Jewish tradition teaches that Jews are responsible for taking care of animals. We are “stewards” of the earth, and thus we are commanded to care for all of God’s creatures. Birds are no exception. Yossi took this responsibility seriously and combined his love of Judaism and science to find a way to protect birds and humans.

Here are some teachings from Jewish text and tradition about our responsibilities toward animals:

1. “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” (Genesis 2:15)

2. “If you come across a bird’s nest beside the road, either in a tree or on the ground, and the mother is sitting on the young or on the eggs, do not take the mother with the young. You may take the young, but be sure to let the mother go, so that it may go well with you and you may have a long life.” (Deuteronomy 22:6-7)

3. We cannot ride on animals or lean against them [on Shabbat], and it is even forbidden to use the side of them… and if one got on an animal, even intentionally, he must come down because of pain to the animal. (Shulchan Arukh, Orah Hayim 305:18)

Activity

1. Place each of these quotes on a piece of butcher paper and spread them out along the walls of the classroom.

2. Instruct students to walk around the room and read every quote, asking to clarify words they may not fully understand.

3. Ask them to stand next to the quote to which they most relate.

4. With their groups, have them discuss the quote and collaboratively create a mural depicting what they think the quote is trying to say. The mural can include images, poetry, a short story, a campaign to encourage others to care for animals, etc.

5. Each group can then present their quote and mural to the rest of the groups.

For older students:

1. Students can create tzedakah campaigns for the protection of animals using one of the quotes or additional Jewish quotes that they find.

2. They should extend their campaign outside of the classroom through posters, speeches, clean-ups.

3. This would be an opportunity for students to reach out to organizations in their communities that work to protect wildlife and specifically birds. Ideas for organizations: Local chapter of the National Audobon Society: (http://www.audubon.org, a local science museum, or local botanical gardens.)