DAILY LIVING - CLASS #35

THE JEWISH WAY TO CARE FOR DOGS, CATS, BIRDS AND FISH.

BASED ON THE RESEARCH OF RABBI DOV LEV

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God’s compassion extends to every living creature, caring for all their needs.¹ As we strive to emulate our Creator,² we have a responsibility to demonstrate concern for animals,³ to take care of their needs⁴ and to alleviate their suffering.⁵

For example, we are forbidden to muzzle an animal that is working in the field, as this denies him the pleasure of eating what he sees.⁶ Also, one may not plow with two different species yoked together (e.g. a cow with a mule), because one may have more strength and stamina, and cause distress to the other.⁷ In general, it is forbidden to cause undue distress to animals, even for financial incentive.⁸

Caring for Household Pets

It is estimated that 39 percent of U.S. households (roughly 100 million people) own at least one dog, and that 34 percent of households own at least one cat.⁹ When we take into account the millions of birds, rabbits, gerbils, lizards, fish and a host of other household pets, we begin to realize to what degree animals play a role in our lives.

For Jews, there are many halachic issues involved in pet care.¹⁰ For some animals, providing food and paraphernalia can get expensive, as well. The Talmud¹¹ stresses that before you acquire an animal, you must be certain that you can properly care for it. As King Solomon said: "A righteous person considers the life of his animal."¹²

¹ see Psalms 104
² Deut. 28:9
³ See Talmud - Baba Metzia 85a
⁴ Machtzil HaShekel (Orach Chaim 324:7). This is not the view of Eliyahu Rabba (Orach Chaim 324:11), Ketav Sofer (Orach Chaim 33 d.h. Heenay) and Kaf HaChaim 324:46.
⁵ See Baba Metzia 32b
⁶ Deut. 25:4; Choshen Mishpat 338:2
⁷ Sefer HaChinuch 150
⁸ See Shu’t Igros Moshe (Even Ha’ezer 4:82) regarding fattening penned calves for slaughter.
⁹ American Pets Products Manufacturer’s Association (APPMA) 2003-2004 National Pet Owner Survey
¹⁰ Additional information on this subject can be found in “Halachic Perspectives on Pets” by Rabbi Howard Jachter in Journal of Halacha & Contemporary Society – No. XXIII, Spring 1992
¹¹ Jerusalem Talmud - Ketubot 4:8
¹² Proverbs 12:10
Feeding Animals

The Torah requires that people feed their animals before feeding themselves.\(^{13}\) This instills in us the sensitivity for the needs of other living creatures. The requirement applies to all animals, birds and fish that rely on people for their food.\(^{14}\) According to some authorities, it is even forbidden to take a light snack before feeding one’s animals.\(^{15}\)

The Torah recounts how Rebecca offered drinks to Eliezer before giving water to his camels.\(^{16}\) We therefore deduce that it is permitted to drink before giving animals to drink,\(^{17}\) since drinking is usually a quick act that will not affect the animal if it needs to wait a bit.\(^{18}\)

If one’s children need to be fed, their needs take precedence over those of the animals.\(^{19}\) One may also provide food for any guests before feeding the animals.\(^{20}\)

There is discussion as to whether food that is edible for humans is allowed to be fed to animals.\(^{21}\) Certainly, if the animal has nothing else to eat, it may be fed any type of food.\(^{22}\) Also, one need not spend a lot of money on animal fodder if there is human food available.\(^{23}\) Moreover, the leftover scraps from the table may also be given to animals.\(^{24}\)

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\(^{13}\) Deut. 11:15; Talmud - Brachot 40a; Biur Halacha 167:6  
\(^{14}\) Shu’t Shevut Yaakov 13:13  
\(^{15}\) Magen Avraham 167:18  
\(^{16}\) Genesis 24:14  
\(^{17}\) Mishnah Berurah 167:40  
\(^{18}\) Shu’t Har Tzvi 1:90  
\(^{19}\) Shu’t Igros Moshe (Orach Chaim 2:52)  
\(^{20}\) Piskei Teshuvot 167:15  
\(^{21}\) Mishnah Berurah 171:11  
\(^{22}\) Mishnah Berurah 171:11  
\(^{23}\) Piskei Teshuvot 171:8  
\(^{24}\) Piskei Teshuvot 171:8
Do Animals Need to Keep Kosher?

