

Lesson Guide: Class Eleven

Jews + Food

Yes



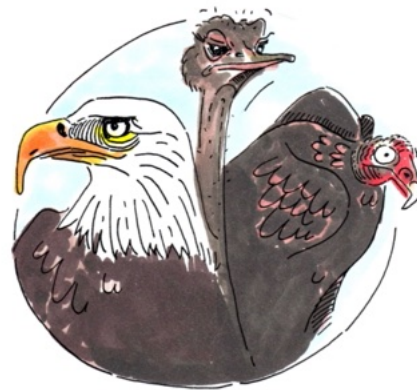
No



Yes



No



Miller Introduction to
Judaism Program

OF AMERICAN JEWISH UNIVERSITY



Miller Introduction to Judaism Program

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Lesson Guide for Class #11: Jews + Food

Class Summary:

Exploration of the practice of *kashrut*—its basic rules and concepts and how to practically apply them to daily life. Emphasis on a developmental approach to taking on Jewish eating practices. Also, study of the practice of *brakhot* before and after eating.

Instructors may also choose to dedicate a portion of this class to completing the Mid-Course Review, which can be found in the DropBox.

Objectives:

Students will:

- Understand some of the basic concepts, terminology, and practices associated with keeping kosher.
- Reflect on various rationales for keeping kosher and think about how they wish to incorporate kashrut into their own lives.
- Gain an appreciation for the practice of saying brakhot before and after eating.

Key Vocabulary:

- Kashrut/kosher
- Treif
- Fleishig/basari
- Milchig/halavi
- Pareve
- Heksher
- Shechita/shochet
- Brakha/brakhot

In-Person Teaching Materials:

- Room and door signs
- Name tags and pens
- Chalkboard, white-board, or large flip chart
- Colored markers or chalk
- On One Foot course books or printed PDFs
- Projector, computer & screen if using Class Slide Decks, On One Foot videos
- *Recommended:* Packaged food items with visible hekshers.

Online Teaching Materials:

- Zoom Pro Account
- PDF of On One Foot chapter
- PowerPoint Class Slide Deck
- Appropriate background, lighting, and sound setup.
- *Recommended:* Packaged food items with visible hekshers.

***** Optional: Mid-Course Review *****

It is valuable to offer a comprehensive review to help students integrate and retain the material at this point in the course. Instructors may choose to distribute the review to be done at home, along with the answer key (both can be found in the DropBox).

The instructor may also choose to dedicate a portion of class time to allow students to fill out the review in small groups/breakouts and then correct it together. There is a significant educational benefit to having students actively review together; however, it will take at least one hour of class time (30-40 minutes of group work, 15-25 minutes to go through it together).

Depending upon the typical length of the class session, the kashrut material can be selectively shortened to accommodate time for review.

Set Induction: “Making Food Choices”

Ask: “What are some reasons, aside from kashrut, that a person might choose not to eat or drink something?”

Possible Answers: Taste, Health, Ethics, Environmental Concerns, Religious Beliefs (Islam, Hinduism, Mormonism, Jainism, etc.), Cultural Norms (certain foods are considered taboo in one culture but may be widely consumed in another).

Ask: “Given that we likely already make values-based choices about food all the time, what are the Jewish values being expressed by kashrut?”

Read the four responses in the coursebook and discuss the values that each author assigns to the practice of kashrut (Reverence for Life, Mindful Consumption, Preserving Jewish Distinctiveness, Maintaining Physical Health).

Discuss: “Which of these rationales resonate with you? Which do not? What other rationales for keeping kosher could you imagine, aside from these?”

Lecture: Basic Laws of Kashrut

Teaching Note: The goal of this presentation is not to overwhelm the students or shame them if they are not currently keeping kosher. It is a value of the Miller Program to emphasize a gradual approach — it is legitimate to take on a big mitzvah like kashrut piece-by-piece, rather than needing to do it all at once.

Some of the key concepts, terminology, and practice to highlight include:

Laws from Genesis In the Garden of Eden, human beings are explicitly told to be vegetarians. However, after the Flood, permission is granted to eat meat – with certain conditions. People are not to eat blood, something that has died a natural death (**neveila**), something torn from something still alive (**treifa**). Later in Genesis, the prohibition on eating the sciatic nerve (**gid hanasheh**) is added and connected with the story of Jacob in Genesis 32.

Forbidden Animals Laws codes later in the Torah prohibit consuming certain types of animals. Kosher mammals require split hooves and must chew the cud. Kosher fish must have fins and scales. Unkosher birds are listed in the Torah, without specific

anatomical details – but birds of prey and flightless birds are prohibited. Reptiles, rodents, and insects are generally prohibited.

