

Name of Session:	Ethical Food Consumption & Judaism
Instructor:	Seth Wax, Cornerstone Faculty 2009
Core Curriculum Pillar:	Giving Camp Life a Jewish ConTEXT
Website Description: (Who, What, Why?)	For many people, the system that embodies our tradition's deep concern for how we relate to the environment and our food –keeping kosher – has been reduced to a bizarre set of rules in which it's difficult to understand how ethics connect with what is sitting on our plate. In this session, we'll explore some of key texts on <i>kashrut</i> (Jewish dietary laws) and connect them with contemporary secular sources about modern food production, consumption and the ethical treatment of animals.
Outcomes: What participants will be able to do at camp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stimulate discussions with campers and staff about Jewish perspectives on ethical consumption. • Share foundational Jewish texts about this topic.
Knowledge to be Acquired:	Basic knowledge of <i>eco-kashrut</i> and classical Jewish texts.
Jewish Texts and/or Contexts:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exodus 23:19 • Leviticus 22:28 • Genesis 2:4b-9, 15-20 • Genesis 9:1-7 • Babylonian Talmud <i>Brachot</i> 35a-35b • Excerpt from Michael Pollan's "Power Steer" • Excerpt from Lewis Hyde, <i>The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property</i>
Materials Needed:	Flipchart and markers
Space Needs:	Preferably outdoors, but not necessary
Maximum Number of Participants:	25
<p>Opening Activity Time: 10 minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to pick one item we ate for breakfast. • On a flipchart and as a group, map out the origin of each component of the food, from energy production to our consumption of it. • Discuss: What does this say about our relationship to our food? How well do we know where it comes from? <p>Step-by-Step Session Description Time: 40 minutes</p> <p>The session will proceed with study of readings related to <i>eco-kashrut</i>, a contemporary Jewish analysis of consumption patterns, based in classical Jewish sources. Participants will divide into three groups, each group learning one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical treatment of animals 	

- Limitations on human consumption
- Blessings and gift offerings

Participants will read the Jewish texts in Hebrew and English and then respond to the questions in their groups. If there is an English passage, they should proceed to that and discuss the questions. **(20 min.)**

After studying their passage, each group will have 7 minutes to teach their text to the group. **(20 min.)**

Planning for Camp

Time: 15 minutes

Facilitator will lead a discussion about how participants can bring an awareness and sensitivity to *eco-kashrut* to their camps. We will also discuss how to use these and other Jewish texts with other staff at camp.

Recommended Follow-Up:
(By Liaison or Faculty)

Check-in with Fellows to see how they are succeeding in bringing awareness of *eco-kashrut* to their camps. Follow up on how useful the texts are or if they have discovered other materials (both Jewish and non-Jewish) that they have used.

Ethical Food Consumption & Judaism: Handout 1

Treatment of Animals

שמות כג:יט

רֵאשִׁית בְּכוֹרֵי אֲדָמָתְךָ תָּבִיא בֵּית ה' אֶלְקֶיךָ לֹא תִבְשֵׁל גְּדֵי בְּחֵלֶב אִמּוֹ.

Leviticus 23:19

The choice first-fruits of your soil you shall bring to the house of the Lord your God. You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

ויקרא כב:כח

וְשׁוֹר אוֹ שֶׁהָ אֶתְּוֹ וְאֶת בְּנוֹ לֹא תִשְׁחָטוּ בְּיוֹם אֶחָד.

Leviticus 22:28

No animal from the herd or from the flock shall be slaughtered on the same day with its young.

Questions:

- What value is demonstrated in not boiling a kid in its mother's milk?
- What value is demonstrated in not slaughtering a parent and child animal on the same day?

Excerpted from "Power Steer," Michael Pollan. *The New York Times Magazine*, March 31, 2002.

I traveled to Poky [Feeders] early in January with the slightly improbable notion of visiting one particular resident: a young black steer that I'd met in the fall on a ranch in Vale, S.D. The steer, in fact, belonged to me. I'd purchased him as an 8-month-old calf from the Blair brothers, Ed and Rich, for \$598. I was paying Poky Feeders \$1.60 a day for his room, board and meds and hoped to sell him at a profit after he was fattened.

