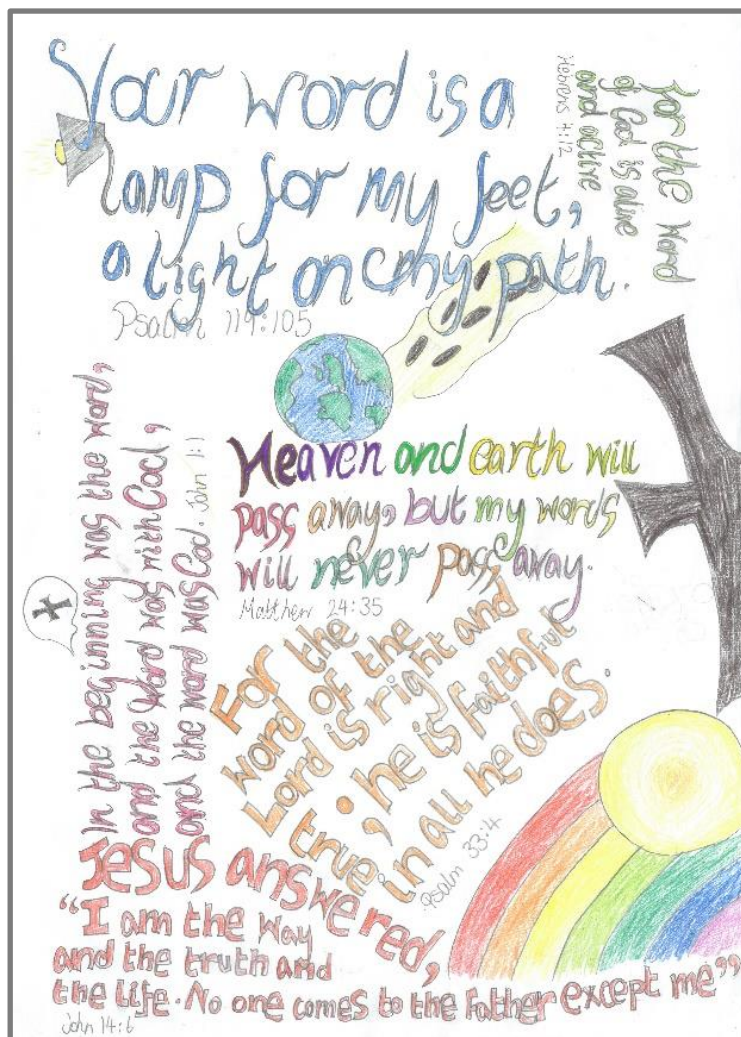


Ethical Veganism in RE Supplementary Resource

Unit 5 (ages 14 to 16):

Is veganism a religious duty?



‘Perspective’

Ping-Ting, Age 13


NATRE Art in Heaven, 2017

Resource 1

Why might some people choose to be vegan?

Work in pairs or small groups and record as many of your ideas as possible on the grid below. Be ready to share your thoughts with the rest of the class.

<p>Scientific</p>	<p>Ethical</p>
<p>Religious</p>	<p>Other</p>



This is RE! Try to be really specific here, if you can. Can you think of any specific religious beliefs, teachings or ways of living that might support the idea of being vegan?

Think deeper

Which of the religions you have studied do you think is most or least compatible with veganism? Discuss this and place them on a spectrum – make some notes, summarising your reasons for where they are placed.



