



JEWISH HUMANE EDUCATION KIT

Quotations from the Bible about Kindness to Animals

Note: This section does not, of course, include each and every quotation in the Bible about kindness to animals, but the list is sufficient to give the reader an idea of the basis for the Jewish attitude towards animals.

Genesis

1:21, 1:24

The term "*nefesh chaya*," a "living being" or a "living soul," is applied to animals as well as to people.

1:22

God viewed the creation of animals as well as of people as "good" and gave sea animals and birds the same blessing as people: "Be fruitful and multiply."

1:28

In granting people "dominion" over animals, stewardship not despotism was implied. According to Rabbi Yitzchak Hacoen Kook, the first rabbi of pre-state Israel:

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."

The Vision of Vegetarianism and Peace

Edited and compiled by "The Nazeer of Jerusalem," Rabbi David Hacoen
P.O.B. 54119, Highlands North, Johannesburg, South Africa

1:29-30

Animals as well as people were initially given a vegetarian diet:

"Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food."

9:2

When, as a temporary concession to human weakness, humans were given permission to eat animals after the Flood, it was recognized that this would mean harmony between humans and animals would be replaced with estrangement and fear:

"And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, and upon all wherewith the ground teemeth and upon all the fishes of the sea into your hand are they delivered."

9:9-10

God made treaties and covenants with animals just as with humans:

"Behold I establish My Covenant with you and with your seed after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the fowl, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that go out of the ark, even every beast of the earth."

Exodus

20:8-10 & 23:12 (see also Deuteronomy 5:14)

Animals as well as people are to rest on the Sabbath:

"Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt not do any manner of work, thou, nor thy son, nor

thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger within thy gates."

"Six days thou shalt do thy work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest that thine ox and thine ass may have rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed."

A full chapter in the Talmud (the fifth chapter, Tractate Shabbat) and in the Shulhan Arukh (Orah Hayim 305) deal exclusively with laws against burdening an animal on Shabbat.

23:5 (see also Numbers 22:32)

It is a human duty to relieve animal suffering. Because Jewish law on preventing cruelty to animals is derived directly from a Biblical verse, it is said to be *de-oraita* – to have the force of the Torah behind the injunction (Bava Metzia 32b):

"If you see the ass of one who hates you lying under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it, you shall help him to lift it up."

The Code of Jewish Law states:

When horses drawing a cart come to a rough road or a steep hill, and it is hard for them to draw the cart without help, it is our duty to help them, even when they belong to a non-Jew, because of the precept not to be cruel to animals, lest the owner smite them to force them to draw more than their strength permits. (Rabbi Solomon Ganzfried, Code of Jewish Law, Hebrew Publishing Co., N.Y., 1961, Vol 4, Ch. 191)

34:26

It is bad enough that you have killed the calf, you must not add insult to injury by cooking the calf in its mother's milk. Animals, like humans, suffer emotionally. We must strive to cause them neither physical pain nor emotional anguish:

"You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk."

Leviticus

22:27-28

Although killing animals was permitted as a concession to human weakness and to the primitive practices during biblical times, restrictions were placed (including the laws of kashrut) to spare animal suffering as much as possible and to instill in humans a sense of mercy and the understanding that killing was unnecessary:

"It is forbidden to kill a newborn ox, sheep, or goat until it has had at least seven days of warmth and nourishment from its mother. And whether it be ox or ewe, ye shall not kill it and its young in one day."

Maimonides comments on this issue:

It is prohibited to kill an animal with its young on the same day, in order that people should be restrained and prevented from killing the two together in such a manner that the young is slain in the sight of the mother; for the pain of animals under such circumstances is very great. There is no difference between the pain of man and the pain of other living beings, since the love and the tenderness of the mother for her young ones is not produced by reasoning but by feeling, and this faculty exists not only in man but in most living things.

