it surely isn't ours."[21]

Modern Interpretations of *Shmirat Ha'adamah*

Many modern Jewish organizations utilize ancient Jewish texts to promote stewardship of the earth and the ideal of enacting *shmirat ha'adamah*. For example, the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, COEJL, "deepens and broadens the Jewish community's commitment to stewardship and protection of the Earth through outreach, activism and Jewish learning."[22] The COEJL attempts to fulfill various initiatives such as aiding synagogues and Jewish organizations "go green," activating networks of Jewish environmental advocates within small communities as well as on a national and global scale, and releasing a "Jewish Energy Guide" and educational resources to help enact change in a plethora of Jewish settings.[23] Another organization, GreenFaith, seeks "to inspire, educate and mobilize people of diverse religious backgrounds for environmental leadership," insisting "that protecting the earth is a religious value, and that environmental stewardship is a moral responsibility."[24] GreenFaith's areas of focus revolve around providing resources to strengthen spiritual connection to the earth "through environmentally-themed worship, religious education and spiritual practices."[25] GreenFaith also offers resources about stewardship of the earth relating to issues of consumption of goods, materials, and resources as well as being devoted to fighting "environmental injustice and racism."[26]

Hazon focuses on a myriad of projects and programs that promote sustainability and stewardship in the Jewish community. Hazon strives to "create healthier and more sustainable communities in the Jewish world and beyond" through "transformative experiences, thought-leadership, and capacity-building."[27] Hazon offers transformative experiences, which range from multi-day bike rides to an annual food conference and frequent retreats held at the Isabella Freeman retreat center in Connecticut. They also offer a four day experience for middle schoolers called "Teva" and the Adamah Fellowship, "a three-month leadership training program for Jewish young adults in their twenties that integrates organic farming, sustainable living, Jewish learning, community building and contemplative spiritual practice."[28] Thought-leadership initiatives include the Jewish Food Education Network, or JFEN, which provides resources and educational materials about food and Jewish tradition, as well as the blog "The Jew and the Carrot" which highlights important conversations about "what is kosher" and fit for Jews to eat.[29] Capacity building initiatives such as organizational support, networks, mini-grants, and fiscal scholarships "strengthen organizations, create and develop networks and hubs, and foster leadership development."[30] Hazon utilizes these transformative experiences to engage Jews in Jewish

tradition while exploring important modern issues like environmentalism and understanding where food comes from.

While Hazon offers the Adamah Fellowship on a "typical farm" and other living and learning retreat centers such Pearlstone Center in Maryland offer similar programs, the Berkely, CA organization and offshoot of the Adamah Fellowship Urban Adamah strives to bring farming and sustainability education to an urban setting. Through a variety of programs such as holiday celebrations, youth programs, retreats, camps, and the fellowship similar to Adamah, Urban Adamah uses Jewish texts as grounding to "build a more loving, just, and sustainable world."[31]

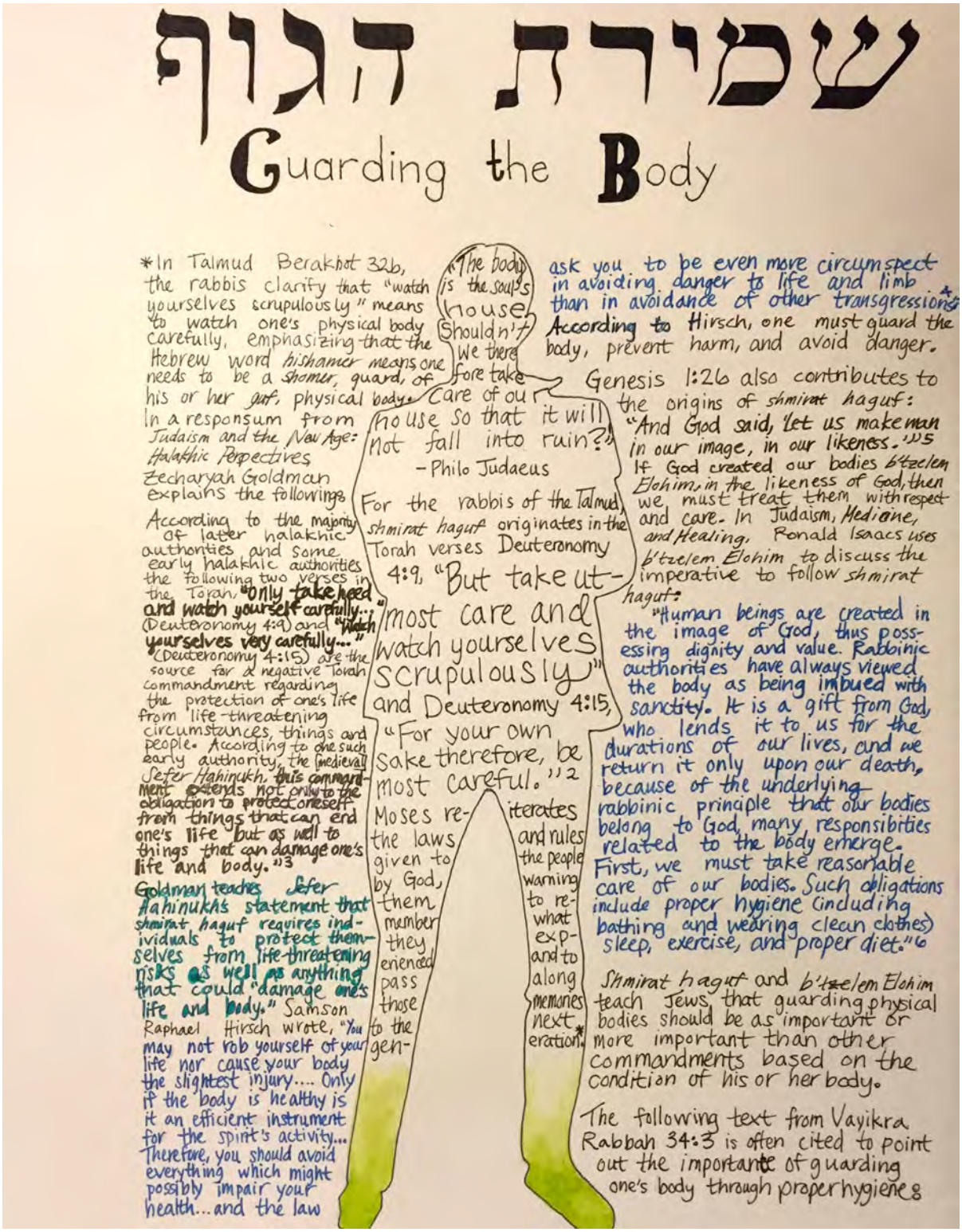
All of these organizations use Judaism as a framework for teaching stewardship and *shmirat ha'adamah*. When visiting the Pearlstone Center, I had the opportunity to sit in on a daily teaching with an alternative spring break trip of college students. Using a drum, a chant, and a few ancient Jewish texts, the group leaders led a song followed by a discussion of *shmirat ha'adamah*. The students engaged in the conversation and talked about what it felt like to have their hands in the dirt and be a part of the farming process. One of the group leaders shared with me that the immersive component of working and living on the farm was so drastically different from what most of the students

experience growing up that many leave claiming the one to two weeks on the farm as one of the most impactful experiences of his or her life. Finding ways to connect urban-dwelling Jews with the land and the physical earth remains one vital component of these immersive experiences. Pearlstone Center's educators have developed a full curriculum used with the Fellowship participants and alternative break participants which utilizes many of the Jewish texts discussed in the section above to illustrate our obligation to protecting creation.[32]

Synagogues in America are also responding to the environmental crisis in new and innovative ways. During rebuilding projects, synagogues have chosen to "go green" and some apply to be Leadership in Environmental and Energy Design certified. LEED certification may be obtained by organizations submitting information to the U.S. Green Building Council.[33] Buildings earn points and levels of certification based on the amount of green components used in construction and design.[34] One Chicago synagogue began construction on a new building in 2008 and after much careful consideration, decided to have the new building LEED certified. Amy Spiro writes about the process: "When the need for a new building first arose in 2000, 'we studied what our values are [concerning] environmentalism and the earth,' said Carole Caplan, a past president of JRC, 'and we were able to begin to decide how to put that into action.' And

while the board 'wrestled' with the decision and the costs, ultimately it 'did vote unanimously to build as green as feasible.'"[35] Jewish texts, values, and traditions inform the decisions of these congregants and help them make decisions about the physical space for their spiritual home.

In GOD's hands
are the depths of the earth


שמירת הגוף
Guarding the Body
*In Talmud Berakhot 32b, the rabbis clarify that "watch yourselves scrupulously" means to watch one's physical body carefully, emphasizing that the Hebrew word hishamer means one needs to be a shomer, guard, of his or her guf, physical body.
In a responsum from Judaism and the New Age: Halakhic Perspectives Zecharyah Goldman explains the following:
According to the majority of later halakhic authorities and some early halakhic authorities the following two verses in the Torah, "only take heed and watch yourself carefully..." (Deuteronomy 4:9) and "watch yourselves very carefully..." (Deuteronomy 4:15) are the source for a negative Torah commandment regarding the protection of one's life from life-threatening circumstances, things and people. According to one such early authority, the (medieval) Sefer Hahinukh, this commandment extends not only to the obligation to protect oneself from things that can end one's life but as well to things that can damage one's life and body."3
Goldman teaches Sefer Hahinukh's statement that shmirat haguf requires individuals to protect themselves from life-threatening risks as well as anything that could "damage one's life and body." Samson Raphael Hirsch wrote, "You may not rob yourself of your life nor cause your body the slightest injury.... Only if the body is healthy is it an efficient instrument for the spirit's activity... Therefore, you should avoid everything which might possibly impair your health... and the law
"The body is the soul's house. Shouldn't we therefore take care of our house so that it will not fall into ruin?"
- Philo Judaeus
For the rabbis of the Talmud, shmirat haguf originates in the Torah verses Deuteronomy 4:9, "But take ut-most care and watch yourselves scrupulously" and Deuteronomy 4:15, "For your own sake therefore, be most careful."2
Moses re-iterates the laws given to them by God, and rules the people to re-member what they exp-erienced and to pass along those memories to the next gen-eration.*
ask you to be even more circumspect in avoiding danger to life and limb than in avoidance of other transgressions."4
According to Hirsch, one must guard the body, prevent harm, and avoid danger.
Genesis 1:26 also contributes to the origins of shmirat haguf:
"And God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.'"5
If God created our bodies b'tzelem Elohim, in the likeness of God, then we must treat them with respect and care. In Judaism, Medicine, and Healing, Ronald Isaacs uses b'tzelem Elohim to discuss the imperative to follow shmirat haguf:
"Human beings are created in the image of God, thus possessing dignity and value. Rabbinic authorities have always viewed the body as being imbued with sanctity. It is a gift from God, who lends it to us for the durations of our lives, and we return it only upon our death, because of the underlying rabbinic principle that our bodies belong to God, many responsibilities related to the body emerge. First, we must take reasonable care of our bodies. Such obligations include proper hygiene (including bathing and wearing clean clothes) sleep, exercise, and proper diet."6
Shmirat haguf and b'tzelem Elohim teach Jews that guarding physical bodies should be as important or more important than other commandments based on the condition of his or her body.
The following text from Vayikra Rabbah 34:3 is often cited to point out the importance of guarding one's body through proper hygiene &

> Once when the sage Hillel had finished a lesson with his pupils, he proceeded to walk along with them. "Master," they asked, "where are you going?" "To perform a mitzvah," he answered. "Which duty is that?" "To bathe in the bathhouse." "Is that a religious duty?" they asked. "Yes! Somebody, appointed to scour and wash the statues of the king that stand in the theaters and circuses, is paid for the work, and is even associated with the nobility," he answered. "Since that is so, how much more should I, who am created in the image and likeness of God, scour and wash myself? As it is written, 'In the image of God did God make humankind.' " (Genesis 9:6)[7]

Hillel uses Genesis 9:6, another iteration of *b'tzelem Elohim*, to highlight the importance of care for the physical body. Though proper hygiene and bathing practices are not directly connected to obesity and overeating, this source highlights an important aspect of *shmirat haguf*: it is not enough to protect one's body from current life-threatening harm but one must perform preventative care. Isaacs points out, "In addition, we are obligated to avoid endangering our health. That is why Jewish law, for example, forbids a sick person from fasting on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. Such a fast might cause further injury to a sick person. In addition, it is the duty of a physician to heal the sick, and it is the duty of

human being to seek out professional medical attention when needed."[8] Jews must practice preventative care whenever possible.

