

## Hazon's Sourcebook on Jews, Food & Contemporary Life



Nigel Savage  
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Hazon means vision.

Hazon was founded in 2000 and is now the largest Jewish environmental organization in North America. We create healthier and more sustainable communities in the Jewish world and beyond. We do that through transformative experiences for individuals and communities, through thought leadership in the fields of Jewish and environmental knowledge, and through support of the Jewish environmental movement in North America and Israel.

Our work in creating and growing the Jewish Food Movement includes the largest faith-based network of CSAs in the country, an award winning food blog, The Jew and The Carrot, [jcarrot.org](http://jcarrot.org), an annual food conference, a family-education project, and now this sourcebook itself. All these programs create opportunities to reflect on what and how we eat.

Learning leads to doing. If these texts and questions help you to learn more deeply, to eat more consciously, and to act more ethically, then Food for Thought will indeed lead to nourishment in the widest sense – for our families, our communities, and the physical world upon which all life depends.



# Food for Thought

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Nigel Savage  
Anna Hanau

Hazon

New York, NY  
San Francisco, CA  
Denver and Boulder, CO

We are incredibly delighted to share this second edition of Food For Thought with you.

There are some amazing texts here, and we hope you'll find them interesting, thought-provoking, and perhaps even life-changing. This second edition includes a re-worked "Bread and Civilization" section, and new pages on yeast and sacrifices in the Temple, as well as more food facts in grey boxes throughout the text. It also takes into account the many comments we've received about typos and texts. If you were involved in helping us edit the first version we are extremely grateful!

And at the same time, this really is still a draft. We hope that you'll not only read this and enjoy it, but that you'll read it with a sharp eye, and a sharp pencil! If we've made a mistake, or left something out, please let us know. Also, if you'd like to get involved with further development of this material, or if you'd like to teach it in your school or community, we'd love to hear from you. Please send an email to both of us.

We apologize to copyright holders who we were unable to contact despite serious efforts to do so. If you are an unacknowledged copyright holder please be in touch. We have been advised that short selections from longer works are permitted by the fair use clause. Complete citations for passages in this book are listed in the Notes.

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by Nigel Savage and Anna Hanau

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In loving memory of Rebecca Rosenstein and Margaret  
Stevenson, strong women, cooks, and teachers both;  
and to my family and friends who have taught me to cook, and  
to think; and for all the people who are working to make the  
world and their lives a better place: love and thanks.

- AMH

To my mother, my role model for cooking and hosting  
warmly and effortlessly;  
and to my father, an astonishing example of eating healthily,  
kosherly, and with remarkable self-restraint. Please G'd by me!  
and in loving memory of my Grandma  
and her chopped & fried fish.

- NSS

<b>Preface .....</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>xii</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Learning Torah .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 An introduction to Jewish learning.....	2
1.2 Lifelong learning, with ourselves and with others .....	4
1.3 Eating in the Torah: An introduction.....	6
<b>Chapter 2: Gratitude, Mindfulness &amp; Blessing our Food.....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1 Stealing from God .....	10
2.2 Paths to mindfulness.....	12
2.3 The blessings we say .....	14
2.4 Birkat Hamazon, the grace after meals .....	16
2.5 Eating our words.....	18
<b>Chapter 3: Kashrut .....</b>	<b>21</b>
3.1 Why do you keep kosher?.....	22
3.2 Kashrut: where does it come from? .....	24
3.3 Separating milk and meat .....	26
3.4 Kosher slaughter .....	28
3.5 Temple sacrifice.....	30
3.6 Kashrut and separation: fraternizing with the enemy.....	32
3.7 Eco-kosher?.....	36
<b>Chapter 4: Bread &amp; Civilization .....</b>	<b>39</b>
4.1 Bread rituals.....	40
4.2 Yeast: raising bread and hope.....	42
4.3 Matzah .....	44
4.4 Bread and technology.....	46
4.5 Baking your own .....	48
4.6 Challah for Hunger .....	50
<b>Chapter 5: Eating Together .....</b>	<b>53</b>
5.1 Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: What's for dinner? .....	54
5.2 Eating alone, eating with others .....	56
5.3 Welcoming guests.....	58
5.4 Mourning and comforting .....	60
5.5 Recipes and learning how to cook.....	62
5.6 The holy kugel .....	64



<b>Chapter 6: Health, Bodies &amp; Nourishment .....</b>	<b>67</b>
6.1 Why do we eat? .....	68
6.2 Food for the soul.....	70
6.3 Overeating .....	72
6.4 Digestion .....	74
6.5 Body image and eating disorders.....	76
6.6 Eating & willpower .....	78
 <b>Chapter 7: Food &amp; Place.....</b>	 <b>81</b>
7.1 Jews, food and place: a complicated relationship.....	82
7.2 Our connection to place .....	84
7.3 Food and where it comes from.....	86
7.4 No taste like home .....	88
7.5 Authentic Jewish food? .....	90
 <b>Chapter 8: Food &amp; Ethics: the implications of our food choices .....</b>	 <b>93</b>
8.1 Agriculture and tzedakah in the Torah .....	94
8.2 Our sphere of obligation.....	96
8.3 When ethics and economics conflict: an ancient example .....	98
8.4 Let all who are hungry come and eat.....	100
8.5 L'dor va'dor: our children and our children's children.....	102
8.6 Eating meat and not eating meat.....	104
8.7 The Age of Awareness.....	106
 <b>Clearing the table .....</b>	 <b>108</b>
 <b>Cultivating a learning community.....</b>	 <b>111</b>
 <b>Resources .....</b>	 <b>118</b>
Glossary.....	118
Books .....	121
Movies .....	124
Organizations .....	125
 <b>Notes .....</b>	 <b>127</b>

# Setting the table...

**Hazon works to create a healthier and more sustainable Jewish community, as a step towards a healthier and more sustainable world for all.**

"Healthy and sustainable" means many different things. It can mean getting on your bike and pushing yourself physically. It can mean creating inclusive community, where people come together across differences of age and denomination. It can refer to the health and sustainability of a culture and of a religious tradition. And it can mean changing the way we eat, so that we nourish ourselves and the earth that sustains us.

***"The Torah is a commentary on the world, and the world is a commentary on the Torah."***

**Reb Shlomo Carlebach, z"l**

MANY OF THESE CHALLENGES seem Jewish in a narrow sense, led by the central challenge of enabling a distinct and particularistic tradition, and one which is rooted in Hebrew language and Jewish learning, to persist and thrive in a time of universalism and within an open society. Many traditional Jewish educational programs, including schools, synagogues and programs like Birthright Israel are focused on these issues.

At the same time, the wider culture faces its own crises. How do we live sustainably in the Age of Awareness – an age in which we're profoundly aware of how we're damaging the planet on which we live? How do we build peace amidst a multitude of cultures and faiths? How can we craft healthy ways of living in a 24/7 wired world?

The challenges of Jewish life and of contemporary life intersect through the prism of food. Keeping kosher has been for three thousand years a central motif of Jewish life. It has linked ethics, culture, religion and family. And / but it has been a significant cause of social separation. How you keep kosher in an open society – where and how you choose to separate, what rules you follow – is a central thread of the Jewish encounter with modernity and postmodernity.

Meantime, how you eat has become, in other ways, a key challenge – some would say obsession – of the world we now live in. Obesity, vegetarianism, food packaging, genetically-modified foods, carbon footprints, battery-caged hens, fast food – these are the daily diet of TV and the newspapers. Our food systems in North America, the UK, Israel and around the world are out of balance. Our eating has become symbolic of our lives: hurried, reactive, disconnected from land, family, tradition and place.

This is the world we live in. What now do we do? How can we, in Reb Shlomo's words, enable the Torah to be a commentary on our daily lives, and our lives a commentary on the Torah?

***"You know you're on the right track when your solution to one problem accidentally solves several others."***

**Michael Corbett**

IT'S AGAINST THIS BACKDROP that we are so excited to present these texts and questions about Jews, Food & Contemporary Life. On one side, what Michael Pollan terms "nutritionism" has turned meat into protein, snacks into energy boosts. On the other side, too many elements of Jewish education seem to have an interior focus; one which excludes or minimizes wider societal issues.



# ...starting the conversation

But man does not live by bread alone, and the relationship between who we are and how we interact with food and other people is immensely rich. Looking at a “food product” by its constituent nutrients, or at Jewish tradition solely through a traditionally Jewish prism, fails to address the entirety of who we are, and how we create meaningful lives.

WE ASSERT THAT Cézanne’s day of revolution is now here. Starting from what’s on your fork, you can have a conversation about pretty much everything that’s wrong with the world—and pretty much every way we might fix things. These conversations are happening with increasing frequency and scope—from Alice Waters to Michael Pollan to John Mackey, from National Catholic Rural Life to Faith in Place to Just Food, and to the work Hazon is doing. How we eat is an extension of who we are. How we consume is a central manifestation of our relationship to the world.

The texts that we’ve gathered here are organized thematically, but they’re not separated into “Jewish” and “non-Jewish texts.” The conversation about how we eat in a way that is enjoyable, sustainable and ethical; in a way that engages our families and our tradition, and also the unique circumstances of the world that we live in – that conversation, in our view, enriches Jewish life and makes the world a better place. And the interplay between the two elements of that conversation is one that we want especially to encourage.

OUR OWN EATING has evolved over the months and years leading up to and during this project, in different ways. Anna is eating meat now, if it’s locally raised, and working on a farm growing organic vegetables. As much as possible, she eats fruits and vegetables only when they’re in season and locally available. Nigel is eating robust breakfasts and a lot more local produce. Much less junk food, but a little more chocolate. More awareness, less guilt and a deeper relationship to the notion of nourishment. Both of us only eat free-range eggs at home (though we’ll eat “treyf”—read: conventional—eggs out).

Our food journeys are still evolving. Our backgrounds and our relationships to food and to Jewish tradition are quite distinct. But we share a love of food and of learning, and the deep belief that learning about food and doing so through the double prism of Jewish tradition and contemporary challenges is vital to the creation of healthier relationships to food in the broadest sense. And also very exciting!

We respect and encourage reflection on your own experience of eating and buying food, balancing responsibility, desire, reality. It’s a process. Our dream for the whole world? Abundant and healthy food for everyone, food that isn’t produced at the expense of people or the earth, food that builds communities and encourages us to be our best selves.

How do we get there? Let’s talk...

***“The day is coming when a single carrot, freshly observed, will set off a revolution.”***

**Paul Cézanne**

***Which is greater, learning or action? Learning, because it leads to action.”***

**Talmud Bavli, Masekhet Kiddushin 40b**

*"The miraculous is not extraordinary but the common mode of existence. It is our daily bread. Whoever really has considered the lilies of the field or the birds of the air and pondered the improbability of their existence in this warm world within the cold and empty stellar distances will hardly balk at the turning of water into wine—which was, after all, a very small miracle. We forget the greater and still continuing miracle by which water (with soil and sunlight) is turned into grapes."*

– Wendell Berry

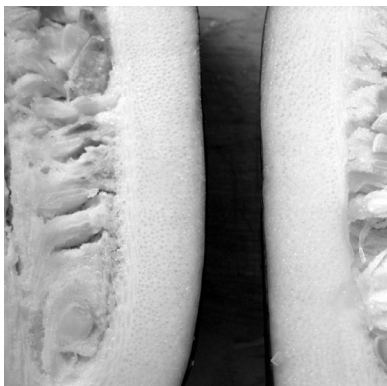
## Chapter 2

# Gratitude, Mindfulness & Blessing our Food



How has Jewish tradition understood gratitude? Why is it important to develop a sense of gratitude and how might we do so today?

In this section, we explore how habits can obscure our awareness of daily miracles, and how blessings can re-awaken our sense of mindfulness, and we investigate traditional and non-traditional tools that inculcate gratefulness and open our eyes to the world.



