

According To Its Kind

On G-d's First Message To Humans

On the fifth and sixth days of Creation, G-d made many living creatures, each according to its kind, that filled water, air, and land. In the end, G-d created a single man and a single woman, Adam and Hava. With the first words to Adam and Hava, He charged them "to rule" over the Earth's creatures. What does this command mean? And why didn't G-d make many kinds of humans?

In Bereshit, G-d proclaimed all animals as good. However, He never gave them ways to know Good and Evil. A tiny hamster mother devouring her babies is a stress reaction, not an atrocity. A fierce tigress stalking prey is not evil. She hunts for food to feed her cubs. Regardless of the kind, the creatures live by instinct, not morals. Unlike animals, people choose Good when they follow moral laws and Evil when they stray off. Also, all people are alike since G-d molded them in His unique image and granted everyone the same drive to know Good and Evil. To help make moral choices, He gave a single book of laws -- Torah -- to all regardless of place, language, race, or skin color.

Thus, it is easy to answer, "why is there just one kind of man?" Because there is only one Torah! Indeed, imagine there were diverse kinds of people. Some walk on the ground, while others fly high in the skies or swim deep in the oceans. Then, the Exodus story of land-bound people would not make sense to the aerial or sea-born. There would have to be a separate Torah for every type of person. Then, a struggle could ensue between various kinds to champion the disparate ideas of Good and Evil. The only sure way to avoid such a conflict is to have no Torah. So, people would be just like animals. All are good in the eyes of G-d, but no one knows or cares about Good and Evil.

Animal use is a part of most Torah stories. Some show it as frivolous or nefarious; others portray it as necessary. It all began when Hava blamed the snake. After the Flood, G-d accepted Noah's sacrifices and allowed animals for food. Abraham fed a kid to angel messengers near Sodom and offered a ram instead of Isaac on Mt. Moriah. Ishmael became an archer, Esau a hunter. Six out of ten Egyptian plagues concerned animals: frogs, lice, wild beasts, pestilence, locusts, and the death of the firstborn. G-d rebuked animal worshipping in the sin of a Golden Calf. Yet He demanded Holidays' korbanot and sin offerings. He warned of wildlife slaying children and livestock should Jews forsake Torah.

The Torah teaches the *ruling of animals* by examples of *compassion*. In the beginning, G-d allowed only herbage and fruits for food. Then Adam gave names to all creatures. His son, Havel, shepherded the flocks. The caring peaked when Noah saved the animals in his Ark from the Flood. Later Abraham, Isaac, Rachel, Jacob, and Moses tended the herds. Rebecca drew water for the tired camels. Jacob was leaving Laban slowly to keep the younglings alive. The children of Israel came to Egypt with the flocks and kept them for the next 400 years. The Jewish nation took all animals on the road when it left for a 40-year desert journey to the Promised Land. Kashrut mandates kindness to animals, and many Torah commandments teach animal empathy.

Animal care begins with understanding animals. A keen observer catches creatures' minds and moods. True, they do not express themselves in words. Yet animals talk and show emotions with sounds, moves, and scents. One can find every human demeanor in this or that kind of creature. Like humans, animals may reveal love, hate, friendship, revenge, etc. Not all creatures respond to man the same way. Still, like most people, many react to human kindness or cruelty with predictable affection or distress. Once established, a bond with a tame or wild animal can be profound.

When one cares with love, animals respond in kind. They get a glimpse into the world of Good, which no creature can perceive on its own, no matter how well trained. Animal abuse is a crime. It exposes them to the peril of Evil and breaks the G-d's first order to people — to rule over the animals.

Thus, pour out love from your heart when caring about a creature so that it feels the otherwise unknown bliss of Good while returning you an overwhelming flow of gratitude. Ooh, but wait, safety first: never pat a wild Komodo dragon, hug a starved piranha, or pity a blood-sucking mosquito!