Besides the broad instruction to prevent harm and take care of the body, the Talmud covers a variety of topics related to consuming appropriate food. B. Gittin 70a teaches that "a properly balanced diet, avoidance of overeating, and attention to the calls of nature on time prevent intestinal trouble."[9] Though the scientific accuracy is uncertain, B. Shabbat 33a purports that "more people die from overeating than from hunger."[10] B. Gittin 62b intones, "Meal regulation is important to one's health; eat when hungry and drink when thirsty."[11] The rabbis express an interesting viewpoint in Baba Batra 107b when they claim that "breakfast is the most important meal of the day."[12] Their reasons may sound quite different from those one may find in modern diet books such as that breakfast "makes one's words listened to and retained by one's listeners...makes one have have affection for one's wife and not lust after a strange woman," and even that breakfast "removes jealousy and substitutes love," but the main message is the same: our bodies need fuel throughout the day, beginning with breakfast.[13]

In *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchot De'ot*, chapter 4, Maimonides, a major proponent for healthy living, insists one must exercise in addition to eating healthy foods and listening to doctors: "Anyone who sits around idle and

takes no exercise will be subject to physical discomforts and failing strength, even though one eats wholesome food and takes care of oneself in accordance with medical advice."[14] Maimonides also teaches that "strenuous exercise should be taken every day in the morning until the body begins to get warm. Then one should rest a little until one is refreshed, and eat. If one takes a warm bath after exercise, so much the better."[15] Maimonides insisted that one may only have a healthy soul and mind when accompanied by a healthy body. In *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchot Deot*, Maimonides writes, "A person should see to it that the body is kept healthy and strong in order that they may be upright to know God. For it is impossible to understand and comprehend wisdom when one is hungry and ailing or if one's limbs ache."[16] Maimonides continues to explain that during all times of this Jew's life, he or she will be serving God because his or her "purpose in all that he does will be to satisfy his needs so as to have a sound body with which to serve God."[17] Maimonides claims that even while this person sleeps and rests he is serving God by practicing preventative care so he or she will not fall ill or become incapacitated.

Hippocrates' writings heavily influenced Maimonides. In his work *Preservation of Youth*, Maimonides purports, "Exercise removes the harm caused by bad habits which most people have. And no movement is as beneficial, according to the physicians, as body movement and exercise."[18]

Maimonides further stresses the importance of heeding Hippocrates' advice, "The preservation of health is the abstaining from oversatiation and from the breakdown due to fatigue."[19] Like other physicians, Maimonides espouses the importance of moderation in food intake and exercise. He stresses the importance of exercising but not exercising so much that one fatigues his or her body.

Theologian and ethicist Elliot Dorff considers the imperative to treat the physical body with care and respect to be of the highest importance. Dorff writes, "For Judaism, God owns everything, including our bodies. God lends our bodies to us for the duration of our lives, and we return them to God when we die. Consequently, neither men nor women have the right to govern their bodies as they will; since God created our bodies and owns them, God can and does assert the right to restrict how we use our bodies according to the rules articulated in Jewish law."[20] Dorff argues not only that the physical body belongs to God but that people must heed the rules set forth that restrict the use of bodies. Dorff continues, "One set of these rules requires us to take reasonable care of our bodies." [21] What does Dorff say "reasonable care" entails? Dorff posits that each person must treat his or her physical body with the same respect he or she would treat a rented apartment.[22] Dorff insists that "rules of good hygiene, sleep, exercise, and diet are not just

words to the wise designed for our comfort and longevity but rather commanded acts that we owe God."[23]

Modern Commentary on *Shmirat Haguf*

Perhaps partly due to the fact that one out of three American adults are considered obese and childhood obesity is considered an epidemic,[24] Jewish authors are beginning to write more about healthy living. In 2011, CCAR Press published *The Sacred Table: Creating a Jewish Food Ethic,* edited by Mary Zamore, which brings together essays from a variety of Reform Jews who consider questions about creating an ethical *kashrut* practice. Other sections focus on *shmirat haguf* and how Reform Jews and Reform Jewish institutions can enact values of treating our bodies with respect through healthy living. Mary Zamore begins the chapter about *Shmirat Haguf* by explicitly stating: "Ignoring the call for a new approach to eating, the majority of our Jewish institutions are still functioning in a vacuum where healthy food is concerned."[25] Zamore frames this chapter as a foundation for discussion in which "Reform Jews can combine their interest in contemporary health issues with the inspiration of our ancient Jewish texts."[26]

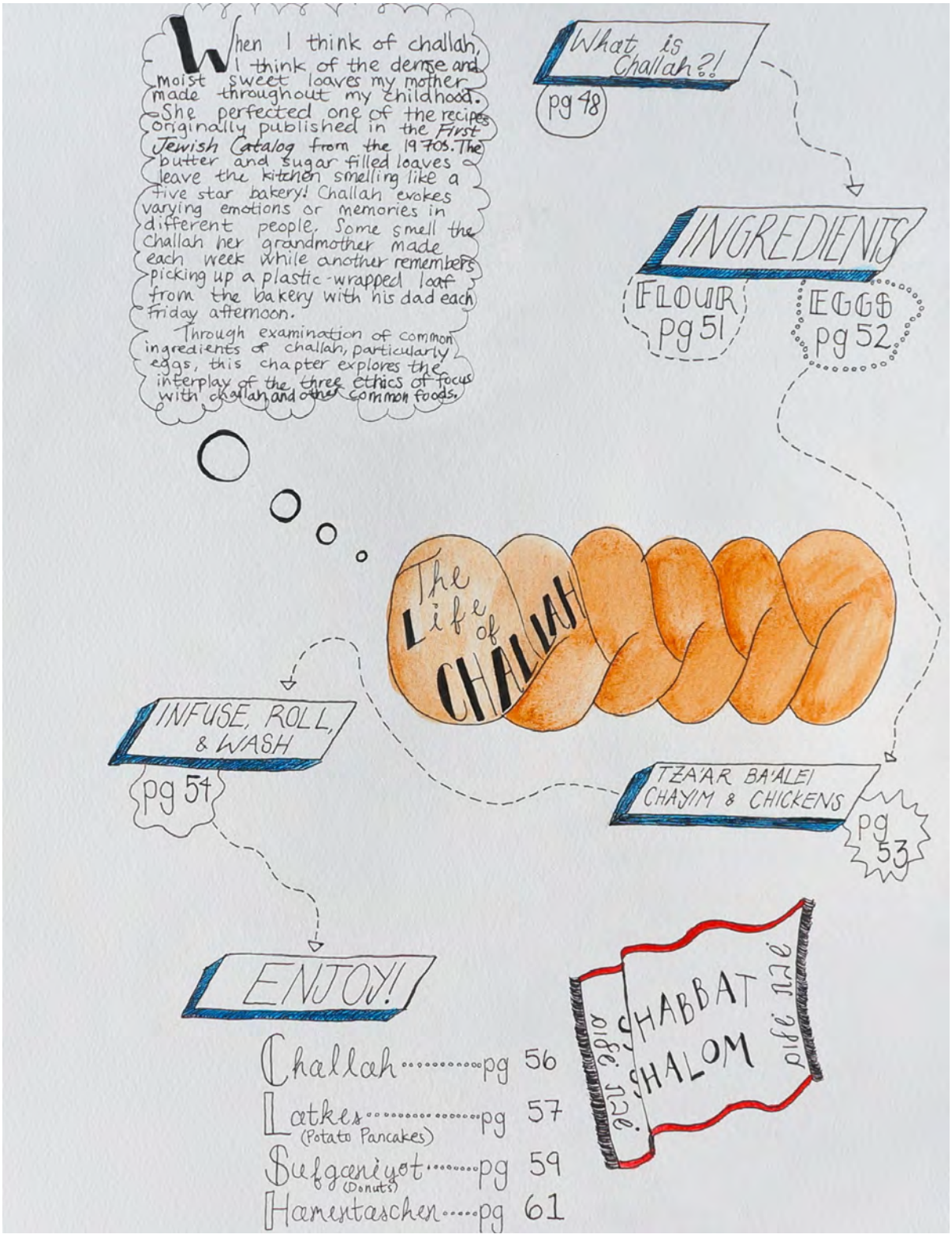
William Cutter's chapter "Palates, Pilates, Politics: A Prophetic Vision for Eating" focuses on how food affects long-term health. Interestingly, he bases his arguments on the principle found in Proverbs 2:20 to do what

is "straight and good," noting that "rabbinic respect for the body can serve only as the most general inspiration and cannot guide us toward specific behaviors. Overriding principles serve as better starting points in the discussion than as conclusions about normative behavior."[27] He uses a variety of principles based in Jewish texts and tradition to call for more attention to health, including *tikkun olam, b'tzelem Elohim, kavanah,* and *shmirat haguf*. Cutter points out that "Culinary restraint, moderation, mindfulness about what we eat, and concern with how others eat and provide our food can become Jewish values, if we choose to make them so. The text can invite us to deliberate but so far, it seems, have directed us only so far."[28] While telling his own story about struggling with healthy eating, Cutter notes an important confusion which arises when one attempts to change bad eating habits: options, opinions, and diets abound. How does one choose the "correct" lifestyle for healthy living? In a time when diet books have their own section in book stores, turning towards healthier eating and exercise can be overwhelming. How does one find inspiration to stay on the healthy path? As Cutter notes in a fairly tongue-in-cheek way, "And where - even in Maimonides - will I find the inspiration to take care of my body any more convincingly than from the admonitions of a good-looking personal trainer named Rick or Stacy?"[29]

Jewish organizations, groups, clergy, and individuals also attempt to spread the message of *shmirat haguf*. The blog *The Jew and the Carrot* which operates from *The Jewish Forward* houses articles about healthy living, cooking, and lifestyle through a Jewish lens. The *Shamayim v'Aretz* Institute publishes online resources for eating a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle, and while the Institute's main message is that going vegetarian or vegan helps keep animals from suffering, it also contends that these lifestyles are healthier choices. Bibliyoga.com is a Website where Jews can visit and read "Kosher Sutras," Marcus Freed's blog about *shmirat haguf* and healthy living through a Jewish lens. The Jewish Yoga Network also has a Website where Jews can read articles and find other Jews interested in exploring "their roots in yoga, meditation and Jewish wisdom."[30] The group "Running Rabbis" maintains a Facebook page and consists of rabbis and rabbinical students interested in raising money for *tzedakah* and completing endurance activities such as marathons. Jewish clergy are taking up the charge to preach about *shmirat haguf*. In November 2014, *Times of Israel* published an article about three clergy members in various movements who openly preach and share stories about personal struggles with obesity and weight loss. Pesach Sommer, Jessica Hutchings, and Nat Ezray all share their journey from the *bimah* and try to teach about taking care of their bodies. Hutchings shares the following with her

congregants, "I knew I was remodeling my 'Temple' in order to create a better one, a stronger one, one that could easily birth a child and live 120 years (OK, maybe not 120, but let's hope!) I had faith in myself that the difficulty I was subjecting myself to would be more than 100 percent worth it."[31]

Synagogues and Jewish organizations could take cues from churches and mimic the burgeoning movement of group weight loss and healthy living programs. There is a movement in White Protestant churches toward helping members find healthy living plans and providing workout buddies, gym equipment, group meetings, and prayer and study sessions. With a motto like "faith, friends, food, and fitness," some Christian clergy lead their congregants to lower body mass indices by focusing on the idea that God requests that they "manage our bodies."[32] Some such programs focus on prayer as an integral component while others use a pre-formed community to help parishioners shed pounds. Perhaps this community weight loss model could help Jews who struggle with weight but they beg the question whether synagogues and other Jewish organizations are responsible for helping or inciting change of unhealthy lifestyle choices.


When I think of challah, I think of the dense and moist sweet loaves my mother made throughout my childhood. She perfected one of the recipes originally published in the First Jewish Catalog from the 1970s. The butter and sugar filled loaves leave the kitchen smelling like a five star bakery! Challah evokes varying emotions or memories in different people. Some smell the challah her grandmother made each week while another remembers picking up a plastic-wrapped loaf from the bakery with his dad each Friday afternoon.
Through examination of common ingredients of challah, particularly eggs, this chapter explores the interplay of the three ethics of focus with challah and other common foods.
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What is Challah?

Biblical Origins

The biblical origin of offering bread is clear. God commands the Israelites to set bread aside as a gift to God in both Numbers and Exodus:

> "And on the table you shall set the bread of display, to be before Me always." (Exodus 25:30)
>
> "Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: When you enter the land to which I am taking you and eat of the bread of the land, you shall set some aside as a gift to the Lord: at the first yield of your baking, you shall set aside a loaf as a gift; you shall set it aside as a gift like the gift from the threshing floor. You should make a gift to the Lord from the first yield of your baking, throughout the ages. (Numbers 15:18-21)

The challah referenced in the above quote from Numbers is conceived as a gift, "at the first yield of your baking, you shall set aside a loaf as a gift." In the Torah, *challah*, translated as portion, hearkens back to the times of the Temple when Jews tithed 1/24 of their dough as a gift to the *kohanim* (priests) and today, folklore and proposed symbolic meanings

abound about different shapes or fillings of challah.[1] We will explore more about this idea later in the chapter in Step 4.

