

Interfaith Vegan Coalition

JEWISH KIT



Demonstrating the Jewish Ideals of Harmlessness and Universal Lovingkindness: Eight Steps

Richard Schwartz prepared this kit, along with the Interfaith Vegan Coalition, and wrote “it is hoped that this kit will help Jewish vegans promote veganism in the Jewish community and will help other Jews shift toward veganism.” Since then there have been some additions.

These are 8 steps that could be introduced at your synagogue either one at a time or all together. The goal of these steps is to help synagogues shift toward practices consistent with Jewish teachings on compassion to animals, environmental sustainability, and healthy living. You can do this alone, but it is very helpful if you have some interested synagogue members who could join you in forming a “Green” committee or similar group that could help you promote these steps. Resources for these steps are listed below.

1. Focus on the daily prayers that indicate that God is compassionate to the earth and all its creatures.
2. Increase awareness of Judaism’s many teachings on compassion to animals. Many of these teachings can be found in the section

on Jewish teachings on animals [at www.JewishVeg.org/schwartz](http://www.JewishVeg.org/schwartz) and at the website of Jewish Veg (formerly Jewish Vegetarians of North America) www.JewishVeg.org Consider using language such as “guardian” rather than “owner” when referring to companion animals. (See In Defense of Animals’ Guardian Campaign, idausa.org). Use “he” or “she,” rather than “it,” when referring to animals.

3. Stress that animal-based diets are inconsistent with basic Jewish teachings on preserving human health, treating animals with compassion, protecting the environment, conserving natural resources, helping hungry people, and pursuing peace.



4. Encourage education and discussion about how the synagogue can help animals by hosting films, speakers, book studies, and Jewish writings about treating animals compassionately. Also, education about the intersectionality of all social justice movements, including animal rights, is very important.
5. Encourage synagogue-sponsored family outings that are nonviolent, such as hiking, camping, and canoeing, instead of hunting, fishing, rodeos, zoos, and circuses.
6. Urge that members not wear fur into the synagogue out of respect for God's beautiful creatures who are brutally raised and killed for vanity.
7. Begin purchasing paper, cleaning products, candles, etc. that are ecologically sustainable, fair-trade, and certified cruelty-free.
8. Certainly the most challenging step, but the most dramatic in its message of compassion, will be for the synagogue to sponsor only cruelty-free meals. Sharing plant-based meals, as described in Genesis 1:29, acknowledges our commitment to our own physical health, the health of the earth, the hungry of the world (since a plant-based diet uses far fewer resources than an animal-based diet does), and the right of all animals to live their own lives free from human exploitation and violence. Sponsoring only plant-based meals also signifies respect and inclusion of those church members who are already committed vegans. Such meals signify our desire to mean what we say when we pray together to a compassionate God.



RESOURCES FOR YOUR EIGHT STEPS

JUDAISM QUOTES

There are MANY quotations related to Jewish connections to vegetarianism, veganism, and animal rights at the website of the [Society of Ethical and Religious Vegetarians](#) (SERV).

“Judaism’s way of life, its dietary practices, are designed to ennoble the human spirit. It is therefore a contradiction in terms to claim that products that come through a process that involves inordinate cruelty and barbarity toward animal life can truly be considered kosher in our world. In our world today, it is precisely a plant-based diet that is truly consonant with the most sublime teachings of Judaism and of the highest aspirations of our heritage.”

– Rabbi David Rosen, Former Chief Rabbi of Ireland

[The Statement Signed by 70 Rabbis](#)

We, the undersigned rabbis, encourage our fellow Jews to transition toward animal-free, plant-based diets. This approach to sustenance is an expression of our shared Jewish values of compassion for animals, protection of the environment, and concern for our physical and spiritual well-being.

JEWISH SONGS THAT SHOW RESPECT FOR ANIMALS

A Song, “Donna, Donna,” originally in Yiddish, tells the mournful story of a calf being led to slaughter. An Internet search reveals the song being sung by Joan Baez and by others, and provides background information about the song.

MUSIC

Daniel Redwood’s album, “Songs for Animals, People, and the Earth.” These can be heard and played on his [website](#). The album can also be purchased on that website.

USEFUL LITERATURE FOR EVENTS

Jeffrey Cohan of JewishVeg.org offers a set of four [infographics](#) “that have enabled people, for the first time in history, to easily grasp why a plant-based, animal-free diet is a Jewish imperative for our times.”

