

בראשית Chapter 9:1-7

- א** וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים, אֶת-נֹחַ וְאֶת-בָּנָיו; וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ, וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ.
- ב** וּמִוְרָאֲכֶם וּחְתֹכֶם, יִהְיֶה, עַל כָּל-חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ, וְעַל כָּל-עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם; בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר תִּרְמַשׁ הָאָדָמָה וּבְכָל-דָּגֵי הַיָּם, בְּיַדְכֶם נִתְּנוּ.
- ג** כָּל-רֶמֶשׂ אֲשֶׁר הוּא-חַי, לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָה: כְּיֶרֶק עֵשֶׂב, נֹתַתִּי לָכֶם אֶת-כָּל.
- ד** אֲךָ-בָשָׂר, בְּנֶפֶשׁ דָּמוֹ לֹא תֹאכְלוּ.
- ה** וְאֲךָ אֶת-דַּמְכֶם לְנֶפֶשְׁתֵיכֶם אֲדַרֵּשׁ, מִיַּד כָּל-חַיָּה אֲדַרְשֶׁנּוּ; וּמִיַּד הָאָדָם, מִיַּד אִישׁ אֶחָיו--אֲדַרֵּשׁ, אֶת-נֶפֶשׁ הָאָדָם.
- ו** שֹׁפֵךְ דַּם הָאָדָם, בָּאָדָם דָּמוֹ יִשָּׁפֹךְ: כִּי בְצַלְם אֱלֹהִים, עָשָׂה אֶת-הָאָדָם.
- ז** וְאַתֶּם, פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ; שֶׂרְצוּ בָאָרֶץ, וּרְבוּ-בָהּ.
- 1** And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: 'Be fruitful and multiply [be many], and fill the earth.
- 2** And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon all the wildlife of the earth, and upon all the fowl of the heavens, and all that crawl on the soil, and all the fish of the sea - into your hand are they given.
- 3** All things crawling about that live, for you shall they be, for eating, as with the green plants, I now give you all of it.
- 4** however - flesh with its life, its blood, you shall not eat.
- 5** And for your blood, of your own lives, I will demand satisfaction – from all wild animals I will demand it, and from humankind, from every man regarding his brother, will I demand satisfaction for human life.
- 6** Whoever now sheds human blood, for that human shall his [own] blood be shed, for in god's image he made humankind.
- 7** As for you – bear fruit and be many, swarm the earth and become many on it

Leading Idea: Eating animals.

This text parallels strongly elements of the text in Bereshit 1:28-29. Yet there is a striking difference. In the account of creation in Bereshi, God blesses us as have dominion over all of creation, but only the plant kingdom is given to us to eat for food. In this blessing, God not only gives us plants, but also the animal kingdom as food. In this, it marks a human transition from being herbivores to carnivores. Yet there are distinctions and limits here as well – we can eat flesh, but not blood, and we will be held accountable for killing another human being. What does this transition signify? What might it say about our relationship to creation and our nature as human beings? To what extent are we what we eat? Does eating flesh make us more violent or is it a release that leads us to be less violent? If we start thinking that it is acceptable to kill animals will we end up thinking it is acceptable to kill people? Both the Jewish textual tradition and philosophical discourse are animated around these questions, offering us multiple responses to that can inform our inquiry.

Discussion Plan: Deciding what we eat

1. Is there any kind of food that you personally choose not to eat? Why?
2. What makes certain foods attractive to you - such that you want to eat them?
3. What makes certain foods unattractive to you – such that you don't want to eat them?
4. Do you eat the same range of food now as you did 5 years ago?
5. Do you eat the same range of food now as you did when you were a baby?
6. Can people's diets change, even when they are adults? Can you give an example?
7. Do you think that what you eat affects your health?
8. Do you think that what you eat affects your mood?
9. Can you look at what someone eats and draw any conclusion about their values?
10. Do you think that what you eat or don't eat can make you a better person?