History of Challah

Gil Marks explains the history of when the Sabbath and festival bread came to be known as challah, "The usage of the biblical word challah to colloquially refer to the Sabbath bread was first recorded in 1488 in the work *Leket Yosher* by Joseph ben Moses of Austria. He described the Sabbath loaves served by his teacher, Israel Isserlein, who was born in Regensburg, Germany, and forced to relocate to Austria. It is probable that the braided German Holle bread sounded like the biblical challah. . . . In the early medieval period, a custom developed in Babylonia of reciting the benediction of *hamotzi* on the Sabbath and festivals over two loaves of bread (*lechem mishneh*) representing the double portion of manna gathered on Fridays for the Sabbath during the 40 years the Israelites were in the wilderness after leaving Egypt. Some Mizrachim, Kabbalists, and Chasidim use 12 small loaves, representing the number of showbreads. Subsequently, some embellishments to the Sabbath bread became symbolic of manna.

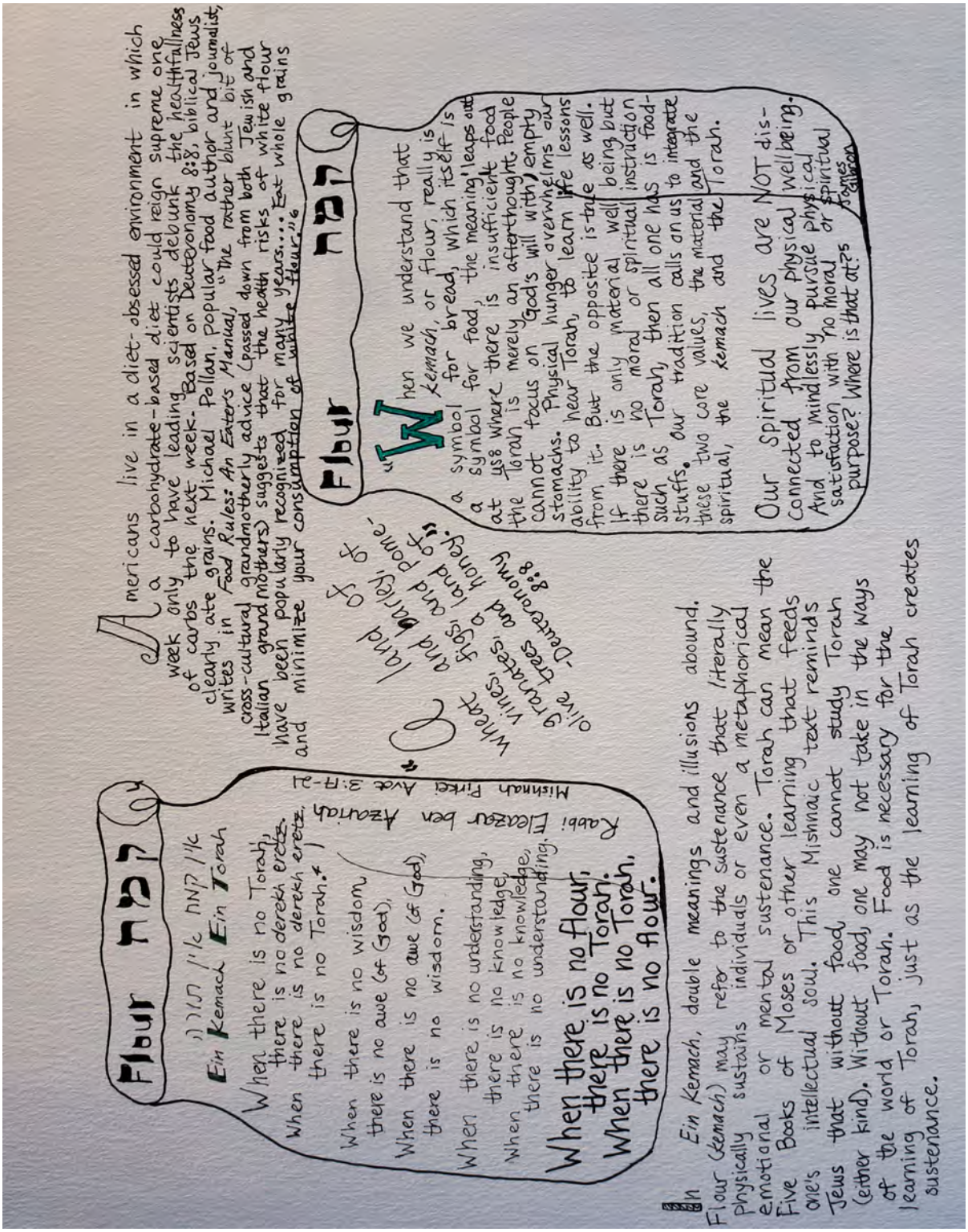
A tradition common to every Jewish community is to place the Sabbath loaves on a cloth or board and cover them with cloth (*dekel* or *mapah*), usually a specially embroidered one, in recognition of the manna,

which was protected by layers of dew. Ashkenazim typically slice the *challot* with a knife, while most Sephardim favor breaking the bread with their hands, as a knife is also an object of violence and war and not allowed on the altar of God. In certain Sephardic communities, especially among Syrians, pieces of the Sabbath bread are tossed to the various diners, reflecting the concept that food actual comes from the Lord, not the host."[2]

Etymological History

"Challah (*challot* plural) is a much-misunderstood biblical term whose meaning has changed greatly over the centuries. Most contemporary American references describe as "a braided egg loaf.'" This notion however, was completely unknown in biblical or even Talmudic times. Even many knowledgeable sources call it "a small portion removed from bread dough to be burned," which was also not the original intent. Nor, as described in various translations, did it mean "round," "rolled," or "cake." Rather, the word challah is derived from the root *chalal* (to pierce/to be hollow), indicating something perforated or poked full of holes, similar to *chalil* (flute), *chalon* (window), and *challal* (a hollow space/hole). Abraham Ibn Ezra noted that challah was "thick" and the commentator Rashi translated challah into Old French as *tourte*, which in his time had also

developed the connotation of thick . . . All of the biblical instances of challah indicate thickness."[3]




"Eggs were rarely mentioned in the Bible and then only in reference to being gathered from the wild. The most common fowl and among the few domesticated species in ancient Israel were turtledoves and their close relative, pigeons, both of which were raised for their flesh and offspring, not for their small eggs. By Talmudic times, chickens were so prominent in Jewish life that beitzah (egg) was used as a Talmudic standard measure of volume. Beitzah is even the name of one of the Talmudic tractates, which deals with the generic laws of the biblical holidays. Eggs from kosher fowl, except those found inside a slaughtered bird (the latter considered meat), are parve and, therefore, particularly versatile in Jewish cooking."[7]
Today, eggs can be found in a variety of Jewish foods including each recipe in this book except for cream cheese! Due to being milk, classified as parve (allowable in both milk or meat dishes), recipes often contain eggs as a binder to hold ingredients together. According to the US Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, in December 2014, on average one dozen eggs cost only $2.21.[8] Eggs contain protein, fat, and vitamins and minerals. Considering that eggs remain an affordable and nutrient-dense food, it makes sense that
305 Million chickens laid in January 2015 to meet ~7.45 billion US demand.[10]
BUT AT WHAT COST?
TZA'AR BA'ALEI CHAYIM
The lives of most egg-laying chickens on American factory farms leave much to be desired. See the following page for a more complete picture of the life of an egg laying chicken.
SHMIRAT HA'ADAMAH
In general, raising animals for eggs, meat, or dairy creates unwanted environmental impact. As Safran Foer explains, "A University of Chicago study recently found that our food choices contribute at least as much as our transportation choices to global warming. More recent and authoritative studies by the United Nations and the Pew Commission show conclusively that globally farmed animals contribute more to climate change than transport."[11] The Environmental Protection Agency suggests that "the environmental impacts resulting from mismanagement of wastes include, among other excess nutrients in water (such as nitrogen and phosphorus), which can contribute to low levels of dissolved oxygen (fish kills) and decomposing organic matter that can contribute to toxic algal blooms.[12] By releasing unwanted chemicals into the air and unwanted nutrients into water supplies, these operations harm the environment.
SHMIRAT HAGUF
Several shmirat haguf issues exist in factory farms which are called by the Environmental Protection Agency Animal Feeding Operation (AFO) or Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO's).[13] The EPA suggests that through mismanagement of waste at an AFO "contamination from runoff or lagoon leakage can degrade water resources, and can contribute to illness by exposing people to wastes and pathogens in their drinking water. Dust and odors can contribute to respiratory problems in workers and nearby residents."[14] In Eating Animals, Safran Foer details the harmful effects of living near an animal production facility: "The fecal mists they are forced to breathe usually do not kill humans but sore throats, headaches, coughing, runny noses, diarrhea, and even psychological illness, including abnormally high levels of tension, depression, anger, and fatigue are common. According to a report by the California State Senate, 'Studies have shown that [animal waste] lagoons emit toxic airborne chemicals that can cause inflammatory, immune, irritation, and neurochemical problems in humans.'"[15]
There seems to exist some confusion in popular nutrition and diet knowledge about the healthfulness or harmfulness of consuming eggs. Recently, the harmful effects of egg consumption on cholesterol levels have been disproved.[16] Luckily, lower impact options exist. You can purchase eggs from smaller farms and those with more environmentally friendly egg production operations. Make sure to speak to someone from the farm to ensure they manage waste efficiently, reduce environmental impact by rotating the locations of chicken coups in order to not overwork the land, and allow chickens full outdoor access with the ability to act as they would in a natural environment. Or since humans do not need eggs to survive, simply cut them down or completely out of your diet.

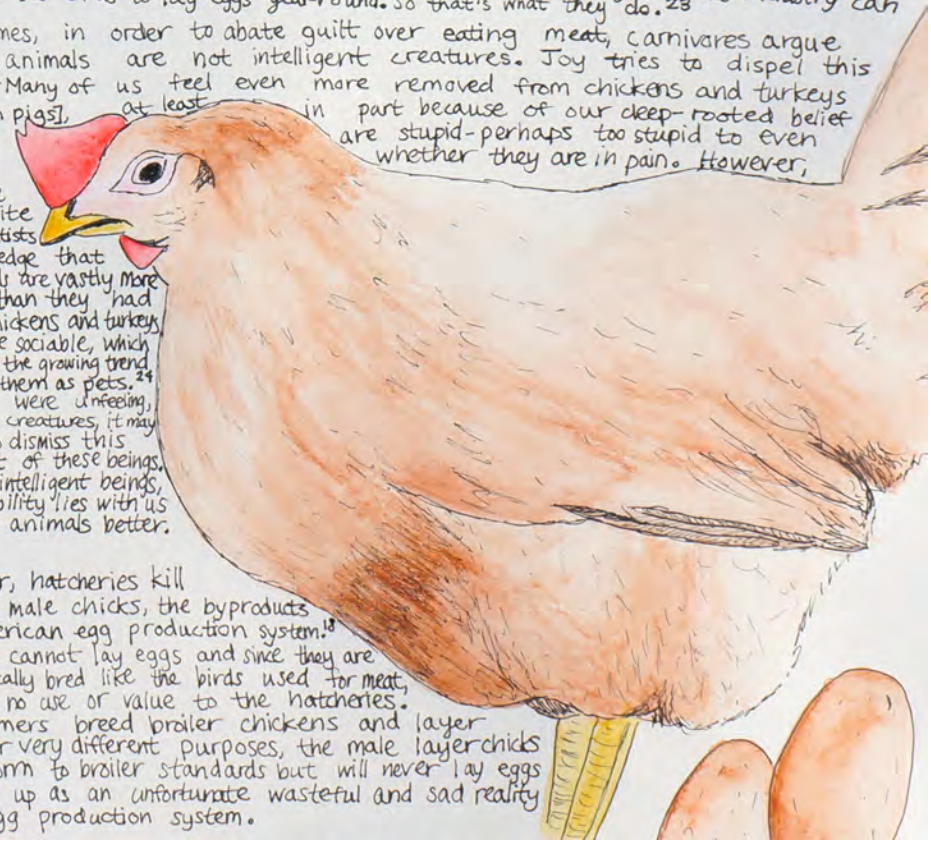
CHICKENS & TZA'AR BA'ALEI CHAYIM

By the 1950s, two types of chickens were developed for American factory farms - one type for eggs (layers) and one type to be bred for meat (broilers).[17]

Hens housed in caged facilities spend their entire lives with about five other hens in a cage called a "battery cage" similar in size to a square filing cabinet.[19] These cages remain one of the most cruel aspects of the egg system. In *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, & Wear Cows*, Melanie Joy explains the typical life of an egg-laying hen, "Hens spend their entire lives in battery cages, where they must eat, sleep, and defecate and where they cannot even open their wings. The bottoms of the cages are made of wire that the birds' droppings can fall through the openings, and their limbs can easily become entangled in the mesh. The wires on the sides and top of the cage scrape off the birds' feathers and cause bruises and some hens neurotically rub their chests against the cage until they are bald and bleeding. Battery cages are considered so cruel that they have already been banned in a number of countries and are being phased out in all twenty-seven nations of the European Union, though they remain widely used in the US."[20] These cages may be stacked eight or nine tall in a windowless shed.[21] Tragically, another common procedure "to prevent the birds from pecking each other to death" requires use of "a hot blade... to cut off the front part of their beaks, without anesthesia, at birth."[22]

In ***Eating Animals***, Safran Foer documents a conversation with a poultry farmer who describes the environment of laying hens, "As soon as females mature... with chickens sixteen to twenty [weeks] - they're put into barns and they lower the light; sometimes it's total darkness twenty-four/seven. And then they put them on a very low-protein diet, almost a starvation diet. That will last about two to three weeks. Then they turn the lights on sixteen hours a day, or twenty with chickens, so she thinks it's spring and they put her on a high-protein feed. She immediately starts laying. They have it down to such a science that they can stop it, start it, and everything... by controlling the light, the feed, and when they eat, the industry can force the birds to lay eggs year-round. So that's what they do."[23]

Sometimes, in order to abate guilt over eating meat, carnivores argue that animals are not intelligent creatures. Joy tries to dispel this myth, "Many of us feel even more removed from chickens and turkeys [than from pigs], at least in part because of our deep-rooted belief that they are stupid - perhaps too stupid to even know whether they are in pain. However, birds are actually quite smart; scientists now acknowledge that these animals are vastly more intelligent than they had realized. Chickens and turkeys are also quite sociable, which may explain the growing trend of keeping them as pets.[24] If chickens were unfeeling, unintelligent creatures, it may be easier to dismiss this mistreatment of these beings. However, as intelligent beings, the responsibility lies with us to treat animals better.