*"A teacher from Berkeley told me about a time when her students washed and trimmed and cut up ingredients and made a big salad. 'Now wait,' she said, 'before we start eating, let's stop and think about the people who tilled the ground, planted the seeds, and harvested the vegetables.'*

*The kids stood up at their desks and gave the salad a standing ovation."*

– Frances Moore Lappé

## 2.1 Stealing from God

The rabbis understood the world's produce to be a sacred, divine gift. As such it was “*kadosh*,” meaning both “sanctified” and “separate”—and, in consequence, forbidden from our enjoyment unless we made a blessing. The blessing acknowledges the divine creation and, in a sense, de-sacralizes the food, therefore enabling us to eat it. The texts in this section explore this rather fascinating idea.

### Everything belongs to God

The Earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof.

— *Psalm 24:1*

לְיִדְּהָ הָאֲרֶץ וּמְלִאָהּ.

### Without blessing, sacrilege

*The word “me'ilah” refers to the sin of using something holy for personal benefit. Standing in the shade of the Temple on a hot day was a me'ilah, as was eating food that had already been offered on the altar.*

*What do you think of this idea?*

For more on Temple rituals, see 3.5

Our Rabbis have taught: It is forbidden to a man to enjoy anything of this world without a blessing, and if anyone enjoys anything of this world without a blessing, he commits sacrilege. What is his remedy? He should consult a wise man. But what will the wise man do for him? He has already committed the offence! Raba said: What this means is that he should consult a wise man beforehand, so that he would teach him blessings, so that he should not commit sacrilege (*me'ilah*).

— *Talmud Bavli, Masekhet Brachot 35a*

תָּנוּ רַבָּנָן: אָסוּר לוֹ לְאָדָם שִׁיחָה מִן הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה בְּלֹא בִּרְכָה, וְכָל הַנֶּהֱנֶה מִן הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה בְּלֹא בִּרְכָה – מַעַל. מֵאִי תִקְנִיתִיה – יֵלֶךְ אֲצֵל חָכָם. יֵלֶךְ אֲצֵל חָכָם – מֵאִי עֹבֵיד לִיה? הָא עֹבֵיד לִיה אֲסוּרָא! אֶלָּא אָמַר רַבָּא: יֵלֶךְ אֲצֵל חָכָם מַעֲיָקְרָא וּלְמַדְנֵי בִּרְכוּת, בְּדִי שְׂלֵא יָבֵא לְיָדֵי מַעֲלָה.

### Putting good energy back into the universe

What does it mean, “Whoever enjoys produce in this world without pronouncing a blessing is called a robber”?

...By means of the blessing, one draws down *shefa*. The angel who is assigned to that fruit [which one is eating] is filled by the *shefa* so that a second fruit can replace the first. One who enjoys the first without blessing it...eliminates the spiritual element it contained. ... As a result, the angel's power is annulled, since it no longer possesses the *shefa* [that it needs in order to replace the fruit.]

— *Peri Eytz Hadar*, translated by Miles Krassen

*This text comes from the kabbalistic/mystical tradition. We don't need to believe literally in angels in order to try to understand something about this kabbalistic relationship to the sanctity of food.*

*What does this passage suggest about the relationship between people and God?*

*“Shefa” means abundance. In this case, the text refers to the flow of Divine abundance.*

Another way to think about stealing from God is to consider the effect of our actions on future generations. See 8.5

## Did you steal that apple?

I was teaching about Tu B'Shevat to a number of people at the Orangetown Jewish Center. We were talking about this idea of food being stolen from God. What does that mean, exactly? "Sir," I said to a man at the front of the room, "what was the last thing you ate before you came here?"

"An apple," he replied.

"Great," I said. "An apple. Did you steal that apple?"

"No," he replied, "I bought it at ShopRite."

People smiled. But he was quite right. When most of us want an apple, we go to a store and we buy one. With stores and markets as the intermediating mechanism by which we obtain our food, which necessarily involve *not* stealing – what could this text possibly imply, and how can a *bracha* make a difference?

I said, "Sir, if someone had given you a million dollars, would you have been able to make that apple?" And people smiled again, this time with a different sense of awareness.

The point of "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Psalm 24) is to remind us that we enjoy the natural fruits of creation. We ourselves did not create and could never create them. A *bracha* is different than saying "Thanks for dinner, Mom," (though we should say that, too). When the rabbis of the Talmud suggested not merely that we say a *bracha* before eating, but that failing to do so represented a case of theft, this is a central idea they teach us: we might buy an apple or we might grow it, but we can never create it, and its creation is an everyday miracle.

– Nigel Savage

### Apples: the fruit of diversity

A hundred years ago, there were over 14,000 different apple varieties cultivated in the US. Today, there are about 2,500. Only 100 of these are grown commercially, and of that, just fifteen varieties accounted for 90% of all sales in 1999.

Before you read the list of those apples below, how many different kinds of apples can you name? Which are your favorite?

1. Red Delicious
2. Golden Delicious
3. Granny Smith
4. Fuji
5. McIntosh
6. Gala
7. Rome
8. Jonathan
9. Idared
10. Empire
11. York
12. Cortland
13. Northern Spy
14. Rhode Island Greening
15. Stayman

(Up-and-coming varieties include: Cameo, Ginger Gold, Honey Crisp and Pink Lady.)

Source: US Apple Growers Association

## Food for Thought:

- What do you think the impact of saying a bracha before you eat has been (or could be) on your life?
- Which sets of wise people might you consult in order to learn how to eat healthily and responsibly?

Being alive and being human means not only that we experience but also that we can reflect on our experience. And the more we do so, the more we notice the world, the details, the hundred different species of tulips, the countless florets in a head of cauliflower, the more we are returned to our best selves. Simply by requiring that we pause a minute to reflect on our food and our lives before we eat, brachot can help us become more mindful of the food we eat. There is great value in this—for the Jewish people and for the whole world.

### Seeing again for the first time

*Jewish tradition also has a bracha for seeing a beautiful sunrise. Do you think it serves the same purpose as food brachot?*

*How is noticing a sunrise different or similar to noticing the source of your food?*

Because we eat two, three or four times every day, it's easy to forget how wondrous that is. It's like the sunrise or the sunset. The sun rises and sets every day. If it's an especially beautiful sunrise, we may notice it. But if it's not "special" we may not even see it.

But if we can see it as if for the first time, each sunrise becomes very special and very beautiful. And so with each meal we create.

– Bernard Glassman, *Instructions to the Cook*

### Radical amazement

*These words of Heschel's have become famous. What does he mean exactly?*

*How would your life be different if you carried this consciousness with you on a daily basis?*

As civilization advances, the sense of wonder declines. Such decline is an alarming symptom of our state of mind. Mankind will not perish for want of information; but only for want of appreciation. The beginning of our happiness lies in the understanding that life without wonder is not worth living. What we lack is not a will to believe but a will to wonder.

Radical amazement has a wider scope than any other act of man. While any act of perception or cognition has as its object a selected segment of reality, radical amazement refers to all of reality; not only to what we see, but also to the very act of seeing as well as to our own selves, to the selves that see and are amazed at their ability to see.

– Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man*

### Stop and bless

*What is the central point you think that Rabbi Ba is making? What might this mean in your life?*

Rabbi Ba the son of Rav Hiyya bar Abba teaches: If he ate while walking, he must stand and bless. If he ate standing, he must sit and bless. If he ate sitting, he must recline [formally] and bless. If he ate reclining, he must enwrap himself and bless. And if he did this, he is like the angels who serve God.

– Talmud Yerushalmi, Brachot 7:5

רַבִּי בָּא בֶּרֶיָה דְּרַב חִיָּיא בַר אֲבָא: אָכַל מְהֵלָךְ, עוֹמֵד וּמְבָרֵךְ. אָכַל עוֹמֵד, יוֹשֵׁב וּמְבָרֵךְ. אָכַל יוֹשֵׁב, מֵיִסַּב וּמְבָרֵךְ. אָכַל מֵיִסַּב, מִתְעַטֵּף וּמְבָרֵךְ. אִם עָשָׂה כֵן הָרִי הוּא כְּמַלְאָכֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם.

## Eating a tangerine

I remember a number of years ago, when Jim and I were first traveling together in the United States, we sat under a tree and shared a tangerine. He began to talk about what we would be doing in the future. Whenever we thought about a project that seemed attractive or inspiring, Jim became so immersed in it that he literally forgot about what he was doing in the present. He popped a section of tangerine in his mouth and, before he had begun chewing it, had another slice ready to pop into his mouth again. He was hardly aware he was eating a tangerine. All I had to say was, "You ought to eat the tangerine section you've already taken." Jim was startled into realizing what he was doing.

It was as if he hadn't been eating the tangerine at all. If he had been eating anything, he was "eating" his future plans.

A tangerine has sections. If you can eat just one section, you can probably eat the entire tangerine. But if you can't eat a single section, you cannot eat the tangerine. Jim understood. He slowly put his hand down and focused on the presence of the slice already in his mouth. He chewed it thoughtfully before reaching down and taking another section.

– *Thich Nhat Hanh, Miracle of Mindfulness*

*This text doesn't have a question, it has a suggestion:*

*Eat a tangerine ☺*

*(And try to eat it slowly, with full awareness...)*

### Special fruit

"Tangerines" are so called because the first of these sweet, easily-peeled oranges to be shipped to the US were from Tangier, Morocco, in 1710. Today, most Tangerines in the world are from China, which produced eleven thousand tons of them (and other winter oranges such as Mandarins and Clementines) in 2005, followed by Spain, which produced two thousand tons in the same year.

– UN Food & Agriculture Organization

## Gratitude means noticing / eating a piece of parsley

Why is eating a vegetable one of the steps to freedom? Because gratitude is liberating. And how do we get there? We focus on the details.

Close your eyes: You are holding a piece of parsley, which you are about to dip into salt water. But before that – what things needed to happen to get this parsley into our hands? Who placed the parsley seeds into the ground? What sort of conditions did it grow in? Was it a hot summer? What did the soil feel like? How was the parsley harvested? What did it look like at that perfect moment when it was mature and ready to be picked? Who picked it? Where did the parsley travel next? Was it packed into cardboard boxes? How did it travel to the store or farmer's market? Who unloaded and unpacked it? Who placed it on a scale and weighed it so it could be purchased? Think for a moment about the number of hands that played a part in getting the parsley to this table and into our hands.

Now open your eyes: Look a little more closely at the parsley in your hand – what does it look like? How many leaves does it have? What does that specific color green remind you of? What does the stem feel like? Imagine what it tastes like...

Take a piece of parsley and dip it in salt water. Then we say the blessing together, and then we eat. *Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, creator of fruit from the earth.*

– *Leah Koenig (Pesach 2006)*

*How does your experience of eating change when you know what has gone into the preparation of the food?*

### Grow your own karpas!

Count back about 7-8 weeks from Passover. You'll need a warm, sunny place to set your parsley plants. Soak the seeds overnight, then plant in 3" pots. Germination can take anywhere from 3-6 weeks, so be patient. Once your shoots are about 6" high, you can harvest them for your seder (or garnish).

## Food for Thought:

- What are the similarities and differences between the contemporary Buddhist perspectives of Glassman and Thich Nhat Hanh and the traditional Jewish understanding of mindfulness and gratitude?
- How does Jewish tradition encourage or discourage emphasis on the human role of food production?



## 2.3 The blessings we say

Jews have been saying food brachot for over 2000 years. The French Revolution and the rise of modernity challenged the theology of traditional religion, and undermined prayer in many ways. The postmodern era enables old traditions to be reaccessed in new ways. We understand the saying of brachot as a key exemplar of this move. Rather than asking, "Do you believe in God?", we want to open a conversation about the broader nature of gratitude in relation to food. Can traditional brachot engender post-traditional mindfulness? And wouldn't it be ironic if post-traditional mindfulness in fact re-connected us to the world of the ancients?