Non-kosher food is only forbidden to be eaten by Jews. We are allowed to benefit from non-kosher food; thus it may be fed to animals.

Although it is normally forbidden to do business with non-kosher food,\textsuperscript{25} that which is clearly marked as animal food (and is not eaten by people) does not fall into this category.\textsuperscript{26} Thus it is permitted to engage in commerce with non-kosher pet food.

There are two primary exceptions to this: meat/milk combinations and chametz on Passover. These are two types of non-kosher food that a Jew may not even benefit from in any way. Therefore, they may not be given to animals nor may they be sold to anyone. Details are as follows:

**Milk and Meat**\textsuperscript{27}

The Torah forbids attaining benefit from milk and meat combinations.\textsuperscript{28} But the scope of this prohibition only applies when:

- the meat and milk were heated together,\textsuperscript{29} and
- the meat and milk are from either a cow, sheep or goat\textsuperscript{30}

Therefore, it is permitted to serve your animal:

- Meat and milk that were not heated together\textsuperscript{31}
- Meat and milk that were heated together, but the milk is from a non-kosher animal (e.g. pig)\textsuperscript{32}

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\textsuperscript{25} Yoreh De’ah 117:1  \\
\textsuperscript{26} Shu’U Igros Moshe (Yoreh De’ah 2:37)  \\
\textsuperscript{27} Much of the information in this section was culled from “Feeding Your Pet: Barking Up the Right Tree” by Rabbi Zvi Goldberg. This valuable article and many others can be found at www.star-k.com  \\
\textsuperscript{28} Yoreh De’ah 87:1  \\
\textsuperscript{29} Yoreh De’ah 87:1  \\
\textsuperscript{30} Yoreh De’ah 87:3  \\
\textsuperscript{31} Yoreh De’ah 87:1
\end{flushleft}
• Meat and milk that were heated together, but the meat is from:
  • a bird (e.g. chicken)\textsuperscript{33}
  • a non-domesticated animal (e.g. deer, buffalo)\textsuperscript{34}
  • a non-kosher animal (e.g. pig)\textsuperscript{35}

So how does one know if their dog food or cat food is “kosher”? There are no kosher symbols on animal foods! Rather, the consumer must check the ingredients for meat and milk combinations. If the label says “milk,” “casein” or “whey,” as well as “meat,” “beef” or “animal fat,” it may be problematic. Inquiries should be made from the manufacturer as to what type of meat is being used.

**Passover Food**\textsuperscript{36}

Almost anything that contains any of the five grains are considered chametz. The five grains are wheat, oat, rye, barley and spelt.

Chametz may not be owned by a Jew on Passover and it may not be fed to animals. How does one determine if their pet food contains chametz? Check the ingredients. If any of these grains, or the following words appears on the ingredients, it may be problematic: bran, flour, gluten, grouts, middling, pasta, starch, yeast. Usually, the manufacturer’s customer service is helpful in resolving any questions.

On Passover there is no problem feeding *kitniyot* to animals.\textsuperscript{37}

Most animals can alter their diet for a week to eat non-chametz food. Some veterinarians recommend mixing the regular food with the Passover food for a week or two before Passover, and gradually raising the percentage of the Passover food so that the animal can become

\textsuperscript{32} Yoreh De‘ah 87:3  
\textsuperscript{33} Yoreh De‘ah 87:5  
\textsuperscript{34} Yoreh De‘ah 87:3  
\textsuperscript{35} Yoreh De‘ah 87:3  
\textsuperscript{36} A trove of information is found in the Pesach digest by Rabbi Avraham Blumenkrantz. Also see Goldberg ibid.  
\textsuperscript{37} See Mishnah Berurah 553:12
accustomed to the new diet. Of course, the area where the animal eats should be thoroughly cleaned before Passover.

What can you do if your pet’s diet must include chametz? The only solution is to transfer ownership of the animal before Passover to a non-Jew, who is then allowed to feed it as he chooses. After Passover, the original owner can re-acquire his pet. This arrangement should only be handled by a rabbi.

Besides being forbidden to own chametz during Passover, it is also prohibited after Passover to purchase chametz that was owned by another Jew during Passover. This means that after Passover, one may not purchase pet food containing chametz from a Jewish-owned store that did not implement a chametz sale. There is no problem purchasing chametz from a store that is owned by non-Jews.

