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Concern for Helping Animals in Israel

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**What kind of treatment does Judaism require toward animals, given the fact that they feel emotional pain (deprivation, fear, neglect)?**

**Theme:**

Judaism recognizes that animals experience emotional pain, and we are forbidden to inflict it.

**Sources:**

- A. Various laws, including: "Do not plow with an ox and a mule together" and "Do not muzzle a threshing animal."
- B. Story about Rabbi Judah the Prince and the calf.
- C. Story of Noah and the dove who preferred his freedom.

**Rabbi Judah the Prince**

Rabbi Judah the Prince was the head of the Jewish community of Eretz Israel in the first century. One day while he was out walking, a calf escaped from a wagon bound for the slaughterhouse. The calf tried to hide under Rabbi Judah's coat, moaning with fear. Rabbi Judah pushed the calf away saying, "Go away — this is what you were created for!" Because of his lack of compassion for the frightened calf, Rabbi Judah was struck with a painful toothache from which he suffered for thirteen years.

One day while studying at home, Rabbi Judah noticed that his daughter was about to kill a family of weasels that she had discovered in a corner. He told her to let the animals live because one should show compassion to animals just as God does. He quoted to her from the Psalms: "God is merciful to all his creatures" (Psalms 145:9).

Because he had saved the animals, Rabbi Judah's painful toothache disappeared.

**Questions for Students:**

1. Why do you think the Torah forbid plowing with an ox and a mule together?
  - a. Was it because the weaker one couldn't keep up with the stronger? (Ibn Ezra)
  - b. Was it because the mule, seeing the ox chew its cud, would think the ox was eating and feel deprived? (Baal HaTurim)
2. What does it tell you about Judaism that two important Talmudic commentators spent a great deal of time dealing with this question?
3. Why do you think the Torah forbid muzzling a threshing animal?
4. What are some ways people abuse animals? (Hitting, teasing, leaving them outside in hot/cold/wet weather without protection, leaving them alone for long periods of time, confining them to small spaces, breeding them in puppy mills for profit.)