



MAMLECHET HACHAI: REWARDING ANIMALS

IN JUDAISM, OUR GREAT BOOKS TEACH THAT EVEN THE ANIMALS ARE REWARDED AND PUNISHED FOR DOING RIGHT AND WRONG.

- In one place, the Torah says, “a dog shall not whet his tongue against the children of Israel”—which means not bite us—and because the dogs obeyed God’s command, they were rewarded with the meat that Jews couldn’t eat because it wasn’t kosher.
- In another place the Torah tells us that the donkeys carried the clothing and valuables of the Hebrews as they were escaping from their slavery in Egypt, so the firstborn of every donkey did not have to be sacrificed as other animals were then. (Ex. 13:13)
- We are taught that the *milhan* or phoenix, a bird, was given the gift of eternal life because it refused to eat the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. (Midrash Tehillim, Psalm 28)
- And did you know that the Torah requires we put to death any animal that intentionally kills a human being?
- Our holy books and our sages, our wisest teachers throughout the ages, have taught that animals may be rewarded for their good behavior and punished for their bad behavior.
- Judaism is teaching us that if animals are rewarded and punished for following or ignoring what the Torah teaches us, then all the more so we should expect to be.

WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU IF YOU IF YOU DON’T OBEY YOUR PARENTS?

- Do you ever get punished for doing the wrong thing?
- Do you ever get rewarded for doing the right thing?
- As you are growing up, you have to learn to do what your parents tell you to do—and as you learn to do that, you become “responsible” to the rules set by your parents.
- And if you do the wrong thing, only your parents—who love you—may punish you.
- Has your mother or father ever said they wanted you to be “more responsible”?

- What do you think they meant by that word “responsible”?

IN JUDAISM, WHEN A GIRL REACHES THE AGE OF 12 AND A BOY THE AGE OF 13, THEY BECOME BAT MITZVAH AND BAR MITZVAH.

- Can anyone teach us what the words actually mean in English? (“Daughter of *commandment*” and “son of *commandment*.”)
- Can anyone teach us what it means to be a son or daughter of commandment?
- It means that when we reach a certain age we become responsible not only to follow our parents’ rules but the teachings that are set out in the Torah.
- It means that we will be rewarded and punished for doing the right and wrong thing not only by our parents but everyone else—our congregation and the community in which we live, so we become responsible for ourselves.
- Why do you think it’s important to become responsible for ourselves?



Gather the People

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