



Shalom,

We hope you will find plenty of resources to share with your congregation or community. Below you will find references from sacred Jewish texts, quotations, reflections and more to help inspire your involvement in helping reduce cruelty to animals.

Sacred Text References:

[Commandments of Compassion: Jewish Teachings on Protecting Animals and Nature](#) (HSUS Resource by Lewis Regenstein)

[Resources on Judaism & Biodiversity](#) (Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life)

Reflection:

The following excerpt is adapted, with permission, from the useful text *Judaism and Vegetarianism* by Richard Schwartz:

God even made treaties and covenants with animals, as God did with humans:

"As for me," says the Lord, "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 animal of the earth with you; of all that go out of the ark, even every animal of the earth." (Genesis 9:9-10)

And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the animals 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. (Hosea 2:20)

In contrast to modern law which generally considers animals as material possessions and thus permits them to be cruelly treated, the fact that God made covenants with animals is of tremendous significance. Ecclesiastes considers the kinship between people and animals. Both are described as sharing the common fate of mortality:

For that which befalls the sons of men befalls animals; even one thing befalls them; as the one dies, so dies the other; yes, they all have one breath; so that man has no preeminence above an animal; for all is vanity. All go to one place; all are of the dust. Who knows the spirit of men whether it goes upward; and the spirit of the animal whether it goes downward to the earth? (Ecclesiastes 3:19-21)

God considered animals, as well as people, when admonishing Jonah: *"...and should I not have pity on Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons... and also much cattle."* (Jonah 4:11)

The psalmist indicated God's concern for animals in declaring: *"God's tender mercies are over all God's creatures"* (Psalms 145:9). This statement serves as a cornerstone of rabbinic teachings on compassion to animals. The author of Psalms also pictured God as *"satisfying the desire of every living creature"* (Psalms 145:16), *"providing food for animals and birds"* (Psalms 147:9), and, in general, *"preserving both people and animals"* (Psalms 36:7)

The Talmud describes God as providing animals with the attributes necessary for survival in their environment. For example, the camel has a short tail so that her tail won't become ensnared when she feeds upon thorns; the ox has a long tail so that he can protect himself from gnats when he feeds on the plains; the antennae of locusts are flexible so that they won't break against trees and blind the locusts.

Perhaps the Jewish attitude toward animals is best summarized by the statement in Proverbs 12:10, "*the righteous person regards the life of his or her animal.*" This is the human counterpoint of "*The Lord is good to all, and God's tender mercies are over all God's creatures*" (Psalms 145:9). One who is cruel to animals cannot be regarded as a righteous individual! In his explanation of Proverbs 12:10, the Malbim, a 19th century biblical commentator, explained that the righteous person understands the nature of his or her animal, and hence gives the animal food at the proper time and according to the amount needed; such a person is also careful not to overwork the animal. For, according to the Malbim, the tzaddik (righteous person) acts according to the laws of justice -- not only with human beings, but also with animals.

Quotations:

"There is no difference between the pain of humans and the pain of other living beings, since the love and tenderness of the mother for the young are not produced by reasoning, but by feeling, and this faculty exists not only in humans but in most living beings."
-Maimonides, Guide for the Perplexed 3:48

"It is forbidden, according to the law of the Torah, to inflict pain upon any living creature [to cause *tza'ar ba'alei chayim*]. On the contrary, it is our duty to relieve the pain of any creature, even if it is ownerless or belongs to one outside the Jewish community."
-Code of Jewish Law, Book 4. Chapter 191

"As God is merciful, so you also be merciful. As God loves and cares for all God's creatures and God's children who are all related to God, because God is their Parent, so you also love all God's creatures as your siblings. Let their joys be your joys, and their sorrows yours. Love them and with every power which God gives you, work for their welfare and benefit, because they are the children of your God, because they are your brothers and sisters."
-Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch, Horeb, Chapter 72, Section 482.

"Here you are faced with God's teaching, which obliges you not only to refrain from inflicting unnecessary pain on any animal, but to help and, when you can, to lessen the pain whenever you see an animal suffering, even through no fault of yours."
-Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch, Horeb, Chapter 60, Section 416, on the mitzvah of *tza'ar ba'alei chayim*, avoiding pain to animals.