The instructor can show the “G-dCast” video on Parshat Shimni (linked on the slide deck), which includes the “Kosher Animals Song.” The song begins at 1:50 in the video.

Separating Meat and Dairy

Three times the Torah says: “Don’t boil a kid in its mother’s milk.” The Rabbis of the Talmud extend this to mean that one cannot eat a mixture of milk and meat. The instructor may wish to discuss some of the rationales quoted in the coursebook.

This section has some essential vocabulary: **Fleishig/basari, milchig/halavi, pareve.** Discuss and provide examples of which foods fall into which categories.

Some other concepts to cover: **Waiting between meat and milk** (different traditions of how long to wait – S.A. = 6 hours, German custom common among Conservative Jews = 3 hours, Minhag Amsterdam = 1 hour, because everything goes in Amsterdam.)

Separate Dishes: Cooking utensils are kashered based on the material they are made of. Metal is generally kashered by immersion in boiling water, glass is kashered by simple cleaning, ceramics and other porous materials cannot be kashered, and two sets should be kept.

Mistakes: The halakhic system recognizes that mistakes happen. The most important principle is called batel b’shishim, meaning that if something is less than 1/60th of the total volume of food, it doesn’t count for purposes of kashrut.

A crumb or a drop of this or that doesn't ruin the whole thing. *This may seem overly technical, but it is important because students who are trying to keep kosher are often worried about making a mistake and may give up. Letting them know that the system accounts for human error helps them relax enough to try kashrut.*

Shechita

The Rabbis of the Talmud also institute a system of kosher slaughter. Just because the meat is from a kosher animal (beef, chicken, etc.) does not automatically mean that it is kosher. It must also be slaughtered and prepared under rabbinic law.

Shechita: The method of kosher slaughter involves an extremely sharp knife and a single cut to the animal's throat, rendering an almost immediate and painless death.

Shochet: A kosher butcher.

Tzaar Baalei Hayyim: The mitzvah of showing compassion to animals. While the Jewish Tradition permits meat consumption, it is a violation of Jewish law to raise or slaughter animals in an unethical way or causes unnecessary suffering.

The instructor may wish to read together from the coursebook and discuss "Why I Became a Shochet" by Rabbi Gabriel Botnick. What values motivate Rabbi Botnick? Do those values resonate with you? You may wish to also look at the texts under the heading "Eating Ethically" to extend this discussion.

Experiential Learning: Kashrut and Blessings

There are multiple ways to reinforce these concepts experientially. Here are some ideas:

1) If you are teaching in a synagogue space with a kosher kitchen, you can provide a tour of the kitchen facility and discuss how kashrut is considered in the design. In addition, if the synagogue has a caterer or food prep staff, this is an excellent opportunity for students to meet them and ask questions.

2) If you are teaching via Zoom, you can tour students through your own kitchen. This is more easily done using an iPad or tablet.

3) Blessings Scavenger Hunt: Introduce the practice of brakhot by discussing the quote: “Our Rabbis taught: It is forbidden to enjoy anything from this world without first saying a blessing. Anyone who benefits from this world without taking the time to offer a blessing is considered to have stolen sacred property.” Brakhot 35a

Show the list of brakhot in the coursebook and explain that different blessings are said for different foods. If teaching via Zoom, have a “Top Chef” style challenge, by having students go to their kitchen and gather items that reflect each of the different blessings and then show them on screen and explain a meal they could make using all of them.

Wrap Up and Reflection

*Journal Prompt: “**Create a Jewish Eater’s Manifesto.** What elements of Judaism am I ready to incorporate into my eating practice now? What elements would I like to add in the future?”*

Instructors should be checking for understanding throughout the lesson and regularly pausing for questions. However, it is essential to do so at the close of each class. In addition to using the journal prompts included in the coursebook, the instructor may do a group check using one of the following methods:

- As a whole class, have students go around and briefly state/write in chat one thing they learned/that surprised them/that interested them in class.
- Have students divide into pairs and share with their partner something they learned/that surprised them/that particularly interested them.

If you want to check that the students understand primary content, at the end of this class, students should be able to define *kashrut*, *milchig*, *fleishig*, *pareve*, *shechita*, and *brakha*. In addition, students should be able to articulate some rationales for kashrut.

At Home Work

Students should be told to watch the "Jews + Food" video and answer the review questions and journal prompt.