Each year, hatcheries kill millions of male chicks, the byproducts of the American egg production system.[18] These chicks cannot lay eggs and since they are not genetically bred like the birds used for meat, they are of no use or value to the hatcheries. Since farmers breed broiler chickens and layer chickens for very different purposes, the male layer chicks do not conform to broiler standards but will never lay eggs so they end up as an unfortunate wasteful and sad reality of the egg production system.

Infuse, Roll, and Wash

Today in America, one can find challah in both Jewish and non-Jewish bakeries, sometimes with a plethora of interesting ingredients folded into the loaves. One popular bakery in Los Angeles, Got Kosher, makes a variety of vegan pretzel challah. Bread loaves with special ingredients mixed in began to appear in Ashkenazic countries in the 18th century.[25] Gil Marks explains these new varieties of challah, "Round thick white loaves seem to have emerged among Ashkenazim during the late medieval period when some began making breads with milk for the festival of Shavuot. To distinguish them as dairy, these loaves were formed into rounds rather than the Sabbath ovals and braids. Afterwards, cooks began making nondairy rounds for Rosh Hashanah, representing the continuity of the year and life, and other shapes, including spirals (*faiglan*), symbolizing the ascent to heaven; crowns (*keter*), symbolizing divine majesty; and birds (*faigele*), an allusion to the verse in Isaiah, "As hovering birds, so will the Lord of hosts shield Jerusalem." Challah for Rosh Hashanah and Sukkot is traditionally kneaded with raisins or various chopped dried fruits, a symbol of sweetness and the harvest."[26]

Jewish communities roll out challah in various ways for Shabbat and festivals. The origin of the braid design used in most American challah originates from 15th century Germany and was a borrowed tradition from

southern German offering bread twisted to resemble the hair of a Teutonic demon, *Holle*.[27] Gil Marks explains further, "So a braided lean loaf, suggestive of a special occasion, soon became the most popular form of Ashkenazi Sabbath bread. Braiding (*flekhtn* in Yiddish), besides adding an attractive appearance, has a practical usage, keeping bread fresh for slightly longer. Many families developed a unique braid in order to tell their loaves apart from their neighbors' at the bakery or communal oven. Three-strand braids are perhaps the most popular among home bakers, as they are rather easy and uncomplicated. Six-strand braided loaves also became commonplace, two of them together representing the twelve showbreads, as well as being a bit fancier than three - or four-strand braids. Braided loaves sometimes contain two rows of six bumps, a clear allusion to the showbread. There are also challahs with ten or twelve braids in a single loaf.... A coating of egg wash imparted a glossy sheen. By the end of the fifteenth century, challah was commonly sprinkled with seeds, primarily poppy or sesame."[28]

Challah

Egg free, dairy free

Used with permission from David Bookbinder and his wife who run a vegan challah start-up called Twisted by the Bookbinders (facebook.com/twistedbread).

Tips: I used regular vegetable cooking oil which worked fine. I also used non-bleached white King Arthur bread flour but you could also try wheat or another variety. This challah comes out being fluffy and airy. Do not worry about proofing the yeast (letting the yeast sit in warm water before adding it to the rest of the ingredients), my test batches still rose fine and were of the right consistency. Instead of using an egg wash, Amanda from The Challah Blog (thechallahblog.com) recommends brushing maple syrup over the loaves before placing in the oven, which can also help sesame or poppy seeds stick to the top if you wish to add those too!

Dry Ingredients:

6 cups Bread Flour
2/3 cup sugar
1 Tablespoon of yeast
1 Tablespoon of salt

Wet Ingredients:

2 cups of warm water
1/4 cup of oil

Directions:

1. Mix the dry ingredients in a bowl.
2. Push the mixture to the sides of the bowl to make a space in the middle.
3. Pour the wet ingredients into the space.
4. Mix until the dough becomes solid but malleable knead until smooth. Put a few drops of oil in a bowl and put the dough in cover with plastic wrap, and let rise for 1 hour punch down the dough and let it rise for another hour.
5. Braid the dough.
6. Bake at 350 for 30 minutes or until it is lightly browned. If you tap the bottom of the challah and it sounds hollow, it is ready!

"My Mom's Potato Latkes"

Egg free

*Used with permission from **Lisa Dawn Angerame** who lives as a vegan for her family's health, the health and welfare of the animals, and that of the planet. She blogs at* LisasProjectVegan.com.

My mother's potato latkes are the best and she makes them vegan now. This recipe is based on one from her friend Roz, who says that the key is to make them ahead of time, freeze them, and then put them in the oven frozen. They come out great every time and are always the centerpiece of the party! Serve with homemade applesauce.

Tips: Flax seeds are a wonderful egg substitute and provide a similar binding property to real eggs. Ground flax powder is available at Whole Foods or you can purchase whole flax seeds and grind them yourself. These latkes were a big hit with our family also and really do taste better when you cook them ahead of time. This also helps on the day of Chanukah parties: no more getting stuck in the kitchen frying up latkes as guests arrive! You can also a different type of oil for frying. You can buy applesauce at the store or even better, make your own from a recipe like the one provided from The Pioneer Woman. Vegan sour cream can be purchased at Whole Foods or other health food stores.

Ingredients:

6 medium russet potatoes
1 medium onion
2 flax eggs (1 flax egg = 1 tablespoon ground flax powder + 3 tablespoons water)
1/3 cup flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
Safflower oil

Directions:

1. Whip up the flax eggs and set aside.
2. Peel the potatoes and place them and the onions into the food processor. Chop them as fine as possible.
3. Pour into a strainer and press out as much of the water as possible.
4. Mix the rest of the ingredients into the onions and potatoes.

5. Fry up in safflower oil until golden brown on both sides. Drain on paper towels and then freeze.
6. When ready to serve, bake in a 450° oven until hot.

Homemade Applesauce

Recipe posted by The Pioneer Woman (thepioneerwoman.com)

Prep Time: 15 Minutes Cook Time: 25 Minutes Servings: 12

Ingredients:

6 pounds Apples, Peeled, Cored, And Cut Into 8 Slices
1 cup Apple Juice Or Apple Cider
Juice Of 1 Lemon
1/2 cup Brown Sugar, Packed
1 teaspoon Cinnamon, More Or Less To Taste
Optional Ingredients: Nutmeg, Maple Syrup, Allspice, Butter

Directions:

1. Combine all ingredients in a large pot and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, for 25 minutes.
2. Carefully puree in a food processor or blender (don't fill too full; split into two portions if needed) until smooth.
3. Store in the fridge and serve by itself or any place where applesauce is needed!

Vegan Sufganiyot

Egg free, Dairy free

*Used with permission from **the blog "Hell Yeah, It's Vegan!"** Visit their blog for more great recipes at www.hellyeahitsvegan.com!*

Hell Yeah It's Vegan's Notes:
*If you're using a candy thermometer to measure your oil's heat, a little higher than 370 degrees is fine, but you don't want it to dip lower than that or the dough will start to soak up the oil, and you'll end up with greasy doughnuts. Gross! **If you don't have a pastry bag, you can cut off the corner of a non-flimsy ziplock bag (be careful not to cut too much off).

Ingredients:

2 Tbsp active dry yeast
½ c plus 3 Tbsp warm water, separated
¼ c plus 1 teaspoon sugar, separated
1 Tbsp ground flax seeds
2.5 c flour
½ tsp nutmeg
1.5 tsp salt
2 Tbsp pumpkin puree or applesauce
2 Tbsp vegan margarine, softened and broken into pieces
3 c flavorless cooking oil
1 c raspberry jam

Instructions:

1. In a small bowl, stir together yeast, ½ c warm water, and 1 tsp sugar. Set in a warm, draft-free place for 5-10 minutes or until very foamy.
2. In another small bowl, beat together flax and 3 Tbsp warm water. Set aside.
3. In a large bowl, sift together flour, nutmeg and salt.
4. Create a well in flour mixture. Add pumpkin or applesauce, margarine, flax mixture, and yeast mixture.
5. Stir until mixture begins to come together into a ball.
6. Knead dough on a lightly floured surface for 8-10 minutes, or until it's smooth and bounces back when poked gently.
7. Place dough in an oiled bowl and cover with plastic. Place in a warm, draft-free spot for 1 to 1.5 hours, or until doubled.

8. On a lightly floured surface, roll out dough until it's about ½" thick.
9. Using a 2.5-3" floured cookie cutter or glass, cut out circles until no dough remains.
10. Cover circles with a towel and let rise for another 15-20 minutes.
11. In the meantime, heat oil -- in a deep-fryer or deep, heavy-bottomed pot -- to 370 degrees F.*
12. Fry doughnuts in small batches (2-3 at a time), cooking each side for 40 seconds (or until golden).
13. With a slotted spoon, place cooked doughnuts on a paper towel, paper bag, or metal rack to drain any excess oil while they cool.
14. Repeat until all doughnuts have been fried.
15. Fill a pastry bag fitted with a large tip with jam.**
16. Set aside to cool. While still slightly warm, poke the tip of the pastry bag into the side (or bottom) of the doughnut. (If your pastry tip isn't particularly pointy, you can use a sharp knife or a toothpick to make a small opening instead.)
17. Squeezing pastry bag slowly but firmly, fill doughnut with desired amount of jam.
18. Roll filled doughnuts in powdered sugar. If you aren't patient enough to let them cool most of the way, the powdered sugar will melt and make them less picture perfect, but don't worry -- you can just roll them in sugar again once they're fully cooled.
19. Best eaten the day they are made.

Vegan Hamentaschen

Dough recipe from The Post Punk Kitchen Blog (http://www.theppk.com/2013/02/prune-poppyseed-hamantaschen/).

Dough Ingredients:

2/3 cup refined coconut oil
1 cup sugar
1 cup warm plain non-dairy milk (I use almond milk)
1 teaspoon fresh lemon zest
4 teaspoons vanilla
3 ¾ cups all-purpose flour
2 Tablespoons organic cornstarch
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt

Instructions:

1. In a medium mixing bowl, use an electric hand mixer to beat together the coconut oil and sugar. It should be somewhere between creamy and crumbly. Add the milk and beat until smooth and incorporated. Mix in the zest and vanilla.
2. Add 2 cups of the flour, the cornstarch, baking powder and salt. Beat on medium until smooth. Add the rest of the flour about ½ a cup at a time, mixing after each addition, until the dough is still, smooth and not tacky. It will probably start climbing up the beaters. That's okay!
3. Divide dough in two, roll into a ball and flatten a bit into a fat disc, then wrap each in plastic and refrigerate for about 30 minutes. In the meantime, prepare the filling (recipes below).
4. Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper.
5. Sprinkle a clean, dry countertop with a little flour. Take one portion of dough and flatten it out a bit with the palm of your hand, then roll about 1/8 inch thick, sprinkling with flour if the dough seems sticky.
6. Using a 3 inch cookie cutter, create 14 to 16 circles of dough.
7. Fill each cookie with about a teaspoon of filling.
8. Pinch together two sides to form a cone. Then, fold up the bottom, once again pinching the sides to seal.
9. Preheat the oven to 350 F then roll out the other portion of dough and repeat.

10. Bake cookies for 10 minutes, then rotate pans and bake for another 8 minutes or so. The bottoms should be golden brown, tops will not brown that much.
11. Transfer to a cooling racks to cool completely. Store cookies at room temperature in a tightly sealed container.