Resource 2

Notes on VegFund article, Five stories of vegan activism in religious communities

[\(5 Stories of Vegan Activism in Religious Communities - VegFund\)](#)

<p>1. Rightful relations: Animals and World Religions travelling exhibition Carolyn Mullin in collaboration with Dr Lisa Kemmerer, author of Animals and World Religions</p>	<p>Information about the exhibition: http://www.lisakemmerer.com/religion_banner_exhibit.html View the online exhibition here: http://vegantapestry.org/banners.html Banners show key teachings on animals from Buddhist, Daoist, Hindu, Indigenous, Islamic, Jain and Jewish traditions.</p>
<p>2. A Prayer for Compassion 2019 film by Thomas Wade-Jackson</p>	<p>A PRAYER FOR COMPASSION A FILM BY THOMAS WADE JACKSON The film includes perspectives widely taught in RE lessons, e.g. several Christian denominations, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and ‘spiritual but not religious’. It also includes worldviews less frequently taught about RE, including Native American tradition, Unitarian Universalism and Zoroastrianism.</p>
<p>3. Plant-based iftar Youth Troopers for Global Awareness (YTGA), founded in a secondary school classroom by Muslim vegan, Zehra Abbas held a plant-based iftar in May 2019 in Ontario, Canada</p>	<p>Read more about Zehra Abbas by copying this link into your browser: https://muslimlink.ca/stories/zehra-abbas-empowering-through-enterprise or searching for ‘Zehra Abbas empowering through enterprise’.</p>
<p>4. Jewish Veg Washington DC Chapter Launch In Autumn 2019, Jewish community leaders and members gathered to celebrate Sukkot (harvest holiday) and, at the same time, to launch the Washington DC chapter of Jewish Veg – a charity that advocates for vegan living for Jewish people. They also unveiled the first ever Jewish Vegan Holiday Initiative. This first-of-its-kind initiative is building partnerships with Jewish institutions throughout the Greater DC and Baltimore area to host vegan celebrations of Jewish holidays.</p>	<p>Watch the video of people attending the launch and talking about how Jewish and vegan values connect here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2l8AB0G4_o&t=4s You can also read about the Synagogue Vegan Challenge, an initiative by the Shamayim Jewish Animal Advocacy here: https://vegfund.org/activist-story/the-synagogue-vegan-challenge-putting-veganism-on-the-jewish-agenda</p>
<p>5. Pagan Social Meeting Festival, Brazil In May 2019, Arthur Ferreira held the Pagan Social Meeting Festival in Recife, Brazil. It brought together the local (mostly non-vegan) Pagan community to raise awareness of veganism and its benefits.</p>	<p>RE Online has good subject knowledge pages on Paganism: https://www.reonline.org.uk/knowledge/pagan/ The British Library has good introductory article to Paganism in the UK: https://www.bl.uk/sacred-texts/articles/contemporary-paganism-in-the-uk</p>

Resource 3

Should Christians be vegan? A look at the Bible

Use a Bible or the online resource 'Biblegateway.com' to explore the following passages. We recommend the Good News translation for this exercise.

Look up	What does it say? Try to sum it up briefly.	What does the passage have to say about animals/the world beyond human beings?	Does the passage help answer the question 'Should Christians be vegan?' Explain.
Genesis 1:20-31			
Genesis 9:2-4			
Psalm 104:24-30			
Psalm 145:10-20			
Ecclesiastes 3:18-21			
Isaiah 11:6- 9			
Luke 12:6-7			
Ephesians 1:10 and Colossians 1:20			

DUAL CODING CHALLENGE: Have you finished? Try to come up with a memorable logo to represent at least 3 of the passages you have studied.

Resource 4

Excerpts from *Laudato Si*, 2015, Pope Francis’s letter to the Catholic Church on caring for the environment

Here are eight statements made by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si*, (*‘Praise be to you’*) in which he covered a wide array of issues related to climate change. But in the midst of the policy talk, scientific data, and historical information he didn’t fail (as some have done) to address our treatment and view of animals.

We’ve labelled them A–H for ease of use in class – they do not necessarily appear in this order in the letter itself.