### Food Blessings

*Why do you think these particular categories for food brachot arose? If you could establish different sorts of food brachot, what would they be?*

*Over bread:*

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, sovereign of the universe, the One who brings bread forth from the earth.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
הַמַּצִּיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

*Over (non-bread) foods made from wheat, oats, rye, barley, and spelt:*

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, sovereign of the universe, Creator of types of nourishment.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
בּוֹרֵא מִיְּנֵי מְנוּחָה.

*Over wine:*

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, sovereign of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

*Over tree fruit:*

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, sovereign of the universe, Creator of fruit of the tree.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

*Eitz or Adamah? Notice that when you think about which prayer to say, you're thinking about how the food you ate grew. Was it planted this season? Is it a perennial that produces new fruit every year? Can you imagine the tree or the field, where your food grew?*

*Over fruit from the earth:*

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, sovereign of the universe, Creator of fruit of the earth.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאָדָמָה.

*Over meat, fish, milk, eggs, and cheese, as well as beverages (other than wine):*

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, sovereign of the universe, by Whose word all things came to be.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
שׂוֹמֵר לְנוֹחָה בְּדָבָר.

*What is the difference between saying a bracha over a natural phenomenon, such as a rainbow, and saying a bracha over food?*

*One last thought on brachot: If you don't usually say food brachot, trying saying them for a week, or even a day, and see how they influence your experience of eating.*

## Wait - what was that bracha?

If they brought before him types of desserts, he recites over them the blessing, 'Creator of types of sweets;' over edible seeds he recites, 'Creator of types of seeds;' and over other herbs he recites, 'Creator of types of herbs;' and over greens he recites, 'Creator of the fruit of the ground.' Rabbi Judah says: [He recites,] 'Blessed are You at Whose word the earth sprouts'.

Rabbi Meir says: Even if one saw a loaf [of bread] and said, 'Blessed are You Who created this loaf, how nice it is,' that serves as its blessing. If one saw figs and said, 'Blessed are You Who created these figs, how nice they are,' that serves as their blessing.

Rabbi Yose says: Anyone who departs from the formula which the sages established for blessings has not fulfilled his obligation.

– *Tosefta Brachot 4:4-5*

הביאו לפניו מיני תרומה מברך עליהן  
'בורא מיני כסני', על החרעים הוא אומר  
'בורא מיני זרעים', ועל הדשאים הוא אומר  
'בורא מיני דשאים', ועל הירקות הוא  
אומר 'בורא פרי האדמה'. רבי יהודה אומר  
'ברוך מצמיח האדמה בדרבו'.

רבי מאיר אומר: אפלו ראה את הפת  
ואמר 'ברוך אשר ברא את הפת זו, כמה  
היא נאה', זו ברכתה. ראה את התאנים  
ואמר 'ברוך שברא את התאנים הללו,  
כמה נאים הן', זו ברכתה.

רבי יוסי אומר: כל המשנה ממטבע שטבעו  
חכמים בברכה – לא יצא.

What is the significance of the word "even" (afilu) in what Rabbi Meir is arguing? What can we infer about the previous formulations by contrast?

What does this discussion in the Tosefta show about the development of food brachot?

Do you agree with Rabbi Meir or Rabbi Yose?

## God Language

Some people have amended the traditional God-language of brachot to reflect their theological outlooks and ethical concerns. While reciting the blessings shown here and those in the liturgy, the following elements can be combined to create alternative formulas.

<i>barukh 'atah adonai</i>	ברוך אתה יהוה	Blessed are you Adonai
<i>berukha 'at yah</i>	ברוכה את יה	Blessed are you Yah
<i>nevarekh 'et</i>	נברך את	Let us Bless
<i>eloheyenu</i>	אלוהינו	our God
<i>he-shekhina</i>	השכינה	the Shekhina
<i>'ein ha-chayim</i>	עין החיים	Source of Life
<i>melekh ha-'olam</i>	מלך העולם	Sovereign of the universe
<i>chey ha-'olamim</i>	חי העולמים	Life of all the universe
<i>ruach ha-'olam</i>	רוח העולם	Spirit of the universe

How do these phrases differ in meaning and outlook?

– *Kol Hanesama (Reconstructionist Prayerbook)*

## Food for Thought:

- If you regularly say brachot, how does this practice help you feel gratitude? If you don't normally say brachot, how do you feel when you do?
- What are the arguments for using the traditional formulations? Or less traditional ones? Which do you choose to say, and why? And if you don't traditionally say a bracha, which of these most makes sense to you?

Deuteronomy 8 includes the phrase, “you shall eat, and be satisfied, and bless.” These three Hebrew words led to the entire Jewish tradition of bensching (saying blessings after we have eaten.) Whether you said *Birkat Hamazon* as a kid at summer camp with lots of banging on the table, or you say it after every meal, or never at all, this remarkable prayer is a fascinatingly rich reflection of the evolution of the Jewish relationship to food and to the world.

### Food for all

*Given that we know there is so much hunger in the world, what does it mean to praise God for being “hazan et ha-kol,” the one who “provides food for all”?*

Because of God’s great goodness, we have never lacked food, nor will we ever lack it—on account of God’s great name—since God feeds and provides for all and is good to all, and who supplies food for all God’s creatures which God brought into being. Blessed are You, God, who nourishes / provides food for all.

ובטובו הגדול תמיד לא חסר לנו  
ואל יחסר לנו מזון לעולם ועד.  
בַּעֲבוּר שְׁמוֹ הַגָּדוֹל כִּי הוּא אֵל זָן  
וּמַפְרִיֵּס לְכָל, וּמַטִּיב לְכָל וּמַכִּין מִזוֹן  
לְכָל בְּרִיּוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה  
יְהוָה, הַזָּן אֶת הַכֹּל.

### Land, food & covenant

*What are the components of the Jewish people’s relationship with God as listed here? How do they compare with other lists (such as in the Amidah, or in Dayenu in the Pesach Hagadah)? Why do you think these elements are included in the grace after meals?*

We thank You, Lord our God, for having given the heritage of a lovely, fine and spacious land to our fathers, and for having brought us out, Lord our God, from Egypt, and for rescuing us from slavery, and also for Your covenant which You sealed in our flesh, as well as for Your Torah which You taught us, and Your laws of which You told us, and for the life, grace and kindness You have granted us, and for the food which You supply and provide for us constantly, every day, all the time, and at every hour.

נוֹדָה לְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, עַל  
שֶׁהִנַּחֲלָתָ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ אֶרֶץ חֲמֻדָּה  
טוֹבָה וְרַחֲבָה, וְעַל שֶׁהוֹצֵאתָנוּ  
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם,  
וּפְדִיתָנוּ מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים, וְעַל  
בְּרִיתְךָ שֶׁחֲתַמְתָּ בְּבִשְׁרֵנוּ, וְעַל  
תּוֹרַתְךָ שֶׁלַּמְדַּתָּנוּ, וְעַל חֻקֶּיךָ  
שֶׁהוֹדַעְתָּנוּ, וְעַל חַיִּים חַוִּי וְחֶסֶד  
שֶׁחֻנַּנְתָּנוּ, וְעַל אֲכִילַת מִזוֹן  
שֶׁאַתָּה זָן וּמַפְרִיֵּס אוֹתָנוּ תָּמִיד,  
בְּכָל יוֹם וּבְכָל עֵת וּבְכָל שָׁעָה.

See Deuteronomy 8 in  
section 1.3 and 7.2

And so for everything, Adonai our God, we thank You and bless You—may Your name be blessed in the speech of all living beings, constantly, for all time. For it is written: “And you shall eat, and be satisfied, and bless the Lord your God for the good land God gave you.” Blessed are You, God, for the land and for the food.

וְעַל הַכֹּל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲנַחֲנוּ  
מוֹדִים לְךָ וּמְבָרְכִים אוֹתְךָ, יִתְבָּרַךְ  
שִׁמְךָ בְּפִי כָל חַי תָּמִיד לְעוֹלָם  
וָעֵד, כְּכַתוּב: וְאַכַּלְתָּ וּשְׂבַעְתָּ  
וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ עַל הָאֶרֶץ  
הַטּוֹבָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לְךָ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה  
יְהוָה, עַל הָאֶרֶץ וְעַל הַמִּזוֹן.

### Rebuild Jerusalem

*How would the nature of being Jewish be different if this paragraph was not included in the bensching? Discuss this, then read the text from Rabbi Joy Levitt on the opposite page, and then read this text again. How, if at all, does your understanding differ?*

And may You build up Jerusalem, the holy city, rapidly in our lifetimes. Blessed are You, God, who in your mercy builds up Jerusalem. Amen.

– Birkat Hamazon

וּבִנְיַה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם עִיר הַקֹּדֶשׁ בְּמַהֲרָה  
בְּיָמֵינוּ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, בּוֹנֵה  
בְּרַחֲמָיו יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, אָמֵן.

### Brich Rachamana

Blessed is the Merciful One,

Ruler of the world,

Who created this bread.

You are the source of Life for all that is,  
and your blessing flows through me.

– Aramaic from Talmud Bavli, Masekhet Brachot 40b. We think that the English words (which can be sung to the same melody but which are not a direct translation) are by Shefa Gold. If we're wrong, and you're the author, or you know who is, please let us know!

בְּרִיךְ רַחֲמָנָא  
מְלֵכָא דְעֵלְמָא  
מְרִיבָה דְהָאֵי פִיתָא

This bracha is based on the shortest bracha that will still fulfill your obligation (to say grace after meals) should you find yourself being invaded by an army or pursued by a lion.

In 1990 Roger Kamenetz was a participant in a group of rabbis and Jewish leaders who traveled to Tibet for an interfaith conversation with the Dalai Lama. He subsequently wrote a book about the experience called *The Jew in the Lotus*. Rabbi Joy Levitt was a participant on the trip. This excerpt is from a review of the book, which she wrote the following year.

### Praying for our holy city

The Tibetans became very moved upon learning that Jews pray for the rebuilding of Jerusalem after meals in their homes. They immediately made plans to see if they might write a Tibetan prayer articulating their yearning for Lhasa.

I was stunned by the new light suddenly cast on this very familiar prayer. I have recited grace after meals on Shabbat my entire life, and yet had never really grasped its role in preserving the Zionist dream in the hearts and minds of Jews throughout the generations. Since my return from India, I have never recited those words without thinking both of the Tibetans and of my deep longing for Zion at peace.

– Rabbi Joy Levitt, “The Dialogue with the Dalai Lama”

What role, if any, does the Birkat Hamazon play in your personal relationship to the Land of Israel? If you don't regularly say the Birkat, what do you think the effect might be if you did?

### Food for Thought:

- Do you normally say a grace after meals? Which one? Why? If you don't normally say one, how do you think it might feel to do so?
- How are the blessings said after the meal different or similar to those we say before eating? (See 2.3) Why do you think the blessings are so different?

Jewish tradition includes the idea of the *d'var torah*—the obligation to speak words of Torah whenever a group of people has gathered to eat. We trace here the elements of this idea and ask the question: how do the words we speak during a meal influence not only the meal itself but also the nature of what it means to be Jewish?

### If three have eaten...

*The joke in yeshiva was, of course, that we'd be eating together and someone would say "iiiiiffff three people..." And we would say, "Yofi! We've just fulfilled our obligation to learn words of Torah, by learning that we are obligated to learn words of Torah when we eat together!"*

– Rabbi Avi Finegold

*Why do you think this applies to three people but not two or four?*

Rabbi Shimon said: If three have eaten at one table and have not spoken over it words of Torah, it is as though they had eaten of the sacrifices of the dead, for it is written (Isaiah 28:8) "All tables are covered with filthy vomit; no place is clean." But if three have eaten at one table and have spoken over it words of Torah, it is as if they had eaten from the table of God, for it is written (Ezekiel 41:22) "He said to me, "This is the table that stands before God."