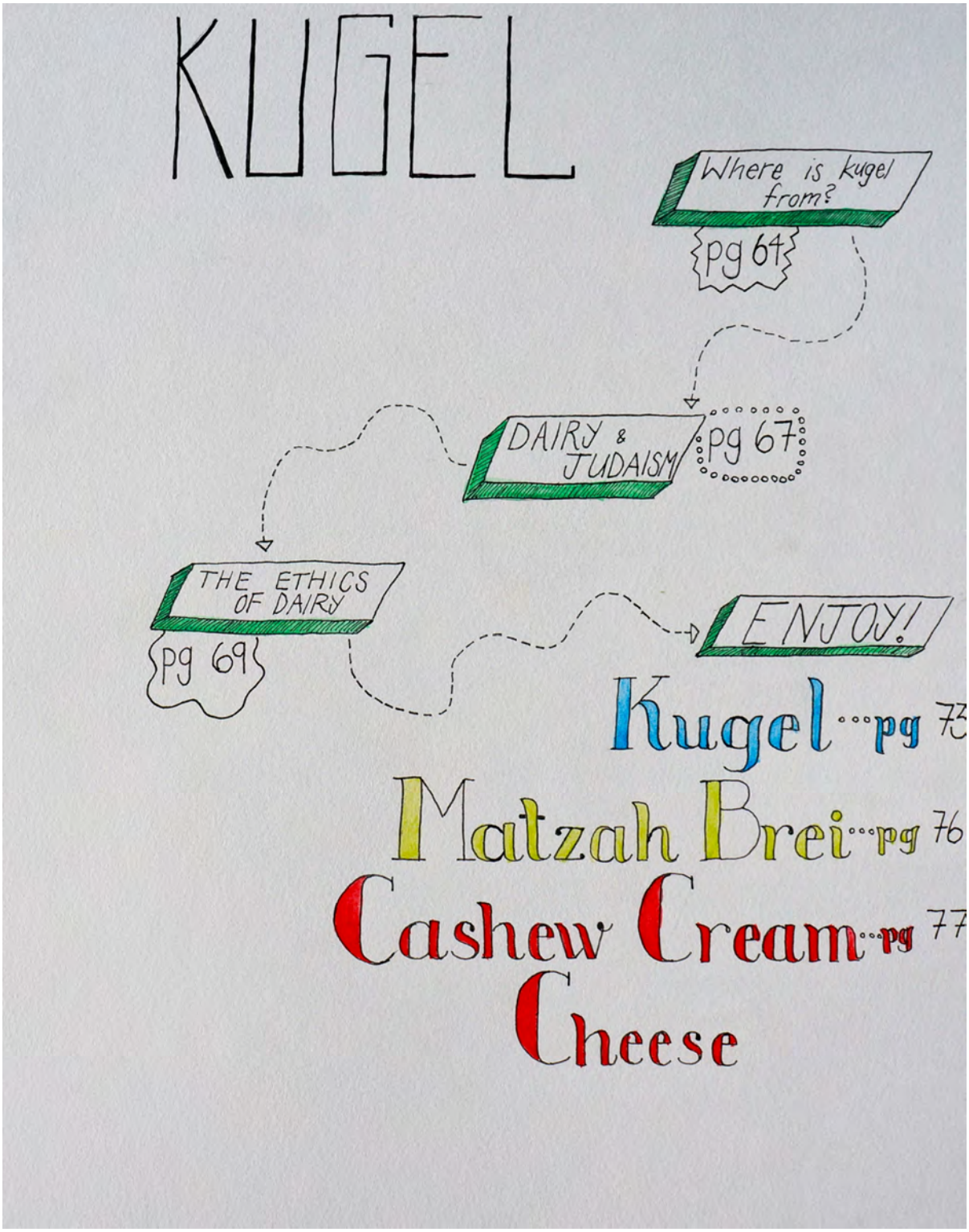
Strawberry Filling for Hamentaschen

Ingredients:

½ lb to 1 lb container of strawberries, cut into fourths
1-3 Tablespoons sugar, depending on taste and ripeness of strawberries
Fresh juice of 1 medium sized lemon

Directions:

1. Cook strawberries in a small pot on low to medium until the juices begin to release.
2. Add in 1 tablespoon of sugar and half of the lemon juice. Cook for about five minutes on low.
3. Mash the strawberries as they continue to cook down. Add more sugar and lemon juice to taste.
4. You can leave the filling chunky or immersion blend for a little smoother finish.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Where is kugel from?

"Kugel, this holy national dish, has done more for the preservation of Judaism than all three issues of this magazine."[2]

The noodle kugel that adorns Jewish tables today evolved greatly over the last eight centuries.[3] According to Marks, noodle kugel developed slowly from a "rudimentary bread dumpling" to the sweet or savory pudding dish found in cookbooks today.[4] Originally, kugel was a basic bread dumpling cooked in cholent, the meat stew for Saturday Shabbat lunch.[5] Over time, as ingredients like sugar, dried fruit, and spices became increasingly available and Jews were more able to bake rather than cook straight over a fire, noodle kugels took on a new life.[6] Marks explains the evolution to the kugel known today: "By the nineteenth century, with the increasing affordability of sugar, sweetened bread, noodle, and rice kugels became increasingly common, particularly among *Galitzianers* (Ukrainian Jews). These kugels, frequently containing raisins and sometimes seasoned with cinnamon, were served as both a side dish and a dessert. In general, Lithuanians and Hungarians retained a preference for savory kugels, although they did also develop a liking for sweet noodle kugel. The sweet versions were served alongside

savory dishes, such as cholent, a pairing that endures. For dairy meals, pot cheese and milk or sour cream were added to noodles, producing a custard-like consistency. Mixing in some inexpensive carrots with a sweetened batter yielded the carrot kugel. Hungarians took the dessert concept even further, laying the sweetened noodles with various fillings, including poppy seeds, jam, and apples."[7]

Though some say kugel tastes heavenly, Hasidic rabbis from the mid-nineteenth century onward literally praised kugel as a holy and sanctified Jewish dish.[8] Food Historian Allan Nadler documents fascinating examples of Hasidic rabbis' serious adorations of the humble noodle dish:

> "The zaddikim proclaim that there are profound matters embedded in the kugel. For this reason they insisted that every Jew must eat the Sabbath kugel. Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Rimanov recalled that once, when he went out for a walk with the holy rabbi of Ropshitz, all that they talked about for three hours were the secrets that lie hidden inside the Sabbath kugel."[9]
>
> "The Seer of Lublin taught that just as one's respective mitzvot and transgressions are weighed in the balance in the process of our final judgment in the heavenly courts, so too they weight all of the kugel that one ate in honor of the Sabbath."[10]

> "Reb Itiskel of Pshevorsk taught that there is a special chamber in the heavens in which the particular reward for eating kugel on the Sabbath is distributed; even on who ate kugel only out of base material motives, because he craved it, would receive his reward."[11]

For one, kugel is such an important symbol of holiness that not eating the dish seems suspect. In contemporary Israel, for "Reb Arele's Hasidim, as they are known…kugel has become a veritable sacrament to the oneness of the God of Israel: 'Kugel is the one special food that all Jews eat, one food in the service of the one God, so that anyone who does not eat kugel on the Sabbath in this country [Israel], should be investigated [for heresy].'"[12] Heresy for not eating kugel!

Some families have multiple kugel recipes present at Jewish events while others may have a favorite that gets passed down from one generation to the next. In her book Cooking Jewish: 532 Great Recipes from the Rabinowitz Family, author Judy Bart Kancigor includes ten noodle kugel recipes cooked by members of her family![13] The once humble bread dumpling kugels has come a long way to being included in many Jews arsenals of go-to recipes and for good reason: the dish is delicious, versatile, easy to prepare and cook, and has affordable ingredients whether savory or sweet.

Ingredients - Dairy

I once had the opportunity to celebrate Shavuot on a kibbutz in the Negev. All dressed in white, we sat down to a festive meal made up of the most amount of dairy products I have ever seen in one place. Milk was the drink of choice but you could choose from regular, strawberry, or chocolate flavors. There were blintzes, cheesecakes, cheeses, kugels and quiches. Sweet, savory, hot, cold, every kind of dairy dish imaginable covered the tables. We had triangular pastries with dairy fillings and yogurt.

According to Louis Jacobs' entry on Shavuot in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, "It is a home custom to eat dairy products on Shavuot because the Torah is compared to milk (Song 4:11) and because the law of the first fruits is placed in juxtaposition to a law concerning milk (Ex. 23:19). In some communities it is customary to eat triangular pancakes stuffed with meat or cheese because the Torah is of three parts (Pentateuch, Prophets, and Hagiographa) and was given to a people of three parts (priests, levites, and Israelites) on the third month through Moses who was the third child of his parents."[14]

Another folkloric custom for eating dairy on Shavuot "connects the tradition of eating dairy with restraint and self control. The Torah is gained by eschewing pleasures and excesses. Meat is the food of those who know no restraint. Ascetics and people who seek self-control usually limit themselves to dairy dishes. Thus eating dairy dishes on Shavuot is a reminder that the Torah is given to the person who lives the sober life rather than that of pleasure."[15]

The Ethics of Dairy

Shmirat Haguf

Like human breast milk, cow's milk and goat's milk are ideal nutrient-rich food for calves and baby goats. However, in their natural form, animal milk products contain a lot of fat and protein and no fiber. Though humans need to ingest fats, proteins, and other nutrients from food, one may live healthily on a vegetarian diet. Various oils and avocados can provide fat and protein can be found in beans, tofu, and even many grains like quinoa. Author and vegetarian activist Richard Schwartz explains that "due to extensive advertising campaigns by the dairy lobby, most people erroneously believe that dairy foods are good for human health. Many that that it is 'nature's perfect food.' However, in addition to the recent medical evidence against dairy products, we can observe how other animals use milk. In its natural environment, no other young animal drinks the milk of another species or drinks milk after it is weaned. Humans are the only species to do both."[16]

Calcium can also be found naturally in vegetables so that should not be a concern for decreasing dairy intake. In fact, in *Eating Animals*, Safran Foer claims that, "Regarding US government recommendations that tend to encourage dairy consumption in the name of preventing osteoporosis,

Nestle notes that in parts of the world were milk is not a staple of the diet, people often have less osteoporosis and fewer bone fractures than Americans do. The highest rates of osteoporosis are seen in countries where people consume the most dairy foods."[17] The jury seems to be out about whether dairy is actually harmful to the body. Studies supporting both sides of the argument can be found even in the scientific community. Refraining from dairy due to lessening the environmental impact and suffering of animals may be more compelling arguments. However, switching to a healthy varied plant-based diet could not be harmful healthwise. Safran Foer states his case, "I talked to several of the leading American nutritionists about this - taking both adults and children as the subjects of my questions - and heard the same thing again and again: vegetarianism is at least as healthy as a diet that includes meat."[18] One convincing reason to at least switch over to certain organic varieties of milk products is that the low levels of antibiotics given to many dairy cows can be passed along in their milk, reducing the effectiveness of antibiotics in humans.[19]

Tza'ar Ba'alei Chayim

Like chickens who produce eggs or who are raised for their flesh, dairy animals in the American food production system live bleak lives. Joy also describes the reality of factory farming dairy cows: "Many cows in

the United States spend their lives in dairy factories, where they are either chained by the neck and confined within tiny stall sin sheds, or live outdoors in overcrowded, fenced-in feedlots. In the feedlots, the cows eat out of a conveyor belt along a fence, and the ground they stand and lie on is concrete, saturated with urine and feces. Dairy cows are injected with genetically engineered growth hormones and are artificially inseminated every year, in order to maximize milk production. In most dairies in the United States, the cows are milked by machines for ten months of the year, which includes the seven-month period during which they are pregnant. This process of continual impregnation and lactation stresses their bodies so much that many cows develop lameness and mastitis, an infection and sometimes massive inflammation of the udder. The cow's system is so overworked that her normal metabolic process may be insufficient to keep up with her physical output, and so her natural, herbivorous diet of grazing pasture is supplemented with grain and high-protein, carnivorous feedstuffs made of meat and bonemeal."[20]

This description just covers the physical stress placed on dairy cows. After giving birth, the calf is taken away almost immediately and many cows spend days or longer bellowing and searching for their missing calf who are raised for veal.[21] Like humans, cows are social creatures who bond with their offspring, sometimes nursing them for up to a year.[22]

After four years of service as a dairy cow, most cows are sent to slaughter.[23] Even giving up meat does not preclude one from contributing to the broken and cruel system.

Shmirat Ha'adamah

Some of the negative effects of factory farms have been previously discusses in the section about shmirat ha'adamah. Dairy factory farms contribute to the gases emitted into the atmosphere which pollute the air; large amounts of waste affect water systems and large amounts of manure can emit noxious gases that enter the air immediately surrounding the farm and cause health issues for neighbors.[24] Dairy farms do nothing good for the environment and cause much harm.

