

2. Laws Concerning Animals

דְּבָרִים שְׂצָרִיכִים לִיזְהָר מֵהֶם בְּבִהְמוֹת חַיֹּת וְעוֹפּוֹת

1. Not only must a Jew rest on Shabbat, but animals owned by a Jew may not be allowed to perform *melachah* as well, as it says in the Torah, “Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; that your ox and your donkey may have rest...” (*Shemot* 23:12). This refers not only to cattle, but to all animals;¹ by themselves or by a non-Jew working with them.²

Prohibited activities include plowing, planting, harvesting, threshing, pulling a wagon, carrying a load out into *reshut harabim*, etc. The Torah likewise forbids work done jointly by man and animal, such

1. **Resting Your Animals** The Torah’s law that animals should rest on Shabbat applies to animals on land, to fowl, as well as to sea creatures. You may not allow your animal to do any *melachah*, or place any burden on it, apart from bridle and reins or whatever is necessary for its protection. If the animal does a *melachah* for its own satisfaction, for example, while feeding, you are not obligated to prevent it.
2. **An Animal Hired from a Non-Jew** If you hired an animal from a non-Jew, you must likewise keep it from doing *melachah* on Shabbat. If you hired the non-Jew for delivery or transport, neither specifying the animal nor assuming responsibility for it or for feeding it, you are not duty bound to keep the animal at rest on Shabbat. Similarly, if you hired an animal from a non-Jew, you may hire it out to another non-Jew to work it as he sees fit on Shabbat.

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as leading or driving a beast of burden (מַחֲמֵר) by directing it by voice, or by striking it with a whip, etc.³

2. A Jew, therefore, may not permit his or her animal to carry a *massa* into *reshut harabim*, as it would be a violation of the Torah law, even if it goes out by itself. The prohibition applies to any kind of burden, even if it is on the animal as an ornament. However, if it is for the purpose of healing, such as a bandage on a wound, or for its normal protection, it is permitted, because it is not considered a burden but rather as a garment, just as for a person.⁴ For example, a horse may go out with a halter or a bridle, but not with both if one suffices. You may bind the halter loosely around its neck so that you can readily slip your hands between the rope and the neck to restrain the horse if it should try to break away. You are permitted to handle the halter and put it on, but you should not lean on the horse, as you are not permitted to support yourself on an animal on Shabbat.

3. Neither a horse nor any other animal may go out with a pack-saddle. A donkey may go out with a saddle-like cover that serves it as a garment to protect it from the cold, as it is its nature to suffer from the cold. However, it must be tied on before Shabbat. It may not go out with the cover if it is not tied on, as it may fall off and the owner might come to carry it. It cannot be tied on Shabbat because that would require having to come close to the animal and lean on it, which is not permitted, as animals are *muktzeh* on Shabbat.⁵ But if the donkey is in

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3. **Driving an Animal Carrying a Load** The prohibition against leading or driving an animal (מַחֲמֵר) that is carrying a load on Shabbat is derived from the verse, “You shall not do any manner of work, you ... nor your cattle” (*Shemot* 20:10), which *Chazal* took to mean “you together with your cattle.” Unlike the *halachah* that your animal must rest on Shabbat, the prohibition of מַחֲמֵר applies to all animals, even those belonging to a non-Jew.
 4. **A Dog Wearing a Collar, Leash, and Blanket** A dog may go out on Shabbat wearing a collar and leash, as they are needed for its safeguarding. A collar that protects the dog from ticks and fleas, or one that glows in the dark and protects it from being struck by a car on the road, would likewise be permitted. Similarly, it may wear a blanket to keep it warm. For the *halachah* relating to walking a dog outside of an *eruv*, see ahead, note 7.
 5. **Handling Pets** See Part IV, Chapter 3, note 3.

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the courtyard, you may put the saddle-like cover on it to protect it from the cold, provided it does not go out with it. You may not put a saddle-like cover on a horse unless it is to protect him from intense cold, or it is to keep the flies from tormenting him in the summer, in which case you should take care not to lean against the animal while covering him. You may not remove the covering from the horse or the donkey on Shabbat if the animal does not suffer from it.

4. You may not take an animal outside, or let it go outside, wearing a bell, even when it is plugged and makes no sound,⁶ and even in a city that has an *eruv*. The animal may wear the bell while it is in a courtyard, provided it is plugged and makes no sound.

5. You are allowed to lead a horse by a rope attached to a bridle, provided you hold onto the end of the rope so that it does not hang out of your hand a *tefach*, and the length of rope between your hand and the animal does not reach down to within a *tefach* of the ground.⁷ If the rope is too long, you should wind it around the horse's neck. You may not lead two or more animals that are tied together by holding on to the halter of one and having the others follow. This applies even in a city where there is an *eruv*, as it appears as if you are taking them to market. You may, however, lead them individually in the manner indicated above.⁸

6. Chickens may not go out with strings tied on to their feet for identification or to keep them from breaking utensils. You may, however, tie their feet together to prevent them from running away. You may,

6. **A Bell on an Animal** The reason for the prohibition is that it appears as if it is dressed up and is being taken to market to be sold. Some *poskim* infer from the reason given that animals such as cats and fowl which are not taken to be sold in this manner may go out with a muffled bell which produces no sound. Others, however, consider the bell a burden and do not permit it in any case.

