

Shabbat Talks

Israel - The Capital For Jewish Vegan Lifestyle

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All over Israel, one can find vegan and vegan-friendly restaurants, communities festivals and learning opportunities. In this little country, going meat-free isn't just easy, it's a chance to sample the best food in town. In fact, Tel Aviv is known as the vegan capital of the world with 400 vegan and vegan-friendly kitchens catering to Israel's veggie loving citizens. Even the Israeli Domino's Pizza franchise was the first to launch their vegan pizza in 2013 and only after its success in Israel, vegan pizza became part of the Domino's menu in other locations around the world. The innovation nation strikes again!

Plant-based lifestyles and veganism are not only becoming prominent in social environments, but also throughout the religious world with an increasing number of [rabbis taking to vegetarianism](#) as a way of commitment to Torah ideals. Judaism demands that we protect our physical and spiritual health, and it is believed that many human diseases could be prevented or alleviated by a plant based diet.

Vegan food is, by most accounts, naturally kosher so is seen as a safe food choice for many Jews. But also in our incredible Israel Defense Forces. Many are surprised to learn that the IDF is the most vegan army in the world with over 10,000 vegan soldiers, generals and even chiefs of staff. As an affirmation of their interest in providing for the brave young men and women who serve and protect, the IDF first began to accommodate vegan soldiers in 2014 by introducing leather-free combat boots and wool-free berets and making dietary changes so that there are [vegan options in IDF kitchens](#).

The gathering of soldiers from all walks of life, backgrounds, faiths and ethnicities are a [social melting pot](#) and a good indicator of Israeli norms. Jewish values, the command to protect the earth, appreciation of animals, and love of diversity within Israel culture drive forward the public expression of ideologies such as vegetarianism and veganism so that all feel welcome and respected. Even [our mangal is filled with veggies](#) suitable for all to enjoy!

Shabbat is an excellent opportunity to try the Jewish vegan lifestyle and reinvent your meal as a vegan meal and discuss around the table veganism, Judaism and everything in between! On Shabbat, or any time you are up to a friendly debate, discuss the relationship between dietary practices, vegetarian and veganism and Jewish values, and how Israel is a beacon of light in a world continuously embattled by controversy.

Enjoy this recipe for [Hawaij Vegetable Lentil Soup](#) and check out some the delicious vegetarian and vegan recipes on our [Cooking Israel](#) section including: [Veggie Shishlik](#), [Potato Rosti](#), [Vegan Mars Bars](#) and [Israeli Pumpkin Couscous](#).



1. Why do you think veganism is so popular in Israel?
2. What do vegan values have in common with Jewish values?
3. What is the role of animals in Judaism?
4. How does go the Torah emphasize the values of a vegetarian lifestyle?
5. In Genesis 1:26 it is written:
Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."
כֹּו וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים, נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ; וַיְרִדּוּ בְדִגְתַּי הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם, וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל-הָאָרֶץ, וּבְכָל-הָרֶמֶשׂ, הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל-הָאָרֶץ.
What does "rule over" mean?
6. The biblical story of creation indicates that the animals had life breathed into them by God, as did man. What does this say about the connection between people and animals?
7. Does humankind have the right to do whatever we want to animals?
8. The 10 Commandments forbids murder but it does not forbid killing. What does this teach us about the morality of killing animals to eat their meat?
<https://youtu.be/ORENPaY043o>
9. Since Jews are commanded to take care of our bodies, should we limit the amount of meat we eat to remain healthy?
10. Shabbat represents the moment of the week where we can separate from the work we do. Many people choose to eat meat only on Shabbat as their method of separation from the week. Do you think there is value in this lifestyle?

DID YOU KNOW?

- Adam and Eve were vegans! "Behold, I have given you every seed-bearing herb which is upon the surface of the entire earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; it will be yours for food."(Genesis 1:29)
- Daniel and his companions avoided non-kosher food while they were held captive in the court of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, through a vegan diet (Daniel 1: 8-16).
- One mitzvah cited by vegetarians is tza'ar ba'alei hayyim; the injunction not to cause "pain to living creatures." However, the laws of shechita are meant to prevent the suffering of animals.
- According to some, vegetarianism is consistent with the sacred teachings and highest ideals of Judaism, including compassion, health, life, conservation of resources, tzedakah, kashrut, peace, and justice.
- In the Song of Songs, the divine bounty is mentioned in terms of fruits, vegetables, grapes, and nuts.
- Many Rabbis only eat meat during certain holidays and have adopted a diet that is popularly known as Shabbatatarian.
- There is no special b'racha (blessing) recited before eating meat or fish, as there is for other foods such as bread, cake, wine, fruits, and vegetables; the blessing for meat, milk, and eggs is a general one, the same as that over water or such foods as juice or soup.