



The *Torah* is aware of the strong bond between a mother animal and her offspring, and explicitly commands us to send away a mother bird when taking the eggs from the nest (*Deuteronomy 22:6-7*) so as not to cause her distress. But dairy farmers routinely take calves away from their mothers, who are impregnated in order to lactate. In South Africa, 200 000 male calves annually die of malnutrition or starvation so that humans can drink their mothers' milk.



Almost all the animals we eat are slaughtered as babies at a very small portion of their natural life span. To quote the former Chief Rabbi of Ireland David Rosen, "Anybody with eyes in their head can see that (factory farming) is a categorical transgression and desecration of the prohibition on causing cruelty to animals." Factory farming thus violates not only the higher principle of "tza'ar ba'alei chayim", but in its routine mutilations of animals – almost always without pain relief – may also

violate the Noahide principle of "ever min hachai". Factory farming fails to meet the basic standards expected of a civilized society. Rabbi Rosen argues that "the current treatment of animals in the livestock trade definitely renders the consumption of meat as halachically unacceptable as the product of illegitimate means."

**Did you know?** All of the seven sacred foods associated with Israel are vegetarian.

**Quote:** *There is no difference between the pain of humans and the pain of other living beings, since the love and tenderness of the mother for the young are not produced by reasoning, but by feeling, and this faculty exists not only in humans but in most living beings.* (Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*)

## FIND OUT MORE

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*Photos:*

*Hens - Compassion in World Farming SA*

*Cow - Humane Society International*



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# Animal Welfare: A Jewish Perspective



*Living faithfully*



## TZA'AR BA'ALEI CHAYIM

In Jewish law, animals may be used for human benefit, but the infliction of unnecessary harms is prohibited. Humans' treatment of animals is governed by the principle of "tza'ar ba'alei chayim" ("the suffering of living creatures"), which prohibits the "causing of sorrow" to any living creature. Judaism recognizes that animals are sentient beings, with interests that must be protected. This concern for the welfare of animals can be seen in many passages from Jewish texts, including the Torah, the Talmud, the

Psalms and the Proverbs. Animals may not work on the Sabbath, and we are forbidden to muzzle an ox to prevent it from eating while it is working in the field



(*Deuteronomy 25:4*). The great Jewish leaders, Moses and King David, were chosen, in part, for their compassion and care of their flock when they were shepherds. Rebecca was chosen as a wife for Isaac because she showed compassion to animals by providing water for his camels.

## JUDAISM AND VEGETARIANISM

Adam and Eve were commanded to be vegetarian, if not vegan: *Genesis 1:29* states "And God said: Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed which is upon the face

of all the earth, and every tree that has seed-yielding fruit—to you it shall be for food." It was only after the flood, when humans were no longer able to live according to the high standard initially expected of us, that God allowed the eating of meat, provided certain conditions, including humane slaughter, were met. Some rabbis, however, including Rav Kook, the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Palestine under the British Mandate and one of the most respected rabbis of the 20th Century, believe that the permission to eat meat was only a temporary concession—vegetarianism is still the ideal towards which humans should strive.

Being a vegetarian is consistent with Jewish law, although there are certain practices which involve the use of animal products; the *Torah* is traditionally written on parchment, as are the *mezuzah* scrolls and *tefillin* (phylacteries). A ram's horn is blown on Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year). But for the most part, observant Jews can live a *kosher* life without consuming animal products. Indeed, since the production of most animal products, including eggs and milk, involves horrendous cruelty, an argument can be made that in a society where most animal products are produced in factory farms, being vegetarian or vegan is the only way to ensure that one does not violate the principle of *tza'ar ba'alei chayim*. This is especially so in the 21st century, where all of our dietary



needs can be satisfied without the consumption of animal products.

## NOAHIDE LAWS

Even in our fallen postdiluvian world, cruelty to animals is not permitted; after the flood, God gave to Noah and his family seven laws, which apply not only to Jews but to all humans. One of the Noahide laws is "ever min hachai", which forbids tearing off the limb of a live animal. Before its flesh may be eaten, an animal must have been properly (and humanely) killed so that it does not suffer unnecessarily. A society that fails to meet this minimum standard of kindness to animals does not meet the basic standards expected of human civilization.

## FACTORY FARMING

Almost all meat and animal-derived products in the modern world are derived from factory farms; intensive farming denies animals the most basic of their needs - the space afforded to the average egg-laying hen is smaller than this piece of paper! To prevent fighting caused by these inhumane conditions, hens are further maltreated by having their beaks and their toes cut off - without pain relief! Male chicks, useless to the poultry industry, are ground up alive, gassed, electrocuted, suffocated, or simply dumped and left to die from starvation.