– *Pirkei Avot* 3:4

רבי שמעון אומר: שלשה שאכלו על שלחן אחד ולא אמרו עליו דברי תורה, כאלו אכלו מזבחי מתים, שנאמר: "כי כל שלחנות מלאו קיא צואה בלי מקום" (ישעיה כח:ח). אבל שלשה שאכלו על שלחן אחד ואמרו עליו דברי תורה, כאלו אכלו משלחנו של מקום, שנאמר: "וידבר אלי זה השלחן אשר לפני יהוה" (יחזקאל מא:כב).

### The D'var Torah

*Why do you think it was not deemed sacrilegious to discuss words of Torah at the table?*

I love that Jews have the tradition of giving a *d'var torah* at a Shabbat meal. At a dinner party, conversation might flit about, from engaging debate to lighthearted banter, and this is enjoyable. Someone may have important news or an exciting new idea to share. But it's different than the choreographed set piece of a *d'var torah*. This is the scene:

You've eaten, you're full. You're schmoozing. Then someone taps a glass and says, "In this week's *parsha*, we learn that..." And we give the person our attention, and for two or five or more minutes we follow an exegetical journey in Torah, contemporary ideas, values, challenges. It could be cute, it could be profound. We hear them say, "and this makes me think of..." and we also are provoked to think, without the complication of conversation to obscure our thinking before we articulate it. And we hear, "In conclusion, I bless us all that..." and the learning ends with the gift of an idea or questions to ponder.

We not only eat, but share pieces of ourselves with others at the table, bringing Torah once again out of history and into the dining room, and creating time and space to enjoy the wisdom of our tradition.

– Anna Hanau

## A person's table

*"And he spoke to me, this is the table that stands before God." (Ezekiel 41:22)*

This verse in Ezekiel refers to the Temple—and the Temple is here called a 'table.' It appears that there is a table that is similar to the Temple. What table is this? This refers to a table upon which many people share words of Torah.

– *Magen Avot of Rabbi Shimon ben Tzemaiah*  
*Duran*

Rabbi Yohanan and Resh Lakish both explain: At the time when the Temple stood, the altar used to make atonement for a person; now a person's table makes atonement for him.

– *Talmud Bavli, Masekhet Chagigah 27a*

וַיֹּדֶבֶר אֵלַי: זֶה הַשֻּׁלְחָן, אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי  
יְהוָה" (יחזקאל מא:כב).

*What connection is made between Torah and table here?*

וְזֶה הַפֶּסוּק בִּיחֲזָקֵאל עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ, וְלִפְנֵי  
שֹׁנֵי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ שֹׁלְחָן, נִרְאֶה שֵׁשׁ שֹׁלְחָן  
דּוֹמֶה לַמִּזְבֵּחַ, וְאֵי זֶה הוּא? זֶה שֻׁלְחָן שְׂאֵמֶר  
עָלָיו דְּבָרֵי תוֹרָה.

רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן וְרִישׁ לָקִישׁ לְקִישׁ דְּאָמְרֵי תְרוּיָהוּ:  
בְּזֶמַן שֶׁבֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ קָיָים מִזְבֵּחַ מְכַפֵּר עַל  
אָדָם. עַכְשָׁיו, שֻׁלְחָנוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם מְכַפֵּר עָלָיו.

*What do you think this means?*  
(If you want to see Rashi's explanation, which points this conversation in a different direction, see 5.3)

## Food for Thought:

- How is conversation over food different from conversation not over food?
- If you don't already have the practice of sharing words of Torah when you eat, what do you think of the idea? If you do this, how is a *d'var Torah* offered at a meal different than one offered, say, in shul or somewhere without food?



*"The reason only one person was created [in the Genesis story] is to teach you that whosoever kills a single soul the Torah considers to have killed a complete world. And whosoever sustains and saves a single soul, it is as if that person sustained a whole world."*

*– Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5*

## Chapter 8

# Food & Ethics: the implications of our food choices



*"There are people in the world so hungry that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread."*

*– Mahatma Gandhi*

The story of our food does not begin and end on our plate.

Food is produced somewhere, by someone, under some circumstances. More and more people are asking not only, "Is this food good for my body?" but also, "Is this food good for the world?"

Jewish tradition has long made the connection between food and social justice, exhorting us whenever possible to share our table with the hungry and to remember the orphan, the widow, the stranger. We were once slaves in Egypt; our memory of our experience of injustice is intended to be a constant reminder to do justice in the world.

The texts that follow raise a broad range of issues. The common thread is the relationship between ethical living and ethical eating.

There is a direct connection between agricultural production, social justice and our relationship with God in the Torah. We no longer live in the agrarian world of the biblical land of Israel; yet the underlying issues remain with us today.

### Shikhecha: Leaving sheaves

*What reasons does the text give for leaving the gleanings behind for the stranger, orphan and widow?*

*How, if at all, do memories of oppression influence our choices today?*

*What is the difference between memory and history?*

*What is the difference between gathering everything and giving a donation to the poor and this rule of incomplete harvesting?*

*What are the different roles of forgetting and remembering in this passage?*

<sup>19</sup> When you reap the harvest in your field and overlook a sheaf in the field, do not turn back to get it; it shall go to the stranger, the orphan, and the widow — in order that the Lord your God may bless you in all your undertakings.

<sup>20</sup> When you beat down the fruit of your olive trees, do not go over them again; that shall go to the stranger, the orphan, and the widow. <sup>21</sup> When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not pick it over again; that shall go to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. <sup>22</sup> Always remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore do I command you to do this thing.

– Deuteronomy 24:19–22

בִּי תִקְצֹר קְצִירְךָ בְּשֹׂדֶךְ וְשִׁכַּחְתָּ עֹמֶר בְּשֹׂדֶךְ  
לֹא תָשׁוּב לִקְחָתוֹ לִגֵּר לִיתוֹם וְלֵאלֶמְנָה  
יְהִיָּה: לְמַעַן יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכֹל  
מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֶיךָ.

בִּי תִחַבֵּט זֵיתְךָ לֹא תִפָּאֵר אַחֲרֶיךָ: לִגֵּר  
לִיתוֹם וְלֵאלֶמְנָה יְהִיָּה. בִּי תִבָּצֵר כֶּרְמְךָ  
לֹא תַעֲזוֹלֵל אַחֲרֶיךָ: לִגֵּר לִיתוֹם וְלֵאלֶמְנָה  
יְהִיָּה. וְזָכַרְתָּ בִּי עֶבֶד הָיִיתָ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם;  
עַל כֵּן אֲנִי מְצַוְךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה.

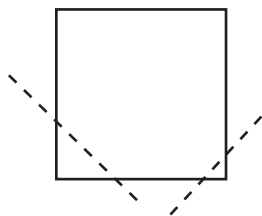
### Pe'ah: The corners of your field

*Imagine a square field. If you were to draw a diagonal line across the field, you'd be left with a triangular "corner". Depending on where you draw this line, however, your corner could be large or small. In this way, the text builds in the notion that each person should share their corners—whatever size that means.*

<sup>9</sup> When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. <sup>10</sup> You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I the Lord am your God.

– Leviticus 19:9–10

וּבְקִצְרְכֶם אֶת קְצִיר אֲרֻצְכֶם לֹא תִבְלֶה  
פֶּאֶת שְׂדֶךְ לְקָצֵר; וְלִקְט קְצִירְךָ לֹא תִלְקֹט.  
וְכֶרְמְךָ לֹא תַעֲזוֹלֵל וּפֶרֶט כֶּרְמְךָ לֹא תִלְקֹט:  
לְעָנִי וְלִגֵּר תַּעֲזוֹב אֹתָם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם.



### An amazing idea

In 2004, Hazon launched the first Community-Supported Agriculture project in the Jewish community. We called it “Tuv Ha’Aretz,” which we translate as both “good for the land” and “best of the land.” The preceding winter, we were talking about food charity and *pe’ah* at our Beit Midrash, a 12-weeks series on “How & What should a Jew Eat?” We were new to the idea of CSA, and so we asked: if we are no longer farmers with fields to leave gleanings for the ‘poor, widow and orphan,’ then what is our responsibility to food charity, as Jews and as twenty-first century city-folk?

Dr. Phyllis Bieri said, “Well, with a CSA, there are always leftovers!” We realized that, indeed, it was inevitable that some members would not pick up their share every week, and that therefore, built into the system of Tuv Ha’Aretz (which met a series of other contemporary food issue concerns, being fresh, local, mostly organic, minimally-packaged, etc.) was also a mechanism that enabled us to “observe *peah*” as well. It made us even more excited to begin Tuv Ha’Aretz at Ansche Chesed that summer. The leftovers that year were taken every week to a soup kitchen on the Upper West Side. It was another example of one of Anna’s favorite quotes from Michael Corbett: “You know you’re on the right track when your solution to one problem accidentally solves several others.”

## Orlah: Fruit trees

<sup>23</sup> When you enter the land and plant any tree for food, you shall regard its fruit as forbidden. Three years it shall be forbidden for you, not to be eaten. <sup>24</sup> In the fourth year all its fruit shall be set aside for jubilation before the Lord; <sup>25</sup> and only in the fifth year may you use its fruit — that its yield to you may be increased: I the Lord am your God.

– *Leviticus 19:23–25*

וְכִי תִבְאוּ אֶל הָאָרֶץ וְנִטְעַתֶם כָּל עֵץ מֵאֲכָל  
וְעֵרְלָתֶם עֵרְלָתוֹ אֶת פְּרִיָּו; שְׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים יִהְיֶה  
לָכֶם עֵרְלִים לֹא יֵאָכֵל. וּבִשְׁנָה הָרְבִיעִית  
יִהְיֶה כָּל פְּרִיָּו קֹדֶשׁ הַלְוִיִּם לַיהוָה. וּבִשְׁנָה  
הַחֲמִישִׁית תֹּאכְלוּ אֶת פְּרִיָּו לְהוֹסִיף לָכֶם  
תְּבוּאָתוֹ: אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם.

How many years? Tu B'shevat, the 15th of the month of Shevat, is the new year of the trees. Originally it was, in a sense, the beginning and end of the "tax year," so that you'd know when to bring the tithes from your tree to the Temple.

If you were to plant a fig tree in your garden, and had to wait five years before you could eat any of the fruit (and in the fourth year you gave all the figs away), how would you feel? What sort of self-restraint would that signify, and engender?

## Aser t'aser: Tithing

<sup>22</sup> You shall surely tithe every year a tenth part of all the yield of your sowing that is brought from the field. <sup>23</sup> You shall consume the tithes of your new grain and wine and oil, and the firstlings of your herds and flocks, in the presence of the Lord your God, in the place where God will choose to establish His name, so that you may learn to revere the Lord your God forever.

– *Deuteronomy 14:22–23*

עֲשֵׂר תַעֲשֶׂר אֶת כָּל תְּבוּאָת זֶרְעֶךָ הַיֵּצֵא  
הַשָּׂדֶה שָׁנָה שָׁנָה. וְאָכַלְתָּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ  
בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר לְשִׁבְן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם מֵעֵשֶׂר  
דְּגָנְךָ תִּירָשְׁךָ וְיִצְהָרְךָ וּבְכֹרֶת בְּקָרְךָ וְצֹאנְךָ:  
לְמַעַן תִּלְמַד לִירְאָה אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כָּל  
הַיָּמִים.

Hebrew signifies intensity by doubling a verb. So what in English is here translated as "You shall surely tithe," is in Hebrew "aser t'aser." "Eser" in Hebrew means ten. "Aser t'aser" means, most literally, something like "ten-percenting, you shall ten percent." "Tithing", which sounds vague, is actually very literal.

## Tithing today

I have one friend who tithes a portion of her income each year, and she explicitly uses this language—"tithing"—to make clear to herself and her family that she is fulfilling her contemporary understanding of the biblical obligation, not merely "giving charity". She's quite clear that not everything that is "tax deductible" is to her, tithing—and some sorts of tithing (giving to a homeless person) are not tax deductible.