7. **Leading an Animal by a Leash** In leading an animal by a leash the rope must be held in such a way that it is evident that he is using it to guard the animal and not just carrying it as a *massa*. If the rope hangs from your hand, or you allow it to trail close to the ground, it appears as if you are carrying it and not holding it to guard the animal. This applies even where there is no *eruv*.

8. **Walking with a Seeing-Eye Dog** A blind person may walk in the street with a seeing-eye dog on Shabbat. If necessary, he may enter the synagogue for prayer accompanied by his seeing-eye dog.

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likewise, tie together two legs of a horse that is grazing in the field to keep it from running away. You are not allowed, however, to tie the horse's foreleg to the hind leg, or to shackle a horse by bending one of its legs and tying it up so that it can walk only on three legs. This may not be done even on weekdays, as it is forbidden to cause suffering to an animal.

7. You do not need to prevent a non-Jewish worker from riding an animal while taking it to water, since the prohibition of riding on Shabbat is not because the rider is considered a *massa*, as per the principle of "*chai nosei et atzmo*" (a living being carries itself). Rather, it is a rabbinic prohibition⁹ which does not apply to the animal but to the person, and only a Jew is forbidden to ride an animal on Shabbat.¹⁰ A non-Jew is not bound by the prohibition. He may even put a saddle or a blanket on the animal in order to ride it, as these are incidental to the rider, but he may not place anything else on the animal.

8. You are allowed to ask a non-Jew to milk the cows on Shabbat, because the accumulated milk causes the animal pain, and one is duty-bound to prevent an animal from suffering.¹¹ However, you may not use or even handle the milk that day, but the non-Jew can store it until after

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9. **Riding an Animal on Shabbat** Apart from the general *halachah* to rest your animals on Shabbat, *Chazal* prohibited riding an animal for fear that the rider might break off a branch to use as a whip to spur the animal. Indeed, they prohibited any use of an animal, such as sitting on it, and leaning or supporting yourself on it. The rabbinic ordinance applies even when there is no reason to fear that you may break off a branch, for example, in the desert, because *Chazal* avoided making exceptions in their enactments. The prohibition, however, does not apply to a non-Jew. Moreover, any distress he may cause the animal in this instance is compensated by the fact that he is taking it to water.
10. **Riding in a Carriage Drawn by an Animal** You are forbidden to ride in a carriage or wagon drawn by an animal on Shabbat, even if it is driven by a non-Jew, because you are not permitted to make use of the animal in any way; see Part II, The Nature of *Melachah*, in the paragraph "The Character of Rabbinic Enactments." As noted above, this general prohibition extends from the *halachah* prohibiting riding an animal. If you drive the carriage yourself, you also transgress the Torah prohibition of "*mechameir*," namely, driving a loaded animal on Shabbat.
11. **Milking to Relieve the Animal** If a non-Jew is not available, you may do the milking to relieve the animal from suffering. For the proper procedure, see Part II, *Melachah* 5, paragraph 5, and note 6.

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Shabbat. You are also permitted to ask a non-Jew to feed the geese once during the day to prevent them from suffering.¹²

9. You are not allowed to lend or hire out your animal to a non-Jew, unless it is on condition that he returns it before Shabbat. If he does not return it, you should renounce ownership of it before Shabbat, even if only in private, so that you will be spared having an animal owned by you work on Shabbat. However, this solution is one of last resort. You may not at the outset lend or hire it out with this intention in mind.¹³

10. You must feed your animals on Shabbat.¹⁴ You are therefore permitted to place food in front of your animals; however, you should not measure out the feed, but only estimate the amount needed. You may untie a bundle of fodder to give to cattle, so long as it is not tied in a durable double knot. You may cut up hard gourds for your cattle, provided they were detached before Shabbat; but if they are soft and can be eaten as they are, you may not cut them up.

11. You are allowed to put your cattle out to graze, as pulling up the grass from the ground is not considered labor for them, because they are content to do so in order to eat it. However, you may not set the

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12. **Feeding Geese** Since the geese are used to being stuffed and cannot feed themselves, it would be cruel not to feed them. If a non-Jew is not available, a Jew, preferably a minor, may feed them.
13. **Hiring Out an Animal** The prohibition applies only to animals that are hired for work, but not to animals that are not used for work. Some *poskim* permit hiring out an animal for a period of time which overlaps with Shabbat by declaring it ownerless property in front of three people. The significance of three people is that anything announced in front of three people is assumed to be public knowledge, and therefore a true renouncing of ownership. Those who are careful about their observance are advised to be strict in this matter. In any case it should be done only if there is a pressing need, as when you have a field which you rent to a non-Jew under a profit sharing arrangement and must provide him with animals to work the field.
14. **Feeding Animals** You may not feed animals you are not responsible to feed either because they can find food for themselves, such as birds, or because they are not to be kept around the house, such as pigs. However, you may feed animals that are permitted to be fed, even if they do not belong to you. When you feed animals on Shabbat, you should be careful not to handle them because all living animals, whether domestic or not, are *muktzeh* and may not be handled on Shabbat. See Part IV, Chapter 3, note 3.