"There are probably no creatures that require more the protective Divine word against the presumption of man than the animals, which like man have sensations and instincts, but whose body and powers are nevertheless subservient to man. In relation to them man so easily forgets that injured animal muscle twitches just like human muscle, that the maltreated nerves of an animal sicken like human nerves, that the animal being is just as sensitive to cuts, blows, and beating as man. Thus man becomes the torturer of the animal soul."
-Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch, Horeb, Chapter 60, Section 415.

"It seems doubtful from all that has been said whether the Torah would sanction 'factory farming,' which treats animals as machines, with apparent insensitivity to their natural needs and instincts. This is a matter for decision by halachic authorities."
-Rabbi Aryeh Carmell, Masterplan: Judaism: Its Programs, Meanings, Goals (New York/Jerusalem: Feldheim, 1991), 69.

"The progress of dynamic ideals will not be eternally blocked. Through general, moral and intellectual advancement... shall the latent aspiration of justice for the animal kingdom come out into the open, when the time is ripe."
-Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook, A Vision of Vegetarianism and Peace

"Apparently the Torah was in principle opposed to the eating of meat. When Noah and his descendants were permitted to eat meat this was a concession conditional on the prohibition of the blood. This prohibition implied respect for the principle of life ("for the blood is the life") and an allusion to the fact that in reality all meat should have been prohibited. This partial prohibition was designed to call to mind the previously total one."
-Rabbi Moses Cassutto, quoted by Nehama Leibowitz, Studies in Genesis, 77.

"Accordingly, the laws of kashrut come to teach us that a Jew's first preference should be a vegetarian meal. If, however, one cannot control a craving for meat, it should be kosher meat, which would serve as a reminder that the animal being eaten is a creature of God, that the death of such a creature cannot be taken lightly, that hunting for sport is forbidden, that we cannot treat any living thing callously, and that we are responsible for what happens to other beings (human or animal) even if we did not personally come into contact with them."
-Rabbi Pinchas Peli, Torah Today, Washington, D.C.: B'nai B'rith Books, 1987, 118.

“As it is halachically prohibited to harm oneself and as healthy, nutritious vegetarian alternatives are easily available, meat consumption has become halachically unjustifiable.”

-Rabbi David Rosen, "Vegetarianism: An Orthodox Jewish Perspective", in *Rabbis and Vegetarianism: An Evolving Tradition*, edited by Roberta Kalechofsky (Micah Publications: Marblehead, Massachusetts, 1995), 54.

Further Reading:

Each of these books contains helpful information on the relationship between Judaism and Animals, and Creation writ large:

Benstein, Jeremy. [The Way into Judaism and the Environment](#), 2007.

Bernstein, Ellen, ed.. [Ecology and the Jewish Spirit](#), 1998.

Kalechofsky, Roberta, [Vegetarian Judaism](#), 1998.

Kalechofsky, Roberta, editor. [Rabbis and Vegetarianism: An Evolving Tradition](#), 1995.

Kalechofsky, Roberta, editor. [Judaism and Animal Rights: Classical and Contemporary Responses](#), 1992.

Kook, Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaKohen, Cohen, Rabbi David, ed., [A Vision of Vegetarianism and Peace](#) (Hebrew & English).

Schochet, Rabbi Elijah J., [Animal Life in Jewish Tradition](#), 1984.

Schwartz, Richard H., [Judaism and Vegetarianism](#), 2001. The [Schwartz Collection](#) of Over 130 Articles

Sears, Rabbi David, [The Vision of Eden: Animal Welfare and Vegetarianism in Jewish Law and Mysticism](#), 2003

Waskow, Arthur, ed. [Torah of the Earth](#), Volumes I & II, 2000

Waskow, Arthur; Alon, Ari; and Hyman, Miriam; eds. [Trees, Earth, and Torah: A Tu B'Shvat Anthology](#), 1999.

Helpful Links:

[Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life \(COEJL\)](#)

[Concern for Helping Animals in Israel \(CHAI\)](#)

[Hazon](#)

[International Jewish Vegetarian Society](#)

[Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center](#)

[Jews for Animal Rights \(JAR\)](#)

[Jewish Vegetarians of North America \(JVNA\)](#)

[Judaism 101: Treatment of Animals](#)

[Micah Publications](#)

[A Sacred Duty: Applying Jewish Values to Help Heal the World Documentary](#)

[ShalomVeg](#)

[Teva Learning Center](#)

[The Vegetarian Mitzvah](#)