



CHAYAT HASHAVUA: DOG

DOES ANYONE KNOW THE HEBREW WORD FOR “DOG”?

- It's *kelev*, from the root letters כלב.
- We don't really know the basic meaning of the word, although one Hebrew dictionary says that it may mean to make stitches—like the marks a dog leaves when it bites.

DID YOU KNOW THAT THE RABBIS TEACH US THAT DOGS HELPED OUR PEOPLE COME OUT OF EGYPT?

- In the *Ku-Bukh* (or “Cow Book”) a cow tells a dog that he had done wrong.
- But the dog answered:
But I am pure and honest,
And do nothing other than the right.
For I am of good stock,
My native piety (i.e., belief in God) guards me for many long years.
I am descended from the quiet and pious canines (i.e., dogs)
Who refused to bark in Egypt on the night Israel left the land.

ON THE OTHER HAND, IN THE BIBLE THE DOG IS ALMOST ALWAYS DESCRIBED IN A BAD WAY.

- They are said to be noisy, dirty, stupid, and filthy, and that they eat dead animals.
- Why do you think people might have thought about dogs in such a bad way at that time? (When the Bible was written, dogs were much more like their wild ancestors and much less like the family pets we have now.)
- Actually, the Bible describes two kinds of dogs—wild ones and shepherds.
- How do you think shepherding dogs would have been treated then?
- Alaskan Malamutes are known as a “natural breed,” that is, they were not bred by people until relatively recently.
 1. Until recently, say the last 50 years or so, Malamutes were working dogs, but not pets.
 2. They never slept inside with their owners and they were given only one fish a day to eat, so they had to get the rest of their food for themselves.

- Why do you think the Rabbis said almost two thousand years ago that a dog should be restrained during the day and only allowed to roam at night? (Before electric lights, people didn't go out much at night, especially in the country.)
- Do you think that nowadays it's a good idea to let your dog run loose anytime?

NORMALLY WE THINK OF OUR DOGS AS AFFECTIONATE AND LOYAL, DEVOTED TO US.

- What does it mean when a dog flattens its ears or bares its teeth? (It may become aggressive.)
- Have you every seen or been threatened by a vicious dog?
- One of our very old sacred books, the Midrash, warns people not to go near or try to handle a wild dog. (Genesis Rabbah 77)
- It was even permitted to kill a wild dog on Shabbat. (Shabbat 121b)
- Why do you think dogs misbehave or become vicious? (Physical illness, mistreatment, and poor socialization.)
- What should you do if you encounter an aggressive dog? (Keep your arms at your sides, slowly back away, and firmly say “no.”)

IT'S TIME FOR THE DOG QUIZ!

- How long ago did dogs become domesticated, that is, become used by people to do work and as companions—4,000, 14,000, or 40,000 years ago? (14,000)
- What's the average weight of the smallest and largest dogs? (10 and 135 pounds)
- What's the greatest threat to the survival of a newborn puppy? (Becoming chilled, because its circulatory system is immature and can't sustain its body temperature, it they must stay close to its mothers.)

IF YOU WANTED TO HAVE YOUR PARENTS GET YOU A DOG, WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS THAT WOULD BE IMPORTANT TO DO *RIGHT AWAY* WHEN YOU GOT THE ANIMAL?

- Take the dog to a vet to be checked and given inoculations.
- Get a license for the dog.
- Make sure there is a comfortable, safe place for the dog to rest and sleep.
- Make sure the dog has an enclosed yard to use for exercise.
- Start to learn how to train the dog to behave properly.

THERE ARE SOME JEWISH PROVERBS, WISE OLD SAYINGS, ABOUT DOGS.

- “The worst dog gets the best bone.” (I.L. Peretz)
- What do you think that means?
 1. We have to make sure that small dogs are fed too.
 2. We have to stand up to bullies and people who use their strength to get more than their fair share of something.
- “If you lie down with dogs, you rise up with fleas.” (Yiddish Proverb)
- What do you think that means?
 1. Exactly what it says!
 2. If we start to think there’s no difference between us and dogs, then the things that happen to them begin to happen to us!



Gather the People

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