

Stories, Biographies & Wonders

Koalas

By Alex Isaacson

While similar in appearance to bears, the Koala is not in fact a bear. They are one of the most amazing creatures that Hashem put in this world. From diet to digestion, to human similarities, the Koala are quite a curiosity. A male can weigh up to 31lbs, and be a little over 2.5 feet tall. They have sharp claws to assist with climbing tree trunks, live up to 18 years, and also have two opposable thumbs to provide better gripping ability. Its closest living relative is the wombat. The Koala, however, has a thicker coat, much larger ears, and longer limbs.



It is a nocturnal marsupial and lives almost entirely on Eucalyptus leaves which are tough, toxic and low in nutrition. Because of its powerful jaws however, the Koala are able to chew up the Eucalyptus into a very fine paste before swallowing. The caecum (or pouch) similar to the human appendix, completes the process by changing the eucalyptus leaves into digestible nutrients.

Hashem made Koala's metabolic has a very low. Amazingly, it rests motionless for about 16 to 18 hours a day, sleeping most of that time, and eats during the 5 hours that it's awake. Interestingly, Koalas are one of the few mammals (other than primates) that have fingerprints. Another peculiar thing about it is that when under stress, Koala may issue a loud cry, which has been reported as similar to that of a human baby.

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Menucha

A Shabbos table companion for the whole family

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במדבר

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Halacha Challenge

Feeding an Ownerless Dog

In the last article we began to explore the halacha of feeding animals on Shabbos. We saw that the prohibition to feeding certain animals on Shabbos is under the general g'zeira of "Tircha." In this week's article we'll see an interesting aspect of this topic.



On a pleasant Shabbos morning, Mr. Silver was walking home after Shacharis. On his way he saw a puppy sitting on a side of the road, wiggling its tail. Five minutes later, Mr. Silver stopped to rest and was surprised to see that the puppy was next to him.

When Mr. Silver approached the front yard of his house, his daughter Shoshi said: "Abba, there is a cute puppy behind you!" "Yes, I know. This puppy followed me for the last 15 minutes," explained Mr.

Silver. "Oh, the puppy must be starving," said Shoshi. "I'll run to the kitchen and bring out some food for it." "One second, Shoshi," said her older brother Moishy. "Didn't we learn recently that a person should not feed strange animals on Shabbos!?"

Q: Can Shoshi feed the puppy?

DEDICATIONS

- ◆ By the **Links** family in honor of their son's Bar Mitzva
- ◆ By **Dov and Lauren Greenberg** in honor of the birth of their son **Akiva**



Special thanks to kehillas **Beis Tefillah Yonah Avraham**

Help: In the previous issue, we saw the following teaching of a mishna [Shabbos 24:3]:
 ...ואין נותנין מים לפני דבורים... אבל נותנין לפני אווזין ותרנגולים...
And we don't put water in front of bees...But we may put [it] in front of geese and chickens... Based on the Gemora's [Shabbos 155b] explanation, the lesson of that mishna is that a person is permitted to feed animals for which he is responsible (i.e., to provide their food). Conversely, one may not feed animals for which he has no responsibility as far as feeding them. As we saw in the last article, this is not a separate *g'zeira derebbanan*, but rather, it is under a general prohibition of "Tircha" (lit. effort). One of the definitions of "Tircha" is doing unnecessary labor. Hence, feeding animals that don't depend on us for their food is prohibited on Shabbos, since feeding them is "unnecessary labor." [Tosafos Shabbos 19a].

Seemingly, it's not a person's responsibility to feed an ownerless dog and hence, it should not be allowed to feed it on Shabbos. Having said that, let's take a look at the following Aggad'ta [Shabbos 155b]:

דרש רבי יונה אפיתחא דבי נשיאה: מאי דכתיב (משלי כט:ז) ידע צדיק דין דלים? יודע הקדוש ברוך הוא בכלב שמזנותיו מועטין, לפיכך שוהה אכילתו במעיו ג' ימים...א"ר הממנא: ש"ם אורח ארעא למשדא אומצא לכלבא...א"ר פפא: לית דעניא מכלבא, ולית דעתיך מחזירא.

Rebbi Yona made the following drasha... What is the meaning of the verse: "A righteous one knows the measure of impoverished" ? [The meaning of this verse is as follows:] The Holy One Blessed is He knows that a dog's food [availability] is limited. [The MaHarsha (ibid.) explains that Hashem knows the g'zeira that was measured out to dogs: their food will not be available in plenty as it is to other creatures such as fish and birds.] Therefore, He makes a dog's food remain in the digestive tracks for three days...Rav Hamnuna said: We learn from this that it's derech erez to throw a piece of meat to a dog...

Menucha's Answer*: Yes. **Explanation:** The Magen Avraham [OC 324 §7] teaches that this Aggad'ta, or more specifically the statement of Rav Hamnuna, is telling us that it is a *mitzva* to give food to a dog—even if it does not belong to the person who is feeding it. The Machtzis HaShekel (ibid.) explains that the *mitzva* involved here is "You should walk in His ways" – the *mitzva* to imitate Hashem's *middos*. Just like Hashem has mercy for His creatures, so must we. The Aggad'ta above revealed to us that dogs don't have sufficient food [see Aruch HaShulchan OC 324 §2]. Thus, it's a *mitzva* to have mercy and give food to any dog* just as Hashem took an extra measure and made dog's digestive process different from other creatures. Since it's a *mitzva* to feed a dog, prohibition of "Tircha" (see the Help section) does not apply and one can therefore give food to any dog* – including an ownerless one [see Mishna Berura 324 §31, Aruch HaShulchan OC 324 §2]. | *with the exception to "an evil dog" (see Mishna Berura (ibid.))

* Note: Menucha's answer is for Torah learning purposes only and not as a *halachic* ruling. To know laws of Shabbos on a practical level, the reader is encouraged to study them in depth, find out the *minhagim* of his/her family and community, and consult with a *halachic* authority. (The opinions of the sources cited in the article may not necessary reflect rulings of other *halachic* authorities.)

Short & Sweet

Mishlei



בְּאוֹר פְּנֵי מֶלֶךְ חַיִּים -- מְשָׁלִי טו: טו

In the light of the King's countenance is life...

-- Mishlei 16:15

As we approach Shavous, this verse becomes more relevant to us. As we know, in the conclusion of Shemone Esrei, we say to the *Ribbono shel Olam*:

You gave us the Torah בְּאוֹר פְּנֵיךְ (in the light of Your countenance.)

Interestingly, the classic *mussar sefer*, Tomar Devora [ch.2], says that it's upon us imitate the *middos* of אור פני מלך (the light of Hashem's countenance).

Tomer Devorah teaches that since one of the *middos* of אור פני מלך is *simcha*, when someone looks at you, he should only find *simcha* and *seiver ponim* radiating from your face.

Riddles



Klal Yisroel is benefiting from "the blessing of strength" that is being passed down to us from our Avos...

Which one of the three *Avos* was blessed by Hashem with "the blessing of strength"?

The answer to the last issue's riddle

Riddle: After learning *parshas* Bechukosai in depth, Aaron exclaimed: "It pays off to be short!" *Why did Aaron say that?*

ANSWER: According to the laws Arachin (determining values of pledges made to the Beis Hamikdash), one can pledge the value of his height! If he does so, he must donate a staff, made from a material that he specified in the vow (e.g., gold, silver). The minimum length of that staff must equal this person's height. [Rambam Hilchos Arachin v'Charamim 2:6]