Vegan Lokshen Kugel (Noodle Pudding)

Used with permission from Lisa Dawn Angerame who lives as a vegan for her family's health, the health and welfare of the animals, and that of the planet. She blogs at *lisasprojectvegan.com.*[25]

Servings: 1 large casserole dishTime: 1 hour 30

Notes: As written, this dish comes out sweet and citrusy. The second time I made it, I left out one of the lemons and only used about ½ of the can of crushed pineapple. You could also leave out the crushed pineapple or add in raisins, if you would like. I did not find egg free wide ribbon noodles but we did locate egg noodles that used cage-free eggs, which was better than nothing! Check the kosher aisle of grocery stores or specialty shops to find ribbon noodles without eggs. You can also substitute honey for agave, if you do not mind using honey. If you have the time, you can make your own cashew butter at home. There are many recipes online but they all consist of food processing cashews for 20-25 minutes. See http://thehealthyfoodie.com/cashew-nut-butte/ for an easy recipe.

Ingredients:

16-ounce bag egg free wide ribbon noodles
3 flax eggs (1 flax egg = 1 tablespoon ground flax + 3 tablespoons water)
16-ounce can crushed pineapple, drained
2 teaspoons salt
½ cup vegan cane sugar
1 stick Earth Balance, melted

Tofu cream cheese:

1 package silken tofu
3 ½ Tablespoons raw cashew butter
Juice of 2 lemons
½ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon agave

Cottage-style tofu:

1 package firm tofu
1 Tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
Pinch of salt
½ teaspoon vanilla powder
1 teaspoon agave

Directions:
To make the tofu cream cheese, place the silken tofu in a clean towel, gather the ends up and twist and squeeze as much of the water out as possible. Crumble it into the food processor with the rest of the ingredients and process until smooth. Set aside.
To make the tofu cottage style, press the tofu. When it is drained, crumble it and add in the rest of the ingredients. Mix well and set aside.
Boil the noodles and preheat the oven to 350°.
Make the flax eggs and set aside until they are really creamy.
Melt the Earth Balance. Drain the noodles.
In a big mixing bowl, mix all of the ingredients well. Turn out into a baking dish and bake for 45 minutes to crisp up the noodles on top. Let the kugel cool and then slice. Note: This kugel is even better the next day right out of the refrigerator.

Sweet Noodle Kugel

Used with permission from Lisa Dawn Angerame who lives as a vegan for her family's health, the health and welfare of the animals, and that of the planet. She blogs at *lisasprojectvegan.com.*[26]

Servings: 1 large casserole dishTime: 1 hour 20 minutes

Lisa also has a much simpler, soy-free noodle kugel on her site. This recipe will make one casserole dish worth of kugel but it will be less substantial than the tofu version. If you have less time or have a guest coming who cannot eat soy, this is a great option.

Ingredients:

1 8oz bag of egg free wide ribbon noodles
2 flax eggs (1 flax egg = 1 tbsp ground flax + 3 tbsp water)
2 Tablespoons sunflower oil
1 tbsp fresh lemon juice
1/2 cup vegan cane sugar
1/4 tsp vanilla powder
4 oz crushed pineapple
1/2 cup golden raisins

Directions:

Boil the noodles. Preheat the oven to 350.
Make the flax eggs and let them sit until they are nice and creamy. Mix all the rest of the ingredients in a big bowl.
When the noodles are ready, drain and pour into the mixture. Mix well. Turn out into a baking dish and bake for an hour until the top is nice and crispy. Enjoy!

Fried Matzah (Matzo Brei)

Servings: 2 Time: 10 minutes

Fried matzah is an easy and delicious Passover time breakfast but can be served year round with leftover matzah. Some recipes for fried matzah call for more savory ingredients but I am partial to the sweeter variety. I grew up pouring a little syrup over my fried matzah like one might pour over French toast. My husband's family only sprinkles salt on their dish. Many savory vegan matzo brei recipes can be found online but we have enjoyed this sweet recipe.

Ingredients:

4 sheets of matzah
1 banana
½ teaspoon cinnamon
¼ teaspoon nutmeg
½ cup milk substitute (we use almond milk)
½ teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon coconut, grapeseed, or vegetable oil

Directions:

1. For crunchier matzah, briefly wash the sheets of matzah under cold running water. For softer matzah, break the sheets up into eighths and soak in cold water while you prepare the batter. Set matzah aside.
2. Combine banana, cinnamon, nutmeg, salt, and milk substitute in blender until completely smooth (about 1 minute). Add more milk substitute 1 Tablespoon at a time if mixture looks too thick.
3. Preheat large skillet on low to medium heat.
4. Move batter to a bowl, break matzah up into the batter (some prefer larger pieces, some prefer smaller). For softer matzah, let it soak for a few minutes. For crunchier, place matzah in the batter immediately before placing in the pan.
5. Pour in oil and move around to coat the whole pan. Test a small piece of matzah to see if the pan is ready. Pour in batter and cook until cooked or browned but not burned.
6. Enjoy!

Garlic and Herb Cashew Cream Cheese

Bagels and cream cheese are staples of Jewish brunches, life cycle events, and just about any other type of gathering. Though you can buy vegan cream cheese in most grocery stores, I found that making this cashew cream cheese at home was both less expensive and tasted much fresher. Another option is to smash avocado with a little salt and pepper for a healthy cream cheese alternative.

The benefit to making this recipe from scratch is that you end up with a good amount of fresh nut milk. Nut milks can be found in almost all grocery stores nowadays but making your own milk at home is easy and allows you to see exactly what goes into your food. You can also substitute almonds for cashews but make sure to soak the nuts for the appropriate length of time (30 minutes to overnight for cashews, overnight or longer for almonds) to ensure the proper texture.

This recipe requires making a nut pulp first and then adding extra elements to the cheese for flavor. You can use cheesecloth, which is available at many groceries and online retailers or you can purchase a "nut milk bag" which is similar to cheese close but the mesh is smaller. I bought a nut milk bag for $8. They are reusable and even work to slow brew coffee too! I adapted a recipe found online to better suit my own preferences for flavors so you may need to tweak the amount of coconut cream, olive oil, and lemon juice in the cream cheese recipe. This endeavor is a bit messy but if you enjoy creating recipes from scratch, this one can be quite fun and delicious!

Nut Pulp Recipe

Servings: Varies based on amount of ingredients Time: 10-15 minutes

Blend the following:
1 part nuts
3 parts filtered water

Using your cheesecloth or nut milk bag, thoroughly strain the mixture. Catch all the liquid in a clean bowl (this is your nut milk). Continue straining the mixture until all that is left in the bag or cloth is a crumbly nut pulp. The pulp can have a little moisture to it still but should not be dripping.

Cream Cheese Recipe

Adapted from The Clean Dish blog.[27]

Servings: 1 medium sized Tupperware container Time: 15 minutes

Some nut cheese recipes call for pressing the cheese overnight by leaving it in the nut bag or cheesecloth with heavy plates or bowls on top and then chilling the finished product in the fridge. The cheese becomes a little tangier through this process. Some also use probiotics to help this process.

Ingredients:

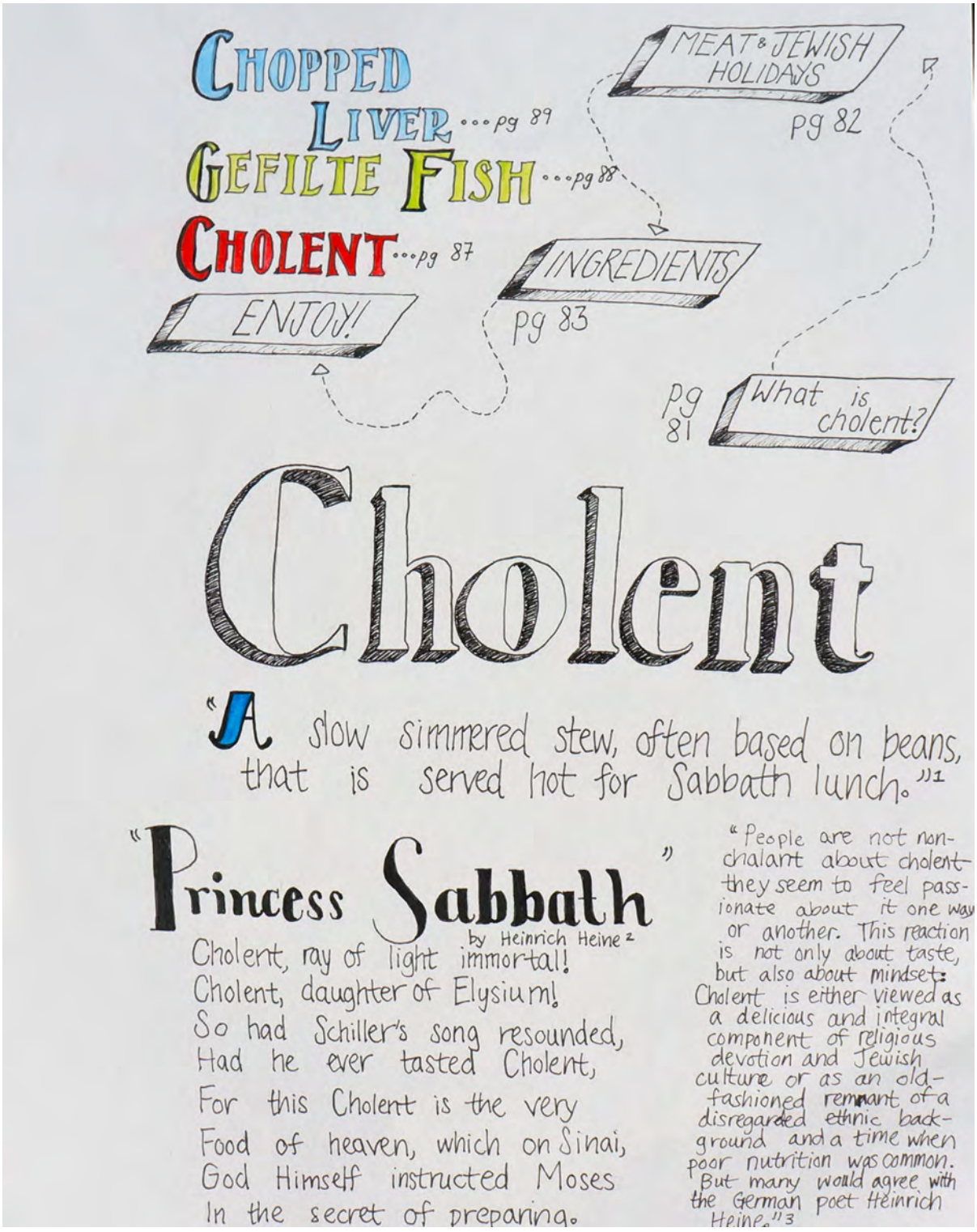
½ cup cashew pulp
1-2 Tablespoons of cashew milk*
3 Tablespoons of thick coconut cream
½ Tablespoon olive oil
2 teaspoons fresh squeezed lemon juice
1 cloves of garlic
1 teaspoon salt
Black Pepper
2-3 Tablespoon chopped chives and/or fresh dill

Directions:

Combine all ingredients except chives in a food processor and process until smooth.
Add chives or dill (or both) before serving.

*If your cashew pulp seems like it need more liquid, you can add 1-2 tablespoons of cashew milk back in to the mixture. If it seems like the right consistency for you, leave it out.


KEEP
CALM
AND
EAT
CHOLENT


CHOPPED LIVER ...pg 89
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ENJOY!
INGREDIENTS pg 83
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pg 81 What is cholent?
Cholent
"A slow simmered stew, often based on beans, that is served hot for Sabbath lunch."1
"Princess Sabbath"
by Heinrich Heine 2
Cholent, ray of light immortal!
Cholent, daughter of Elysium!
So had Schiller's song resounded,
Had he ever tasted Cholent,
For this Cholent is the very
Food of heaven, which on Sinai,
God Himself instructed Moses
In the secret of preparing.
"People are not nonchalant about cholent- they seem to feel passionate about it one way or another. This reaction is not only about taste, but also about mindset: Cholent is either viewed as a delicious and integral component of religious devotion and Jewish culture or as an old-fashioned remnant of a disregarded ethnic background and a time when poor nutrition was common. But many would agree with the German poet Heinrich Heine."3

What is Cholent?

Cholent is a hearty meat and beans stew that one begins cooking on Friday and serves for lunch on Saturday. Since the codification of the Mishnah in the third century C.E., "it was the custom in Jewish homes to eat warm food on the Sabbath in order to enhance one's delight: '...food may be covered [concealed] to retain its heat' (M. Shabbat 2:7)."[4] Gil Marks proposes that cholent originates from France and evolved from the "Sephardic Sabbath stew hamin/adafina, probably traveling by way of Provence" that "eventually reached the Jews of France to become an indelible part of their Sabbath. Certain Medieval French bishops, distressed at the good relations between Christians and Jews in their region, issued a series of edicts forbidding various practices, including eating long-simmered bean stews. From France, the stew moved eastward to southern Germany and later to eastern Europe."[5]

In the 13th century, Isaac ben Moses of Vienna wrote about seeing cholent's early predecessor being cooked in the home of his mentor, where servants would light fires close to the pot or move the simmering stew farther away to adjust the cooking temperature.[6] Since families did not have their own oven, cholent would often be cooked in the town bakery oven overnight.[7] The ingredients of cholent were tweaked by Jews in different countries. Some exchanged chickpeas for rice or spelt and

some used beef, goose, or duck depending on region.[8] The thickness of the final product also varies based on region. Today, slow cookers provide an easy cooking method that can be left alone from Friday to Saturday.[9]

Meat and Jewish Holidays

"Rabbi Judah ben Beteira declared, "During the time that the Temple existed there was no 'rejoicing' other than with meat, as it is said, 'and you shall slaughter peace-offerings and you shall eat there; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God' (Deut. 27:7)."