Activity:**Interview two people in your family or community about the following:**

1. Is there any kind of food that you personally choose not to eat? Why?
2. Do you think that what you eat affects your health?
3. Do you think that what you eat affects your mood?
4. Can you look at what someone eats and draw any conclusion about their values?
5. Do you think that what you choose to eat or not eat can makes you a better person?
6. Do you eat meat? Do you think this affects the kind of person you are?
7. In the account of creation God blesses us and tells us and gives us all seed bearing plants to eat. In Noah, after the flood he tells he blesses us again, but this time he also allow us to eat meat. Why do you think God changes his blessing? Do you think we should eat meat?

Discussion Plan: Deciding what we *should* eat

1. Do you think parents should decide what food their pre-school child should eat?
2. Do you think your family should decide what you eat now?
3. Are there food you can eat too much of?
4. Are there foods you can eat too little of?
5. Are their kinds of food that it is hard to stop eating once you start?
6. If a species is endangered, should people continue to eat it? (even if it acceptable to eat it)
7. Are there animals you don't think we should eat because it is wrong to kill them?
8. If you raise an animal and look after it – would it be wrong to eat it?
(Would this be the same if you lived on a farm?)
9. In many ways, animals are like people – is that a reason not to kill them?
10. Think of eating an animal's eye – disgusting? Why does this disgust you?
11. To what extent do you think that your culture decides what it is possible for you to eat?
12. To what extent do you think the Torah should guide what you eat and what you don't?
13. Do you think that if we think it is OK to kill animals we are more likely to think it is ok to kill people?
14. Can you love animals and eat meat?

Exercise: What do we eat and why / why not

	I eat this	Someone else in my family eats this	Other people in my culture eat this	In the Torah it says we shouldn't eat it	People from other cultures I know of do eat it	I don't think anyone eats this – but it wouldn't be wrong if they did	No-one should eat this- it is morally wrong
Fish							
Dried Pineapple							
Mushrooms							
Beef							
Golf balls							
Raw eggs							
Lamb							
Animal Hair							
Blood sausage							
Monkeys							
Cats							
Gum							
Pork							
Elephants							
Leftovers							

Strawberries							
Ants							
Human Beings							
A leather shoe							
Dolphins							
Mice							
Paper							
Someone elses half eaten sandwich							
A pen							

To Adam:

כח וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים, וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם
אֱלֹהִים פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ,
וּכְבֹּשְׁהָ; וַיְרֵדוּ בִדְגַת הַיָּם, וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם,
וּבְכָל-חַיָּה, הָרֹמֶשֶׂת עַל-הָאָרֶץ.

כט וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים, הִנֵּה נֹתַתִּי לָכֶם אֶת-
כָּל-עֵשֶׂב זֶרַע זָרַע אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-הָאָרֶץ,
וְאֶת-כָּל-הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ פְּרִי-עֵץ, זֶרַע
זָרַע: לָכֶם יִהְיֶה, לְאֹכֶלָה.

And God blessed them [Adam and Chava], and said to them: 'Be fruitful, and multiply [be many], and fill the earth, and bring it under your control [subdue it]; and have command over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the heavens, and all living things that crawl upon the earth. And God said: 'Here, I give you all plants that bear seeds, that are upon the face of all the earth, and all trees, in which there is fruit of the tree that bears seeds—for you they shall be for eating.

To Noah:

א וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים, אֶת-נֹחַ וְאֶת-בָּנָיו; וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם
פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ, וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ.

ב וּמוֹרָאֲכֶם וְחִתְּכֶם, יִהְיֶה, עַל כָּל-חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ,
וְעַל כָּל-עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם; בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר תִּרְמַשׁ הָאֲדָמָה
וּבְכָל-דְּגֵי הַיָּם, בְּיַדְכֶם נִתְּנוּ.

ג כָּל-רֶמֶשׂ אֲשֶׁר הוּא-חַי, לָכֶם יִהְיֶה
לְאֹכֶלָה: כְּיִרְק עֵשֶׂב, נֹתַתִּי לָכֶם אֶת-כָּל-

ד אֶד-בֶּשֶׂר, בְּנִפְשׁוֹ דָּמוֹ לֹא תֹאכְלוּ.