– *Nigel Savage*

Think about tithing a proportion of your income in the next week to those deeply in need.

## Food for Thought:

- What are the different agricultural rules, and what are the reasons given for them? What do they all have in common? How are they different?
- What do you think our obligation to the orphan, stranger and widow could be or should be if we are not producing our own food, and/or if we are not living in the land of Israel?
- The Torah reiterates the refrain "the stranger, the orphan and the widow"—signifying the weakest, poorest and most vulnerable members of their society. Who in your community or city or country is the weakest, the poorest and the most vulnerable? How might you help?

Caring for the stranger, the orphan and the widow is a constant refrain throughout Jewish tradition, and Jews have always been at the forefront of social justice issues—within and beyond the Jewish community. We thank God in the *Birkat Hamazon* (grace after meals) for ‘feeding the world’—but we know in fact that many people are hungry every day, all over the world. Many of us are privileged to live in a world where we can meet our basic needs; yet for many even the ability to sit and study about food might be considered a luxury. What is our obligation to share what we have with others? If we can never do enough to fix all the world’s problems, how do we prevent our hearts from being hardened yet also protect ourselves from feeling overwhelmed? How should we act, as individuals and as communities, both to help people in need individually, and to create a healthier and more sustainable world for all?

### Shepherds and watchmen of orchards

*What is the difference between a watchman of an orchard and the owner of an orchard?*

*On whom is this text placing the obligation to avoid the possibility of theft?*

One may not buy wool, milk or kids from shepherds [of the flocks of others]. Nor may one buy wood or fruit from the watchman of orchards. ... [Even in circumstances where it is permitted to buy something,] in all cases in which the seller asks that the goods be hidden, it is forbidden [to make such a purchase].

– *Talmud Bavli, Masekhet Bava Kama 10:9 (Mishna)*

אין לוקחין מן הרועים צמר וחלב וגדיים  
ולא משומרי פירות עצים ופירות. [...]  
ובולן שאמרו להטמין אסור.

### Our sphere of obligation

*This text is the clearest explication of the traditional understanding of how we change the world. It presumes that we can't, by ourselves, fix the whole world, but that we begin where we can and move out in concentric circles from there. What do you think of this? What might this mean with regards to how you eat?*

The support of oneself comes before anyone else. A person is not obligated to give tzedakah until a basic livelihood has been attained. After that is support of parents, then the support of grown children, then siblings, then all other relatives, then neighbors, then members of one's local community, then members of other communities.

– *Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 252:3, Rema*

פרנסת עצמו קודמת לכל אדם, ואינו חייב  
לתת צדקה עד שיהיה לו פרנסתו, ואחר  
כך יקדים פרנסת אביו ואמו, אם הם עניים,  
והם קודמים לפרנסת בנים. ואחר כך בנים,  
והם קודמים לאחיו, והם קודמים לשאר  
קרובים, והקרובים קודמים לשכנים, ושכנים  
לאנשי עירו, ואנשי עירו לעיר אחרת.

### Jews & non-Jews

*The texts on this page do not require that Jews help only other Jews. In what situation, if any, do you think it would be appropriate to first offer help within the Jewish community?*

In a city where non-Jews and Jews live, the tzedakah collectors collect from Jews and non-Jews and support Jewish and non-Jewish poor; we visit Jewish and non-Jewish sick and bury Jewish and non-Jewish dead, and comfort Jewish and non-Jewish mourners, and return lost goods of non-Jews and Jews, to promote the ways of peace.

– *Talmud Yerushalmi, Masekhet Demai 4:1*

עיר שיש בה גוים וישראל הגבאים גובין  
משל ישראל ומשל גוים, ומפרנסין עניים  
ישראל ועניים גוים, ומבקרין חולי ישראל  
וחולי גוים, וקוברין מתי ישראל ומתי גוים,  
ומנחמין אבלי ישראל ואבלי גוים,  
ומכניסין בלי גוים וכלי ישראל, מפני  
דרבי שלום.

## Embodied energy

I can't believe it, but nine berries later, each one has provided a different experience; some implode in my mouth, others slowly melt, others are sweet and silky, some are warm and smoky. It's amazing that such a small package can produce such a powerful experience.

I try to get Anthony to expound on what makes these so good. I want to hear about technique, some secret that I can take with me. Instead, he says, "If you want good fruit, you have to treat your pickers well, good trellising for ease of picking, good outhouses, hot coffee at the right times."

Hot coffee! Good outhouses! I was expecting him to tell me about pruning or a particular blend of compost or special irrigation techniques. And yet, if you believe as I do that food embodies the energy of the people who grow and harvest it, then coffee and outhouses and the well-being of those doing the work are as important as any technique.

– Michael Ableman, *Fields of Plenty*

## "When you pray, move your feet"

<sup>21</sup> I loathe, I spurn your festivals, I am not appeased by your solemn assemblies.

<sup>22</sup> If you offer Me burnt offerings, or your meal offerings, I will not accept them; I will pay no heed to your gifts of fatlings.

<sup>23</sup> Spare Me the sound of your hymns, and let Me not hear the music of your lutes. <sup>24</sup> But let justice well up like water, Righteousness like an unfailing stream!

– Amos 5:21-25

שָׁנְאֵתִי מִאֲסֻדֹּתֶיךָ; וְלֹא אֲרִיחַ  
בְּעֻצְרֹתֶיךָ. כִּי אִם תַּעֲלֵוּ לִי עֹלֹת  
וּמִנְחֹתֶיךָ לֹא אֲרִיחַ; וְשָׁלֶם מְרִיאֲכֶם לֹא  
אֲבִיט. הִסֵּר מַעְלֵי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ שְׂרִידָיו; וְזִמְרַת נָבְלָיו  
לֹא אֲשָׁמַע. וַיִּגַּל בְּמִים מְשֻׁפָּט; וַצִּדְקָה בְּנַחֲל  
אֵיתָן.

## Negotiating our responsibility

<sup>17</sup> You shall not hate your kinsfolk in your heart. Reprove your kinsman but incur no guilt because of him. <sup>18</sup> You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your countrymen. Love your fellow as yourself: I am the Lord.

– Leviticus 19:17-18

לֹא תִשָּׂא אֶת אָחִיךָ בְּלִבְבְּךָ; הֲזִכָּה תֹכִיחַ  
אֶת עַמִּיתְךָ, וְלֹא תִשָּׂא עָלָיו חֵטָא.  
לֹא תִקֵּם וְלֹא תִטֹּר אֶת בְּנֵי עַמְּךָ וְאֶהְבֶּתָ  
לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ: אֲנִי יְהוָה.

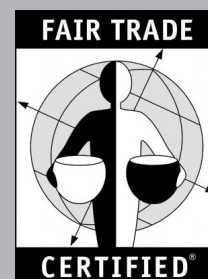
## Food for Thought:

- In what ways does buying produce that may have been grown with unfair labor and environmental practices constitute buying goods that have been stolen? What about them is stolen?
- How does the fact that our food is grown outside our community change the hierarchy of our obligation?
- If you reflect on the texts on these two pages together, how might you see that they influence each other? In what way, if at all, do they prompt you to eat differently?

Have you ever had the experience of tasting a fruit that was absolutely incredible? What made your experience so incredible?

### Fair Trade

Fair Trade uses the same principle that Ableman describes: commodities are made of more than just soil and sun, and it takes more than just money to produce them. When you buy Fair Trade coffee, tea, bananas and chocolate, you are supporting the social and economic health of the people and communities who grow them.



How does this passage understand the relationship between your own actions and someone else's? Do you think it is fair that we "bear our neighbor's sin" if we don't rebuke them for their wrongdoing?



The first example of large-scale food planning and subsidies in Jewish tradition is the story of Joseph and Pharaoh in the Torah. Seven years of plenty, seven years of famine, and a process to buy, store and distribute the grain over the entire fourteen-year period. Food production and distribution since ancient times has required complicated choices to be made. The texts on these pages from different eras and different worlds address a series of complex issues. The Talmudic passage below is especially remarkable. Read these texts carefully, as an introduction to the complexities of planning food production in a world of six billion people.

### Vegetables at the market

*The first part of this text is about the relationship between short term choices, longer term implications, and learned human behavior. What do you think of each of Rav Huna's choices? If you had the money, would you choose to replicate his behavior or not?*

Raba said to Rafram bar Papa: Tell me some of the good deeds which Rabbi Huna did. [Rafram bar Papa] said to him: [...]

On the eve of every Sabbath he would send a messenger to the market and any vegetables that the [market] gardeners had left over he bought up and had them thrown into the river.

Should he not rather have had these distributed among the poor? [He was afraid] lest they would then at times be led to rely upon him and would not trouble to buy any for themselves.

Why did he not give the vegetables to the domestic animals? He was of the opinion that food fit for human consumption may not be given to animals.

Then why did he purchase them at all? This would lead [the gardeners] to do wrong in the future [by not providing an adequate supply].

...When he had a meal he would open the door wide and declare, Whosoever is in need let him come and eat.

Raba said: All these things I could myself carry out except the last one because there are so many [people] in Mahuza.

— *Talmud Bavli, Masekhet Ta'anit 20b-21a*

אמר ליה רבא לרפרם בר פפא:  
לימא לן מר מהני מילי מעלייתא דהוה  
עביר רב הונא אמר ליה: ...

וכל פניא דמעלי שבתא הוה משדר  
שלוחא לשוקא, וכל ירקא דהוה פייש להו  
לגינאי – זבין ליה, ושדי ליה לנהרא.

וליתביה לעניים?  
זמנין דסמכא דעתיה, ולא אתו למיזבן.

ולשדייה לבהמה?  
קסבר מאכל אדם אין מאכלין לבהמה.

ולא לזבניה כלל?  
נמצאת מכשילן לעתיד לבא.

פי הוה כרך ריפתא הוה פתח לבביה ואמר:  
'כל מאן דצריך – ליתי וליכול.'

אמר רבא: פולחו מצינא מקיימנא, לבר  
מהא דלא מצינא למיעבר, משום דנפיש  
בני חילא דמחוזה.

*How does Raba's comment shed further light on this passage?*



## Outrage during the Great Depression

The works of the roots of the vines, of the trees, must be destroyed to keep up the price, and this is the saddest, bitterest thing of all. Carloads of oranges dumped on the ground. The people come from miles to take the fruit, but this could not be. How would they buy oranges at twenty cents a dozen if they could drive out and pick them up? And men with hoses squirt kerosene on the oranges, and they are angry at the crime, angry at the people who have come to take the fruit. A million people hungry, needing the fruit — and kerosene sprayed over the golden mountains.

– John Steinbeck, *Grapes of Wrath*

## Supply & Demand

The free market has never worked in agriculture and it never will. The economics of a family farm are very different than a firm's: when prices fall, the firm can lay off people, idle factories, and make fewer widgets. Eventually the market finds a new balance between supply and demand. But the demand for food isn't elastic; people don't eat more just because food is cheap.

– George Naylor, President of the National Family Farms Coalition, as quoted in Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*

## Food for Thought:

- In what ways are Rav Huna's actions different from the "men with the hoses" in Steinbeck's story? How are they similar?
- Do you think the government has an obligation to help support farmers? To help feed hungry people? Why or why not? Do you think individuals have either of these obligations?
- What creative policies do you think Rav Huna might suggest if he were the US Secretary of Agriculture today?

### Modern effects of crop subsidies

Through legislation called the Farm Bill, the US government spends billions of dollars "supporting American agriculture." The way the money is distributed has a direct effect on food prices, which in turn affects diet choices and general health. These numbers help tell the story:

More than \$50 billion was paid to corn farmers from 1995-2005.

Over the past thirty years, consumption of high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) has increased 1,000%.

Soft drink consumption has more than doubled since 1971. The average teenage boy drinks two 12-ounce sodas per day – 700+ cans a year.