**Pet Care on Shabbat and Yom Tov**

In the Ten Commandments, God decreed that “The seventh day is the Sabbath to God, your Lord; You may not do any melacha, neither you… nor your animal…”

Based on this, it is forbidden for a Jew to lead any animal to do any melacha on Shabbat or Yom Tov. Even merely telling an animal to violate a melacha is prohibited. For example (if there is no eruv), you may not instruct Scruffy to fetch the newspaper from a public area.

In general, there is no problem with an animal violating a rabbinic form of melacha.

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38 Mishnah Berurah 448:33
39 Exodus 20:10
40 Mishnah Berurah 266:7; Aruch HaShulchan 266:10; Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchato 27:2, 27:5
41 Mishnah Berurah 266:7; Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchato 27:2
42 Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchato 27:4. The exception is transferring within a karmelit; this is forbidden even though it is a rabbinic violation.
In any case, it is always permitted to have an animal perform *melacha* for its own benefit. You could encourage Scruffy to have fun digging up the ground in search of bones, as that is for his own benefit.

If there is no eruv, a pet owner must make sure that the animal does not transport anything to or from a *reshut harabim* or a *karmelit* on Shabbat or Yom Tov. An animal may transfer something that is normally worn for its comfort or protection – e.g. your puppy may wear a sweater in the winter, and an injured animal may wear a bandage. However, since a muzzle or an identity tag is not worn for the benefit of the animal, it may not go into a public domain with it.

On Shabbat, it is permitted to walk a pet with a leash even in a *reshut harabim*. The leash is considered being “worn” by the animal and is permitted. However, the person should take care that the end of the leash does not hang within three inches of the ground.

Also on Yom Tov, it is forbidden to transfer items (in an area with no eruv) for the needs of a pet.

According to most authorities, pets are considered *muktzeh*. Items that are *muktzeh* may not be moved by hand on Shabbat or Yom Tov. They may be moved with any other part of the body other than the hands, and they may be pulled with a leash. It is permitted to

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43 *Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchato* 27:6
44 *Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchato* 27:7
45 *Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchato* 27:11
46 *Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchato* 27:7
47 *Orach Chaim* 305:15-16; *Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchato* 27:8
48 *Orach Chaim* 512:3
49 See *Orach Chaim* 308:39 that all animals are considered *muktzeh*. However, see Shu’at Igros Moshe (Orach Chaim 5:22:21) that rules that designated pets are exceptional and are not *muktzeh*. On the other hand, Rabbi Y. P. Bodner writes (*Halachos of Muktzeh*, Feldheim, p. 118) that he heard from Rabbi Feinstein that pets are indeed *muktzeh*. This is supported by Rabbi Feinstein’s responsa (#24) at the end of the book as well as by Shu’at Igros Moshe (Orach Chaim 4:16). See also *Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchato* (ch. 27, footnote 96) who brings different opinions on the subject. The conclusion of Rabbi S. Z. Auerbach is to consider them *muktzeh*. This is also the ruling of Shu’at Yabia Omer 5:26.
50 *Shulchan Aruch* 308:39
51 Mishnah Berurah 308:13
52 Bodner, *Halachos of Muktzeh* (pg. 122)
touch or pet an animal without intent to move it.\textsuperscript{54} It is permitted to place food in the animal’s mouth if one is careful not to move it.\textsuperscript{55}

In any case, it is permitted to move any animal in whatever method necessary to alleviate its suffering.\textsuperscript{56} Also, it is permitted to instruct a pet to move.

Animal cages are \textit{muktzeh}, in the category of \textit{kli she’melachto li’issur}.\textsuperscript{57}

Animal wastes are \textit{muktzeh}, but may be moved if they are in a place that is offensive to people.\textsuperscript{58}

Animals that rely on people to feed them must be fed on Shabbat and Yom Tov.\textsuperscript{59} Other animals (unless they are very hungry)\textsuperscript{60} may not be fed on Shabbat and Yom Tov, with the exception of dogs.\textsuperscript{61} (Dogs are singled out as a reward for their participation in the Exodus from Egypt.\textsuperscript{62} See below the section on dogs.)