Leather shoes may not be worn on Yom Kippur because one cannot ask for compassion if one has not shown it. Rabbi Moses Isserles, known as the Ramah, states: "How can a man put on (leather) shoes, a piece of clothing for which it is necessary to kill a living thing, on Yom Kippur, which is a day of grace and compassion, when it is written 'His tender mercies are over all His works.'"

Similarly, the blessing of She-heh-eyanu, thanking God for allowing us to reach a special occasion, and the greeting of Tithadesh (May you be renewed in your garment) are not recited when a person dons leather shoes or furs because these garments are the result of taking an animal's life. (Orah Hayim 223:6 Code of Jewish Law, vol.2, p.29)

25:6-7

The sabbath (seventh) year will be a year of sacred rest for the land, yet what the land itself produces in the Sabbath year is to feed animals as well as people:

"The sabbath of the land shall provide food for you...for your cattle also and for the beasts that are in your land all its yield shall be for food."

Numbers

22:32 (see also Exodus 23:5)

The Talmud uses the following verse in which the angel of the Lord confronts Balaam as the primary basis for the assertion that inflicting suffering on animals is forbidden:

"Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass? Behold, I have come forth to withstand you, because your way is perverse before me."

The Code of Jewish Law states: "It is forbidden, according to the law of the Torah, to inflict pain upon any living creature, even if it is ownerless or belongs to a non-Jew." The code deals with specific cruelties, such as "It is forbidden to tie the legs of a beast or of a bird in a manner as to cause them pain." (Code of Jewish Law, book 4, ch.191, p.84)

A bird must not be made to sit on eggs that are not her own (Kitzur Shulhan Arukh, vol. 5, ch. 191/3) and the Sefer Hasidim (12th century) warns against the spurring of horses.

The Talmud states that the obligation to relieve an animal from pain or danger supersedes rabbinic ordinances related to the Sabbath. (Shabbat 128b)

Deuteronomy

5:14 (see also Exodus 20:8-10 & 23:12)

Animals, like people, are to rest on the Sabbath:

"The seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; on it you shall not do any work, you, your son...or your ox, or your ass, or any of your cattle." (see also Exodus 20:8-10; 23:12)

11:15

A person may not eat or drink before first providing for his or her animals, based on the following statement:

"And I will give grass in thy fields for thy cattle, and thou shalt eat and be satisfied."

The duty to feed an animal first is so great that a rabbinic commandment may be interrupted to ascertain if this has been done. (Orach Chayim 167:6; Berachot 40a) According to R. Eleazer ha-Kapar, a Talmudic sage, no one should have an animal or a bird unless he or she is able to care for the animal properly. (Yerushalmi Ketuvot 4:8)

22:6-7

The mother bird and her young may not be taken on the same day:

If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young; thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, but the young thou mayest take unto thyself; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days.

For the compassion shown to the mother, we are promised a long life. Maimonides states that in most cases, this commandment will result in the entire nest being left untouched, because the young or the eggs which people may take are generally unfit for food. (Guide to the Perplexed, Ch. 48, Part 3)

22:10

Animals of different species may not work together on the same task because the weaker animal would suffer in trying to keep up with the stronger:

"Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together."

The Talmud states: "You may not allow one task to be done together by animals of two species. You may not allow them to carry the smallest thing together, even if it be only a seed.... You may not sit in a wagon drawn by animals of differing species." (Yoreh De'ah, 297b)

25:4

Animals may not be muzzled during threshing because they are helping humans reap the fruits of the earth and therefore have a right to these fruits:

"Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn"

The Talmud states that you can only prevent animals from eating the fruits of their labor when it would be harmful for them to do so. (Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Horeb, Dayan Dr. 1. Grunfeld, trans., Soncino Press, London, 1962, p. 293).