BOOKS AND ARTICLES RELATED TO JEWISH TEACHINGS ON VEGETARIANISM, VEGANISM, AND ANIMAL RIGHTS

Berman, Louis. *Vegetarianism and the Jewish Tradition*. New York: K'tav, 1982. (A comprehensive review of connections between Judaism and vegetarianism.)

Bleich, Rabbi J. David, “Vegetarianism and Judaism,” *Tradition*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Summer, 1987).

Cohen, Rabbi Alfred, “Vegetarianism From a Jewish Perspective,” *Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society*, Vol. I, No. II (Fall, 1981).

Cohen, Noah J. *Tsa'ar Ba'alei Chayim—The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Its Bases, Development, and Legislation in Hebrew Literature*. New York: Feldheim, 1979. (Survey of the laws and lore relating to animals and their treatment in the Jewish tradition. Defense of shechitah, ritual slaughter.)

Kalechofsky, Roberta, *Vegetarian Judaism*. Marblehead, MA: Micah Publications, 1998. (Updated, comprehensive analysis of reasons Jews should adopt vegetarianism.) —., editor. *Judaism and Animals Rights: Classical and Contemporary Responses*. Marblehead, MA: Micah Publications, 1992. (A wide varieties of articles on animal rights, vegetarianism, animal experimentation, from the perspective of Judaism.) —., editor. *Rabbis and Vegetarianism:*

An Evolving Tradition. Marblehead, MA: Micah Publications, 1995. (Articles on vegetarianism by seventeen rabbis from different backgrounds and perspectives.)

Klein, Rabbi Jonathan, “Back To The Garden: Divine Intention vs. Human Nature,” *Faith Action for Animals*, faithactionforanimals@gmail.com

Kook, Rabbi Abraham Isaac.. *A Vision of Vegetarianism and Peace* (Hebrew). (There is an English translation by Rabbi Jonathan Rubenstein. The vegetarian philosophy of this great Jewish leader and thinker.)

Pick, Philip, ed. *The Tree of Life: An Anthology of Articles Appearing in “The Jewish Vegetarian,” 1966–1974*. New York: A. S. Barnes, 1977. (A wide variety of essays and editorials from the *Jewish Vegetarian* on many aspects of the relationship between Judaism and vegetarianism. Schochet, Rabbi Elijah J. *Animal Life in Jewish Tradition*. New York: K'tav, 1984. (Thorough, well-documented consideration of all aspects of animal issues, from the perspective of the Jewish tradition.)

Schwartz, Richard H. *Judaism and Vegetarianism*, New York: Lantern, 2001 (3rd edition). Argues that vegetarianism, and even more so veganism, is the diet most consistent with basic Jewish values.

Schwartz, Richard H. *Who Stole My Religion? Revitalizing Judaism and Applying Jewish Values to Help Heal Our Imperiled Planet*, New York, KATV Publishing House, 2016.

Schwartz, Richard H. Over 250 articles at JewishVeg.org/schwartz Sears, Dovid. *The Vision of Eden: Animal Welfare and Vegetarianism in Jewish Law and Mysticism*. A wealth of quotations and insightful essays relating Judaism to animal issues and vegetarianism.



DOCUMENTARIES AND VIDEOS

“[A Sacred Duty](#)” Friedberg, Lionel, producer of video, “A Sacred Duty: Applying Jewish Values to Help Heal Our Imperiled Planet.”

“[Cowspiracy](#)” and “[What the Health](#)” are on Netflix.

“[Earthlings](#)” is a very intense video that shows the unbelievable cruelty endured by animals at human hands. If you plan to show it, you need to give people fair warning. While it has caused many people to go vegan on the spot, it can be traumatic to watch, and viewers need to be given great compassion and care while watching it.

“[Jewish Vegetarianism](#)”

“[A Life Connected](#)” is a short, 11 minute, but powerful and feel-good video [online](#).

“[Meat, dairy, and eggs: A Desecration of Jewish values](#)”

“[The Metaphysics of Food](#),” by Will Tuttle.

“[Peaceable Kingdom](#)” and “[The Witness](#)” can be watched free [online](#).

“[A Prayer for Compassion](#),” by Thomas Jackson.

“[The Theology of Christian Veganism](#).”

[Public Statement of 70 Rabbis](#). Jeffrey Cohan, of JewishVeg.org, announced the public statement of 70 rabbis urging their fellow Jews to transition to a plant-based diet. See [Quotes](#) to read the text of the statement.

[Vegan Revolution](#) in Israel.