A	B	C	D
In our time, the Church does not simply state that other creatures are completely subordinated to the good of human beings, as if they have no worth in themselves and can be treated as we wish.	Clearly, the Bible has no place for a tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures	The very flowers of the field and the birds which his human eyes contemplated and admired are now imbued with His [God’s] radiant presence.	We are not God. ... we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God’s image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures.
E	F	G	H
When our hearts are authentically open to universal communion, this sense of fraternity excludes nothing and no one. It follows that our indifference or cruelty towards fellow creatures of this world sooner or later affects the treatment we mete out to other human beings	An inadequate presentation of Christian anthropology gave rise to a wrong understanding of the relationship between human beings and the world. Often, what was handed on was a Promethean vision of mastery over the world, which gave the impression that the protection of nature was something that only the faint-hearted cared about. Instead, our ‘dominion’ over the universe should be understood more properly in the sense of responsible stewardship	If we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously	Every act of cruelty towards any creature is contrary to human dignity.

Resource 5

Mystery activity: Will Marty go vegan?

Marty is a 14-year-old Catholic Christian. He goes to a Catholic high school. He is popular and most of his friends share the same faith. He's thinking about going vegan. Use the information to decide whether Marty will go vegan.

Instructions

Make sure that students have the information about Marty above. Cut out the cards and give them to students in groups of around four. They place them face down and turn them over one at a time, reading each card and discussing whether it suggests that Marty will or will not go vegan, then sorting or organising the cards appropriately. Remind students that there is not a correct/definitive answer to the question – what is important is their thinking process and how well they can present their reasons for the conclusions they draw. Discuss each group's conclusion, encouraging students to make connections with their wider learning on the issues of belief and ways of life raised in this mystery activity.

<p>Marty's mum and dad both have busy jobs. They tend to get home late in the evenings, and it's usually chicken nuggets, burgers or pizza for dinner (with plenty of veg, of course). Meat or fish is the main part of every evening meal. 'Meat-Free Mondays' lasted a week!</p>	<p>Marty's parish church is having a barbecue next month to raise money for Christian Aid. Marty's uncle is a butcher's assistant, and he persuaded the butcher to donate rather a lot of meat for the event – with Marty's help. Marty's really looking forward to it.</p>	<p>Marty's best friend, Sam, has been vegan for six months. He's always been vegetarian as he and his family are Sikh. Some of his classmates tease him about it and Marty heard that a bully threw bacon at Sam in the school canteen when he wasn't there to stick up for him.</p>
<p>Marty is a keen rugby player and would like to play professionally when he grows up. He also does boxing. He's heard mixed views about whether eating plant-based is good for sporting performance. He's done some reading and has found some elite athletes who eat totally plant-based diets. His sports coaches are <i>not</i> convinced!</p>	<p>Marty is active in his local Extinction Rebellion movement, and he has taken part in quite a few marches. He admires Greta Thunberg, who is vegan for the environment.</p>	<p>Marty's older sister has recently had a baby. Much to his parents' disappointment, she is not going to have the baby baptised as she and her partner are both atheists. She's considering a Humanist naming ceremony though. Marty's parents are still trying to persuade her to have the baby baptised at the local parish.</p>
<p>Marty finally saved enough money to get the leather jacket he'd been after for ages. He met some friends to go and buy it and they went for a KFC as well.</p>	<p>Marty's Catholic faith is very important to him. His family are very traditional and still eat fish every Friday in line with Catholic tradition. Marty serves as an altar boy and gets involved with the church as much as possible.</p>	<p>Marty represented his school in a national debating competition, arguing in favour of the statement: 'The world needs to go vegan'. He did a lot of research for this and it really got him thinking about going vegan himself.</p>
<p>Marty discussed going vegan with his priest, Father Mike, who said some Christians are seeing a vegan lifestyle as a way of being good stewards for God's earth. He said some Bible passages could be used to support this view, but it's a matter of personal choice for Catholics - there's no Church teaching on vegetarianism or veganism.</p>	<p>Marty loves animals! He walks his elderly neighbour's dog three times a week. He has two cats which his family got from a local shelter. On many occasions, he's stayed up all night looking after birds that the cats have injured, and even got into trouble at school for taking a baby bird into class so that he could feed it in his pocket throughout the day.</p>	<p>Marty was really impressed with a young vegan activist he came across called Genesis Butler. When she was just 12 years old, she challenged Pope Francis to go vegan for a charity donation of \$1 million, as he was talking about caring for animals and the planet. The Pope declined, but he sent his blessings.</p>