...My primary interest in this animal was educational. I wanted to find out how a modern, industrial steak is produced in America these days, from insemination to slaughter. Eating meat, something I have always enjoyed doing, has become problematic in recent years. Though beef consumption spiked upward during the flush 90's, the longer-term trend is down, and many people will tell you they no longer eat the stuff. Inevitably they'll bring up mad-cow disease (and the accompanying revelation that industrial agriculture has transformed these ruminants into carnivores—indeed, into cannibals). They might mention their concerns about E. coli contamination or antibiotics in the feed. Then there are the many environmental problems, like groundwater pollution, associated with "Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations." (The word "farm" no longer applies.) And of course there are questions of animal welfare. How are we treating the animals we eat while they're alive, and then how humanely are we "dispatching" them, to borrow an industry euphemism?

Meat-eating has always been a messy business, shadowed by the shame of killing and, since Upton Sinclair's writing of "The Jungle," by questions about what we're really eating when we eat meat. Forgetting, or willed ignorance, is the preferred strategy of many beef eaters, a strategy abetted by the industry. (What grocery-store item is more silent about its origins than a shrink-wrapped steak?) Yet I recently began to feel that ignorance was no longer tenable. If I was going to continue to eat red meat, then I owed it to myself, as well as to the animals, to take more responsibility for the invisible but crucial transaction between ourselves and the animals we eat. I'd try to own it, in other words.

...Around lunch time, Metzen and I finally arrived at No. 534's pen. My first impression was that my steer had landed himself a decent piece of real estate. The pen is far enough from the feed mill to be fairly quiet, and it has a water view—of what I initially thought was a reservoir, until I noticed the brown scum. The pen itself is surprisingly spacious, slightly bigger than a basketball court, with a concrete feed bunk out front and a freshwater trough in the back. I climbed over the railing and joined the 90 steers, which, en masse, retreated a few steps, then paused.

I had on the same carrot-colored sweater I'd worn to the ranch in South Dakota, hoping to jog my steer's memory. Way off in the back, I spotted him—those three white blazes. As I gingerly stepped toward him, the quietly shuffling mass of black cowhide between us parted, and there No. 534 and I stood, staring dumbly at each other. Glint of recognition? None whatsoever. I told myself not to take it personally. No. 534 had been bred for his marbling, after all, not his intellect. I don't know enough about the emotional life of cows to say with any confidence if No. 534 was miserable, bored or melancholy, but I would not say he looked happy. I noticed that his eyes looked a little bloodshot. Some animals are irritated by the fecal dust that floats in the feedlot air; maybe that explained the sullen gaze with which he fixed me. Unhappy or not, though, No. 534 had clearly been eating well. My animal had put on a couple hundred pounds since we'd last met, and he looked it: thicker across the shoulders and round as a barrel through the middle. He carried himself more like a steer now than a calf, even though he was still less than a year old. Metzen complimented me on his size and conformation. "That's a handsome looking beef you've got there." (Aw, shucks.)

Staring at No. 534, I could picture the white lines of the butcher's chart dissecting his black hide: rump roast, flank steak, standing rib, brisket. One way of looking at No. 534—the industrial way—was as an efficient machine for turning feed corn into beef. Every day between now and his slaughter date in June, No. 534 will convert 32 pounds of feed (25 of them corn) into another three and a half pounds of flesh. Poky is indeed a factory, transforming cheap raw materials into a less-cheap finished product, as fast as bovinely possible.

Yet the factory metaphor obscures as much as it reveals about the creature that stood before me. For this steer was not a machine in a factory but an animal in a web of relationships that link him to certain other animals, plants and microbes, as well as to the earth. And one of those other animals is us. The unnaturally rich diet of corn that has compromised No. 534's health is fattening his flesh in a way that in turn may compromise the health of the humans who will eat him. The antibiotics he's consuming with his corn were at that very moment selecting, in his gut and wherever else in the environment they wind up, for bacteria that could someday infect us and resist the drugs we depend on. We inhabit the same microbial ecosystem as the animals we eat, and whatever happens to it also happens to us.

Questions:

- Pollan highlights the ways in which we distinguish between a cow as a living animal and a cow as food. How does that process happen? Why does it happen?
- How does Pollan's emphasis on how animals are treated connect with the passages from Exodus and Leviticus?

