Introduction (sounds of waves in the sea):

Since the beginning of human race, nature and religion have always been considered to be close to one another. From the dawn of our existence, due to the lack of knowledge and technology, we do not know about our nature, we cannot explain our nature. That is the reason why we came up with a force that is beyond us, the force of Gods. We tend to believe Gods create everything, God creates us and God creates Nature. However, as mankind evolves, there is not only one religion, there are many.

Fades in question: To kick off our show today, we asked a few people how they view nature through their religion. Here’s what we got.

Hoa: Hi Rebecca, so what is your view on nature?

Interviewee: So I think that God created the world and nature in such a way that humans can benefit from it. God created humans so as to govern nature but also to appreciate it. Because if we exploit nature down to nothing, then how do we benefit from nothing? However, nowadays less and less people care about this as they think we use up all these resources. So as a Christian, I see nature as a gift from God and I have the responsibility to take care of it.

Matt: So ladies and gentlemen, just through a couple of answers we can see there are a lot of so called “definitions” for knowing nature through religion. How do we know what’s right and what is not? We are here today with “Nature 101” to figure this out. Let me introduce 2 guest speakers today! (cheesy music kicks in, audience claps)

Matt: Number one, we have myself, Mr. Matt Lebow, and number two we have Wawa, Asian from Vietnam.

Matt: Wawa, let’s get to know you. How about you introduce yourself?

Hoa (Chinese traditional music kicks in) Thank you, my name is Wawa, 19 years old. I was born into a Buddhist family where my grandparents are hardcore Buddhist. They don’t eat meat, they say prayers everyday and they go to the pagoda every month. My parents are pretty much like quite the same, but a little bit less extreme. I on the other hand, hardly practice any religious belief. But still, I’m really affected by my family’s way of view and really that way just affects my view of seeing life and nature. So what about you? Why don’t you introduce yourself?

Matt: (audience laughs and claps occasionally, Hebrew music kicks in) Thank you, my name is Matt Lebow. I’m 18 years old, and I was born and raised in a Jewish family. I come from Short Hills, New Jersey. You know, right off the turnpike, very nice place. Anyway, when I was younger, in regards to my Jewish education, they didn’t really talk much about nature and it rarely came up because Judaism doesn’t really have that much of a strong view on nature. When it comes to the Bible and stuff like that, it more pertains to God
and humans and in the background it will talk about nature a little bit, but really not much. So really the basis of my Jewish education was, you know, to marry a nice Jewish girl.

Matt: Now Wa, you said earlier that Buddhism played a pretty big role in the way you came to know and understand nature. So when it comes to nature, what is it that your religion dictates?

Hoa (traditional Chinese music kicks in): Yes Matt, that’s a really good question and I think that’s the point of us being here today. But what you need to know upfront is that the elimination of 3 basic evils, including greed, is the center of Buddhism. We have this wheel of life that really treasures nature and makes nature really important, for Nature if where we get everything from, Nature is where we live and where we will survive. For survival, man needs to use nature. But in order to live in harmony and not exploit nature down to nothing, we need to protect and give back too. And over exploitation will lead us to nothing but destruction and suffering. So that’s the reason why some Buddhist even stop eating meat, so that they can protect the balance of nature. However, I still eat meat, all type of meat, including dog.

Basically we consider Nature as a whole, one united force. People should be like bees, we collect what we need from Nature like bees collecting pollen but not harm the flowers, and even benefit the flowers. Yes, Nature to us is a higher force, and we need to keep it, and we need to protect it.

Matt: Well I just have a few questions about that. I think my first question is: You eat dog? Am I correct?

Hoa: Er… Yes.

Matt: Is it tasty?

Hoa: Er… Yes. Well it tastes like beef.

Matt: It tastes like beef? Is it chewy beef or what, gamey? Come one man give me a texture.

Hoa: Oh yeah it’s kinda chewy, but it depends on the way you cook it.

Matt: So you are more like a stir-fried type of guy or what? Because you know I usually grill my dog…

Hoa: Oh really? Well yeah I’m more prone to stir-fry.

Matt: Yeah nothing like a good dog teriyaki you know? But back to the point, so if Buddhism promotes this love of nature, wawa, why do you eat dog?

Hoa: Yeah that’s a good question. So let me restate the point that we, human needs to survive, and we need to survive, therefore, we need to eat. Furthermore, we Buddhists believe that it’s a way to get the dog to the next life, to free it from this world, to free it from the suffering of this world, so therefore, there’s some kind of reason for that.
**Matt:** Hoa was saying that Buddhism, the whole religion really, is centered around an appreciation for nature and even would you say a love, a love of Nature Hoa?

**Hoa:** Yes, it’s like the love for Nature.

**Matt:** So what I think we’re getting at is, Judaism really, to put it quite bluntly, Judaism doesn’t really care about nature. I mean in Genesis 126, and I’ll quote it right now, “Then God said: Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” And so basically what that says is, first of all, God created everything, and second of all, the 2 most important lines in that sequence are “rule” and “over.” “Rule over.” So there’s a hierarchy, God is number 1, humans number 2 and then below that are all the animals. God doesn’t even care about the animals so much as to take responsibility for them. He shifts that responsibility to the humans. So really, how far down on the totem pole are the animals and nature in general? Just some food for thought.

**Hoa:** So when it comes to nature today, a major problem is Global warming. So with that view of nature you have, what are your thoughts on this?

**Matt:** The thing about Judaism is, even though it’s an old religion, it’s not an archaic religion, at least under conservative Judaism, which is how I recognize myself, as a conservative Jew. So for conservative Judaism, and even reform for that matter, the door is open to move into the 21st century, and in this case, move to help protect nature. So it’s not surprising that a lot of the Jewish environmentalist movements, such as the Green Zionist Alliance and Hazon, each founded in the early 2000s, are born out of conservative and reform Judaism. So, even though the Bible does not strictly tell us to go out of our way to protect our world, Jews still feel the responsibility to act, and over the last decade, have definitely done so.

**Hoa:** For me, because Buddhism promotes this appreciation, this love for nature, Buddhists also support all the campaigns that promote the awareness of nature’s protection. Buddhist always want to keep the pristine form of nature. And for Global Warming, Buddhists agree that this phenomenon is caused by us, the human, and that we need to act now against pollution, exhaustion and help save the planet for later generations. Because we know the pristine beauty of nature, we need to protect it, we have to act and we have to protect it now.

**Conclusion (waves in the sea):** So now we have listened to two of the religious views of knowing Nature. And it’s critical to understand that each of these views represents a different lens to see the world that we live in today. And to get the best possible view, we should take a peak at each of the different lenses. For religion as a whole not only gives us ways to see nature, but the motivation to protect it!

**Hoa:** So that has been our podcast about “Nature through Religion” of Hoa and Matt, stay tune for more to come, after this break~