ה וְאֵד אֶת-דִּמְכֶם לְנִפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם אֲדַרְשׁ, מִיַּד כָּל-
חַיָּה אֲדַרְשְׁנוּ; וּמִיַּד הָאָדָם, מִיַּד אִישׁ אֶחָיו--
אֲדַרְשׁ, אֶת-נֶפֶשׁ הָאָדָם.

And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: 'Be fruitful and multiply [be many], and fill the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon all the wildlife of the earth, and upon all the fowl of the heavens, and all that crawl on the soil, and all the fish of the sea - into your hand are they given. All things crawling about that live, for you shall they be, for eating, as with the green plants, I now give you all of it. However - flesh with its life, its blood, you shall not eat.

בראשית Chapter 9:1-7

Animals and People – Killing Animals and Killing People

להשתמש בבעלי חיים ובעבודתם מותר לכם, להשתלט עליהם כדי שיהיו לעזר לכם בקיומכם אתם רשאים, אבל אין מן הראוי שתזלזלו בכוח החיים שבהם, ושתמיתו אותם כדי לאכול את בשרם; המאכל הראוי לכם יהיה מאכל צמחוני... כנראה כוונת התורה הריהי זו, שמבחינה פרינציפיונית מן הראוי היה לו לאדם להימנע מאכילת הבשר, וכשנתנה לנח ולבניו רשות לאכילתו (ט, ג) לא היתה זו אלא קונצסיה, קשורה בתנאי של איסור הדם. איסור זה פירושו חלוקת כבוד לעקרון החיים, ("כי הדם הוא הנפש") וגם מעין זכר לדבר, שאמנם כל הברואי היו להיות אסור, ויש להזהר מלאכול מקצתו, כדי לזכור את האיסור הסודם.

מ.ד. קסוטו, מאדם עד נח, ע' 30



You are permitted to use the animals and employ them for work, rule over them in order to utilize their services for your survival, but you must not hold their life cheap or kill them for food. Your natural diet is vegetarian... Apparently the Torah was in principle opposed to the eating of meat. When Noah and his descendants were permitted to eat meat this was a concession conditional on the law against eating blood. This law implied respect for the principle of life ("for the blood is the life") and hints that in reality all meat should have been prohibited. This restriction was designed to call to mind the previous total one.

Cassuto: From Adam to Noah, on Genesis 1:27

Umberto Cassuto was also known as **Moshe David Cassuto** (1883–1951)
He was a rabbi and Biblical scholar born in Florence, Italy.

Isaiah 2:4

וְשָׁפַט בֵּין הַגּוֹיִם וְהוֹכִיחַ לְעַמִּים רַבִּים וְכָתְתוּ חַרְבֹתָם לְאַתִּים וְחִנִּיתוּתֵיהֶם לְמִזְמֹרוֹת לֹא-יִשָּׂא גּוֹי אֶל-גּוֹי חֶרֶב וְלֹא-יִלְמְדוּ עוֹד מִלְחָמָה (ישעיהו ב: 4)

Nation shall not lift up sword against nation neither shall they
learn the arts of war any more

לאמור : אחרי המבול הותרו בני נח באכילת בשר, כי אחרי שמלאה הארץ חמס, אחרי ששרר חמס ושוד ורצח ושלטון האדם באדם לרע לו בעולם, לא נדרש האדם למאמץ מוסרי זה של ויתור גמור על הריגת בעלי חיים, כל זמן שעוד דרוש לו המאמץ הזה לבלי הרג איש את רעהו. והרי המשך דבריו :

Since the land had become filled with violence and man had given free rein to his worst instincts, man was no longer required to go without the killing of animals for food. It was far more important that he should, at least, use what moral control he still had to hold back from killing his own kind and respecting the life of his neighbor.