Less than \$1 million was spent by the USDA to promote the 3,700 farmers' markets in the United States in 2005, while \$9.4 billion was paid to corn farmers.

Between 1985 and 2000, the real price of fruits and vegetables increased by 40%, while prices for soft drinks decreased by 24%.

Between 2003 and 2005, 66% of crop subsidies went to 10% of farmers.

Between 1997 and 2005, the industrial broiler chicken industry saved \$11.25 billion, and the industrial hog industry saved \$8.5 billion from Farm Bill policies that kept corn and soybean prices below the cost of production.

See Notes for sources.

Many of us are active in helping our communities in many ways—but feeding people is not always the first thing that we think of when we want to work to make the world a better place. Jewish tradition has a commitment to social justice in general, and feeding the hungry in particular. Every year on Passover, we open our doors to share our table and our food with people less fortunate than us. Our celebration of freedom reminds us of those who are less free than we are. But if our tradition teaches “let all who are hungry come and eat,” how in practice do we fulfil that injunction?

### How much is enough?

*Most people do not even reach the level of Job in this passage, much less Abraham. But this passage is, as you see, consistent with a strong thread in Jewish tradition about providing for those in need. If you were to choose to be a living part of this chain of tradition, how might you emulate Job—or Abraham?*

For more on hospitality, see 5.3

#### Tamarisk / Eshel Tree

There are eight or perhaps nine species of tamarisk [in the Middle East]... They are shrubs or small trees, with a flattened hemispherical comus, and brittle branches and twigs, with minute scale-like leaves, white or pinkish, perfect or dioecious flowers, in dense spike-like racemes. Most of them thrive especially in sandy soil, or exposures where they receive the sea air laden with salt.

– G.E. Post, *Dictionary of the Bible*

A shade-providing tree in a desert landscape, the tamarisk is a symbol of hospitality. The rabbis of the Talmud made a mnemonic from the letters of the tree's name, **אשל**, to refer to Abraham's hospitality:

א - *achilah*: he fed them

ש - *sh'tiyah*: he gave them drinks

ל - *linah*: he provided a place for them to stay

When the great calamity befell Job, he pleaded with the Holy One. “Master of the Universe, did I not feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, as it is written, “Have I eaten bread alone, and orphans not eaten from it?” (Job 31:16). And did I not clothe the naked, as it is written, “Was he not warmed by the fleece of my sheep?” (Job 31:20).

However, the Holy One answered Job, “Job, you have not yet reached half the measure [of hospitality] extended by Abraham. You sat in your house waiting for guests to come to you. To him who was accustomed to eat wheat bread, you gave wheat bread; to him who was accustomed to eat meat, you gave meat; and to him who was accustomed to drink wine, you gave wine.

But Abraham did not act this way. He went out, getting about in the world. When he met prospective guests, he brought them to his home. Even to him who was not accustomed to eat wheat bread, he gave wheat bread; to him who was not accustomed to eat meat, he gave meat; and to him who was not accustomed to drink wine, he gave wine. Not only that, but he got busy and built spacious mansions along the highways, and stocked them with food and drink, so that whoever entered ate, drank, and blessed Heaven.

Therefore, unusual satisfaction was given to Abraham, and whatever any person requested was to be found in his house, as it is written “And he planted a tamarisk tree (*“eshel”*) in Be’er Sheva.

– *Avot de Rabbi Natan 7 on Genesis 21:33*

ובשָׂבָא עָלָיו הָהוּא פּוֹרְעָנוּת גָּדוֹל אָמַר  
לְפָנַי הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: “רְבוּנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם,  
לֹא הֵייתִי מֵאֲכִיל רַעֲבִים וּמִשְׁקָה צְמֵאִים?”  
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: “וְאֶכֶל פֶּתִי לְבָדִי, וְלֹא אֶכֶל יְתוֹם  
מִמֶּנָּה” (אִיּוֹב ל”א ט”ז). וְלֹא הֵייתִי מִלְבִּישׁ  
עֲרוּמִים? שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: “וּמִגֵּזוּ כֶּבֶשׂי יִתְחַמֵּם” (שִׁם  
שֵׁם כ’).

אִף עַל פִּי בֶן אָמַר לוֹ הַקְדוֹשׁ  
בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְאִיּוֹב: “אִיּוֹב, עֲדִין לֹא הִגַּעְתָּ  
לְחֻצִי שִׁיעוֹר שֶׁל אֲבִרְהָם. אֵתָּה יוֹשֵׁב וְשׁוֹהָה  
בְּתוֹךְ בֵּיתְךָ וְאוֹרְחִין נִכְנָסִים אֶצְלְךָ. אֵת  
שֶׁדָּרְבָּךְ לֵאכּוֹל פֶּת חֲטִים הֵאֱכִלְתָּ פֶת  
חֲטִים, אֵת שֶׁדָּרְבָּךְ לֵאכּוֹל בֶּשָׂר הֵאֱכִלְתָּ  
בֶּשָׂר, אֵת שֶׁדָּרְבָּךְ לְשִׁתּוֹת יַיִן הִשְׁקִיתָו יַיִן.

אֶכֶל אֲבִרְהָם לֹא עָשָׂה כֵן, אֲלֵא יוֹצֵא  
וּמַהֲדֵר בְּעוֹלָם, וְכֹשִׁימָצֵא אוֹרְחִין מִכְנִיסֵם  
בְּתוֹךְ בֵּיתוֹ. אֵת שְׂאִין דָּרְבּוֹ לֵאכּוֹל פֶּת  
חֲטִין הֵאֱכִילָהוּ פֶת חֲטִין, אֵת שְׂאִין דָּרְבּוֹ  
לֵאכּוֹל בֶּשָׂר הֵאֱכִילָהוּ בֶּשָׂר, וְאֵת שְׂאִין  
דָּרְבּוֹ לְשִׁתּוֹת יַיִן הִשְׁקָהוּ יַיִן. וְלֹא עוֹד אֲלֵא  
עָמַד וּבָנָה פְּלִטְרִין גְּדוֹלִים עַל הַדְּרָכִים  
וְהֵנִיחַ שֵׁם מֵאֲכִיל וּמִשְׁקָה, וְכָל הַבָּא וְנִכְנָס  
אֶכֶל וְשָׁתָה וּבִרְךָ לְשָׁמַיִם.

לְפִיכֶךָ נַעֲשִׂית לוֹ נַחַת רוּחַ. וְכָל שֶׁהָפָה  
שׂוֹאֵל מְצוֹי בְּתוֹךְ בֵּיתוֹ שֶׁל אֲבִרְהָם  
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: “וַיֵּשֶׁע אֲשֶׁל בְּבֶאֱר  
שֶׁבַע” (בְּרֵאשִׁית כ”א ל”ג).

### To each his own

To one for whom bread is suitable, give bread; to the one who needs dough, give dough; to one for whom money is required, give money; to one for whom it is fitting to put the food in that one's mouth, put it in.

– *Sifre on Parshat Re'eh*

הָרָאוּ לִיתֵּן לוֹ פֶּתַת, נוֹתְנִים לוֹ פֶּתַת; עֵיסָה,  
נוֹתְנִים לוֹ עֵיסָה; מָעָה, נוֹתְנִים לוֹ מָעָה;  
לְהַאֲכִילוֹ בְּתוֹךְ פִּי, מֵאֲכִילִים אוֹתוֹ בְּתוֹךְ  
פִּי.

What might be the modern equivalent of the four things listed here? In your community? In Israel? Elsewhere in the world?

### Let all who are hungry come and eat ("ha lachma anya")

This is the bread of affliction, which our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. All who are hungry, come and eat. All who are in need, come and partake in the Pesach offering. Now we are here, next year we will be in the Land of Israel; now we are slaves, next year we will be free.

– *Pesach Haggadah*

הָא לַחֲמַת עֲנִיָּא וְיֵאכְלוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ  
בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם. כָּל דְּכָפִין יִמְנֵי  
וְיִיכַל, כָּל דְּעָדִיד יִמְנֵי וְיִפְסַח. הַשְׁתָּא  
הֵכָא, לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל.  
הַשְׁתָּא עַבְדֵּי, לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּנֵי חֵרִין.

What does it mean for Jewish people to have recited 'Ha lachma anya' at Passover every year for 2000 years?

### Food for Thought:

- What is your personal experience with giving *tzedakah*, especially feeding people who are hungry? How much do you give? How do you decide what you give?
- Contemporary society makes it difficult to literally invite strangers into our house. How can we still fulfill the obligation of Passover, and the prophets, and Jewish tradition generally, which exhort us to share our table with the hungry?

In Jewish tradition the world-to-come is an important and central idea. At the same time, we pragmatically recognize that our future is not in heaven as much as it is in our children. Much of our philanthropic giving and community organizing in the Jewish community is focused around family and Jewish renewal. How does our tradition of valuing our children and their future inform our discussion about food?

### Choni ha-Ma'agel

*Why seventy years? "For the Lord said: When Babylon's seventy years are over, I will take note of and I will fulfill you my promise of favor: to bring you back to this place."  
(Jeremiah 29:10)*

*People often read this text as a metaphor. But imagine it literally. What will be the date 70 years from the day you're reading this? What do you think the world will look like then? The place you are right now? And if you planted a tree, what tree would you plant, and where?  
And as a bonus: Go plant it!*

*Another saying that we like is this:*

*"The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The second best time is now."*

Rabbi Johanan said: Throughout the days of his life, this righteous man [Choni] was troubled about the meaning of the verse, "A song of ascents: When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were veritable dreamers." (Ps. 126:1)

He said: Is it possible for a man to dream continuously for seventy years?

One day he was journeying on the road and he saw a man planting a carob tree.

He asked him, How long does it take [for this tree] to bear fruit?

He replied: Seventy years.

He then further asked him: Are you certain that you will live another seventy years?

He replied: I found [ready grown] carob trees in the world; as my forefathers planted these for me so I too plant these for my children.

– Talmud Bavli, Masekhet Ta'anit 23a

אמר רבי יוחנן: כל ימיו של אותו צדיק היה מצטער על מקרא זה (תהלים קכו) "שיר המעלות בשוב ה' את שביבת ציון היינו בחלמים."  
אמר: מי איכא דגיים שבועין שנין בחלמא?

יומא חד הוה אזל באורחא, חזייה לההוא גברא דהוה נטע חרובא.  
אמר ליה: עד כמה שנין טעין?

אמר ליה: עד שבועין שנין.

אמר ליה: פשיטא לך דחייית שבועין שנין?

אמר ליה: האי גברא עלמא בחרובא אשבחתייה, כי היכי דשתלי לי אבהתי – שתלי נמי לבראי.

### Thanks, kids

We do not inherit the Earth from our parents, we borrow it from our children.

– Native American Saying

*Where the past and the future meet: Noa, age 9, kneading dough for challah at Hazon's 2006 Food Conference.*

For more on Challah, see 4.5



## Sustainability

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

– Brundtland Commission report to the United Nations on Sustainability (1987), “Our Common Future”

## Half-Dipper River

A river behind Eihei-ji, the Zen temple [Dogen] founded in Japan, contained an abundance of water. Mountain streams and waterfalls flowed into it. Nevertheless, when Dogen went to the stream, he would take a dipper of water and then put back half a dipper for future generations. That river is still called Half-Dipper River.

– Bernie Glassman, *Instructions to the Cook*

*What are the ways that you're contributing to leaving the world in better shape than you found it?*

## Guests of the future

Twenty four things prevent repentance. ...

Among them are five of which, of one who does them, it is assumed he will not repent, since they are “light matters” in the eyes of most people, and the transgressor imagines that he is not transgressing.

1) One who eats from a meal that is not sufficient for its hosts – there is a hint of theft. And he imagines that he has not transgressed and says: “I ate nothing except with their permission.”

– Maimonides, *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 4

עֲשָׂרִים וְאַרְבָּעָה דְּבָרִים מַעֲכָבִין אֶת  
הַתְּשׁוּבָה...

