

## **The Environment & Animals in Judaism**

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

*---Gen 1:26*

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And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.

And the awe of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every bird of the air, upon all that moves upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; to your hand are they delivered.

Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.

But flesh with its life, which is its blood, you shall not eat.

*---Gen 9:1-9:4*

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**"A righteous man regards the life of his beast; but the heart of the wicked is cruel" - - - Prov. 12:10**

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### ***Deut. Chapter 12***

13. Take heed to yourself that you offer not your burnt offerings in every place that you see;

14. But only in the place which the Lord shall choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you.

15. However you may slaughter animals and eat their meat in all your gates, to your heart's desire, according to the blessing of the Lord, your God which he has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat of it, as they do of the gazelle and the deer.

16. Only you shall not eat the blood; you shall pour it upon the earth like water.

17. You may not eat inside your gates the tithe of your grain, or of your wine, or of your oil, or the firstlings of your herds or of your flock, nor any of your vows which you vow, nor your freewill offerings, or offering of your hand;

18. But you must eat them before the Lord your God in the place which the Lord your God shall choose, you, and your son, and your daughter, and your manservant, and your maidservant, and the Levite who is inside your gates; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God in all that you put your hands to.
19. Take heed to yourself that you forsake not the Levite as long as you live upon the earth.
20. When the Lord your God shall enlarge your border, as he has promised you, and you shall say, I will eat meat, because your soul longs to eat meat; you may eat meat, to your heart's desire.

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### *Babylonian Talmud - Bava Metzia 85a*

Rabbi observed: Suffering is precious. Thereupon he undertook [to suffer likewise] for thirteen years, six through stones in the kidney and seven through scurvy: others reverse it. Rabbi's house-steward was wealthier than King Shapur. When he placed fodder for the beasts, their cries could be heard for three miles, and he aimed at casting it [before them] just then when Rabbi entered his privy closet, yet even so, his voice [lifted in pain] was louder than theirs, and was heard [even] by sea-farers. Nevertheless, the sufferings of R. Eleazar son of R. Simeon were superior [in virtue] to those of Rabbi. For whereas those of R. Eleazar son of R. Simeon came to him through love, and departed in love, those of Rabbi came to him through a certain incident, and departed likewise.

'They came to him through a certain incident.' What is it? — A calf was being taken to the slaughter, when it broke away, hid his head under Rabbi's skirts, and lowed [in terror]. 'Go, said he, for this wast thou created.' Thereupon they said [in Heaven], 'Since he has no pity, let us bring suffering upon him.'

'And departed likewise.' How so? — One day Rabbi's maidservant was sweeping the house; [seeing] some young weasels lying there, she made to sweep them away. 'Let them be, said he to her; 'It is written, and "his tender mercies are over all his works."' Said they [in Heaven], 'Since he is compassionate, let us be compassionate to him.'

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### *Perek Shirah - The Chapter of Song*

---From the Introduction to Perek Shirah: Rabbi Yehudah the Prince said, Whoever is engrossed in Perek Shirah in the World, will merit to learn, teach, observe, perform, and fulfill; and his Torah learning will remain with him, he will be rescued from the Evil Inclination, from an evil occurrence, from jostling in the grave, from the judgement of Genna, and from the birthpangs of the Messiah.

And he will live long and merit to live in the days of the Messiah and to the life of the World to Come.

---This is the significance of Perek Shirah, of which the Sages said, "Whoever recites Perek Shirah every day merits the World to Come, for when a person recites it he encompasses all of the powers that are in the Universe and which took part in the creation of man. He gives strength to the angels and ministers of all the creatures so that they can recite these songs, and through this strength provided by man, the heavenly angels and ministers draw their life and the influence that flows from them upon all the lower creatures. (Nefesh HaChaim)

---Every cog has its own function. When all eighty five "musicians" mentioned in Perek Shirah do what they were created to do, the result is the Song of the Universe. In this, we see the basic difference between man and all the other creatures. Man vacillates between the aspirations of the soul and the desires of his body. He can have great moments, but for most people they are few, and even for great people they are often interrupted. The sun is always bright; man is often dark. That is why man has no song in Perek Shirah

---The songs of Perek Shirah are constant, but the creatures singing them cannot achieve their complete purpose without man. Man's virtue ennobles Creation; his sin demeans it.

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***From Sefer Hasidim (R. Judah HaHasid 1140-1217)***

"Never beat nor inflict pain upon any creature, beast, bird, or insect; nor throw stones at a dog or cat; nor kill flies or wasps"

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***From Tomeir Devorah (RaMaK 1522-1570)***

"One's compassion should extend to all creation. One should neither destroy nor abuse any creature, for all of them were created with God's wisdom. One should not consciously uproot any plant or take the life of any animal unless it be for a purpose---and then one should see to it that their death be an easy painless one."

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## *The Music of A Holy Shepherd - Rebbe Nachman*

Every shepherd has his own unique melody according to the herbs and grasses in the place where he pastures his sheep. Different animals eat different kinds of grasses. Shepherds do not always pasture their flocks in the same place. The shepherd's melody varies according to the place where he pastures his flocks and the herbs and grasses growing there. For every plant and every blade of grass has its own song. It is from the song of the grass that the shepherd gets his song.