“[Vegetarianism and Veganism according to Torah](#)”

[Gary Yourofsky Veganism in Israel](#)

“[Wasted Wings](#)” Documentary about Kaporos.

[Victoria Moran’s](#) Radio Program featuring Alex Hershaft.

Alex Hershaft, Ph.D, Holocaust survivor, chemist, and founder of Farm Animal Rights Movement, is my first guest, discussing his route to animal rights, the intersectionality of oppression, his brand of abolition...

JEWISH PRAYERS THAT HONOR ALL LIFE AND PROMISE NONVIOLENCE TOWARD ALL BEINGS

The daily morning prayers include:

“Blessed is the One (God) Whose compassion is over the land; blessed is the (One) Whose compassion is over the creatures.”

The Ashrei prayer, recited three times daily includes: “God is good to all and His compassion is over all His works [including animals].”

Some non-denominational prayers for animals can be found at www.circleofcompassion.org and in the book *Peace to All Beings: Veggie Soup for the Chicken’s Soul*, by Judy Carman.

Also, the synagogue could join the universal noon prayer for animals at www.circleofcompassion.org which states “Compassion Encircles the Earth for all Beings Everywhere.”



RITUALS AND CEREMONIES THAT COULD BE MODIFIED TO INCLUDE VEGAN VALUES

Tu Bishvat: There is a Jewish holiday, Tu Bishvat, which is the New Year for Trees, that has a Seder (celebration at which many fruits are eaten and many environmental teachings and teachings about trees and fruits are discussed) that is increasingly being considered a Jewish Earth Day.

All the foods eaten on that holiday are vegan, so it is a great opportunity to consider Jewish teachings on veganism.

New Year for Animals: There should be efforts to restore the ancient ‘New Year for Animals’ and to transform it into a day devoted to increasing awareness of Judaism’s powerful teachings about compassion to animals and how far current realities are from these teachings. Four articles about the importance of this initiative are at a special section at www.JewishVeg.org/schwartz.

Vegan Seder: This was organized by JoAnn Farb. It is “a vegan Passover Seder that I organized for ECM on Monday April 17, 2017. It was the first time I had ever put together a complete [Passover Seder](#), including creating a Haggadah (based upon Holistic Non-violence, a concept developed by Tribe of Heart film producers). On this page, you will find all of the recipes that I used and a PDF that you can download of the Haggadah that I assembled.”

VEGAN SYNAGOGUES

[Makom](#), a small Downtown synagogue in Toronto, Canada.

WEBSITES RELATED TO VEGANISM, ANIMAL RIGHTS, AND JUDAISM

[Anonymous for Animal Rights](#)

[Aytzim](#) (Ecological Judaism)

[Concern for Helping Animals in Israel](#) (CHAI)

[International Jewish Vegetarian Society](#)

[Israeli Jewish VeSociety](#)

[Jewish Veg](#)

[Shamayim v’Aretz](#)

[The Vegetarian Mitzvah](#) (prepared by Dan Brook)

[Vegan Spirituality](#), This is a community of spiritual vegans from many religious backgrounds who see veganism as an essential part of their spiritual practice.

[Vegetarian Friends](#), this website hosts “The Peaceable Table,” a vegetarian online journal for Quakers and other people of faith. You can sign up to receive this excellent monthly journal.

JEWISH VEGAN AND ANIMAL RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

Dan Brook, vegetarian author and activist

Jeffrey Cohan, Director of Jewish Veg

David Krantz, founder and director of the Green Zionist Alliance

Nina Natelson, Founder and Director of Concern for Helping Animals in Israel (CHAI)

Rabbi David Rosen, former Chief Rabbi of Ireland and author of many articles about Jewish teachings on vegetarianism

Richard H. Schwartz, Ph.D. Professor Emeritus, College of Staten Island. Author of Judaism and Vegetarianism, Judaism and Global Survival, Mathematics and Global Survival, and Who Stole My Religion? Revitalizing Judaism and Applying Jewish Values to Help Heal Our Imperiled Planet, and over 250 articles at JewishVeg.org/schwartz, and President emeritus of Jewish Veg

Lara Smallman, Director of the London-based International Jewish Vegetarian Centre

Jonathan Wolf, founder and first president of Jewish Vegetarians of North America (JVNA), now Jewish Veg

Yossi Wolfson, Coordinator of the Israeli Jewish Vegetarian Society

Rabbi Dr. Shmuly Yanklowitz, Founder and Director of Shamayim v’Aretz



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ADVICE, ETC., PLEASE EMAIL:

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