Resource 6

6.1 Exploring Jewish perspectives

Jewish traditions have a lot to say about animals and how humans should treat them. There are many different ways of interpreting teachings, which means there is a lot of discussion and debate within Jewish communities.

Animals in Jewish scripture

Jewish scriptures express great concern for treating animals with respect and kindness. There are two central guiding principles from Jewish teachings:

- **Tza'ar Ba'alei Chayim** is the Jewish code of laws which not only prohibits Jewish people from causing any unnecessary pain or suffering to living creatures, but also requires them to prevent suffering. According to tza'ar ba'alei chayim, Jews are not allowed to pass by an animal in distress or being mistreated, even on the Sabbath.
- **Rachimim** which is most often translated as 'compassion', but sometimes as 'pity', or 'mercy', is a word featured in many Jewish prayers and rites, and it is often used in reference to animals.

The status of animals

Throughout the Tanakh, animals are acknowledged as a valuable part of God's creation, held by the Creator in high esteem, who blessed them all and called them 'good'. In the account of Creation, God gave human beings dominion over the rest of the animal kingdom (Genesis 1:26 and 1:28), affording them a special and higher status than other animals. Sometimes this superior status is interpreted as permission from God for humans to treat animals however they like. However, although 'dominion' is used in a variety of ways throughout Jewish scripture, it is never used to indicate that people can or should exert cruel power over animals or exploit them. On the contrary, the Jewish idea of dominion may be better understood as responsible leadership or stewardship; God gives humans the right to use animals should they legitimately need to do so.

Whilst centuries later, scientists were still debating whether animals were sensitive to pain and suffering, Jewish scriptures frequently acknowledge not only that animals experience physical pleasure and pain, but also that they experience emotions and form strong bonds with their families and companions. These concerns are reflected in the many religious laws that govern how humans treat and interact with animals. Jewish scripture is clear that human beings have a serious responsibility to show animals compassion and care.

Uses of animals

When the Tanakh and the Talmud were written, animals were mainly used for food or for labour (e.g. animals like oxen or donkeys pull ploughs or carry heavy loads). We should also remember that, historically, animal sacrifices to God were part of Jewish worship. There are several passages (particularly in Leviticus) which prescribe animal sacrifices and describe when and how they should be done.

Animals and farming practices today

When thinking about Jewish attitudes towards using animals for food, we need to be mindful that the way animals were farmed for food when the scriptures were written was starkly different from today. People then often raised their own animals for food; interacting directly with the animals used for food was commonplace. Today, it is very rare that people have any contact at all with the animals they eat. Animals are farmed on an industrial scale unlike any other time in history. Most animal-based foodstuffs produced today come from animals who have been raised on factory farms. Tens of billions of land animals are slaughtered for food each year, along with trillions of fish killed for food, too. The laws in the Torah that govern the raising and slaughter of animals for food are extensive and very detailed. Clearly, they are designed to not only prevent any unnecessary physical pain or suffering to animals, but also psychological and emotional distress. Also, these laws reflect respect for the dignity of the animal that is being used as a source of food as well.