Ethical Food Consumption & Judaism: Handout 2

Limits on Human Consumption

בראשית ב:ז-ט, טו-כ

וַיִּצַר ה' אֱלֹקִים אֶת הָאָדָם עֹפֶר מִן הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה. וַיִּטַּע ה' אֱלֹקִים גֶּן בְּעֵדֶן מִקְדָּם וַיִּשֶׂם שֵׁם אֶת הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר יָצָר. וַיִּצְמַח ה' אֱלֹקִים מִן הָאֲדָמָה כָּל עֵץ נֹחַמֵד לְמִרְאָה וְטוֹב לְמֵאֲכָל וְעֵץ הַחַיִּים בְּתוֹךְ הַגֶּן וְעֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע.

וַיִּקַּח ה' אֱלֹקִים אֶת הָאָדָם וַיְנַחֲהוּ בְּגֵן עֵדֶן לְעִבְדָּהּ וּלְשִׁמְרָהּ. וַיִּצַו ה' אֱלֹהִים עַל הָאָדָם לֵאמֹר מִכָּל עֵץ הַגֶּן אָכַל תֹּאכַל. וּמֵעֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ כִּי בְיוֹם אֲכַלְךָ מִמֶּנּוּ מוֹת תָּמוּת. וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹהִים לֹא טוֹב הָיִיתָ הָאָדָם לְבַדּוֹ אֶעֱשֶׂה לוֹ עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ. וַיִּצַר ה' אֱלֹקִים מִן הָאֲדָמָה כָּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה וְאֵת כָּל עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיְבִיא אֶל הָאָדָם לְרְאוֹת מֶה יִקְרָא לוֹ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא לוֹ הָאָדָם נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה הוּא שְׁמוֹ. וַיִּקְרָא הָאָדָם שְׁמוֹת לְכָל הַבְּהֵמָה וְלְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּלְכָל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה וּלְאָדָם לֹא מָצָא עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ.

Genesis 2:7-9, 15-20

The Lord God formed man from the dust of the earth. He blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being. The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed there the man whom He had formed. And from the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that was pleasing to the sight and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and bad.

The Lord God took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden, to till it and tend it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you are free to eat; but as for the tree of knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat of it; for as soon as you eat of it, you shall die." The Lord God said, "It is not good for man to be alone; I will make a fitting helper for him." And the Lord God formed out of the earth all the wild beasts and all the birds of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that would be its name. And the man gave names to all the cattle and to the birds of the sky and to all the wild beasts; but for the man no fitting helper was found.

בראשית ט:א-ט

וַיְבָרֵךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת נֹחַ וְאֶת בְּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ. וּמוֹרָאֲכֶם וְחַתְכֶם יִהְיֶה עַל כָּל חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ וְעַל כָּל עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר תִּרְמַשׁ הָאֲדָמָה וּבְכֹל דְּגֵי הַיָּם בְּיַדְכֶם נִתְּנוּ. כָּל רֶמֶשׂ אֲשֶׁר הוּא חַי לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָהּ כִּיֹּרֵק עֵשֶׂב נִתַּתִּי לָכֶם אֶת כָּל. אֲךָ בְּשֹׂר בְּנִפְשׁוֹ דָּמוֹ לֹא תֹאכְלוּ. וְאֲךָ אֶת דַּמְכֶם לְנִפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם אֲדַרְשׁ מִיַּד כָּל חַיָּה אֲדַרְשֶׁנוּ וּמִיַּד הָאָדָם מִיַּד אִישׁ אַחִיו אֲדַרְשׁ אֶת נֶפֶשׁ הָאָדָם. שֹׁפֵךְ דַּם הָאָדָם בְּאָדָם דָּמוֹ יִשְׁפֹּךְ כִּי בְצַלְם אֱלֹקִים עָשָׂה אֶת הָאָדָם. וְאַתֶּם פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ שְׂרֹצוּ בָאָרֶץ וּרְבוּ בָהּ.

Genesis 9:1-9

God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, "Be fertile and increase, and fill the earth. The fear and 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. You must not, however, eat flesh with its life-blood in it. But for your own life I will require a reckoning: I will require it of every beast; of every man, too, will I require a reckoning for human life, of every man for that of his fellow man! Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his

blood be shed; for in His image did God make man. Be fertile, then, and increase; abound on the earth and increase on it.

Questions:

- What is the human being's relationship with animals in the garden of Eden? How is it different after the Flood?
- How are human consumption patterns different after the Flood? Why do you think that happened?
- Why does God prohibit humans from eating the blood of animals?
- Does God want us to eat meat? Why is there a limit on what we eat?