



THE CATS ON BEN YEHUDA STREET

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The Hebrew phrase tza-ar ba-alei chayim, kindness to animals, literally means to prevent animals from suffering. There are many laws about caring for animals in the Torah (the first five books of the Bible), including providing animals a day of rest and feeding our animals before we eat.

BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOR

The neighbors in this book look out for one another even before they become friends. A saying from the Jewish text Pirkei Avot (Ethics of Our Ancestors) teaches: “Let your neighbor’s property be as dear to you as your own.” It’s comforting to know that others are concerned about our welfare and safety. In what new ways can you reach out to a neighbor? Might you offer to buy something for an elderly neighbor the next time you are at the supermarket? Perhaps your family could take in the mail or feed the cat for someone who is away or working late.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN READING

- Why do you think Mr. Modiano changes his mind about cats?
- In what ways do the neighbors in this book help one another?
- Can you count the cats in this book?

CATS IN ISRAEL

Tel Aviv, as most of Israel, is teeming with cats. Scientists believe that the world’s 600 million housecats may have descended from just five female wildcats -- probably from Israel! Sadly, a cat’s life on the streets often leads to injury and disease. There are many places, such as the Cat Welfare Society of Israel, that are dedicated to the spaying/neutering and sheltering of these cats. Your family may consider finding an animal shelter to support.

MULTIPLE LANGUAGES

Mr. Modiano and his cat, Gatito, have Ladino names. Ladino, derived from Old Spanish and Hebrew, originated with the Sephardic (Spanish) Jews who fled Spain in 1492. The language began to die out, but like Yiddish (which combines German and Hebrew) it is benefitting from resurgence. There are many examples of Ladino music on the Internet. Mr. Modiano also speaks Hebrew. His “lo, lo, lo” means “no, no, no.” Maybe now he also says, “Ken, ken, ken.” Yes, yes, yes!