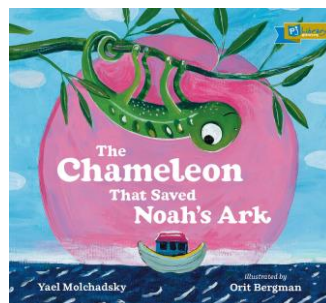


The Chameleon That Saved Noah's Ark

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On one foot: Jewish classical texts and folklore feature many stories about Noah and life on the ark. It is hard to fathom how so many creatures, each with their own unique needs and eating habits, could occupy a confined space for such a long storm. Though the chameleon saves the day, who is really the hero of this story? This book is based on a Talmudic story in Tractate Sanhedrin, 108b.

Highlighted Jewish Values:

Kindness to animals

צַעַר בְּעֵלֵי חַיִּים

Tza-ar ba-a-lei chayim

Everything has its place

כָּל דָּבָר יֵשׁ מָקוֹם

Kol da-var yesh ma-kom

Connection to heroes

No matter how small, anyone can be a hero.

Optional preparation for reading the story:

Gather matching animal cards or stickers to represent the pairs of animals on the ark.

Display a large poster or outline of Noah's ark for students to investigate. You can find some examples on our Noah's Ark Pinterest board: <https://www.pinterest.com/pjgts/noahs-ark/>

Before You Read

Jewish Values and Background Information

Tza'ar ba'alei chayim – kindness to animals

Three aspects of this value to consider:

- Animals are vulnerable; kindness to all creatures helps make us better people
- We have a responsibility to maintain the balance of nature
- We are dependent on animals for our survival and eco-system

According to Jewish law, animals are to be treated with kindness and compassion. In our interactions with animals, people must continually consider the animals' needs and feelings. For example, although humans are allowed to use animals for food and work, animals may not be worked excessively nor may they be denied food as they work (Deuteronomy 22:10). When animals are to be killed for eating, they must be slaughtered in the quickest and most humane way possible. Those who choose to own animals must be careful to always feed their animals before they themselves sit down to eat (Berachot 40a) and to allow their animals to rest on Shabbat (Exodus 20:8). An animal may not even be purchased until the owner has made certain that he/she has enough food and supplies to care for it (*Jerusalem Talmud*, Yevamot 15:3, 14d).

Kol da-var yesh ma-kom - Everything has its place

Three aspects of this value to consider

- All of God’s creations have their place and purpose in our world.
- Don’t discount anything due to its size, age, or appearance.
- Everything has both a physical space in the world and a spiritual place in the world.

Judaism teaches that the natural world is a marvelous wonder, where nothing is superfluous and “you have no person without his hour and no thing without its place” (*Pirkei Avot* 4:3). The Rabbis of the Talmud note, “Of all that the Holy One created, God did not create a single thing without purpose” (*Shabbat* 77b). We do not necessarily need to understand each creature’s purpose. Contemporary Jewish theologians such as Abraham Joshua Heschel and Lawrence Kushner believe that every Jew should try to live life in “a state of awe and radical amazement,” striving to see the everyday mysteries and beauty of God’s world.

When You Read

Introducing the story and engaging the children

Set the stage with questions

Why did Noah build an ark? What do you think it may have been like to live aboard the ark for 40 days?

Choose a storytelling technique (optional)


1. Draw a large paper image of Noah’s ark. (Find suggestions [here](#).) As you read the story, have children place their animal cards where they might live on the ark. After the story you can continue to design the living and eating areas of the ark. Place your outline on the floor to play find-your-matching-animal games or try squeezing all of the animals into their appropriate places.

2. Invite students and families to spend a day on the ark. Think ahead about what kinds of snacks you might serve. Ask the crowd to imagine some of the problems that Noah and his family may have encountered during their 40 day stay on the ark.





After You Read

Making connections and making it personal

Tza’ar ba’alei chayim/kindness to animals	Kol davar yeish makom/everything has its place
<p>Discuss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What acts of kindness do Noah and his family do for the animals on the ark? • How do you show kindness to animals – even if you don’t own an animal yourself? • Why do we need to show kindness to animals? 	<p>Discuss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an ancient teaching that says, “Every person has his/her hour, everything has its place.” What do you think this teaching means? • What animals can you think of that don’t seem to serve a purpose? What purpose might bees, spiders, poison ivy, or the flu serve? What if we can’t find a purpose for something? • What actions did Noah and his family take because of their belief that everything has its place? How did that help them organize the ark?



Tza'ar ba'alei chayim/kindness to animals	Kol davar yeish makom/everything has its place
<p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do animals need? Contact a local animal shelter and find out what items your students can collect or make for the animals. Many shelters accept gifts of homemade dog treats, small knotted blankets, or decorated peek-a-boo boxes for cats. • Animal lunch: Arrange a trip to a farm or zoo where your students can help prepare and serve food for the animals. They will be able to experience how different animals need to eat different food to keep healthy. Which animals eat quickly? Which slowly? Which animal diet might you like to eat? • What's in a name? Sayings like “proud as a peacock” and “sly as a fox” connect animals with characteristics. What similar animal phrases can your class think of or create? Make a game of imitating the animals' body movements. 	<p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bless this bug: Use hula-hoops to mark off a small outdoor microenvironment. How many living organisms can your students find within the designated area? Teach students to appreciate all creatures with this <i>bracha</i>: <i>Baruch atah Adonoi, Eloheinu melech ha'olam, oseh ma'aseh bereshit.</i> Blessed are You, God, sovereign of the universe, who made all of Creation. • Keep it organized: Our classrooms run much more smoothly when all of the materials have a home. Work together to create a chart of where your art supplies, books, and toys belong. Refer back to it when cleaning up at the end of the day. • Guess what, guess why: With your students' help, gather a variety of natural items and place them into a pillowcase or grab-bag. Supplement your collection with items from home such as shells, herbs, or unusual rocks. Have students try to identify the items by touch only. Can they identify at least one purpose for each item? 
<p>Engaging families – Kindness to animals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite families to accompany the class on your trip to an animal shelter, zoo, or natural history museum. • Ask your class to choose an animal-related cause for which they would like to raise money, such as adopting an animal at a zoo. Have students prepare baked goods, paintings, or other art that can be sold or auctioned off at a fundraising event for this purpose. 	<p>Engaging families – Everything has its place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge families to create an artistic or functional item using only natural materials. Have the children bring their items to school to display in a mini “everything has its place” museum. • Research ant farms or beehives. These are great examples of ecosystems where all of the parts work together, and everything has its place.

