



JEWISH HUMANE EDUCATION KIT: TEN LESSON PLANS

Curriculum for Children

LESSON I

What kind of character is seen as a model by the Jewish tradition? How is a positive attitude toward animals an important part of this character?

Theme:

Jewish tradition embodies the view that good and wise treatment of the animals in our care is so important that it indicates good character and even demonstrates that the person is worthy of being in a position of national responsibility and leadership.

Sources:

- A. Story of David the shepherd.
- B. Story of Moses the shepherd. (Both chosen to lead on the basis of how they treated the animals in their care.)
- C. Contrast David and Moses (heroes) with Esau and Nimrod (villains and hunters) — regarded as uncultured. (The Torah described Esau, Jacob's twin brother, as "a wild man." Rashi, the great authoritative Torah commentator, interpreted this to mean: "He loved to hunt beasts.")
- D. Rebecca was chosen to be Isaac's wife because of the kindness she showed to animals.
- E. Story of Rabbi Yitzhak of Pshiskof, "Ha Yehudi."

See Lesson I — Backup Material

Questions for Students:

1. What kind of leaders were David and Moses? What qualities of leadership made them outstanding?
2. What leadership qualities could be observed from the way they treated their sheep?
3. Does the fact that they were chosen as leaders tell us something about the importance Jewish tradition attaches to the kind and wise treatment of animals?

LESSON II

What kind of treatment does Judaism require toward animals, given the fact that they feel physical pain?

Theme:

Judaism recognizes that animals feel physical pain, and we are forbidden to inflict it.

Sources:

- A. Story of Balaam beating his donkey and the donkey protesting.
- B. Rabbi Yehuda the Hassid vs. spurring of horses in the Middle Ages and today.
- C. Story of Hassidic Rabbi Velvel stopping the whipping of the horses.
- D. Shulhan Aruch forbids tying animals' legs in a painful manner.
- E. Refer to the Responsa of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein concerning veal calves raised in crates, in which he states that "...it is definitely forbidden to raise calves in such a manner because of the pain that is inflicted on them....it is forbidden

to cause them pain for no reason, even if someone may profit from this."

See Lesson II — Backup Material

Questions for Students:

1. What does the Jewish tradition tell us about whether animals can feel physical pain?
2. What does the Jewish tradition tell us about causing pain to an animal?
3. Is putting out poison that causes a slow, painful death to animals in accordance with the Jewish tradition (poison is put out to kill coyotes and other wild animals in the western United States)?
4. Is raising veal calves in crates so tiny that they cannot move in accordance with Jewish tradition?
5. What are some ways people abuse animals? (Hitting, teasing, leaving them outside in hot/cold/wet weather without protection, leaving them alone for long periods of time, confining them to small spaces, breeding them in puppy mills for profit.)

LESSON III

What kind of treatment does Judaism require toward animals, given the fact that they feel emotional pain (deprivation, fear, neglect)?

Theme:

Judaism recognizes that animals experience emotional pain, and we are forbidden to inflict it.

Sources:

- A. Various laws, including: "Do not plow with an ox and a mule together" and "Do not muzzle a threshing animal."
- B. Story about Rabbi Judah the Prince and the calf.
- C. Story of Noah and the dove who preferred his freedom.

See Lesson III — Backup Material

Questions for Students:

- 1. Why do you think the Torah forbid plowing with an ox and a mule together?
 - a. Was it because the weaker one couldn't keep up with the stronger? (Ibn Ezra)
 - b. Was it because the mule, seeing the ox chew its cud, would think the ox was eating and feel deprived? (Baal HaTurim)
- 2. What does it tell you about Judaism that two important Talmudic commentators spent a great deal of time dealing with this question?
- 3. Why do you think the Torah forbid muzzling a threshing animal?

LESSON IV

What kind of treatment does Judaism require toward animals, given the fact that they have parental feelings toward their young?

Theme:

Judaism recognizes that animals have parental feelings toward their young and feel emotional pain when their young are harassed, threatened, or hurt. Inflicting such pain is forbidden.

Sources:

- A. "Do not boil a baby goat in its mother's milk"
- B. Law of "*shiluach haken*."
- C. Laws forbidding people to take young away to slaughter in the first week of life, and forbidding killing the offspring and the mother on the same day.
- D. Quotations about the protective eagle and her young, and the bereaved bear.
- E. Quotation from Maimonides, the great Sephardic commentator also known as Rambam, on parental feelings.

See Lesson IV — Backup Material

Questions for Students:

1. Have you seen instances of a mother animal showing fear for her young or trying to protect them? (cat or dog or wild animal)
2. How can we be considerate of both domestic/wild animals when they have young to protect? Sometimes even our own companion animals will be upset when we come too close to their babies.
3. What do you think of children who take away an animal's young (in the case of a cat or dog, before 6–8 weeks; in the case of a wild animal, taking them at all)?
4. How would Jewish tradition regard the slaughter of seal pups in the sight of their mothers? (Explain the clubbing of seal pups for fur.)
5. How would Jewish tradition regard the veal industry, in which newborn calves are forcibly taken away from their mothers?
6. People who are considerate of the mother bird are promised a "long life," as are people who honor their parents. What does this tell us about the importance Judaism attached to this law?

LESSON V

What responsibilities do we have toward the animals in our direct care?

Theme:

Jewish tradition doesn't just require that we not inflict pain on animals, it requires positive actions toward the animals in our care.

Sources:

- A. Several stories about how Noah and his family fed all the animals in their care.
- B. Talmud: a human cannot eat before feeding his/her animal.
- C. Talmud: a human cannot have animals unless he or she is able to take good care of them.
- D. Story of Rabbi Berlin and the hungry fowl on Rosh Hashanah.

See Lesson V — Backup Material

Questions for Students:

1. Is the requirement to feed animals properly based primarily on self-interest, according to the Jewish tradition?
2. Why should it matter if the animal is fed after we eat or before we eat? What does it tell us about the Jewish tradition that animals must be fed before we eat?
3. What is the significance of the fact that both Noah and Joseph were called "tzaddik" because they dedicated themselves to feeding people and animals?

4. Carriage horses, race horses, and greyhound racing dogs are worked very hard. Frequently, when they become injured, old, or fail to perform well, they are neglected, destroyed, or sold (sometimes as pets, often as animal food). What do you think about people who make their horses or dogs work very hard and don't feed them well because new ones can be cheaply bought if these die? Is it right to do this?

