



THE ANIMALS' ARK

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You've heard the story of Noah's Ark before – but have you ever heard it from the animals' perspective? With all those species sharing such tight quarters, it had its challenges. But Noah set an example for everyone to follow.

JEWISH CONCEPTS

One of the best known Bible stories is that of Noah and the Flood. Noah was part of the tenth generation after the creation of the world, as recorded in the Torah (first five books of the Bible). Noah was the most righteous person alive at that time, so God entrusted him with a task critical to human and animal survival: He was to build an ark in which he, his family, and two of every kind of animal would escape a devastating flood.

Miracles abound in this story. God caused a multitude of creatures to seek safety on the ark, one male and one female from every species: "They came to Noah into the Ark; two by two of all flesh in which there was a breath of life" (Genesis 7:15). Jewish sages comment that such an enormous number of animals, including some that were huge, should not have been able to fit in the space under normal circumstances. Additionally, although the animals in *The Animals' Ark* were friends before the flood, we surely cannot say the same for the real-life lions and sheep, bears and rabbits. That they were able to coexist peacefully with each other and their human caretakers on the ark for close to a year was nothing short of miraculous!

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Noah's care for the animals on the ark is a beautiful example of respect and compassion for all living things. The Jewish value of avoiding *tzar ba'alei chaim*, causing pain to living creatures, is one that can be taught to even young children. If you have pets, involve your children in caring for them. Explain that the Torah teaches that we have a responsibility to feed our animals before we feed ourselves, since they depend on us. Teach them to touch pets gently. ("How do you feel when someone pulls your hair?") The whole family can enjoy giving the dog some exercise by walking together or playing in the yard.

Consider visiting a zoo or aquarium as a family, where your children can learn about more exotic members of the animal kingdom. Discuss how special each creature is, and that they need food, water, and shelter, just as people do. The more your children learn about the unique qualities of all creatures and our responsibility for their care, the more compassion they will have for all living things.