On Shabbat and Yom Tov, animal food should not be cut into small pieces if the animal is able to chew the larger pieces.\textsuperscript{63}

One of the 39 \textit{melachot} is trapping. The Torah forbids confining a previously free animal. There are no restrictions of further confining an already “trapped” animal. Slow-moving creatures like turtles are always considered “trapped” since they can’t get escape one who is trying to confine them.

\textsuperscript{54} See Shulchan Aruch 308:42
\textsuperscript{55} Mishnah Berurah 324:28
\textsuperscript{56} Shu’Y Yabia Omer 5:26; Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchato 27:28, 27:30
\textsuperscript{57} Kaf HaChaim 310:38
\textsuperscript{58} See Shulchan Aruch 308:34
\textsuperscript{59} Orach Chaim 324:11
\textsuperscript{60} Aruch HaShulchan 326:2; Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchato 27:23
\textsuperscript{61} Mishnah Berurah 324:31
\textsuperscript{62} Mishnah Berurah 324:31
\textsuperscript{63} Mishnah Berurah 324:3
Since most household pets are obedient and would not resist their master confining them, it is permitted to “trap” domesticated dogs, cats, etc. However, if the animal is either not yet used to the master, or is unruly and rebellious, it is forbidden to confine the animal in a way that would make it easy to grab. There is never any problem with releasing a confined animal.

It is permitted to treat a sick pet by giving it medication or an injection, or moving muktzeh for it. However, one may not violate any of the 39 melachot, even on a rabbinic level, for the sake of the well-being of an animal. Similarly, a Jew may not terminate the life of a mortally wounded animal on Shabbat or Yom Tov. In such cases, a non-Jew should be asked to care for the injured or suffering pet.

The body of a pet that dies on Shabbat is muktzeh. However, it may be moved from a place that makes it offensive to people.

**Prayer**

It is forbidden to pray or recite blessings in a place where there is an odor of animal wastes.

Although it is disrespectful to bring a pet into a synagogue, a blind person may take his seeing-eye dog into the synagogue, if necessary. Of course, he should position himself in a way that the dog does not disturb others.

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64 Orach Chaim 316:12
65 Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchato 27:36
66 Mishnah Berurah 316:25; Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchato 27:45
67 Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchato 27:55
68 Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchato 27:55
69 Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchato 27:57
70 Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchato 27:56
71 See Mishnah Berurah 324:17 for further discussion.
72 See Mishnah Berurah 308:110
73 Orach Chaim 79:4
74 Shu’t Igros Moshe (Orach Chaim 1:45). This is in contrast to Shu’t Chelkas Yaakov 1:34 who forbids this.
75 Shu’t Igros Moshe (Orach Chaim 1:45)
Damages

The Talmud\textsuperscript{76} recounts an incident where the fright of a barking dog caused a pregnant woman to miscarry. The Sages denounced anyone who owns a dangerous dog that is not properly chained.\textsuperscript{77} It is incumbent upon every animal owner to see to it that his animal does not injure anyone, damage property, disturb or frighten neighbors, or even cause minor inconveniences. The owner of an animal is obligated to compensate for any damage that his animal caused.\textsuperscript{78} The details of this principle are complex and a competent rabbinical authority should be consulted when necessary.

Appreciating the Value of Life

While the Torah recognizes the value of all life, this does not mean that all life is on equal level. Human beings always take precedence over animals, and insects are considered an even lower life form. If an animal is causing pain or grief to a human being, or the creature has utilitarian value (i.e. medical research), one is permitted to kill it. After all, the Torah does permit the slaughtering of animals for food.\textsuperscript{79}

Animals, on the other hand, should not be killed, unless it is for a good purpose. For example, one should not wantonly step on ants.\textsuperscript{80} But an animal may be “put to sleep” in order to spare it from pain.\textsuperscript{81}