LESSON VI (extension of theme of LESSON V)

What are some of the other responsibilities we have toward the animals in our care besides feeding them well?

Theme:

Given that animals feel physical and emotional pain (review Lessons II and III) and that we have responsibilities toward them (review Lesson V) — how should we take care of our companion animals and the animals who help us in our work, according to Jewish tradition?

Note: This lesson is lengthy and may need to be broken up into two lessons, depending on available time.

Sources:

- A. "A righteous person understands the soul of his animals."
- B. "A human's animals are his life."
- C. Story of Rabbi Hiya bar Abba who worried about his donkey.
- D. Story of Rabbi Shlomo and Rabbi Ytzhak Elchana, who kept cats and dogs.
- E. Early pioneers in the Galil — rules about treatment of animals in an agricultural society.

For Lesson VI, see Backup Material for Lesson V (Note: Lesson VI is an extension of Lesson V)

Questions for Students:

1. What do the stories about the Talmudic sage Rabbi Hiya and the Hassidic rabbis tell us about the history of Jews keeping and caring about companion animals?
2. What responsibilities do we have toward animals in our care that could come under the heading of "knowing an animal's soul"?
3. Do animals need fresh air, exercise and companionship just like humans?
4. What special precautions should be taken in hot/cold weather (for example, what precautions to take when leaving an animal in a parked car; the need for protection from sun/snow/rain). Is keeping a dog tied or chained up all day in a hot yard or locked up alone in a small apartment day and night in keeping with the Jewish tradition?
5. Animals have certain special needs. Is it necessary to learn what the specific needs of your animal are (e.g. straw for rabbits)? Is not taking care of these special needs a violation of the Jewish tradition? Is it a form of neglect? What constitutes animal neglect? Why is neglect another form of abuse?
6. Is it necessary to take your dog or cat to the vet for rabies and distemper vaccinations or when they are sick? Is it our responsibility to learn the warning signs that an animal is sick?
Is it our responsibility to have our cats and dogs spayed and neutered to prevent the suffering that results from their overpopulation? Are spaying and neutering a positive act of kindness toward animals?
7. Whose responsibility is it to make sure pets are well behaved? What can people do to make sure their dogs learn to walk with a leash, become house trained and obey basic safety commands? Why is it important to attend obedience class with your dog? Will both you and your dog be happier if you do this? Should we keep our dogs leashed when we walk them so they won't hurt smaller animals or get hit by a car? Is keeping dogs on leashes a positive act of kindness toward animals?

8. Should people who can no longer keep their companion animals or who have newborn litters put the animals out on the street? What are some of the things that could happen to the animals on the street (poisoning, starvation, hurt by dogs, hit by cars)? What should you do instead to prevent this problem?
9. Millions of animals are killed in animal shelters because homes cannot be found for them. If we spayed and neutered our animals, could we eliminate the problems of pet overpopulation such as abandoned, homeless, sick animals, needless death by extreme heat, cold, cars?

For Teenagers:

A discussion on experimentation on animals: Millions of animals are sacrificed in laboratories every year. Several different types of experiments are performed on these animals — cosmetics testing, psychological experiments, and medical experiments. Since animals feel physical pain (Lesson II) and emotional pain (Lesson III), what should be our attitude toward experimentation on animals? In light of the fact that animals feel pain, can we justify using them for medical experiments or product testing (cosmetics, cleaners)? Are there laws that protect animals used in laboratories? What do the laws cover? Are they comprehensive enough? What are some alternatives to using animals available now? Should we be putting our efforts into using the many alternatives that already exist and into finding additional ones? Is it our responsibility to protest when we learn that these things are going on?

LESSON VII

Do we have responsibilities toward animals not directly in our care?

Theme:

We also have responsibilities toward animals we encounter, to prevent their pain (law of helping an overburdened donkey), hunger and thirst (Rabbi Leib), abandonment (Rabbi Salanter), and emotional suffering (Rabbi Zusya).

Sources:

- A. Law of helping up on overburdened donkey even if it belongs to your "enemy" (Code of Jewish Law).
- B. Relieving animal suffering supercedes rabbinic ordinances related to the Sabbath (Shabbat 128b).
- C. Story of Rabbi Salanter who came late to Kol Nidre in order to return a Gentile's strayed cow.
- D. Story of Rabbi Leib of Sassov who watered merchants' cattle left thirsty in the marketplace.
- E. Story of Rabbi Zusya who freed the caged birds.

See Lesson VII — Backup Material

Questions for Students:

1. How important is the prevention of animal suffering, according to the Jewish tradition, if Rabbi Salanter delayed getting to Shul on Yom Kippur eve to rescue a lost cow?
2. Why is it significant that the famous Rabbi Leib didn't mind taking orders from merchants who "took advantage" of him to water their cattle?
3. If you see a starving, stray animal, what should you do?
4. Is it our responsibility to reduce the cat and dog overpopulation in humane ways to prevent suffering? (Review question #7 from Lesson VI.)

5. How can you help the stray animals and the cats, dogs, and other animals in your city or town?
6. If you see an animal hit by a car, what should you do?
7. If you see an animal being beaten, neglected, or tortured by an adult or by other children, what should you do?
8. What should be our attitude when we learn of mistreatment of animals in foreign countries? Do we have a special responsibility to animals in Israel and how can we act on it?

LESSON VIII

Do we have responsibilities toward the animal kingdom as a whole?

Theme:

Jewish tradition includes the mitzvah of "bal tashchit" (do not destroy). Animals are not "hefker" (expendable, lacking in intrinsic value) to be abused with impunity.

Sources:

- A. The Talmud requires that a blessing be recited upon seeing a beautiful animal: "Blessed are You our God, Ruler of the Universe, who created beautiful animals in this world."
- B. Story of Rabbi Schneor Zalman of Ladi (author of Tania)
- C. Jonah and Nineveh
- D. The Talmud prohibited association with hunters, based on the statement "not to stand in the path of sinners," (Ps. 1:1).
- E. Maimonides on hunting: "Those who go to hunt (beasts) and kill birds. . .violate the commandment that forbids us from wantonly destroying any part of God's creation."

- F. The Landau response on hunting.
- G. The Talmud forbids spectator sports that involve hurting people or animals:
"Whoever sits in a stadium spills blood."
- H. Rabbi Kook on the concept of "stewardship" vs. "dominion" over animals.