This is why it says: "And Ada gave birth to Yaval: he was the father of those who dwell in tents and amidst herds. And the name of his brother was Yuval: he was the father of all who play the lyre and pipe" (Genesis 4:20-1). For as soon as people took up tending herds, musical instruments came into the world. In the same way, King David (peace be upon him), who was "skilled in music" (Samuel I, 16:18), was a shepherd. Indeed we find that all the founding fathers had flocks.

"From the corner of the earth we hear songs" (Isaiah 24:16). Melodies and songs come from the "corner of the earth"! For it is from the herbs that grow in the earth that music is made. Indeed it is the shepherd's musical skill that puts strength into the herbs and grasses, providing the animals with their food. This is why it says: "The blossoms have appeared in the land, the time of singing has come!" (Song of Songs 2:12). This means that the plants and flowers grow in the land because of the relevant songs and melodies. It is through his songs and melodies that the shepherd puts strength into the herbs and grasses, providing pasture for the animals.

These songs and melodies are of benefit to the shepherd himself. Being constantly surrounded by animals, the shepherd could easily descend from the human level to that of an animal. But his songs and melody save him from this. For song refines the soul, elevating the human being above animalistic tendencies. Music has the power to refine and elevate the human soul, and this is why the shepherd's melodies save him from falling to the level of an animal.

*Likutey Moharan II:63*

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*From Olay Rayah (R. Avraham Isaac Kook - Chief Rabbi of Palestine 1865-1935)*

“In the future the abundance of enlightenment will spread and penetrate even the animals...The gift offerings of vegetation that will be brought as sacrifices will be as acceptable as the sacrifices of ancient days.”

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### *Speaking the Language of the Animals and Plants*

According to tradition, certain outstanding saints and sages attained such exalted levels of perception that they could understand not only the meaning of the outward form and structure of natural phenomena such as plants and animals but their very languages.

Foremost among those credited with such knowledge was King Solomon, as alluded to in the verse: "And he spoke of trees from the cedar in Lebanon down to the hyssop that grows in the wall; he spoke also of beasts and birds, of creeping things and fishes" (I Kings 5:13).

Of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai (1st Century C.E.), the Talmud relates: "Hillel the Elder had eighty disciples. The greatest of all of them was R. Yonatan ben Uziel, the smallest of all of them was Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai. They said of him that he had comprehensive knowledge of Mishneh, Talmud, law, exposition, logical inference, astronomy, mathematics, incantations of angels, the language of the demons, the *language of trees* and the proverbs of launderers and foxes..." (*Succah* 28a).

R. Leib of Polonnoye had a powerful yearning to understand the language of the animals, birds and trees. He decided to travel to the Baal Shem Tov to ask him to teach him this wisdom. When he arrived, there were many people in the Baal Shem Tov's house and the latter paid no attention to him. It was a long time before he even greeted him, and when he finally did, it was with great causalness. R. Leib was quite surprised as the Baal Shem Tov usually showed him great affection since he was one of his closest students. However R. Leib did not pay too much attention because of his great desire to learn this wisdom. He waited for the right time to broach the subject.

One day the Baal Shem Tov had to go on a journey and he asked R. Leib to come with him. R. Leib was delighted. He was sure that on the way the Baal Shem Tov would accede to his request.... As they traveled in the carriage the Baal Shem Tov said to R. Leib: "I know that the main reason you came to me was to learn the conversation of animals and birds. And now I will teach you...."

"From the face of the Man in the Supernal Chariot (the *Merkavah*) vitality is drawn down to man in this lowly world. From the face of the Ox vitality comes down by a downward chain of causes and effects from level to level with contraction after contraction to all the animals (*Behemot*) in the lower world. From the face of the Lion vitality is drawn to all the wild animals (*Chayot*). And from the face of the Eagle vitality is drawn to all the birds in the lower world. This is the secret of the *Perek Shirah* (literally, Chapter of Song, a collection of Biblical verses put into the mouths of various different species of trees, plants, animals, birds and other natural phenomena). The formulae of words expressed by the various forms in the Supreme Chariot determines the vitality that comes down into the lower world to the various species of animals and birds and so on.... This is the general principle, but there are awesome and wondrous secrets in all the details...."

The Baal Shem Tov explained the entire subject until R. Leib had a thorough understanding. The Baal Shem Tov explained many relevant passages in the *Zohar* and *Tikkuney Zohar*. With one ear R. Leib listened to the words of the Baal Shem Tov while with the other he listened to what the birds and animals were saying. The Baal Shem Tov carried on teaching him until they approached the town. Then he said to R. Leib, "Have you understood everything?" "Yes" replied R. Leib.

The Baal Shem Tov passed his hand over R. Leib's face, and R. Leib promptly forgot all the secrets which the Baal Shem Tov had revealed to him. All R. Leib could remember was the Baal Shem Tov's opening words about the Supernal Chariot.

The Baal Shem Tov smiled and said, "If you had a need for this wisdom in order to serve God, I myself would have been in a hurry to teach you. I only told you what I did in order to satisfy your thirst. And you forgot it all because you have no need for it! Serve God with simplicity!"

*Sipurey Baal Shem Tov*