Hunting as a sport is a violation of the spiritual norms of Judaism, particularly if there is no utilitarian purpose, for it invariably involves an element of cruelty to animals.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{76} Baba Kama 79b
\textsuperscript{77} Baba Kama 33a; Choshen Mishpat 409:3. This is in contrast to the apparent position of Maimonides (Nizkei Mamon 5:9) who disallows owning any dog unless it is chained. Rabbi Yaakov Emden (She’elat Ya’avetz 1:17) also forbids owning any dogs.
\textsuperscript{78} Choshen Mishpat 389:1
\textsuperscript{79} Shu’1 Igros Moshe (Choshen Mishpat 2:47). He adds that it is preferable not to do so with your hands in order to that you do not develop a cruel attitude.
\textsuperscript{80} She’elat Yavetz 1:110
\textsuperscript{81} Rema - Even Ha’ezer 5:14
\textsuperscript{82} Nodeh BiYehuda 2:10
The Torah forbids the castration or spaying of animals.\(^{83}\) It is even forbidden to ask a non-Jew to do so.\(^{84}\) If it is necessary to alleviate the suffering of a pet, it may be sold to a non-Jew who can in turn bring in to a (non-Jewish) veterinarian to be castrated.\(^{85}\) Alternatively, one may utilize one of the alternative methods of sterilizing animals that does not involve the removal of reproductive organs.\(^{86}\)

**Dogs**

It is well known that a dog is “man’s best friend.” What is not so well-known is that dogs are also the Jewish people’s trusted comrade. The Torah relates that at the birth of our nation, in the historic Exodus from Egypt, God promised that no dog will bark to disturb the Jews.\(^{87}\) As a result of this obedience, God rewarded dogs for all times.\(^{88}\) In prescribing the disposal of non-kosher meat, the Torah specifies that it should be “fed to dogs,”\(^{89}\) even though in practice any benefit may be accrued.

To this day, dogs continue to enjoy a special elevated relationship with the Jewish people.\(^{90}\) The word for dog in Hebrew is *kelev*, a contraction of the words *kol lev* – "full hearted." From a dog we can learn the trait of faithfulness.\(^{91}\) The Sages also observe that dogs are particularly

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\(^{83}\) Even Ha’ezer 5:11
\(^{84}\) Even Ha’ezer 5:14
\(^{85}\) Rema - Even Ha’ezer 5:14
\(^{86}\) See *Halachic Perspectives on Pets* by Rabbi Howard Jachter in *Journal of Halacha & Contemporary Society* – No. XXIII, Spring 1992
\(^{87}\) Exodus 11:7 with Targum and Ibn Ezra.
\(^{88}\) Mechilta (Mishpatim, *mesechta dikaspa*, ch. 20); Rashi (Pesachim 22a)
\(^{89}\) Exodus 22:30
\(^{90}\) See Mechilta (Mishpatim, *mesechta dikaspa*, chapter 20), Rashi (Pesachim 22a) and Torah Sh’leimah (Bo 11:32)
\(^{91}\) Sefer Chassidim 47
sensitive to metaphysical matters that are not within the perception of humanity.92

Although pets are considered muktzeh, a seeing-eye dog may be used on Shabbat and Yom Tov.93

**Birds**

Birds have played important roles in Jewish history. After the great Flood, Noah dispatched a raven and then a dove to determine if it was safe to leave the ark.94 The Torah reminds us of how God swiftly removed our nation from slavery: "You saw that which I did to Egypt, and how I lifted you on the wings of eagles."95

Later, God granted King Solomon extensive wisdom and he learned the language of the birds.96 Also, when Elijah the prophet was hiding near the Jordan River, it was the birds that brought him food every day.97

In fact, God uses the bird to symbolize Jewish continuity98 and faithfulness.99

Birds are muktzeh on Shabbat and Yom Tov. Bird cages are in the category of kli she’melachto li’issur.100 However, if the cage is in a place that is causing the birds discomfort (e.g. in direct sunlight), the cage may be moved if there is no alternative solution.101

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92 See Torah Sh’leimah (Bo 11:33)
93 Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchato (ch. 18, footnote 62)
94 Genesis 8:7-8
95 Exodus 19:4
96 Rashi (1-Kings 3:15)
97 1-Kings 17:6
98 Rashi (Genesis 15:10, Psalms 84:4)
99 Ramban (Leviticus 1:14)
100 Kaf HaChaim 310:38
101 Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchato 27:30
Fish

God conferred a special blessing on the fish that they should be fruitful.\textsuperscript{102} There are over 27,000 species of fish in the world, and a worldwide fish population in the trillions.