See Lesson VIII — Backup Material

Questions for Students:

1. What does the Jonah story teach us about how the Jewish tradition feels about letting animals be killed without doing anything to prevent it?
2. Why has hunting not been part of the Jewish tradition? Should hunting be outlawed in Israel, as a Knesset bill once proposed?
3. Since Jews are not allowed to wear leather on Yom Kippur because you can't ask for compassion if you haven't shown it, and since hunting is considered a cruel sport, should Jews wear furs to shul on Yom Kippur? Should Jews wear fur at all when fake fur is readily available?
4. Is going to a bullfight (cockfight, dogfight, rodeo — ask your humane society about the cruelties involved in rodeos if you are unfamiliar with them) against Jewish law? Why? Does watching it and not trying to stop it mean you approve of it?

For Teenagers:

1. There have been many instances of animals being abused in the making of movies. Where you've read that animals have been abused in American and foreign films, should you go to see such movies? Should you boycott them? Should you picket, protest, write letters, or otherwise protest?

2. As part of our responsibilities to the entire animal kingdom, is it important that we be involved in local/state/national and international conservation efforts? By preserving wilderness areas, are we not also protecting the lives of animals? Who lives there? Some species have very limited territories. Can destroying one forest or river make a species extinct?
3. Why is it important that humans not destroy the balance of nature and species diversification? God created a natural system that worked and allowed the planet to survive for millions of years. Is it right for us to recklessly undo God's work? Stewardship vs. dominion (Rabbi Kook)

LESSON IX

Why does Judaism require that nonhuman animals be allowed to rest on Shabbat?

Theme:

Shabbat is regarded as a foretaste of the Messianic Age. The Messianic Age will restore the original harmony between human and nonhuman animals. Requiring people to let their nonhuman animals rest on Shabbat creates a consciousness that the Messianic Age will also be one of peace between human and nonhuman animals as well as between nations.

Sources:

- A. Various Torah verses about animals resting on Shabbat.
- B. Quotations from Isaiah about Messianic Age.
- C. Rabbi Kook on the Messianic Age restoring the original harmony between humans and animals.
- D. Story of Rabbi Abramtzi.

[See Lesson IX — Backup Material](#)

Questions for Students:

1. Why should animals be allowed to rest on Shabbat when they are not required to observe Shabbat?
2. Does this law mean that animals have some need to rest and should we respect this as a right?

LESSON X

Did Jews understand the various kinds of animal suffering because they, too, were treated badly for centuries in many societies in the Golah?

Theme:

Jews developed, in centuries of living in the Galut (Diaspora), an acute understanding of what it means to be "hefker" (Lesson VIII) — to be hunted, captured, penned up in ghettos, subject to the power of others. Instead of passing on their pain to animals, the ideal is to transfer their understanding and compassion to animals.

Sources:

- A. I.B. Singer: "For animals it is an eternal Treblinka."
- B. Quotation from Appelfeld's story equating Jews and fish.
- C. Shalom Aleichem's story "The Pair" about two turkeys.
- D. Rosa Luxemburg and the beaten animals.

(Backup material for Lesson X will be supplied at a later date.)

Questions for Students:

1. What kind of conditions did Jews live under in many societies in the Golah?
2. How are these conditions and the treatment Jews received similar to the way people have treated animals?

3. Do you think this is why Jews abhorred hunting, blood sports, and other forms of cruelty to animals?
4. Is it significant that a Jew, Louis Gompertz, was one of the principle founders of the first Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) in the world, the RSPCA, founded in England in 1832?
5. Does being a Jew mean being compassionate toward animals?

At the conclusion of the ten lessons, review the stories of David and Moses (Lesson I), who were considered heroes in the Jewish tradition, and the importance their treatment of animals had in their being chosen as role models for Jews.

6. What does the concept of a Messianic Age foresee about what will happen to animals?
7. How does having a real Shabbat, including letting your domestic animals rest, give us a "foretaste" of the Messianic Age?

For Teenagers:

1. Since animals are allowed to roam freely on Shabbat and this is seen as a good thing, what should be our attitude toward factory farming, where animals never get to rest or even lie down?
2. The original creation story envisioned people eating only plant food (Genesis 1:29–30). It was only after the emergence from Noah's Ark that people were grudgingly allowed to eat animals. If the Messianic era is seen as restoring the original harmony between humans and animals, does this mean that people will be vegetarians?
3. One view holds that the laws of Kashruth with all their restrictions were an attempt to make eating meat more difficult and, at a minimum, make people aware of what they were doing. The Kashruth laws require that the shochet inflict a minimum of pain on the animal. Today, however, with shackling and

hoisting common practice, various pre-shechita factory methods are completely against the spirit of these laws. Should we be eating kosher meat? Should we be eating meat at all?

4. Should people begin to be vegetarians as a "foretaste" of the Messianic era, just as they observe Shabbat as a "foretaste" of the Messianic era?

JEWISH HUMANE EDUCATION KIT Lesson I: Backup Material – Biblical Stories

Jewish tradition embodies the view that good and wise treatment of the animals in our care is so important that it indicates good character and even demonstrates that the person is worthy of being in a position of national responsibility and leadership. Thus, the truly great Jewish

heroes of the Bible were trained for their tasks by being shepherds of flocks. They were chosen as leaders of their people because of the kindness they showed to the animals in their care.

Moses

Moses was tested by God through his shepherding. When Moses was tending the sheep of Jethro in the wilderness of Midiam, a young kid ran off from the flock. Moses ran after him until he found the kid drinking from a pool of water. Moses approached him and said, "I did not know that you ran away because you were thirsty; now you must be tired." So Moses placed the kid on his shoulders and carried him back to the flock. Then God said, "Because thou hast shown mercy in leading the flock, thou will surely tend My flock, Israel."

David

God also deemed David worthy of leading the Jewish people because he knew how to look after sheep, bestowing upon each the care it needed. David prevented the larger sheep from going out before the smaller ones. The smaller ones were then able to graze upon the tender grass. Next he permitted the old sheep to feed from the ordinary grass, and finally the young, lusty sheep ate the tougher grass.

Midrash, retold by Richard Schwartz
Judaism and Vegetarianism, pp. 18-19

Esau

The Torah described Esau, Jacob's twin brother, as "a wild man." Rashi, the great authoritative Torah commentator, interpreted this to mean: "He loved to hunt beasts."