וּמִהֶן חֲמִשָּׁה דְּבָרִים הָעוֹשֶׂה אוֹתָן אֵין  
חֲזָקָתוֹ לָשׁוּב מֵהֶן, לְפִי שֶׁהֵן דְּבָרִים  
קְלִים בְּעֵינֵי רַב הָאָדָם, וְנִמְצָא חוֹטֵא  
וְהוּא יִדְמֶה שְׂאִין זֶה חֲטָא; וְאֵלוֹ הֵן:  
(א) הָאוֹכֵל מִסְעֻדָּה שְׂאִינָה מִסְפָּקָת  
לְבַעֲלֶיהָ, שֶׁזֶּה אֶבֶק גָּזֵל, וְהוּא מִדְּמֶה  
שֶׁלֹּא חֲטָא וְיֹאמַר: כְּלוּם אֶכְלָתִי אֵלֹא  
בְּרִשְׁוֹתָיו.

*Basic ideas of food and fairness we have understood since we were children. If there were three kids and three cupcakes, there is no way that we would ever have been allowed more than one cupcake – it wouldn't be fair. Rambam here is cautioning us not to eat more than our fair share in a situation where we might not even realize it. In the spirit of hospitality many hosts save their best food for when guests are visiting. We need to be careful not to eat too much if our hosts are needy.*

*How does your understanding of this text change if you consider the “hosts” to be future generations? or, alternatively, to be other people in the world who bear the brunt of our overconsumption? See 8.2*

- Daniel Bloom

## Food for Thought:

- Do you have children? How, if at all, has your attitude towards food and sustainability changed since having kids? (If you don't have children, but might one day, how do you think you might answer this question?)
- In what ways do you think your community or city is most sustainable? In what ways is it least sustainable?



There are many reasons people choose to eat little or no meat, including concern for animals, health, environmental issues, ethical concerns about commercial meat production, and many others. Within Jewish sources, there are some very vocal proponents of vegetarianism. And there are also many sources in Jewish tradition that clearly permit, and encourage, meat eating, especially for celebration. It seems clear that we and the planet would be better off if most of us ate less meat, but clearly whether you choose to eat any meat is up to you. Either way, we believe—and Jewish tradition teaches—that meat consumption is something we should do thoughtfully, with full awareness.

### Eat Plants

*What can we learn from the fact that the Torah includes both of these texts?*

*Do you find it helpful to look for a basis for eating meat or not eating meat in the Torah?*

<sup>29</sup> God said, “See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food.

– Genesis 1:29

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה נֹתְנִי לָכֶם אֶת כָּל  
עֵשֶׂב דֹּרֵעַ וְדֶרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ  
וְאֵת כָּל הַנֶּחֱץ אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ פֶּרִי עֵץ דֹּרֵעַ וְדֶרֶע  
לָכֶם וְהִנֵּה לָאֵבֶלָה;

### Eat Meat

<sup>3</sup> Every creature that lives shall be yours to eat; as with the green grasses, I give you all these. <sup>4</sup> You must not, however, eat flesh with its life-blood in it.

– Genesis 9:3–4

כָּל רֶמֶשׂ אֲשֶׁר הוּא חַי לָכֶם וְהִנֵּה לָאֵבֶלָה  
בְּיָרֵק עֵשֶׂב נֹתְנִי לָכֶם אֶת כָּל: אֵךְ בְּשָׂר  
בְּחַיָּו וְדָמוֹ לֹא תֹאכְלוּ;

### To have a good time...

*Some people still feel strongly that eating meat on Shabbat is central to celebrating the day. Do you agree or disagree?*

*Do you think of meat eating as something to be reserved for special occasions? If not, how would your life be different if you did?*

It was taught, Rabbi Judah ben B'tayra said: When the Temple was in existence there could be no rejoicing save with meat, as it is said: “And you shall sacrifice peace-offerings, and shall eat there; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God” (Deut. 27). But now that the Temple is no longer in existence, there is no rejoicing save with wine, as it is said, “wine makes glad the heart of man.” (Ps. 104).

– Talmud Bavli, Masekhet Pesakhim 109a

תַּנְיָא: רַבִּי יְהוּדָה בֶּן בִּתְרָא אוֹמֵר: בְּזִמְנָן  
שְׂבִית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ קָיָים אֵין שְׂמֵחָה אֱלָא  
בְּבָשָׂר, שְׁנָאֵמַר: “וְזָבַחְתָּ שְׁלָמִים וְאָכַלְתָּ  
שֶׁם וְשִׂמְחָתָה לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ” (דְּבָרִים כו).  
וְעַכְשָׁיו שְׂאִין בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ קָיָים, אֵין שְׂמֵחָה  
אֱלָא בַּיַּיִן, שְׁנָאֵמַר: “וַיַּיִן יִשְׂמַח לִבָּב  
אָנוּשׁ” (תְּהִלִּים קד).

### Only on special occasions

**Isaac to Esau:** “Hunt me some game, and make a tender morsel that I love and bring it to me and I will eat it in order that my soul bless you before I die.” (Genesis 27:7. See 5.1)

*Why did Isaac request a meal of hunted game? Were not there sufficient goats in his flocks, and do they not taste like venison anyway?*

A person should only eat meat on rare appointed occasions, and the reason is that a person should not become accustomed to eat meat, as it is written “You shall eat meat with all your desire. Eat it, however, as you eat the gazelle and the deer,” (Deut. 12:21–22). This means that you should eat meat by circumstance [accident] rather than in a set way. For the gazelle and the deer are not easily found around human dwellings for they are wild, and their habitation is not with people, but in the deserts and forests. Consequently, they can only be eaten in small quantities for not everyday does such a miracle occur that a herd of gazelles appears when one is hunting. Consequently, since one eats of them rarely, he will not come to habituate himself to eating ordinary meat since it gives birth to cruelty and other bad qualities in the body of a person. For it is the birds of prey that kill and eat meat, and the lion that kills prey and eats. Therefore it says that in the future “The lion like the ox will eat straw. For there will be peace between all the living creatures” (Isaiah 11:7). Therefore, Isaac said, “Hunt me game,” (Genesis 27:7) for he did not want to eat meat except if it was according to the circumstance [of the hunt].

– Kli Yakar on Talmud Bavli, Masekhet Chulin 84a



## In an ideal world...

It is impossible to imagine that the Master of all that transpires, Who has mercy upon all His creatures, would establish an eternal decree such as this in the creation that He pronounced "exceedingly good," that it should be impossible for the human race to exist without violating its own moral instincts by shedding blood, be it even the blood of animals. ...

When humanity reaches its goal of complete happiness and spiritual liberation, when it attains that lofty peak of perfection that is the pure knowledge of God and the full manifestation of the essential holiness of life, then the age of "motivation by virtue of enlightenment" will have arrived. ... Then human beings will recognize their companions in Creation: all the animals. And they will understand how it is fitting from the standpoint of the purest ethical standard not to resort to moral concessions, to compromise the Divine attribute of justice with that of mercy [by permitting mankind's exploitation of animals]. ... Rather they will walk the path of absolute good.

— Rav Kook, *A Vision of Vegetarianism and Peace*

*Rav Kook was the chief Rabbi of Israel in the early twentieth century. He believed when the Messiah came, the world would become vegetarian. However, he himself ate meat - but only on Shabbat. What do you make of this paradox?*

*Do you believe that eating meat is a moral concession? Why or why not?*

## Current methods of commercial beef production

The ever-increasing cattle population is wreaking havoc on the earth's ecosystems, destroying habitats on six continents. Cattle raising is a primary factor in the destruction of the world's remaining tropical rain forests. Millions of acres of ancient forests in Central and South America are being felled and cleared to make room for pastureland to graze cattle. Cattle herding is responsible for much of the spreading desertification in the sub-Sahara of Africa and the western rangeland of the United States and Australia. The overgrazing of semiarid and arid lands has left parched and barren deserts on four continents. Organic runoff from feedlots is now a major source of organic pollution in our nation's ground water. Cattle are also a major cause of global warming... The devastating environmental, economic and human toll of maintaining a worldwide cattle complex is little discussed in policy circles... Yet, cattle production and beef consumption now rank among the gravest threats to the future well-being of the earth and its human population.

— Jeremy Rifkin, *Beyond Beef*

## Looking for transparency

The industrialization—and brutalization—of animals in America is a relatively new, evitable, and local phenomenon. No other country raises and slaughters its food animals quite as intensively or as brutally as we do. No other people in history has lived at quite so great a remove from the animals they eat. Were the walls of our meat industry to become transparent, literally or even figuratively, we would not long continue to raise, kill, and eat animals the way we do. Tail docking and sow crates and beak clipping would disappear overnight, and the days of slaughtering four hundred head of cattle an hour would promptly come to an end—for who could stand the sight? Yes, meat would get more expensive. We'd probably eat a lot less of it, too, but maybe when we did eat animals we'd eat them with the consciousness, ceremony, and respect they deserve.

— Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*

## Food for Thought:

- Do you eat meat? How often? Why or why not? How do you feel about it? Do you think that people should eat meat?
- Would you be more or less likely to eat meat if you saw how the animal was raised and slaughtered?

### Eat meat that grew up where you did

Many people believe that it's wrong to eat meat under any circumstances. But if you do eat meat, here are some of the arguments in favor of meat from local, mixed-use farms. In contrast to commercial meat production, local sustainably-raised meat is a healthy, tasty and environmentally-friendly alternative. Frequently, animals play an important role on small, diversified farms, where their manure completes the nutrient cycle by replacing minerals and organic matter in the soil. Meat animals are also the by-product of dairying: female goats and cows must become pregnant to continue their milk flow. If their babies are male, they are usually slaughtered at the end of the season, because there isn't room for them on the farm. Eating a small amount of meat is therefore part of a balanced and sustainable food system.

A number of folks are working to provide sustainably-raised kosher meat by linking small meat farms with shochets. See [Resources](#).

For more on kosher slaughter, see 3.4

"Sometimes I feel the more I learn about food, the less there is that I can eat," said one participant at Hazon's 2006 Food Conference. That's the challenge of living in what Nigel calls, "the Age of Awareness," a time when the unintended or unhelpful consequences of our "normal" behaviors are steadily becoming more and more apparent. This text provides no answers. But it poses important questions, and establishes a framework for relating to a range of contemporary issues through the prism of Jewish tradition. The Jewish people has always played a role in seeking to perfect the world. We now have the opportunity to add our distinctive voice to a global conversation about the nature of human life on this planet. This we not only can do, we actually must do. And we might begin by thinking about "our stones"—the things we move from our property to public space, that do damage in the world.

### The Stones

*Why does the man laugh?*

*What causes him to change his mind?*

*In what sense is the land which he owns actually not his? In what sense is the land which is not his, actually his?*

*What are the "stones" that you throw from land that you think of as yours to land you think of as not yours, and how do we all stumble over them?*

Our sages taught:

A man should not move stones from his ground to public ground.

A certain man was moving stones from his ground onto public ground when a pious man found him doing so and said to him,

"Fool, why do you move stones from ground which is not yours, to ground which is yours?"

The man laughed at him.

Some days later the man had to sell his field, and when he was walking on that public ground he stumbled over those stones.

He then said, "How well did that pious man say to me, 'why do you move stones from ground which is not yours to ground which is yours?'"

— *Talmud Bavli, Masekhet Bava Kama 50b*

תנו רבנן:

לא יסקל אדם מרשותו לרשות הרבים.

מעשה באדם אחד שהיה מסקל מרשותו לרשות הרבים, ומצאו חסיד אחד, אמר לו:

ריקה, מפני מה אתה מסקל מרשות שאינה שלך לרשות שלך?

לגלג עליו.

למים נצרך למכור שדהו, והיה מהלך באותו רשות הרבים ונקל באותו אבנים.

אמר: יפה אמר לי אותו חסיד מפני מה אתה מסקל מרשות שאינה שלך לרשות שלך?