Pesachim 109a[10]

One could claim that this text gives Jews permission to eat meat because "there is no 'rejoicing' other than with meat." However, the Talmud clearly states "During the time that the Temple existed." Commentators do not seem to reach a consensus of whether Jews are obligated to eat meat on yom tov after the Temple is destroyed. Rambam states that a simcha can happen in a variety of ways, one of which is consumption of meat while Bet Yosef claims that one may just drink wine to fulfill the obligation.[11] Rabbi Yehuda Ben Batheira also states that the obligation only needed to be upheld in the time of the Temple.[12] In Orach Chayim, Magen Avraham states both that there is no obligation to

consume meat post-destruction and then contradicts his earlier statement by saying that one must consume meat![13]

Modern commentators also state that eating vegetarian food on Shabbat does not preclude someone from properly celebrating: "Rabbi Moshe Halevi Steinberg of Kiryat Yam, Israel argues: 'One whose soul rebels against eating living things can without any doubt fulfill the commandment of enhancing the Sabbath and rejoicing on festivals by eating vegetarian foods.... Each person should delight in the Sabbath according to his own sensibility, enjoyment, and outlook.'"[14]

Ingredients

Though some Jews cook vegetarian cholent, most recipes call for some kind of meat. Like egg production and dairy production, the meat industry drastically impacts animal welfare, the environment, and the physical body.

Tza'ar Ba'alei Chayim

"There are probably no creatures that require more the protective Divine word against the presumption of man than the animals, which like man have sensations and insticts, but whose body and powers are nevertheless subservient to man. In relation to them man so easily forgets that injured animal muscle twitches just like human muscle, that

the maltreated nerves of an animal sicken like human nerves, that the animal being is just as sensitive to cuts, blows, and beating as man. Thus man becomes the torturer of the animal soul."[15] Raphael Samson Hirsch

Animals raised on large-scale factory farms live rough lives. Between cramped, dirty conditions and hormone injections to alter growth, animal welfare for factory farmed animals is deplorable. Birds whose flesh is later labeled "cage-free" have approximately 67 inches of space to live in which is even smaller than one piece of 8xll.5 printer paper.[16] Ducks and geese are force fed to produce foie gras which means fat liver.[17] Cows raised for beef spend the first six months of their lives outside but are then transferred into big, crowded buildings where they will remain until being taken to slaughter.[18] Most animals are led to slaughter by being prodded if they show intense fearful emotions.[19] On factory farms, the process of slaughter is grotesque and includes first stunning the animal before hoisting them into the air by their hind legs.[20] Animals are sometimes not rendered unconscious by the stunning process and continue through the slaughter line while being conscious, an especially egregious violation of tza'ar ba'alei chayim.[21]

Shmirat Ha'adamah

"Nearly one third of the land surface of the planet is dedicated to livestock."[22]

"Most simply put, someone who regularly eats factory-farmed animals products cannot call himself an environmentalist without divorcing that word from its meaning."[23]

"According to the UN, the livestock sector is responsible for 18 percent of greenhouse gas emissions, around 40 percent more than the entire transportation sector - cars, trucks, planes, traines, and ships - combined.... The UN summarized the environmental effects of the meat industry in this way: raising animals for food (whether on factory or traditional farms) 'is one of the top two or three most significant contributors to the most serious environmental problems, at every scale from local to global.'"[24]

Shmirat Haguf

Similar to the shmirat haguf concern with ingesting dairy from factory farmed dairy cows, animals raised for meat are often given antibiotics. Ingesting meat of animals given antibiotics may decrease the effectiveness of the medicinal use of those drugs.

Consumption of red meat has also been linked to a variety of serious diseases. The American Institute of Cancer Research (AICR) urges consumers to limit red meat intake to no more than 18 ounces per week and avoid processed meats like sausage, bacon, ham, hot dogs, etc.[25] A recent two-decade long study by researchers at University of Southern

California showed that excessive animal protein consumption during middle age is linked to higher mortality rates form cancer and "low protein intake during middle age followed by moderate to high protein consumption in old adults may optimize healthspan and longevity."[27]

Reducing consumption of all animal protein is not only a great way to lessen overall impact on animals and the environment but also a vital step towards guarding one's health.

Vegan Cholent

Servings: 6-8 Time: 30 minutes hands-on, 3+ cooking

Ingredients:
½ cup red beans
½ cup white beans
½ cup garbanzo beans
2 Tablespoons oil
2 large onions, diced
½ cup barley
2 Tablespoons onion powder or 1 Tablespoon dried minced onion
1 16-oz can of diced tomatoes

Directions:
1. Soak the beans in water overnight. Drain.
2. Heat oil in a skillet. Saute onions for 5-7 minutes, until translucent.
3. In a crockpot, mix onions with beans and barley. Add water to cover. Bring to a boil. Lower heat and cook, covered, for 30 minutes.
4. Add potatoes. Cook, covered, on low heat for 30 more minutes.
5. Stir in onion soup mix and tomatoes. Cook, tightly covered, on low heat for several hours or (if you plan to serve it for Sabbath lunch) overnight.

Gefilte Fish

Recipe from The V Word Blog.[28]
Servings: 4 pieces Time: 1 ½ hours

Ingredients:
1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
½ small onion, chopped
2 small or 1 large celery stalk, chopped
1 large carrot, chopped (save some for garnish)
2 cloves garlic, chopped
1-15 oz. can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
Salt and black pepper to taste
1 tsp. Old Bay seasoning
1 ½ tsp. dulce flakes
1 tsp. kelp flakes
1/8 tsp. cayenne pepper (optional)
Zest and juice of one lemon
Red cabbage, shredded
Prepared horseradish, if desired

Directions:

1. Heat the oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onion, celery, carrots and garlic and let the sweat for about 3-4 minutes. You don't want them to brown or change color. The veggies should just get softer. Add the chickpeas to the skillet and toss with the veggies. Mix in the seasonings. Remove from the heat and let cool.
2. Transfer the chickpeas and veggie mixture to a food processor. Add the lemon zest and juice of half the lemon. Pulse the mixture and then process until smooth. Taste for any seasoning adjustments. Using a measuring cup, scoop 1/3 cup of the mixture and mold it into a gefilte fish shape. The shape is like a small football or a lemon. Lay the molded gefilte "fish" on a small baking sheet or plate. Repeat with the rest of the mixture. Cover the gefilte fishies with plastic wrap, letting the wrap fit around each piece. Refrigerate for at least an hour or until ready to serve.
3. Serve each piece of Gefilte "fish" on a small bed of red cabbage and garnished with a small slice or a few shreds of carrot. Squeeze the remaining half lemon over the "fish" and cabbage. Serve with horseradish, if desired.

Mock Chopped Liver

Version I - Mushroom Base

Adapted by PETA from No Cholesterol Passover Recipes by Debra Wasserman and Charles Stahler and provided by The Vegetarian Resource Group (VRG.org)

Servings: I cup Time: 20 minutes

We made this recipe for a few Shabbat dinner parties and the bowl was empty at the end of each meal! The mushrooms, onion, and walnuts give a nice meaty sort of texture and the flavors blend well to create a delicious appetizer spread. This mock chopped liver does not taste like chopped liver exactly but it is definitely reminiscent of the flavor and satisfying nonetheless! We found both recipes offered here to receive two big thumbs-up from carnivores and herbivores alike.

I/2 lb. mushrooms, chopped
I small onion, chopped
3 Tablespoons oil
I cup chopped walnuts
Salt and pepper, to taste
I Tablespoon water

Directions:

1. Sauté the mushrooms and onion in the oil for 8 minutes.
2. Pour into blender or food processor, adding the walnuts, salt, pepper, and water.
3. Blend until smooth.
4. Serve as a spread for matzah, crackers, or bread, or as a dip with vegetable crudite.

Mocked Chopped Liver

Version 2 - Pecans and Peas

From *Still Fiddling in the Kitchen*, recipe by Bluma Schechter and Carole Sobel.

Servings: 1 small-medium sized *hors doeuvres* bowl Time: 25 minutes

This mock chopped liver has been a staple *hors d'oeuvres* at our Thanksgiving celebration. My husband's Bubbe makes this every year and it is a crowd pleaser! Preparing this version the night before allows for the flavors to blend nicely. The recipe calls for hard boiled eggs but you can substitute flax eggs into the recipe (1 flax egg = 1 tablespoon ground flax + 3 tablespoons water). I would suggest starting with just one flax egg instead of two, you can always add more. The authors also note that to make this recipe low-fat, you can substitute four hard boiled egg whites for the two whole eggs.

Ingredients:

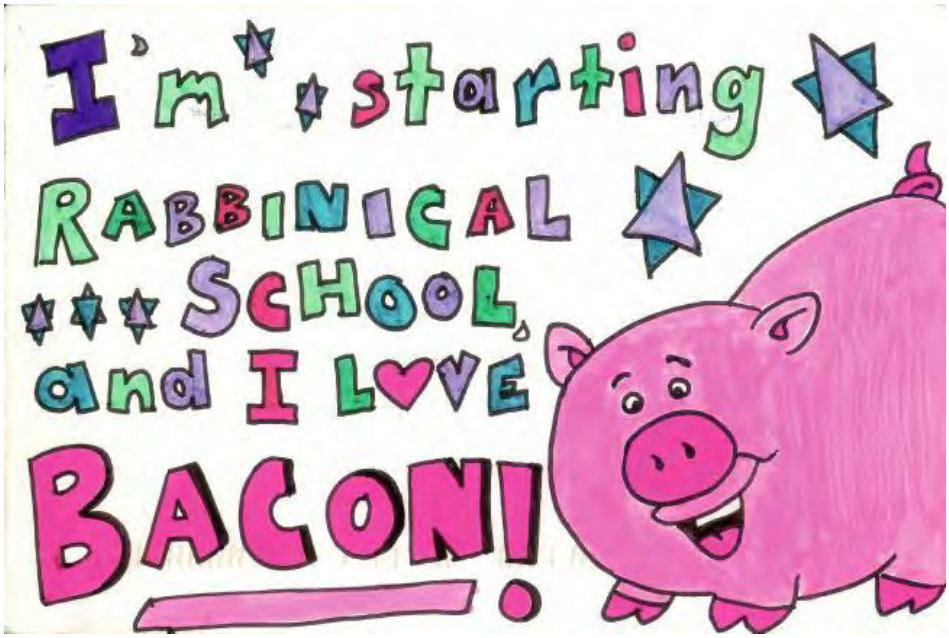
1 15-oz can baby peas, drained
3 medium onions, chopped and sautéed
2 hard boiled eggs, sliced in half
¾ cup ground pecans or walnuts
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

1. Put drained peas, sautéed onions, and hard boiled eggs in food processor and blend together well.
2. Add ground nuts and blend again.
3. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Place in serving bowl and chill.

Conclusion



In 2009, I anonymously sent this postcard to Frank Warren who started a project called "PostSecret" in 2005. The project began when Warren placed blank postcards around his town with only a few simple instructions for people. He wanted people to tell secrets that had never been shared with others. He expected 10 or 20 postcards; he has received over 1 million postscards in the last 10 years. Each Sunday, Frank posts a selection of secrets on his Website. I sent this postcard in when he called for secrets related to "Life, Death and God" for an upcoming compilation of secrets that would become a book. My secret appeared when Warren was talking about the new book and I was shocked. I thought my secret was funny but I never imagined other people would find it amusing, striking, or thought-provoking.

When I began rabbinical school later that summer, I began to understand that even if I thought little of my love for bacon, other Jews, rabbis, or future congregants would analyze or scrutinize my food practices. I received numerous questions about starting rabbinical school or my own Jewish practice in the years after I began HUC. One of the most prevalent and frequently asked questions remains, "Do you keep kosher?" I found this situation peculiar that even as a Reform rabbinical student, others were expecting me to uphold certain food practices because I chose to become a rabbi. I was training to be a leader in the community and I quickly learned that for many Jews, a rabbi or rabbinical student's kashrut practice conveyed symbolic meaning. To some, my eating habits conveyed a sense of Jewish seriousness. As someone drawn to Jewish ritual and particularly Jewish ritual objects, I found food practices weighed on my mind more than before. When I moved to Los Angeles with a kosher-keeping classmate as a roommate, I began to keep kosher-style. I read *The Sacred Table* to help me discern what practices felt meaningful to me. I bought mostly kosher meat since my roommate wanted a kosher kitchen and did not eat treyf or mix milk and meat when I ate out. After two years of keeping kosher-style, I ate a piece of juicy bacon when out to brunch one weekend and thought I would never looked back. I made up my mind that keeping kosher seemed outdated and only

meaningful to me in a way that I was self-conscious of what others may think of a bacon-loving rabbi.