Rebecca

Abraham sent his faithful servant Eliezer on a long journey to his birthplace to find a wife for his son Isaac. Eliezer traveled on the back of a camel, bringing with him other camels laden with

Jacob

gifts. He arrived exhausted, hungry, and thirsty after the long trip through the desert.

Eliezer arrived at the well in the city of Abraham's birth in the evening, the hour when the women of the city came to the well to draw water for their households. He prayed for a sign that would show him the woman who was destined to be Isaac's bride.

As he finished praying, Rebecca came to the well and filled her jug. Eliezer approached her and asked if he could drink a little water from her jug. Rebecca said to him, "Drink and let me draw water for your camels as well." Rebecca's kindness and compassion for animals convinced Eliezer that she was the one destined to be Isaac's bride.

Genesis 24:11-20



The patriarch Jacob also demonstrated concern for animals. After their reconciliation, his brother Esau said to him, "Let us take our journey and I will go at your pace." But Jacob, concerned about his flocks and children, politely told him to go on ahead of him: "My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and that the flocks and the herds giving suck are a care to me; and I will journey on gently, according to the pace of the cattle that are before me and according to the pace of the children...."

Genesis 33:12-14

Rabbi Yaakov Yitzhak

When Rabbi Yaakov Yitzhak of Pshiskof was a boy, he would take walks in the field with his father. If he saw sheep fighting and wounding each other with their horns, he would separate them and quiet down the herd. The baby lambs would come up to the boy and When Rabbi Yaakov Yitzhak of Pshiskof was a boy, he would take walks in the field with his father. If he saw sheep fighting and wounding each other with their horns, he would separate them and quiet down the herd. The baby

lambs would come up to the boy and cling to him. He would pet them and talk to them in loving words. His uncle said, "This boy is destined to be a faithful shepherd to his people." And so it was. Yaakov Yitzhak became known as "Ha Yehudi" — the model Jew.



Rabbi Shneur Zalman

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Ladi, who lived in the 18th century, used to like to take walks with his grandson. He often stopped to listen to the songs of the many different birds. His grandson expressed surprise that a famous and important rabbi would spend his time listening to birds. Zalman said to the boy: "You should know, my son, that if every person whose hearing is working properly listens, he can hear in the voice of every bird and beast the voice of God."

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Questions for Students:

1. What kind of leaders were David and Moses? What qualities of leadership made them outstanding?
2. What leadership qualities could be observed from the way they treated their sheep?
3. Does the fact that they were chosen as leaders tell us something about the importance Jewish tradition attaches to the kind and wise treatment of animals?

## **JEWISH HUMANE EDUCATION KIT Lesson II: Backup Material – Biblical Stories**

### **THEME**

Judaism recognizes that animals feel physical pain, and we are forbidden to inflict it.

### **Balaam**

After the Exodus, when the Jews who had wandered 40 years in the desert were about to cross into the Promised Land, they camped first in the plains of Moab. The Moabites thought of the Jews as enemies, and sent their "prophet" Balaam to curse them.

Balaam set out one morning on his donkey for the Jews' camp, but God put an angel with a sword in his path. Balaam didn't see the angel, but the donkey did, and she turned off the road into the field.



Balaam beat the donkey three times with his stick to try to force her back onto the road, but it was no use. After the third beating, the donkey said to Balaam, "What have I done to cause you to beat me three times?" Balaam replied, "Because you made a fool of me. If I had my sword in my hand I would kill you now."

The donkey said, "Aren't I your donkey that you've ridden ever since you owned me? Did I ever mock you?" And Balaam had to confess that the donkey had not.

Then God opened Balaam's eyes and he saw the angel with his sword, whom God had sent against him. The angel said, "Why did you beat your donkey three times? Do you realize that had she not turned off the road when she saw me, I would have killed you and saved her?"

Balaam then understood he had done wrong. When he came to the camp of the Jews, instead of cursing them, he blessed them.



Numbers, Chapter 22:21-34

## **Rabbi Yehuda the Hassid**

### **Rabbi Velvel**

In Germany in the Middle Ages, nobles fought battles and also took part in mock battles called "jousts" — all on horseback. To make the horses gallop faster they used spurs — sharp wheels on their boots that dug into the animals' flesh. Many cowboys still use them today. Rabbi Yehuda the Hassid ("the Pious") who lived in the 12th Century, warned Jews who rode horses — the only means of transportation then — against using spurs because they were cruel to animals.



One day, Rabbi Velvel, a Hassidic leader who lived in the Polish town of Zabriz, was riding in a wagon. The driver started to whip the horses to make them run faster.

Rabbi Velvel pitied the unfortunate animals. He said to the driver, "Don't hit the horses! It causes them pain!" The driver replied that he was only using the whip to chase away the flies who were bothering the horses.

Rabbi Velvel told him, "So take my handkerchief and use it to chase away the flies, but don't use the whip." The driver, outsmarted by the rabbi, had no choice but to stop hitting the horses.



Questions for Students:

1. What does the Jewish tradition tell us about whether animals can feel physical pain?



2. What does the Jewish tradition tell us about causing pain to an animal?
  
3. Is putting out poison that causes a slow, painful death to animals in accordance with the Jewish tradition (poison is put out to kill coyotes and other wild animals in the western United States)?
  
4. Is raising veal calves in crates so tiny that they cannot move in accordance with Jewish tradition?
  
5. What are some ways people abuse animals? (Hitting, teasing, leaving them outside in hot/cold/wet weather without protection, leaving them alone for long periods of time, confining them to small spaces, breeding them in puppy mills for profit.)

~~~~~ Questions for Students:

1. What does the Jewish tradition tell us about whether animals can feel physical pain?

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3. Is putting out poison that causes a slow, painful death to animals in accordance with the Jewish tradition (poison is put out to kill coyotes and other wild animals in the western United States)?

4. Is raising veal calves in crates so tiny that they cannot move in accordance with Jewish tradition?

5. What are some ways people abuse animals? (Hitting, teasing, leaving them outside in hot/cold/wet weather without protection, leaving them alone for long periods of time, confining them to small spaces, breeding them in puppy mills for profit.)



THEME

JEWISH HUMANE EDUCATION KIT Lesson III: Backup Material – Biblical Stories

Judaism recognizes that animals experience emotional pain, and we are forbidden to inflict it.

Rabbi Judah the Prince

Rabbi Judah the Prince was the head of the Jewish community of Eretz Israel in the first century. One day while he was out walking, a calf escaped from a wagon bound for the slaughterhouse. The calf tried to hide under Rabbi Judah's coat, moaning with fear. Rabbi Judah pushed the calf away saying, "Go away — this is what you were created for!" Because of his lack of compassion for the frightened calf, Rabbi Judah was struck with a painful toothache from which he suffered for thirteen years.

One day while studying at home, Rabbi Judah noticed that his daughter was about to kill a family of weasels that she had discovered in a corner. He told her to let the animals live because one should show compassion to animals just as God does. He quoted to her from the Psalms: "God is merciful to all his creatures" (Psalms 145:9).

Because he had saved the animals, Rabbi Judah's painful toothache disappeared.