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cattle to eat grass that was cut from the ground by a non-Jew on Shabbat for fear that you may come to handle the grass, which is *muktzeh*. If they have nothing else to eat, it is permitted, for you may not cause the animals to suffer. Likewise, if the cattle have nothing to drink, you may tell a non-Jew to bring water from a well that is in a *karmelit*.

12. You may not hang a pouch or another container of feed on an animal so that it can eat without bending its neck, as this is merely for its comfort. Since the animal will not suffer without the pouch, you are not permitted to exert yourself on Shabbat for the animal's pleasure. However, you are permitted to do this for calves or foals; since their necks are short, eating from the ground causes them distress. But you should keep them in the courtyard as long as they are wearing the pouch or container, as it is considered a *massa* for them, and they should not be allowed to go to areas that require an *eruv*.

13. In feeding fowl, you should not throw the grain on moist ground, as some of the grain may remain and afterwards begin to sprout.¹⁵

14. On Shabbat, you are permitted to feed only those breeds of cattle, animals and fowl you might raise and for whose care you would be responsible.¹⁶ You are not permitted to exert energy to feed those animals you would not raise or whom you have no particular obligation to feed.¹⁷ For example, you are not permitted to feed roosting pigeons, since they can fly out and eat in the field, but you may place food before

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15. **Feeding Fowl** In a place where people walk about, you may place the grain even on moist ground, because any of the grain that might remain on the ground will not sprout. In any case it is allowed to put out an amount of grain that will be eaten up in a day or two.
16. **Feeding Fish in an Aquarium** Fish should be fed by putting the food into the aquarium before Shabbat. However, if necessary, you may feed the fish on Shabbat. If the tank contains grass weeds or similar products, you should not change or add water, but you may have the water changed automatically. You should not move a fish bowl or aquarium on Shabbat, nor should you remove the fish from the water.
17. **Feeding the Fish at *Tashlich*** For this reason, and as stated in note 14, feeding the fish at *Tashlich* would seem to be something you ought not do. Indeed, Maharil, one of the earliest sources for the *minhag* of *Tashlich*, specifically cautions against feeding the fish. (No *poskim* endorse this practice, as opposed to those who do endorse feeding the birds on *Shabbat Shirah*. See next note.)

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your dog. Moreover, it is a *mitzvah* to provide food for any dog, even if it is a stray, for *Hashem* has compassion on dogs on account of their meager supply of food. Some are accustomed to put out wheat-grain for the birds on *Shabbat Shirah*, the Shabbat on which the Song at the Sea (*Shemot* 15:1-19) is read in the synagogue. However, it is not proper to do so, as you are not obliged to provide them with food.¹⁸

15. You may not drive into their cage or into the house animals that are not yet trained to return to their cages in the evening, or animals that are trained but are uncooperative and have not returned. Even if they are already in the house or in the cage, you may not trap them by closing the door or the gate, as this would be a violation of the *Melachah* of Trapping. If they are trained and domesticated, and are accustomed to return to their places in the evening, but they went out and you are concerned about their being stolen, you are permitted to drive them into a safe place.¹⁹ However, you may not take hold of them, as they are *muktzeh*.

16. You may not deliver the young of an animal, or assist in the birth of an animal on Shabbat.²⁰

17. You may smear oil on the fresh wound of an animal to relieve it of its pain, but not when the wound is already healing and it is only for its pleasure. If your animal is in pain from overfeeding, you may make it run about in the courtyard until it becomes tired and is relieved. If the animal has an attack of congestion, that is, an excessive fullness of the blood vessels, you may stand it in water to be cooled. If it is critically ill, all remedies should be administered by a non-Jew.

18. **Feeding the Birds on *Shabbat Shirah*** Some *poskim* favor retaining the custom of putting out feed for the birds on *Shabbat Shirah*, or at least shaking off the crumbs from the tablecloth, where there is an *eruv* and it is permissible. They consider it a *mitzvah* to feed the birds, who are said to have burst forth in song when *Benei Yisrael* were saved from Pharaoh and the Egyptians. It is a reminder of the joyous song of deliverance sung by Moshe and *Benei Yisrael* at the sea.

19. **Domesticated Animals** A cat is not considered a fully domesticated animal. Therefore, the prohibition against trapping applies to it as to animals or birds.

20. **Delivering an Animal** You may have a non-Jew deliver the animal. If a non-Jew is not available, and the animal or its young is in danger, the Jew may make the delivery on Shabbat.