According to the Code of Jewish Law (Vol. 4, Ch. 186), preventing an animal from eating while the animal works, whether by muzzling or by shouting, is punishable by whipping. The punishment for muzzling a working animal is more severe than that for preventing a human laborer from eating as he works - presumably because the animal is defenseless. (Tur Hoshen Mishpat 338)

Psalms

1:1

Hunting as a sport is strongly disapproved of:

Based on the statement "not to stand in the path of sinners," the Talmud prohibited association with hunters. (Avodah Zarah 18b)

In his response to a man requesting permission to hunt on his land, Rabbi Ezekiel Landau stated: "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."

Not just hunting, but all sports using animals are forbidden. Bullfighting is specifically condemned:

"One who sits in a stadium spills blood." (Avodah Zarah 1)

40:6 & 50:9-23 (see also Isaiah 1:11-17 & 66:3-4, 6 and Micah 6:6-8)

Attitudes about animal sacrifice:

"Sacrifice and offering thou dost not desire."

I will accept no bull from your house, nor he-goat from your folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the air, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world and all that is in it is mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving.... He who brings thanksgiving as his sacrifice honors me.

104:14 (see also Genesis 1:29-30 and Deuteronomy 8:7-10)

This is but one of many quotations throughout the Bible that indicates that man was intended to be vegetarian. For a bibliography on the subject of Judaism and vegetarianism, write to CHAI: info@chai-online.org.

"Thou dost cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth, and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread to strengthen man's heart."

A special blessing is recited before eating vegetarian foods such as bread, wine, fruits, and vegetables, but there is no special blessing to recite before eating meat or fish. (R. Schwartz, *Judaism and Vegetarianism*, Lantern Books, NY, NY. 2001, p. 7)

145:9

God's concern for animals is indicated in the phrase:

"His tender mercies are over all His creatures."

Proverbs

12:10

A person cannot be considered righteous unless he or she treats animals with compassion:

"The righteous person regards the life of his beast."

21:3

About sacrifice:

"To do charity and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice."

Ecclesiastes

3:19-22

The spirit of man and the spirit of animals come from the same place and go to the same place. Man has no advantage:

For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts; for all is vanity. All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down to the earth?

Isaiah

1:11-17 & 66:3-4 (see also Psalms 40:6 & 50:9-14 & Micah 6:6-8)

Attitude about sacrifices:

What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the Lord; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of

bulls, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When you come to appear before me, who requires of you this trampling of my courts? Bring no more vain offerings.... When you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean...cease to do evil, learn to do good.

He who slaughters an ox is like him who kills a man; he who sacrifices a lamb, like him who breaks a dog's neck.... They did what was evil in my eyes, and chose that in which I did not delight.

11:6-9 (see also Hosea 2:20)

It is predicted that in the Messianic era, all will once again be vegetarian and peace and harmony will once again reign:

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.

Ezekiel

34:2-5

Throughout the Bible, God is portrayed as a good shepherd whose example people are expected to imitate in their dealings with other people and with animals. Moses and David were chosen as leaders of the Jewish people because they were good shepherds over their flocks.

Ho, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened,

the sick you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them.

Daniel

1:8-16

Daniel, while in King Nebuchadnezzar's household, demonstrated that a vegetarian diet is a healthier diet:

Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's rich food...therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself.... Daniel said..."Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's rich food be observed by you, and according to what you see deal with your servants."...At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's rich food. So the steward took away their rich food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

Hosea

2:20

A promise of a future vision of harmony between man and animal (see Isaiah 11:6-9):

"And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field and with the fowls of heaven and with the creeping things of the ground. And I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the land and I will make them to lie down safely."

6:6 & 8:13

More on attitudes love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings:

"For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings."

"They love sacrifice; they sacrifice flesh and eat it; but the lord has no delight in them."

Amos

5:21-4

About animal sacrifice:

"I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though you offer me burnt-offerings and your meal offerings, I will not accept them neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy song; and let Me not hear the melody of thy psalteries. But let justice well up as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."

Jonah

4:11

God's concern for the welfare of animals is expressed in the following quotation:

"And should I not have pity on Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand person...and also much cattle."