~~~~~ Questions for Students:

1. Why do you think the Torah forbid plowing with an ox and a mule together?
  - a. Was it because the weaker one couldn't keep up with the stronger? (Ibn Ezra)
  - b. Was it because the mule, seeing the ox chew its cud, would think the ox was eating and feel deprived? (Baal HaTurim)

2. What does it tell you about Judaism that two important Talmudic commentators spent a great deal of time dealing with this question?
3. Why do you think the Torah forbid muzzling a threshing animal?



## **JEWISH HUMANE EDUCATION KIT Lesson IV: Backup Material – Biblical Stories**

### **THEME**

Judaism recognizes that animals have parental feelings toward their young and feel emotional pain when their young are harassed, threatened, or hurt. Inflicting such pain is forbidden. **Maimonides**

Maimonides, the great Sephardic scholar and physician also known as Rambam, wrote in his famous book "Guide for the Perplexed": "There

is no difference between the worry of a human mother and an animal mother for their offspring. A mother's love does not derive from the intellect but from the emotions, in animals just as in humans.”

~~~~~ Questions for Students:

1. Have you seen instances of a mother animal showing fear for her young or trying to protect them? (cat or dog or wild animal)
2. How can we be considerate of both domestic/wild animals when they have young to protect? Sometimes even our own companion animals will be upset when we come too close to their babies.
3. What do you think of children who take away an animal's young (in the case of a cat or dog, before 6–8 weeks; in the case of a wild animal, taking them at all)?
4. How would Jewish tradition regard the slaughter of seal pups in the sight of their mothers? (Explain the clubbing of seal pups for fur.)
5. How would Jewish tradition regard the veal industry, in which newborn calves are forcibly taken away from their mothers?
6. People who are considerate of the mother bird are promised a "long life," as are people who honor their parents. What does this tell us about the importance Judaism attached to this law?

JEWISH HUMANE EDUCATION KIT

Lesson V and VI: Backup Material – Biblical Stories

THEME

Jewish tradition doesn't just require that we not inflict pain on animals, it requires positive actions toward the animals in our care.

Talmud and Feeding Animals

The Talmud says that before people eat a meal, they have to feed the animals in their care. (Gitten 64) The Talmud also says that before people decide to take a work or companion animal into their home, they must first make sure they can feed the animal properly. Yevanot 15

Rabbi Naftali Zvi Berlin

It was Rosh Hashanah, the New Year, and Rabbi Naftali Zvi Berlin, head of the famous Yeshiva (Talmudic Academy) of Volozhin came home from the synagogue. His household was waiting for him so they could all sit down to the festival dinner.

Before he said the *Kiddish* (blessing on the wine starting the meal), Rabbi Berlin asked if the chickens had been fed. When he found out they hadn't, he insisted it be done immediately, but the key to the barn was missing.

After the members of the household searched in vain for

the key, Rabbi Berlin instructed them to call in a non-Jewish neighbor to break the lock. Only after the barn door was opened and the fowl fed would the Rabbi sit down with his family to the holiday meal.

Rabbi Shlomo the Admor

In Jerusalem, several centuries ago, there lived a man as great in learning as in piety. His name was Rabbi Shlomo the Admor, from Zuahil. Every day, Rabbi Shlomo walked on foot to the Western Wall to pray for the handicapped and the oppressed.



Rabbi Shlomo lived in great poverty. His small hut had only a bed, a table, and a chair, but he managed to care for many cats in his home. The cats would lie on his bed, waiting for him to return from the Western Wall. Rabbi Shlomo took great care to feed all his cats properly.

Rabbi Yitzhak Elchana



Rabbi Yitzhak Elchana, the Rabbi of Dovno and Lithuania, was very fond of animals. His cat always sat on the back of the couch, behind his head. A neighborhood dog regularly came to his house during meals.

Rabbi Hiya bar Abba



Rabbi Hiya bar Abba was a scholar during the period when great academies were holding the discussions on Jewish law that later became the Talmud. One day at a lecture given by Rav, the great scholar, Rabbi Hiya could not concentrate. Rav noticed that the rabbi's mind was wandering and asked him why. Rabbi Hiya replied, "I'm worried about my donkey. She's about to give birth and I'm afraid she might catch cold and die."

Midrash Rabba

Pioneers in Israel

In the early years of the rebuilding of the Land of Israel, pioneers founded an agricultural society in the lower Galilee. One of the laws of the society was "It is forbidden to leave work animals outside in the afternoon without shelter from the burning rays of the sun. Care must also be taken that the animals are kept healthy and given food and water on time."

~~~~~ Questions for Students:

1. Is the requirement to feed animals properly based primarily on self-interest, according to the Jewish tradition?
2. Why should it matter if the animal is fed after we eat or before we eat? What does it tell us about the Jewish tradition that animals must be fed before we eat?
3. What is the significance of the fact that both Noah and Joseph were called "tzaddik" because they dedicated themselves to feeding people and animals?
4. Carriage horses, race horses, and greyhound racing dogs are worked very hard. Frequently, when they become injured, old, or fail to perform well, they are neglected, destroyed, or sold (sometimes as pets, often as animal food). What do you think about people who make their horses or dogs work very hard and don't feed them well because new ones can be cheaply bought if these die? Is it right to do this?

~~~~~ Questions for Students:

1. What do the stories about the Talmudic sage Rabbi Hiya and the Hassidic rabbis tell us about the history of Jews keeping and caring about companion animals?
2. What responsibilities do we have toward animals in our care that could come under the heading of "knowing an animal's soul"?
3. Do animals need fresh air, exercise and companionship just like humans?

4. What special precautions should be taken in hot/cold weather (for example, what precautions to take when leaving an animal in a parked car; the need for protection from sun/snow/rain). Is keeping a dog tied or chained up all day in a hot yard or locked up alone in a small apartment day and night in keeping with the Jewish tradition?

5. Animals have certain special needs. Is it necessary to learn what the specific needs of your animal are (e.g. straw for rabbits)? Is not taking care of these special needs a violation of the Jewish tradition? Is it a form of neglect? What constitutes animal neglect? Why is neglect another form of abuse?

6. Is it necessary to take your dog or cat to the vet for rabies and distemper vaccinations or when they are sick? Is it our responsibility to learn the warning signs that an animal is sick?

Is it our responsibility to have our cats and dogs spayed and neutered to prevent the suffering that results from their overpopulation? Are spaying and neutering a positive act of kindness toward animals?

7. Whose responsibility is it to make sure pets are well behaved? What can people do to make sure their dogs learn to walk with a leash, become house trained and obey basic safety commands? Why is it important to attend obedience class with your dog? Will both you and your dog be happier if you do this? Should we keep our dogs leashed when we walk them so they won't hurt smaller animals or get hit by a car? Is keeping dogs on leashes a positive

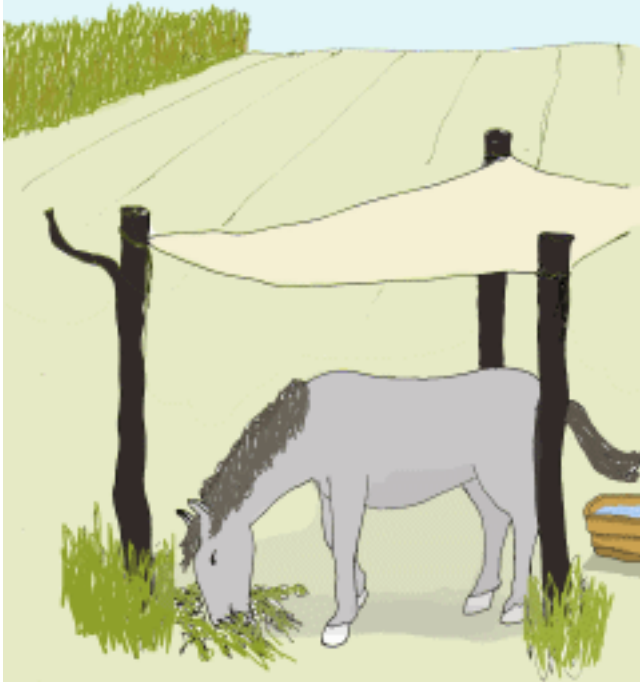
act of kindness toward animals?

8. Should people who can no longer keep their companion animals or who have newborn litters put the animals out on the street? What are some of the things that could happen to the animals on the street (poisoning, starvation, hurt by dogs, hit by cars)? What should you do instead to prevent this problem?

9. Millions of animals are killed in animal shelters because homes cannot be found for them. If we spayed and neutered our animals, could we eliminate the problems of pet overpopulation such as abandoned, homeless, sick animals, needless death by extreme heat, cold, cars?

For Teenagers:

A discussion on experimentation on animals: Millions of animals are sacrificed in laboratories every year. Several different types of experiments are performed on these animals — cosmetics



testing, psychological experiments, and medical experiments. Since animals feel physical pain (Lesson II) and emotional pain (Lesson III), what should be our attitude toward experimentation on animals? In light of the fact that animals feel pain, can we justify using them for medical experiments or product testing (cosmetics, cleaners)?

Are there laws that protect animals used in laboratories? What do the laws cover? Are they comprehensive enough? What are some alternatives to using animals available now? Should we be putting our efforts into using the many alternatives that already exist and into finding additional ones? Is it our responsibility to protest when we learn that these things are going on?

JEWISH HUMANE EDUCATION KIT Lesson VII: Backup Material – Biblical Stories

THEME

We also have responsibilities toward animals we encounter, to prevent their pain (law of helping an overburdened donkey), hunger and thirst (Rabbi Leib), abandonment (Rabbi Salanter), and emotional suffering (Rabbi Zusya).

Rabbi Israel Salanter

Rabbi Israel Salanter, one of the most distinguished Orthodox Rabbis of the nineteenth century, failed to appear one Yom Kippur eve to chant the Kol Nidre Prayer. His congregation became concerned, for it was inconceivable that their saintly rabbi would be late or absent on this very holy day. They sent out a search party to look for him. After much time, the rabbi was found in the barn of a Christian neighbor. On his way to the synagogue, Rabbi Salanter had come upon one of his neighbor's calves, lost and tangled in the brush. Seeing that the animal was in distress, he freed her and led her home through many fields and over many hills. His act of mercy represented the rabbi's prayers on that Yom Kippur.

S.Y. Agnon, *Days of Awe Jerusalem*: Schocken, 1939



Rabbi Moshe Leib

The Hassidic Rabbi Moshe Leib went regularly to the weekly fair in Sassov. One day, while at the fair, Rabbi Leib saw cattle whom the merchants had left for a long time without food and water. Rabbi Leib, sensing how thirsty and uncomfortable the animals were, filled a pail with water and gave it to them to drink.

As he was doing this, one of the merchants returned.