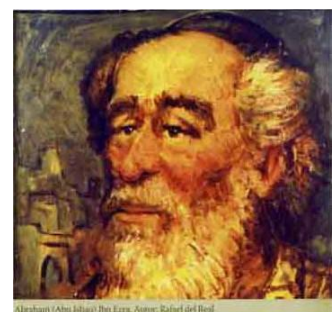
Nehama Leibowitz -1905-1997, was a famous Israeli Bible scholar who developed a particular style of Bible study that was very popular around the world.



Nehama Leibowitz

“ואך את דמכם” : פירושו : התרתי לכם שפוך דם כל חי זולתי דמכם של נפשותיכם שאתם אדם— לא התרתי, רק אדרשנו, כטעם (תהלים ט, יג) : “כי דורש דמים אותם זכר”, וזה כלל. ואחר כן ביאר “מיד האדם”, אם יהרגו רבים את יחיד או יחיד את יחיד אני אדרוש הדם, גם אדרשנו מיד כל חיה, שאצוה לאחרת שתהרגנה, והנה החיות מותרות לכם ולא אתם להן.

I permitted you to shed the blood of every living except your own blood which I did not permit since you are human. I shall require it This is a general rule. Subsequently the text explains its detailed application. "By the hand of man" – if many slay a single person or one individual another, I shall seek out the blood. I shall also seek it out from any beast, by commanding another to slay it. For animals are permitted to you but not you to them.



Ibn Ezra.

Abraham Ibn Ezra. Born in 1089 in Spain. He was a poet, astrologist, scientist, and an expert in Hebrew grammar.

אף בפחותים מן האדם לא היה רשות לאדם להשחיתם, עד שציוה האל לנח, וגם צומח שהוא פחות מן החי היה צריך מצות האל להתירם לאדם ולחיה, כמו שאמר בראשית א' כט): "הנה נתתי לכם את כל עשב". וכן ציוה האל לשפוך דם האדם חטאו, כמו שציוה בתורת משה, וזה בראויים לעונש מיתה לפי חטאם, כל חוטא בראוי לו, לפי שהוא השחית צלמו תחילה בעוברו מצות האל.

Permission was not given to man to destroy even the most inferior of his kind, until the Divine command to Noah. A special command of God was even required to allow Adam and Eve to make use of the plants which are lesser than the animals, as it is stated: (1:29): "behold I have given you all the herbs of the field." Similarly, God commanded the shedding of a man's blood, if his sin warranted it.... as in the Law of Moses, For man is the highest of God's creatures, created in His image and enjoying the gift of intelligence. Other creatures must therefore fear him and one man must not destroy the other, since by doing so man destroys the highest work of God, made in His image, and he goes and destroys it.

Radak

"Radak" is short for "Rabbi David Kimchi" He was born in southern France in the year 1160. He came from a family of famous scholars, which gave rise the famous saying; Where there is no 'kemach' (flour) there is no bread".



Previous

October 7, 2010, 10:05am

Parshat Noah: Pondering the Eating of Meat

By Rachel Kahn-Troster

In this week's *parsha*, as Noah stands outside the ark surveying a post-deluge world, God blesses him and gives him new dietary parameters: "Every creature that lives shall be yours to eat; as with the green grasses, I give you all these." (Genesis 9:3) This divine permission to eat meat is a big departure from the instructions given generations earlier to Adam and Eve, who were only allowed to eat a vegetarian diet.

No explanation is given in the torah for this change, which is bundled together with other injunctions against eating the blood of animals and against murder. But the rabbis argue that the permission to eat meat is an attempt to put boundaries on something people were doing prior to the flood, killing animals wantonly and without regard to the fact that to eat an animal was to take a life. God was setting up checks and balances to explicitly prevent this cruelty.

But "This concession to human weakness is not a license for savagery," argues scholar Nahum Sarna. Meat cannot be eaten without recognition of its origins in life; God's permission can be seen as the original injunction to eat mindfully.

...have we fulfilled our obligation to God by eating humanely raised meat, or should we be aiming for Edenic ideal of not eating meat at all?