## Tzedek, Tzedek

Pursue justice. Justice!

– Deuteronomy 16:20

צֶדֶק צֶדֶק תִּרְדֵּף.

When the situation is clearly in front of us, it is easy to know what to do. But sometimes our information is muddled. The double call of “Justice! Justice!” reminds us that we should indeed seek out the truth—and it may not always be self-evident.

For a prophet’s take on justice, see 8.2

## Citizens of a global world

If a person of learning participates in public affairs and serves as judge or arbiter, he gives stability to the land...

But if he sits in his home and says to himself, “What have the affairs of society to do with me?... Why should I trouble myself with the people’s voices of protest? Let my soul dwell in peace!”—if he does this, he overthrows the world.

– Midrash Tanhuma, Mishpatim 2

מִלְכָּה שֶׁל תּוֹרָה, בְּמִשְׁפָּט שֶׁהוּא עוֹשֶׂה,  
מַעֲמִיד אֶת הָאָרֶץ...

When do you sit at home when you might stand up and make a difference?

אִם מְשִׁים אָדָם עֵצְמוֹ בְּתִרוּמָה הֵוא  
שְׂמוֹשְׁלֶכֶת בְּזוּיוֹת הַבַּיִת וְאוֹמֵר: “מָה לִּי  
בְּטוֹרַח הַצִּבּוֹר? מָה לִּי בְּדִינֵיהֶם? מָה לִּי  
לְשִׁמוּעַ קוֹלָם? שְׁלוֹם עָלֶיךָ נִפְשִׁי” הֲרִי זֶה  
מַחְרִיב אֶת הָעוֹלָם.

## Important:

It is not your duty to complete the work but neither are you free to desist from it.

– Pirkei Avot 2:21

לֹא עָלֶיךָ וְחֵלְאָבָה לְגַמְּרָהּ, וְלֹא אֲתָה בֶן  
חוֹרִין לְבַטֵּל מִמֶּנָּה.

This is a famous text. How do you relate to it? What do you make of the fact that it explicitly does not answer the question, “How much is enough”?

How does it modify the previous text?

## Food for Thought:

- Do you think Jewish tradition encourages us to be hopeful or pessimistic? How do you feel when you think about the big challenges facing the world today?
- What does it feel like to be simultaneously called to rigorous action, and reminded that we cannot possibly deal with the enormity and complexity of the world’s problems?
- What are some of the most pressing food issues to you? Do you feel you know how they could be fixed? Do you know how you personally could help ameliorate them?

# About Hazon

## Hazon means vision.

**Our vision is to create healthy and sustainable communities in the Jewish world and beyond.**

Hazon is now in its tenth year and is the largest Jewish environmental organization in North America. As we have grown, our vision and brand have become clearer. Simply stated, we create healthy and sustainable communities in the Jewish world and beyond. We do that through transformative experiences for individuals and communities, through thought leadership in the fields of Jewish and environmental knowledge, and through support of the Jewish environmental movement in North America and Israel.

We are driven by Jewish thought, Jewish practice, and what is in between. We leave no soul unturned. Lastly, we aspire to excellence in all that we do.



## ***Hazon: Jewish Inspiration, sustainable communities***

All of our programs enable and encourage Jewish people to make a difference in the world and to renew and reframe their Jewish lives while doing so. Imagine yourself at a Hazon CSA: while your purchasing power supports local, mostly organic, family farms, you have the chance to join other Jewish people in your community to share recipes from the week's bounty, take family trips to the farm, and enjoy Shabbat potlucks and cooking demonstrations.

### **Pedal for Change: Environmental Bike Rides**

Outdoor programming and education is a key step towards environmental protection. It reminds us of how beautiful – and fragile – the world is, and it enables us to see how much more powerful we are than we realize. Hazon's Rides put you on your bike to experience the power of the outdoors and the empowerment of a community.

**Hazon's New York Bike Ride** is held over 4 days during Labor Day weekend in the New York area, drawing over 300 participants from across the country. Rider fundraising supports the work Hazon and its major partners. A series of smaller grants are allocated to individual projects in the Jewish community.

**Hazon's California Ride** is held in the Spring. The inaugural Ride was in 2009 with 73 riders, ending in San Francisco. The Ride features Hazon programming at a Shabbat retreat, followed by a beautiful ride in the Napa and Sonoma wine regions. Advanced riders can enjoy a century on California's breathtaking coast.

**The Arava Institute Hazon Israel Ride: *Cycling for Peace, Partnership & Environmental Protection*** is held annually over 7 days in the Fall. The Israel Ride is a 200 – 300 mile journey that provides participants the opportunity to experience the beauty and challenges of the Israeli landscape in a whole new way.

### **The New Jewish Food Movement**

As Jews, we have been thinking about kosher food—about what is “fit” to eat—for nearly 3,000 years. Today, a growing number of people are realizing that our food choices have significant ramifications for ourselves, our families and the world around us. Hazon's food programs bring together Jewish tradition and contemporary food issues, creating rich opportunities for conversation and action.

**“The Jew and the Carrot”** a partnership between Hazon and the Forward, at [www.jcarrot.org](http://www.jcarrot.org), serves as a public front page for this work, bringing the discussions between Jewish farmers, day school educators, food enthusiasts, chefs and families to far reaching corners of the Jewish community and beyond.

**Hazon's Food Conference** brings together foodies, educators, rabbis, farmers, nutritionists, chefs, food writers and families who share a passion for learning about and celebrating food.

**The Jewish Food Education Network (JFEN)** offers resources, curricula, and training about food and Jewish tradition, to help you navigate questions on topics such as nutrition, industrial farming, obesity and family food traditions in a Jewish context. JFEN enables you to tap into the passion about food and the environment in your community and use food as a platform for innovative Jewish education.

**Hazon CSA** is the first Jewish Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) program in North America and is currently the largest faith-based CSA program in the country. In 2010, over 40 Hazon CSAs put over \$1 million in Jewish family purchasing power behind local, sustainable farms. Hazon CSA sites include JCCs, synagogues, Jewish day schools and Hillels – and we'd love to add your community to the list. Contact [csa@hazon.org](mailto:csa@hazon.org) to apply.



## Support of the Jewish Environmental Movement in North America and Israel

In the United States, Hazon is a major funder and partner to several innovative environmental educational organizations. **Adamah: The Jewish Environmental Fellowship** is a 3-month leadership training program at the Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center for Jewish young adults that integrates organic farming, sustainable living, Jewish learning, community building and contemplative spiritual practice. **The Teva Learning Center** runs outdoor education experiences for day school children, as well as family Shabbaton programming for synagogues. Teva teaches over 6,000 Jewish children about Jewish roots of environmentalism and activism each year. The **Jewish Farm School** is an educational organization that practices and promotes sustainable agriculture to cultivate food systems rooted in both justice and Jewish tradition.

Hazon is one of the largest American funders of the Israeli environmental movement. Our outdoor events support some of the most vital work happening on environmental issues in Israel.

The Israel Ride raises significant funds for the **Arava Institute for Environmental Studies**. It also enables participants to learn first hand about some of the key issues Israel faces, and some of the ways that environmentalists are helping to create peace.

Hazon supports a number of environmental organizations that significantly benefit from the small grants the NY Ride Allocations Committee distributes. The **Israel Bicycle Association** works to promote active transport as a major means of transportation within towns and cities in Israel to reduce social disparities and improve the quality of life, the environment, public health and road safety for the benefit of the entire population. The **Green Apprenticeship Practical Ecology Training Program** at Kibbutz Lotan is an intensive 7-week work/study experience providing theoretical and practical instruction in designing systems that replicate relationships found in natural ecologies.



## Thought Leadership, Advocacy and Public Education

Hazon believes that changing the world involves education, action and advocacy. Thought leadership at Hazon means giving people the tools they need to communicate the importance of not just their actions, but of the changes needed to create healthy and sustainable communities.

Most car rides in the US are less than three miles – if we walked those distances, or rode our bikes, we would be more fit, have more interaction with our communities, and reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions considerably. Hazon is a supporter of Transportation Alternatives (TA), a New York-based organization that advocates on behalf of cyclists and pedestrians. Working with TA, Hazon has taken on the **Upper West Side Renaissance Livable Streets Campaign**. The Livable Streets Campaign is addressing the urgent need to create human-friendly spaces in America's densest urban environment. Hazon is working with Jewish institutions to improve the quality of life for everyone on the Upper West Side by making small changes to the blocks on which they are situated and throughout their neighborhoods. This past year Hazon helped advocate for the installation of a protected bicycle lane on Columbus Avenue, to be installed this Fall on the Upper West Side.

**"The Jew and the Carrot"** blog is a natural forum for readers to engage with current issues in the food movement. Recently, the blog has been active in covering the environmental impacts of the gulf oil spill and its subsequent effects on marine life. There has been extensive discussion about the earthquake in Haiti and what it means to create sustainable agriculture in a country that has been made dependent on others for food. There is a growing demand for and commentary on what kosher meat means in terms of figuring out where kosher and ethics meet. The Jew and the Carrot has sparked discussion on what food justice is and how to pursue it and, of course, there are delicious recipes featured regularly.

Through the work initiated last year with the **Jewish Climate Change Campaign**, Hazon is participating in a new global initiative on Green Pilgrim Cities to inspire pilgrims on all continents and the pilgrim cities that receive them to leave a positive footprint on the Earth.

Our goal is that by September 2015, the end of the next sabbatical year in the Jewish calendar, we will have transformed Jewish communities using education, action, and advocacy on Jewish and environmental thought and values so that we are creating a healthier and more sustainable world for all.

# about the authors



**Nigel Savage**, originally from Manchester, England, founded Hazon (Hebrew for “vision”) in 2000.

In 2000 Nigel led Hazon’s first major project, a 3000 mile Cross-USA Jewish Environmental Bike Ride, in which participants cycled from Seattle, WA to Washington, DC, to raise environmental awareness in the American Jewish community. They ended at the White House where they received an award from the EPA.

Nigel has taught in a variety of settings, including the General Assembly of the United Jewish Communities, the Wexner Heritage Conference, the UJA Young Leadership Conference, the leadership retreat of the Dorot Fellows in Israel and the World Union of Jewish Students. His articles have appeared in various publications including The Forward and the Jerusalem Report.

Before founding Hazon Nigel was a professional fund manager in the English equivalent of Wall Street, where he worked for the Rothschilds and was co-head of UK Equities at John Govett & Co. He has an MA in American Jewish History from Georgetown, and learned at Pardes, Yakar, Hebrew University and Jerusalem Fellows.

He is Vice-President of the Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center and he was one of the founders of Limmud NY.

Nigel is infamous in the UK for his cameo appearance in the cult Anglo-Jewish comic movie, *Leon The Pig Farmer*. He is also believed to be the first English Jew to have cycled across South Dakota on a recumbent bike.



**Anna Hanau** grew up in North Vancouver, British Columbia. She moved to New York in 2000 to attend the Jewish Theological Seminary and Barnard College, where she earned a BA in Urban Studies/Environmental Science and a BA in Bible Studies in 2004.

Anna joined Hazon as an intern, working on the first beit midrash about Jews and food in 2003. She then helped to launch Hazon’s Community-Supported Agriculture Project at Anshe Chesed in 2004, and after that was the New York Ride Coordinator for the 2005 and 2006 New York Jewish Environmental Bike Rides. She was the co-chair of the Hazon Food Conference in 2007.

Anna participated in the Adamah fellowship in 2007, and worked at Adamah as the Farm Manager in 2008 and 2009. She rejoined the Hazon staff in 2010 as Associate Director of Programs. Anna and her husband Naftali Hanau founded a kosher pastured meat business, Grow and Behold Foods, and keep a small flock of chickens in their backyard in Brooklyn. (In accordance with Hazon’s conflict of interest policy, Anna does not work on meat or meat-related projects at Hazon.)