6.2 What do these examples from the Torah show us about Jewish attitudes towards animals?

<p>“You shall not boil a kid in its mother’s milk.” Exodus 23:19</p>	<p>“No animal from the herd or from the flock shall be slaughtered on the same day with its young.” Leviticus 22:28</p>	<p>“Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease from labour, in order that your ox and your ass may rest, and that your home-born slave and the stranger may be refreshed.” Exodus 23:12</p>
<p>Historically, animal sacrifices at the Temple were part of Jewish worship. For example, in the Book of Genesis, we read how Abraham, relieved that God has spared him the sacrifice of his son, Isaac, sacrifices a ram in Isaac’s place (Genesis 22). The book of Leviticus gives detailed instructions for various sacrifices, including sin offerings to make atonement for an individual, which involves offering a female goat or lamb (Leviticus 4).</p>		<p>In the story of Rebecca at the well, Rebecca is chosen to be the wife of Abraham’s son, Isaac, when she shows compassion to the ten thirsty camels. As well as giving Abraham’s servant water to drink, she draws water for the camels as well. Drawing water from a well was very hard work and ten camels would need a lot of water! (Genesis 24:19)</p>

[NB Translations from JPS Contemporary Torah 2006 as published on Sefaria.org <https://www.sefaria.org/terms>]

6.3 Is vegan the new kashrut for the 21st century?

Veganism is on the rise across the world. Veganism is becoming popular among people of religious faith and of none. Indeed, there is a rapidly growing vegan movement among Jewish people, too. In fact, Israel has more people who identify as vegan per capita than anywhere else in the world.

Jewish Veg and the Rabbinical Statement on a Plant-Based Diet

In 2017 over 70 rabbis signed a Rabbinical Statement on a Plant-Based Diet, urging their fellow Jews to commit to eating only plant-derived food. They state that in today’s world there is no need to eat meat or products from animals. They argue that modern-day production methods for raising and slaughtering animals for meat are ‘highly problematic’ in terms of keeping kosher. The statement was signed by rabbis across a diverse spectrum of Jewish traditions. It gives three main reasons for seeing vegan eating as the new kashrut for the 21st century:

<p>1. God’s preference is that we do not eat animals Straight after giving humans dominion in Genesis 1, God seems to command that they eat a vegan diet: “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.” (Genesis 1:29)</p>
<p>2. God allowed people to eat meat only as a concession to human desire It was only after the flood (Genesis 6-9) that God explicitly gave people permission to eat meat (and even then, with many restrictions governing what and how it should be produced and eaten). The view that a vegetarian or vegan world is God’s ideal finds support, some Jewish people would argue, in passages from prophets such as Isaiah and Hosea. These speak of harmony between different species of animals when God’s order is restored on earth (e.g. Hosea 2:18 or Isaiah 65:25).</p>
<p>3. The Torah forbids causing animal suffering As it is possible to live a healthy and long life eating only plant-based foods, the rabbis see the suffering caused to animals by the production of meat or other animal-derived foods as unnecessary and, therefore, against the principle of <i>tza’ar ba’alei chayim</i>. Certainly, the conditions in which many animals are kept, and the sheer numbers killed for food are at odds with this principle, too.</p>

6.4 Some arguments against veganism as the new kashrut for 21st Century

Many Jewish people believe that it is God's intention for humans to eat and use animals. Some may argue that the list of plant-based foods that God prescribes to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:29, was only a partial list of what they were allowed to eat, and with no command from God not to eat animals, they could eat meat if they wished to.

The Torah gives detailed dietary rules, which includes the eating of meat. The argument that Genesis 1 models a kind of ideal diet is speculative, and that single verse needs to be given a great deal of weight if it is to cancel out the many instructions on the eating of meat.

Being vegan entails not using animals for any purpose. This would make it difficult – some might say impossible – to fully participate in certain forms of worship, customs and celebrations e.g. wearing tefillin, which are made of leather, blowing the shofar, which is a ram's horn, or reading from the Torah scrolls, which are made from animal skins.

Some Jewish people may see eating meat as part of certain celebrations and religious observances as obligatory. This is reflected in the writings of many Jewish scholars and rabbis, such as Rambam (Maimonides), an influential scholar who wrote in medieval times. He recommended that meat be treated as a special food for occasions such as Shabbat and Passover, and excessive restriction or consumption of meat was not good.