Can eating meat ever be a holy act? I posed this dilemma to Naftali Hanau, owner of [Grow and Behold](#), an ethical kosher meat company. Hanau, a former vegetarian (because of the historical lack of humanely raised kosher meat), argues that questions of sustainable eating must go beyond whether or not one should eat meat.

There are many overlooked trade-offs in the food system. "How is it any better to eat conventional tofu, made from genetically modified soy and grown on a field covered in petrochemical fertilizer? Conventional food does not get a free pass on environmental sustainability just because something is a vegetable." He pointed out that Amish farmers who raise his chickens – moving the coops by hand and restoring the soil – leave a smaller environmental impact than conventional vegetable farming.

One question I posed to Hanau was whether having greater access to sustainable meat meant he ate more of it, as I have found to be true in my house. He said that it had not, but that it was still an ongoing conversation in his family about how much meat to eat. Purchasing sustainable meat is not a license to eat it mindlessly, he says.

All forms of eating can be savagery. All of them can be holy. This was the challenge to Noah and to us.

Rabbi Rachel Kahn-Troster is director of education and outreach for Rabbis for Human Rights-North America.

Read more: <http://blogs.forward.com/the-jew-and-the-carrot/131966/parshat-noah-pondering-the-eating-of-meat/#ixzz28PZaQiXf>

NEW YORK TIMES Published May 3, 2012

The Ethicist Contest Winner: Give Thanks for Meat



By JAY BOST:

A few weeks ago, we [invited readers to make an argument for the ethics of eating meat](#). Thousands of readers submitted essays, and thousands more [voted on the finalists that we posted online](#). Our panel of judges — Mark Bittman, Jonathan Safran Foer, Andrew Light, Michael Pollan and Peter Singer — chose the essay below by Jay Bost as the winner.

As a vegetarian who returned to meat-eating, I find the question “Is meat-eating ethical?” one that is in my head and heart constantly. The reasons I became a vegetarian, then a vegan and then again a conscientious meat-eater were all ethical. The ethical reasons of why NOT to eat meat are obvious: animals are raised and killed in cruel conditions; grain that could feed hungry people is fed to animals; the need for pasture fuels deforestation; and by eating meat, one is implicated in the killing of a sentient [conscious] being. Except for the last reason, however, none of these aspects of eating meat are necessary, yet they are exactly what make eating some meat unethical. Which leads to my main argument: eating meat raised in specific circumstances is ethical; eating meat raised in other circumstances is unethical. Just as eating vegetables, tofu or grain raised in certain circumstances is ethical and those produced in other ways is unethical.

What are these “right” and “wrong” ways of producing both meat and plant foods? For me, they are summed up well in [Aldo Leopold’s](#) land ethic: “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the ecological community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.”

While most present-day meat production is an ecologically foolish and ethically wrong endeavor, happily this is changing, and there are abundant examples of ecologically beneficial, pasture-based systems. The fact is that most farmers interested in ecology agree that animals are integral parts of truly sustainable agricultural systems. They are able to cycle nutrients, aid in land management and convert sun to food in ways that are nearly impossible for us to do without fossil fuel. If “ethical” is defined as living in the most ecologically sound way, then in fairly specific circumstances, of which each eater must educate himself, eating meat is ethical; in fact NOT eating meat may be arguably unethical.

The issue of killing of a conscious being, however, lingers....

For me, eating meat is ethical when one does three things. First, you accept the biological reality that death is part of the chain of life on this planet ... Second, you combine this realization with that cherished human trait of compassion and choose ethically raised food, vegetable, grain and/or meat. And third, you give thanks.

[language slightly adapted]

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/06/magazine/the-ethicist-contest-winner-give-thanks-for-meat.html>

Should we eat meat?