Thinking Rabbi Leib was someone's servant, the merchant ordered him to take water to a group of calves at the other end of the marketplace. Rabbi Leib did not reveal his identity to the merchant, but filled up a bucket and went off to water the thirsty calves.



Rabbi Zusya

Rabbi Zusya once went on a journey to collect money to ransom prisoners. He came to an inn and in one room found a large cage with many types of birds. He saw that the birds wanted to fly out of the cage and be free again. He burned with pity for them and said to himself, "Here you are, Zusya, walking your feet off to ransom prisoners. But what greater ransoming of prisoners can there be than to free these birds from their prison?" He then opened the cage,

and the birds flew out into freedom.

When the innkeeper saw the empty cage, he was very angry and asked the people in the house who had released the birds. When the innkeeper found out that Rabbi Zusya had let the birds free, he shouted at him: "You fool! How could you rob me of my birds

and make worthless the good money I paid for them?" Zusya replied "You have often read these words in the Psalms: 'His tender mercies are over all His works.' " Then the innkeeper beat Zusya until he became tired and then he threw him out of the house. And Zusya went his way serenely.

Martin Buber, Tales of the Hasidim,
Vol. 1, p. 249



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Questions for Students:

1. How important is the prevention of animal suffering, according to the Jewish tradition, if Rabbi Salanter delayed getting to Shul on Yom Kippur eve to rescue a lost cow?



2. Why is it significant that the famous Rabbi Leib didn't mind taking orders from merchants who "took advantage" of him to water their cattle?
3. If you see a starving, stray animal, what should you do?
4. Is it our responsibility to reduce the cat and dog overpopulation in humane ways to prevent suffering? (Review question #7 from Lesson VI.)
5. How can you help the stray animals and the cats, dogs, and other animals in your city or town?
6. If you see an animal hit by a car, what should you do?
7. If you see an animal being beaten, neglected, or tortured by an adult or by other children, what should you do?
8. What should be our attitude when we learn of mistreatment of animals in foreign countries? Do we have a special responsibility to animals in Israel and how can we act on it?

## **JEWISH HUMANE EDUCATION KIT Lesson VIII: Backup Material – Biblical Stories**

### **THEME**

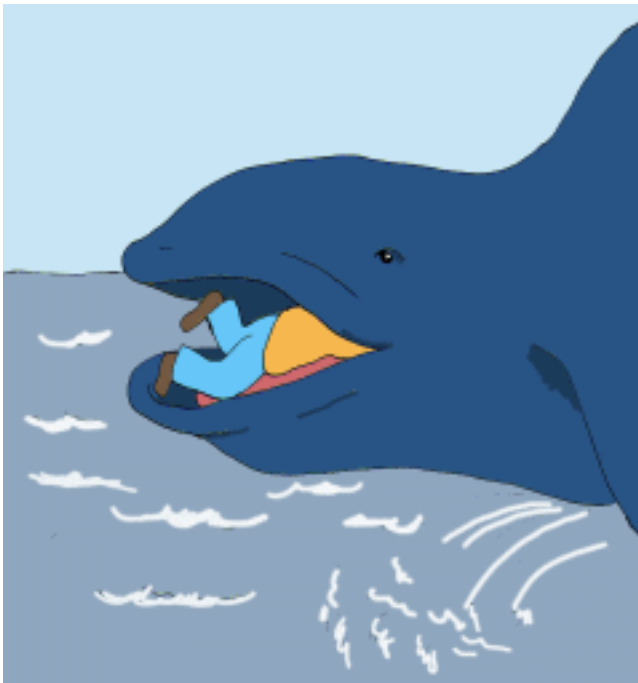
Jewish tradition includes the mitzvah of "bal tashchit" (do not destroy). Animals are not "hefker" (expendable, lacking in intrinsic value) to be abused with impunity.

## **The Talmud and Reciting a Blessing on Seeing a Beautiful Animal**

The Talmud requires that when Jews see a beautiful animal they must recite a special blessing: "Blessed are You our God, Ruler of the Universe, who created beautiful animals in this world." Berachot 9

### **Jonah**

God then talked with Jonah about compassion. God Said, "Should I not have spared Nineveh, that great city where live more than 120,000 people, who cannot distinguish between their right hand



and their left, their children, and also many animals?" Jonah had not thought of the innocents whose lives could be destroyed with the guilty if they city were destroyed, but God had compassion for all creatures, humans and animals alike.

### **The Talmud and Animal Combat**

In the days of the Roman Empire, people went to the Coliseum, a very large stadium, to be "entertained" by battles between men (gladiators), between animals, and between people and animals. The sages of the

Talmud did not differentiate between the victims of these combats, but stated categorically, "Whoever sits in a stadium (as a spectator) spills blood."

Later lawmakers forbid all games with animals and birds — today's dogfights and cockfights would be included.

### **Rabbi Ezekiel Landau**

Rabbi Ezekiel Landau was a leading scholar in Austria-Hungary in the 18th century. People came to him with numerous questions regarding Jewish law.

In those days, many Jews made a living as managers of the estates of non-Jewish nobles. The nobles, who didn't work, spent much of their time hunting in the vast forests of Poland. They often wanted their Jewish employers to come along on these hunts. The Jews asked Rabbi Landau if Jewish law allowed them to go hunting for fun. He replied: "In the Torah the sport of hunting is imputed only to fierce characters like Nimrod and Esau, never to any of the patriarchs and their descendants.... I cannot comprehend how a Jew could even dream of killing animals merely for the pleasure of hunting.... When the act of killing is prompted by that of sport, it is downright cruelty."

### **Maimonides**

Maimonides, also known as Rambam, is regarded as one of the most brilliant scholars in Jewish history. Born in Spain, he was hired as the court physician in Egypt. Maimonides wrote this about hunting: "Those who go to hunt (beasts) and kill birds...violate the commandment that forbids us to wantonly destroy any part of God's creation."

### **Rabbi Yitzhak Hacohen Kook**

Rabbi Yitzhak Hacohen Kook on dominion vs. stewardship, from *The Vision of Vegetarians and Peace*, edited and compiled by Rabbi David Hacohen:

"There can be no doubt in the minds of every thinking man that the concept of dominion as expressed in the Torah...does not in any way imply the rule of a haughty despot who tyrannically governs his people and his servants for his own personal selfish ends and with a stubborn

heart. Heaven forbid that such a repulsive form of servitude be forever integrated (sealed) in the world of the Lord, whose tender mercies are on all His works and of whom it is said, 'He shall build a world of kindness.' “