A fish tank containing fish is not \textit{muktzeh} on Shabbat because it is regarded as ornamental.\textsuperscript{103}

It is forbidden to change the water of an aquarium on Shabbat and Yom Tov.\textsuperscript{104} But if necessary, one may add fresh water.\textsuperscript{105}

If a fish jumps out of the aquarium on Shabbat or Yom Tov, it is permitted to return it to its tank, if there is a chance it may still live. This is not forbidden by the principle of \textit{muktzeh} since it is alleviating an animal’s suffering.\textsuperscript{106} But if a non-Jew is available, he should be asked to do so.\textsuperscript{107}

A dead fish may be removed from an aquarium to prevent other fish from dying, in a situation that would involve a great loss.\textsuperscript{108}

There is a custom to eat fish at each of the three Shabbat meals.\textsuperscript{109} The kabbalists explain that in the time of Noah, fish remained pure and the Flood did not affect them.\textsuperscript{110}

The origin of gefilte fish is traced to the Shabbat prohibition of \textit{Borer}, which precludes one from (easily) removing bones from fish. To circumvent this, Jewish homemakers turned to grinding the fish before cooking.

\textsuperscript{102} Genesis (1:22)
\textsuperscript{103} Rav S.Z. Auerbach as quoted in \textit{Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchato} (chapter 28 footnote 96). This is in opposition to the position of \textit{Shu’at Igros Moshe} (Orach Chaim 4:16) and \textit{Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchato} 27:27 who forbid moving the fish tank that contains fish within.
\textsuperscript{104} \textit{Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchato} 27:27
\textsuperscript{105} \textit{Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchato} 27:27
\textsuperscript{106} See \textit{Shu’at Yabia Omer} 5:26; \textit{Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchato} 27:28, 27:30
\textsuperscript{107} Mishnah Berurah (308:70)
\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchato} 27:29
\textsuperscript{109} Magen Avraham (Orach Chaim 242:1)
\textsuperscript{110} Talmud – Kiddushin 13a
Other Animals

All creatures have their purpose, even if it is not obvious to us.\(^{111}\)

The Sages teach us to learn dignity from a cat,\(^{112}\) since it will not relieve itself in front of others and always covers its wastes.\(^{113}\)

The Sages also teach that we could learn:

- chastity from the dove, because they only have one mate
- good manners from the rooster, who first sweet-talks and then mates
- not to steal from the ant, since they do not take food that belongs to someone else\(^{114}\)
- not to be lazy from the ant,\(^{115}\) who works hard to gather and store food

Elsewhere the Talmud writes, "Be bold as a leopard, and light as an eagle, swift as a deer, and strong as a lion -- to do the will of your Father in Heaven."\(^{116}\)

It is forbidden to raise pigs.\(^{117}\) However, guinea pigs are not from the porcine order and therefore may be kept as pets.

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\(^{111}\) Halachot Ketanot 1:137
\(^{112}\) Eruvin 100b
\(^{113}\) Rashi (Eruvin 100b)
\(^{114}\) ibid.
\(^{115}\) Proverbs 6:6. See Maharsha (Eruvin 100b) regarding what we learn from an ant.
\(^{116}\) Avot 5:20
\(^{117}\) Choshen Mishpat 409:2
In Conclusion

There are many benefits to caring for God’s creatures. The loving relationship that develops between a person and his dependent pet is a valuable experience. Yet one must always keep things in perspective. The Torah teaches that man is the purpose of creation. So while we relate to animal life in the most loving, caring fashion, this should not be at the expense of other people. The wonderful experience of a human-animal relationship should serve to enhance human life, and not detract in any way from interpersonal relationships and the experience of raising a family.

The Midrash\(^\text{118}\) tells of a dog that saved some shepherds from unwittingly eating poisonous food, by eating the food himself. The heroic animal immediately dropped dead. The shepherds were so grateful that they buried the dog and placed a marker by its grave. They did not do so to benefit the animal, since there is no afterlife for animals.\(^\text{119}\) Rather, they wanted to instill within themselves the attribute of gratitude to the loyal animal that saved their lives.

Maintaining pets is a very rewarding experience, giving children and adults alike many opportunities to learn and grow. But in relating to animals – as with any other endeavor – one must always be sure to follow God’s will.

\(^{118}\) Pesikta Rabasi (Buber ed., beginning of Parshat Beshalach)
\(^{119}\) Mesechet Kallah 1:19, Tanchuma (Tazriya 2:2)