Debating Both Sides: (Clear presentations of many arguments from both sides)

<http://debatewise.org/debates/938-should-humans-eat-meat/>

בראשית -9:17-9:8 Bereshit Chapter

- ח וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל-נֹחַ, וְאֶל-בָּנָיו אִתּוֹ לֵאמֹר. 8 And God said to Noah, and to his sons with him, saying:
- ט וְאֲנִי, הֲנִי מְקִים אֶת-בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם, וְאֶת-זֶרְעְכֶם, אַחֲרֵיכֶם. 9 'As for Me, here, I now establish my covenant with you, and with your seed [children] after you;
- י וְאֵת כָּל-נֶפֶשׁ הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר אִתְּכֶם, בְּעוֹף בְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל-חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ אִתְּכֶם; מִכָּל יֹצְאֵי הַתֵּבָה, לְכָל חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ. 10 and with all living creatures that are with you, the fowl, herd-animals, and all the wildlife of the earth with you; with all those going out of the Ark, of all the living things on the earth.
- יא וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת-בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם, וְלֹא-יִכָּרֵת כָּל-בָּשָׂר עוֹד מִמִּי הַמַּבּוּל; וְלֹא-יִהְיֶה עוֹד מַבּוּל, לְשַׁחַת הָאָרֶץ. 11 I will establish my covenant with you; never again shall all flesh be cut off again by waters of a flood; never again shall there be a flood, to destroy the earth!
- יב וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים, זֹאת אוֹת-הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר-אֲנִי נֹתֵן בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם, וּבֵין כָּל-נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה, אֲשֶׁר אִתְּכֶם--לְדֹרֹת, עוֹלָם. 12 And God said: 'This is the sign of the covenant which I set between me and you and all living creatures that are with you, for all ages to come:
- יג אֶת-קִשְׁתִּי, נֹתַתִּי בָּעָנָן; וְהָיְתָה לְאוֹת בְּרִית, בֵּינִי וּבֵין הָאָרֶץ. 13 My bow, I set in the cloud, so that it shall serve as a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth.
- יד וְהָיָה, בְּעָנְנִי עָנָן עַל-הָאָרֶץ, וְנִרְאָתָה הַקֶּשֶׁת, בָּעָנָן. 14 And when I bring clouds over the earth, and the bow is seen, in the clouds
- טו וְזָכַרְתִּי אֶת-בְּרִיתִי, אֲשֶׁר בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם, וּבֵין כָּל-נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה, בְּכָל-בָּשָׂר; וְלֹא-יִהְיֶה עוֹד הַמַּיִם לְמַבּוּל, לְשַׁחַת כָּל-בָּשָׂר. 15 I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and all living creatures of all flesh; so the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.
- טז וְהָיְתָה הַקֶּשֶׁת, בָּעָנָן; וְרָאִיתִיהָ, לְזִכָּר בְּרִית עוֹלָם, בֵּין אֱלֹהִים, וּבֵין כָּל-נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה בְּכָל-בָּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר עַל-הָאָרֶץ. 16 When the bow will be, in the cloud; I will see it, and remember the covenant between God and all living creatures - all flesh that is on the earth
- יז וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים, אֶל-נֹחַ: זֹאת אוֹת-הַבְּרִית, אֲשֶׁר הִקְמַתִּי, בֵּינִי, וּבֵין כָּל-בָּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר עַל-הָאָרֶץ. {פ} 17 And God said to Noah: 'This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.'
- יח וַיְהִיו בְּנֵי-נֹחַ, הַיּוֹצְאִים מִן-הַתֵּבָה--שֵׁם, וְחָם, וְיָפֶת; וְחָם, הוּא אָבִי כְנָעַן. 18 And the sons of Noah, that went out from the Ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth; and Ham is the father of Canaan.

Leading Idea: Establishing and Maintaining

Establishing (מִקְיָם), **remembering** (לִזְכֹּר) and **remembering in the future** (זְכֵרְתִּי)

In Verses 9:8-17 God turns his attention from Noah to himself. “As for me...” Within this passage he reflects on the act of *establishing* a covenant and remembering it – that is *maintaining* a covenant (keeping it over time), and the intention to keep it in the future (I will remember). God also reflects on the ‘sign’ (אוֹת), or rainbow, as *representing* the covenant (as a sign of the covenant), as a way of *showing us* of his intentions (it stands as a sign between me and you), and as a way of *reminding himself* of his covenant. These exercises and discussion plans explore these subtle yet very powerful distinctions.