I ate treyf and mixed milk and meat to my heart's content until August 27, 2013. It was the first month of my fourth year of rabbinical school and my sister texted me, "I'm watching this crazy documentary on Netflix, you've got to see it. Our food system is terribly messed up." I hesitated, knowing that I was easily swayed by calls for compassion. I turned on the documentary and sat through 1.5 hours of shocking realizations about our food system and my own food practices. At the end of the documentary, I looked over at our two rescue dogs and just cried. I loved animals and yet I was personally contributing to organized and systematic abuse and inhumane treatment of living beings.

I stopped eating meat. Over the course of the next few months, I read, watched, and listened to anything I could get my hands on about vegetarianism and veganism. I slowly changed my eating practices and food purchases to reflect my values better. Whereas I used to eat meat and buy non-organic produce from any supermarket, I stopped eating meat and began researching organic and local produce. When possible, I shopped at farmers markets and investigated options for CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) boxes. I slowly cut out butter, milk, and cheese from my diet and found a company that sold Certified

Humane eggs (eggs produced by chickens allowed to live like regular chickens). I examined my food practices critically and came to realize that my purchasing and eating habits did not align with my deeply held values and ethics.

By early spring, I transformed my eating practices. Throughout this journey, I felt as though my eyes had been opened to atrocities that I simply could not ignore. I knew about the abuse and horror taking place in most factory farms across the country. Eating meat and consuming dairy meant consciously choosing to take part in a system that I no longer believed in. I became the only vegan in my family and group of friends. I struggled with being different and missing certain foods but ultimately realized that I felt so strongly about not supporting the meat and dairy industries that this lifestyle was less of a choice and simply my new reality that I would stand behind.

Why these ethics?

Focus on the ethics *tza'ar ba'alei chayim* and *shmirat ha'adamah* directly resulted from my research during my first eight months as a new vegetarian. I realized that Jewish texts abound about treating animals, people, and our planet with care and respect. However, American food practices, kosher and otherwise, mostly do not align with these Jewish values. *Shmirat haguf* became an important aspect of this project

as I became aware of the harm we inflict on ourselves by the food choices we make. My instinct told me that Jewish texts would confirm what I suspected: treating our bodies poorly through poor food choices violates the value of *betzelem Elohim*. Rabbi Elliot Dorff once wrote, "American law would permit me to eat a half-gallon of ice cream every night of the week. I might be stupid to do so because I will look and feel terrible and endanger my life, but that is my choice. In Jewish law, though, I do not have that right because I have a legal duty to take care of my body, since it belongs to God."[1]

I first became concerned with *shmirat haguf* when I interned in a synagogue as a Hebrew school teacher. Each Wednesday before class, we offered students two slices of pizza and a bag of chips. Parents prepaid for these "snacks" and I watched as eight, nine, and ten year old students easily ate two this gargantuan snack totalling somewhere near 750 calories. The USDA recommends 9-13 year olds consume between 1600-1800 calories each day.[2] Students were eating an entire large meal worth of calories just a few hours before they would arrive home for dinner. At first, I was so grateful to have snacks also that I thought nothing of the high calorie treats. However, after a few months, I became concerned for my own health and the health of my students. Pizza and chips contain large amounts of fat, sugar, and simple carbohydrates. Why

did we not offer carrots, apples, and other healthy fare? What kind of values were conveyed each time we offered these snacks? I came to see this time of day as a missed opportunity. We could teach about *shmirat haguf* and treating our bodies as though we are created *betzelem Elohim* but instead, we ate pizza and chips.

Before I began research, my gut told me that these three ethics intertwined with Jewish recipes in a variety of ways. However, I was unprepared for the way all three ethics interacted with various foods and recipes. Whereas I thought I could just focus on *tza'ar ba'alei chayim* when talking about challah, I quickly found that the other two ethics were also important when looking at ingredients. When I began to examine the meat system, both kosher and non-kosher, I had not realized just how much the planet is affected by meat raised in America. This process continued throughout my research: my assumptions were pushed and challenged each time I looked deeper into an issue.

Through simple substitutions or creative thinking and cooking, we can pass down less harmful Jewish food traditions. Instead of cooking a big brisket for Passover, families can begin new traditions that impact the environment less. Or, one could cook brisket that can be served as a side dish instead of the main part of the meal. Showcase seasonal foods, like different colored asparagus during Passover, and teach families about

buying local and *shmirat ha'adamah*. Teach about *shmirat haguf* and adorn the holiday table with colorful salads and grain dishes. Serve fresh fruit for dessert instead of calorie-laden pastries. Focus on families gathering and dining together instead of the food consumed together.

The exploration of the three ethics shows that the Torah and Jewish rabbinic literature contain reasons to set the meat aside. However, the real imperative to leading a more vegetarian or vegan lifestyle comes from applying the three ethics to the world in which we live. American factory farms violate all three ethics by treating animals poorly, negatively affecting the environment with gas emissions and toxic waste, and harming humans who consume meat filled with antibiotics. Farm workers endure seeing and contributing to the suffering of animals each day.[3]

By regularly substituting meat, dairy, or eggs, each of us could diminish the suffering of animals and destruction of the planet. Vegan or vegetarian lifestyles may not be viable for every person. However, each of us can examine our personal food practices and ensure that those practices align with our values. What are your core values in life? Do your food practices align with these? Ask yourself these questions and begin examining the food you purchase, prepare and serve. If *tza'ar ba'alei chayim* matters to you, investigate the origin of your meat. Check into

local grocers that carry Certified Humane products.[4] When you do purchase meat, purchase from farmers whom you can ask about the lives of the animals. If you have the means, shop at Whole Foods and select meat with the highest Animal Welfare Standard you can afford.[5] Avoid consuming pesticides and antibiotics through food and purchase only organic fruits, vegetables, and grains. Support local farm-to-table restaurants that focus on organic and fresh produce. It seems simple to say that we care about the treatment of animals and the environment but ultimately, we must put our money where our mouths are.

Jewish texts do suggest a moral imperative to help prevent damage, loss of life, or illness. Leviticus 19:16 teaches that we must "not profit by the blood of our fellow" and Talmud Shabbat 54b insists that "those who have a capacity to eliminate a wrong and do not do so bear the responsibility for its consequences."[6] How can we stand idly by when we hear about a community member's sudden illness or death as a result of unhealthy lifestyle choices and lack of *shmirat haguf*? How can we continue to make choices that negatively affect not just our physical body but also animals, the environment, and other people? After all, Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5 teaches, "If a person saves one life, it is as if he or she saved an entire world." If we can save even one life by seizing

opportunities for healthier and more compassionate living, it will be as if we saved an entire world.

Notes

Introduction

1. Gil Marks, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Food* (Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2010), vi.
2. Isidore Epstein, trans., *Babylonian Talmud* (London: Soncino Press, 1935), 20a. I follow this translation unless otherwise noted.
3. Hoffman, Lawrence A., and David Arnow. *My People's Prassover Haggadah. Traditional Texts, Modern Commentaries.* (Woodstock: Jewish Lights Pub., 2008), 127.
4. Jay A. Anderson, "Scholarship on Contemporary American Fold Foodways," *Ethnologia Europaea 5* (1971), 57. Quoted in Anne R. Kaplan, Marjorie A. Hoover, and Willard B. Moore. ed. Barbara E. Shortridge, *The Taste of American Place: A Reader on Regional and Ethnic Foods* (Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield: 1998), page 122.
5. Marks, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Food*, vi.
6. Both Gil Marks and John Cooper (*Eat and be Satisfied: A Social History of Jewish Food)* extensively document the evolution of and possible origins of Jewish foods. Other contemporary authors such as Tina Wasserman (*Entree to Judaism)* also explore Jewish foods, including their origins and iterations in various Jewish communities around the world.
7. *"Im ein kemach ein Torah,* if there is not flour, there is no Torah." In Mishnah Pirkei Avot 3:21, Rabbi Elezar ben Azariah teaches that without flour (or metaphorically food or sustenance), there is no Torah. My translation.
8. Numerous books, editorials, documentaries, and undercover investigations document the state of American factory farms. Some books that shed light on these conditions include *Eating Animals* by Jonathan Safran Foer, *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows* by Melanie Joy, *The Omnivore's Dilemma* by Michael Pollan. A few documentaries detailing the lives of animals in factory farms include *Food, Inc*. (2009), *Forks Over Knives* (2011), and *The Ghosts in Our Machine* (2013).
9. In 2015, the United Nations released a study detailing the many negative impacts of factory farming, processed food, and other components of the American food system on the environment and people titled "Assessing the Environment Impacts of Consumption and Production." This comprehensive study is one of many released in recent years. Find the study online at: http://www.unep.org/resourcepanel/Portals/24102/PDFs/PriorityProductsAndMaterials_Report.pdf.

10. “About Hazon,” Hazon, accessed February 28, 2014, http://hazon.org/about/overview/.

How to Read this Book

1. My husband, Lane, is one of these Jews. Along with certain family members, Lane believes that meat remains an integral part of certain Jewish holidays and that Passover without gefilte fish is simply unforgivable.

Tza’ar Ba’alei Chayim **– Lessening the Suffering of Animals**

1. Richard Schwartz, *Judaism and Vegetarianism* (New York, NY: Lantern Books, 2001), 15.
2. A more literal translation of *tza’ar ba’alei chayim* could be suffering of animals. Numerous scholars who write about *tza’ar ba’alei chayim* claim that the ethic comes from the Torah even though no specific verse mentions the phrase. For example, contemporary author Richard Schwartz writes about the “biblical mandate” of *tza’ar ba’alei chayim* but does not reference a particular biblical verse (Schwartz, *Judaism and Vegetarianism*, 15.). Schwartz even calls *tza’ar ba’alei chayim* a “Torah-based mandate” to clarify that our sages expounded upon a general principle in the Torah but may not have taken the name directly from a biblical verse (Cf Schwartz, 15 ff).
3. *JPS Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures.* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2008), 120, Exodus 23:5.
4. Bava Metzia 32b
5. Solomon Ganzfried, *Code of Jewish Law* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1961), 84.
6. Moshe ben Maimon, *Guide of the Perplexed.* Quoted in *Judaism and Vegetarianism* by Richard Schwartz, (New York, NY: Lantern Books, 2001), 22.
7. Ganzfried, *Code of Jewish Law*, 84.
8. Deuteronomy 5:12-14 and Exodus 23:12
9. Deuteronomy 25:4
10. Deuteronomy 11:15 states, “I will also provide grass in the fields for your cattle - and thus you shall eat your fill.” (*JPS Tanakh*) Berakhot 40a explains that because God provides food for the animals first and then humans eat their fill, animals must be provided for first.
11. Ganzfried, *Code of Jewish Law*, 2.
12. *JPS Tanakh*, 4 Gen 1:29.
13. Soncino notes the following, “I.e., the herbs, etc. have been given to you and to the beasts of the earth, but the beasts of the earth have not been given to you for food.”

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    In 2000, the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly wrote a *teshuva* about “Shackling and Hoisting.” The “shackle-and-hoist,” according to Adam Frank and Aaron Frank in a letter addressed to the Committee, “is a method of slaughter restraint in which a fully conscious animal is shackled with a chain around its back leg and hoisted into the air. The animal hangs upside down, often for minutes, prior to slaughter. Often, nose tongs are used to pull the head back to allow for the throat to be cut.” The Committee ultimately concluded, “Now that kosher, humane slaughter using upright pens is both possible and widespread, we find shackling and hoisting to be a violation of Jewish laws forbidding cruelty to animals and requiring that we avoid unnecessary dangers to human life. As the CJLS, then, we rule that shackling and hoisting should be stopped.”
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    “Recommended Ritual Slaughter Practices,” Dr. Temple Grandin’s Web Page, accessed March 22, 2015, http://www.grandin.com/ritual/rec.ritual.slaughter.html.
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18. Killing male chicks is a widely known practice in egg production facilities. An undercover investigator from the animal welfare organization Mercy for Animals taped the process of male chicks being sorted and sent into a machine that ground them alive only moments after birth. Other undercover investigations cited in various news stories tell of male chicks being suffocated in garbage bags or other deplorable forms of euthanasia. However, the American Veterinary Medical Association, a supporting organization of the egg production industry, mandates that these unwanted animals be “instantaneously euthanized.” See http://www.avma.org/issues/animal_welfare/euthanasia.pdf for more information about mandated procedures.
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23. Safran Foer, *Eating Animals*, 60.
24. Joy, *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows,* 53.
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16. Schwartz, *Vegetarianism and Judaism*, 141.
17. Safran Foer, *Eating Animals*, 147
18. Safran Foer, *Eating Animals*, 145.
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Conclusion

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6. Leviticus 19:6, *JPS Tanakh*, 185.
   Epstein, *Talmud Shabbat*, 54b.
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