~~~~~ Questions for Students:

1. What does the Jonah story teach us about how the Jewish tradition feels about letting animals be killed without doing anything to prevent it?
2. Why has hunting not been part of the Jewish tradition? Should hunting be outlawed in Israel, as a Knesset bill once proposed?
3. Since Jews are not allowed to wear leather on Yom Kippur because you can't ask for compassion if you haven't shown it, and since hunting is considered a cruel sport, should Jews wear furs to shul on Yom Kippur? Should Jews wear fur at all when fake fur is readily available?
4. Is going to a bullfight (cockfight, dogfight, rodeo — ask your humane society about the cruelties involved in rodeos if you are unfamiliar with them) against Jewish law? Why? Does watching it and not trying to stop it mean you approve of it?

For Teenagers:

1. There have been many instances of animals being abused in the making of movies. Where you've read that animals have been abused in American and foreign films, should you go to see such movies? Should you boycott them? Should you picket, protest, write letters, or otherwise protest?
2. As part of our responsibilities to the entire animal kingdom, is it important that we be involved in local/state/national and international conservation efforts? By preserving wilderness areas, are we not also protecting the lives of animals? Who lives there? Some species have very limited territories. Can destroying one forest or river make a species extinct?
3. Why is it important that humans not destroy the balance of nature and species diversification? God created a natural system that worked and allowed the planet to survive for millions of years. Is it right for us to recklessly undo God's work? Stewardship vs. dominion (Rabbi Kook)

JEWISH HUMANE EDUCATION KIT Lesson IX: Backup Material – Biblical Stories

THEME

Shabbat is regarded as a foretaste of the Messianic Age. The Messianic Age will restore the original harmony between human and nonhuman animals. Requiring people to let their nonhuman animals rest on Shabbat creates a consciousness that the Messianic Age will also be one of peace between human and nonhuman animals as well as between nations.

Isaiah

In the ancient kingdom of Judea, the prophet Isaiah fearlessly told the people and their kings that they must practice justice. He shared with them — and us — his vision of a future of mercy and peace for all. He told the people that in that time, the Messianic Age:

The wolf will dwell with the lamb

and the leopard with the kid repose.

The calf and the lion cub and

baby sheep (will be) together.

A young child will be their steward.

The cow and the bear will eat together;

their young ones will repose with each other.

The lion will eat grass like the cow....

No one will cause harm or destroy in all My holy mountain,
for the knowledge of God will have spread all over the
earth like the waters that cover the seabed.

Isaiah 11:6-9

Yohanan ben Toraita

A pious Jew once owned a cow who he took care of very well, feeding her regularly and letting her rest on the Sabbath. But times were bad and he lost all he had. Finally, he couldn't even feed the cow and he sold her to a non-Jewish farmer.

The cow worked behind the plow all week. On the Sabbath, the owner harnessed her to the plow as usual, but she refused to work — she was used to resting on the Sabbath.

The non-Jew asked the Jew about what the Sabbath meant and why Jews were required to let their animals rest on that day, just as people rested. The Jew explained the matter and the more he talked, the more the non-Jew became interested in Judaism. He began to study the religion and eventually became a Jew himself. He took the new name of "Yohanan ben Toraita" — son of the cow — in honor of the Sabbath-observing cow who set an example for him in the observance of Shabbat that led to his becoming a Jew.

Rabbi Abramtzi

Rabbi Abramtzi was a man full of compassion for all living things. He would not walk on the grass of the field lest he trample it down. He was very careful not to tread on grasshoppers or crawling insects. If a dog came to the door of his house, he would instruct the members of his household to feed the animal. In winter he would scatter crumbs of bread and seed on the windowsills. When sparrows and other birds arrived and began to pick at the food, he could not remove his gaze from them and his face would light up with joy like that of a little child.

He looked after his horses far better than his coachmen did. When traveling, if the coach had to ascend an incline, he would climb down in order to lighten the load, and more often than not he would push the cart from behind. On summer days he would compel his coachman to stop on the way and turn aside to a field in order that the horses could rest and partake of the pure green grass. The rabbi loved these rest periods in the forest. While the horses were grazing, he would sit under a tree and interest himself in a book. At times he would pray in the field or the forest. This gave him great pleasure, for he used to say, "The field and the forest are the most beautiful and finest of the Houses of the Lord."



It happened once that the rabbi was on the road on a Friday. It would take another three hours to reach home. Because of the rain, the road was a mess. The wagon could only proceed with difficulty; the mud gripped the wheels and slowed down its progress. It was midday and they had not even completed half the journey. The horses were tired and worn out. They had no energy to proceed further.

The *tzaddik* (saint) told the driver to stop and to give fodder to the horses, so that they could regain their strength. This was done. Afterwards the journey was continued, but the going was heavy and the wagon sank up to the hubs of the wheels in the mud. In fact it was with the greatest difficulty that the horses maintained their balance in the swampy ground. The vapor of sweat enveloped their skin. Their knees trembled and at any moment they would have to rest. The coachman scolded and urged them on. He then raised his whip on the unfortunate creatures. The *tzaddik* grabbed him by the elbow and cried out: "This is cruelty to animals, cruelty to animals." The coachman answered in fury: "What do you want me to do? Do you want us to celebrate the Sabbath here?"

"What of it?" replied the rabbi quietly. "It is better that we celebrate the Sabbath here than cause the death of these animals by suffering. Are they not the creatures of the Lord? See how exhausted they are? They have not the energy to take one more step forward." "But what of the Sabbath? How can Jews observe the Sabbath in the forest?" asked the coachman.

"My friend, it does not matter. The Sabbath Queen will come to us also here, for her glory fills the whole world, and particularly in those places where Jews yearn for her. The Lord shall do what is good in His eyes. He will look after us, supply us with our wants and guard us against all evil."

Ben Ami, quoted in Joe Green,
The Jewish Vegetarian Tradition pp.19-20

~~~~~ Questions for Students:

1. Why should animals be allowed to rest on Shabbat when they are not required to observe Shabbat?
2. Does this law mean that animals have some need to rest and should we respect this as a right?
3. What does the concept of a Messianic Age foresee about what will happen to animals?
4. How does having a real Shabbat, including letting your domestic animals rest, give us a  
  
"foretaste" of the Messianic Age?

## For Teenagers:

1. Since animals are allowed to roam freely on Shabbat and this is seen as a good thing, what should be our attitude toward factory farming, where animals never get to rest or even lie down?
2. The original creation story envisioned people eating only plant food (Genesis 1:29–30). It was only after the emergence from Noah's Ark that people were grudgingly allowed to eat animals. If the Messianic era is seen as restoring the original harmony between humans and animals, does this mean that people will be vegetarians?
3. One view holds that the laws of Kashruth with all their restrictions were an attempt to make eating meat more difficult and, at a minimum, make people aware of what they were doing. The Kashruth laws require that the shochet inflict a minimum of pain on the animal. Today, however, with shackling and hoisting common practice, various pre- shechita factory methods are completely against the spirit of these laws. Should we be eating kosher meat? Should we be eating meat at all?
4. Should people begin to be vegetarians as a "foretaste" of the Messianic era, just as they observe Shabbat as a "foretaste" of the Messianic era?