Exercise: Establishing something and Maintaining it

Is there a difference between these things, if so, what is the difference?

- Setting a rule that says "do not enter the room without knocking"
- Remembering to keep the rule that says "do not enter the room without knocking"
- Starting a friendship
- Keeping that person as a friend
- Earning a name for being fair
- Remembering to always be fair
- Keeping a name for being fair once you have it

What is the difference between...

- Putting a sign on the door to *show* visitors that they can't enter without knocking.
- Putting a sign on the door to *remind* visitors that they can't enter without knocking.
- Putting a sign on the door to *remind yourself* that you shouldn't let visitors in unless they have knocked on the door first.

When might you need to post each of these signs?

Inter-textual exploration

Using a Tanach, Look up the following references. Is there any difference between the meaning of (אוֹת) in these passages? What do you think the function of the (אוֹת) is in each case? (to show? tell? remind? something else?)

- Bereshit 4:15 (Cain and Abel)
- Shemot 31:13 (Shabbat)
- Shemot 31: 17 (Shabbat)
- Shemot 8:18-19 (Plagues)
- Shemot 12:13 (Blood on the doorposts)

Activity: Handmade Midrash:

Make a torn-paper Midrash that draws on how you understand the term אוֹת in light of one of the texts and the distinctions you explored in your community of inquiry.

Leading Idea: Caring for our world

This section of text about the Keshet comes after the flood – after God in his anger almost completely destroys the world. The Keshet is a reminder to God to avoid global destruction in the future. This raises a larger question about our relationship to the world and our care for it. The following poem can invite discussion around our sensory experiencing of the world and our care for it. You might like to create your own poem that draws on the way your students' own experiences of connecting to the world through their senses.

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 which you know do not yield food may be destroyed...
(Deuteronomy 20:19-20)

D'Var Torah

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<http://www.reformjudaism.org/learning/torah-study/shoftim/protect-trees-protect-our-world>

... These verses toward the end of the *parashah*, Deuteronomy 20:19-20, form the basis for the mitzvah *bal tashchit*, "do not destroy." While the verses themselves deal specifically with cutting down trees during war, the Sages extended their meaning to cover all forms of wasteful destruction. They taught that anyone who deliberately wastes our resources, either natural or man-made, violates the law.

For over 3,000 years Jews have been concerned about the environment. Although these instructions are specifically directed to the care of fruit trees during war, the lesson gleaned from them has far-reaching implications for life on this planet. Our ancestors understood that life depends upon preserving the land. Although they didn't use words like "ecology," "global warming," or "environmental crisis," they clearly understood and respected these concepts.

The tree in the Torah text is read by the Sages as a metaphor. They understood that the prohibition to destroy fruit trees implies that it is forbidden to destroy anything that was beneficial to humankind. Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* tells us that a tree may be cut down if it damages other trees or causes harm to neighboring fields. According to Maimonides, the Torah only forbids willful destruction. We are not precluded from making use of God's creations but are warned against unnecessarily destroying gifts of nature. Needless cutting down of a fruit-bearing tree is forbidden not only in wartime, but at all times. Similarly, we may not destroy or waste anything useful, whether it be food or money or clothing.

In the creation story in Genesis 1:28, humankind is granted dominion over the earth. The same biblical passage that gives us this dominion also requires that we care for the earth; we are reminded that even as we till the earth, we must also preserve it. God's command to "rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth" gives us the responsibility to guard the world. Because God created the natural world, it is sacred. It is ours on loan, to be used and cared for. We are granted both dominion and stewardship of our world; therefore we are not to pollute its water or air or waste its precious resources.

As a child in religious school, one of the first stories I heard was that of Honi and his planting of the carob tree. When asked why he was planting a tree that would not bear fruit until long after his death, he replied that when he came into the world he found carob trees that had been planted by those who came before him, so he was doing the same for his descendants. It's a simple story that we tell every Tu BiSh'vat, but one that teaches an age-old truth.

Today's environmentalists raise the same concern as Honi. Since the mid-twentieth century, we have become aware that restoring our planet's diminishing resources is a crucial issue. The destruction of tropical forests, lumbering without reforestation, burning of land, and the general wasting of other natural resources will leave future generations with diminished resources. Just over forty years ago, author Rachel Carson warned of the dangerous effects of our lifestyle on the environment. *Silent Spring* spoke of our reckless attempt to control our environment by the use of pesticides and warned that destroying the balance of nature would ultimately do more harm than good.

Since Carson's best-selling publication, others have written on the same subject. Just ten years ago, Al Gore, in his book *Earth In the Balance*, wrote of his conviction that only radical rethinking of our relationship with nature could save our ecology. Whether or not we believe that we must save our resources because God has commanded us to do so, we cannot ignore what we have done to our world or sit idle without trying to correct the mistakes we've made.

Judaism does not separate people from nature. We're taught that the earth is one unit, just as God is one. Whatever affects plant and animal life affects humans as well. If we destroy other kinds of living things on this earth, we are also destroying ourselves. The most important lessons we can teach our children are that not only do all living things depend upon each other, but also what we do today affects what the world will be like tomorrow. Each generation is linked to the next by its actions. Like Honi, we depend on what those who came before us did, as our children will depend upon us. Whether it is wartime or peacetime, we must care for the natural resources entrusted to us.

By the way....

Look upon This Land

*Look upon this land—
Touch it.
Sand under your bare feet,
The squish of mud,
Silky coat of cat,
Soft rose petals,
A smooth round rock,
Rain on your face.*

*Touch it with your eyes.
Cherry trees blossoming pink,
Lake of blue and summer sky,
The green of life,
Purple grapes and apples red,
Moon rising yellow,
Orange sun going down.*

*Touch it with your ears.
Splatter of rain,
Crack of thunder,
Wind whispering,
Birds singing,
The crying of babies and puppies,*

Kittens and ducklings.

*Touch it with your nose.
Pine-scent of woods, lilacs blooming,
new-mown grass, smoke of chimneys,
strawberries in the sun.*

*Touch it with your tongue.
Lick of sugar,
Tang of lemon, ginger, or spice,
Bite of cold snow,
Gulp of pure water.*

*Look upon this land—
Touch it.
Touch it in every way you can,
For this land is part of you,
And you are part of it.*

*Given into your care is this earth.
See how beautiful it is.
Be careful not to spoil it,
For if you destroy the world,
There will be no one after you to restore it.
(Kohelet Rabbah 1 on Ecclesiastes 7:13)*

(Molly Cone, Listen to the Trees [New York: UAHC Press, 1995], pp. 42-43)

In Jewish liturgy, we find the following repeated time and again: *chaim*, *shabbat*, and *shalom*. These three terms form the underlying Judaic doctrine of respect for all forms of life. Throughout the Bible, we are urged to respect creation and not waste or destroy. Living things range from the human being to the simplest of species, and the rich variety of nature is to be cherished. In addition, Jewish tradition is distinctly linked to trees and to water; in fact, our Torah is referred to as the "Tree of Life." Jewish tracts entreat us time and again to respect and enhance trees and water.

Your Guide

- Torah has a multitude of verses regarding the care of our resources. How do we decide which ones to follow? Do we pick and choose only those that affect us personally, or do we move beyond our own neighborhoods, cities, and even countries for the betterment of all humankind?
- How, in this age of technology, can we ensure that we don't do more damage to our natural resources—our drinking water, our rivers, the soil, or the air?
- When our military goes into another country to liberate it, as we have recently done in Iraq, do we have any obligations to the people of that country regarding the protection of their natural resources?

Activity

Based on the structure of this poem, create your own poem (visually or in words) that draws on the way you experience your connection to the world through your senses.

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