

Jewish Fairy Tales and Legends
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The Quarrel of the Cat and Dog

In the childhood of the world, when Adam named all the animals and ruled over them, the dog and the cat were the greatest good friends. They were inseparable chums in their recreations, faithful partners in their transactions, and devoted comrades in all their adventures, their pleasures and their sorrows. They lived together, shared each other's food and confided their secrets to none but themselves. It seemed that no possible difference would ever arise to cause trouble between them.

Then winter came. It was a new experience to them to feel the cold wind cutting through their skins and making them shiver. The dismal prospect of the leafless trees and the hard cold ground weighed heavily upon their hearts, and, worse still, there was less food. The scarcity grew serious, and hunger plunged them into unhappiness and despair. Doggie became melancholy, while Pussie grew peevish, then petulant, and finally developed a horrid temper.

"We can't go on like this," moaned the cat. "I think we had better dissolve partnership. We can't find enough to share when we are together, but separately we ought each to discover sufficient forage in our hunting."

"I think I can help you, because I am the stronger," said the dog.

Pussie did not contradict, but she thought the dog a bit of a fool and too good-natured. She knew herself to be sly and intended to rely on that quality for her future sustenance. Doggie was deeply hurt at Pussie's desire to end their happy compact, but he said quietly, "Of course, if you insist on parting, I will agree."

"It is agreed then," purred Pussie.

"Where will you go?" asked Doggie.

"To the house of Adam," promptly replied the cat, who had evidently made up her mind. "There are mice there. Adam will be grateful if I clear them away. I shall have food to eat."

"Very well," assented the dog. "I will wander further afield."

Then the cat said solemnly: "We must each take an oath never to cross the other's path. That is the proper way to terminate a business agreement. The serpent says so, and he is the wisest of all animals."

They put their right fore-paws together and gravely repeated an oath never to interfere with each other by going to the same place. Then they parted. Doggie trotted off sorrowfully with his head hanging down. Once he looked back, but Puss did not do so. She scampered off as fast as she could to the house of Adam.

"Father Adam," she cried, "I have come to be your slave. You are troubled with mice in the house. I can rid you of them, and I want nothing else for my services."

"Thou art welcome," said Father Adam, stroking Pussie's warm fur.

Puss rubbed her head against his feet, purred contentedly, and ran off to look for mice. She found plenty and soon grew fat and comfortable. Adam treated her kindly, and she soon forgot all about her former comrade.

Poor Doggie did not fare so well. Indeed, he had a rough time. He wandered aimlessly about over the frozen ground and could not find the slightest scrap of food. After three days, weary, paw-sore and dispirited, he came to a wolf's lair and begged for shelter. The wolf took pity on him, gave him some scraps of food, and permitted him to sleep in the lair. Doggie was most thankful, and sleeping with his ears on the alert, he heard stealthy footsteps in the night. He told the wolf.

"Drive the intruders away," said his host in a surly tone.

Doggie went out obediently to do so. But the marauders were wild animals and they nearly killed him. He was lucky to escape with his life. After bathing his wounds at a pool in the early morning he wandered all day long, but again could find nothing. Toward night, when he could scarcely drag his famished and wounded body along, he saw a monkey in a tree.

"Kind monkey," he pleaded, "give me shelter for the night. I am exhausted and starving."

"Go away, go away, go away," chattered the monkey, jumping and swinging swiftly from branch to branch, moving his lips quickly and opening and shutting his eyes comically. Doggie hesitated, and, to frighten him away, the monkey pulled cocoanuts from the tree and pelted him.

Poor Doggie crawled miserably away.

"What shall I do?" he moaned.

Hearing the bleating of some sheep, he made his way to them and asked them to take compassion on him.

"We will," they replied, "if you will keep watch over us and tell us when the wolf comes."

Doggie agreed willingly, and, after he had devoured some food, he stretched himself to sleep like a faithful watch-dog, with one eye open.

In the middle of the night he heard the wolves approaching, and, anxious to serve the sheep who had treated him kindly, he sprang to his feet and began to bark loudly. This aroused the sheep, who awoke and started to run in all directions. Some of them ran right into the pack of wolves and were killed and eaten. Poor Doggie was nearly heart-broken.

"It is my fault, my fault," he wailed. "I barked too soon. Oh, what an unhappy creature I am. I shall keep away from all animals now."

Once again he set off on his travels. Whenever he met an animal he ran off in the opposite direction. He had to make his journey by the loneliest paths and the most unfrequented routes, and the difficulty of finding food grew steadily greater. At last he grew so weak and thin that he hardly had strength to crawl and he had several narrow escapes from falling a prey to ferocious beasts.

One night he came to a house and begged a morsel of food. It was given, and during the night he woke the man and warned him that wild animals were making a raid. The man jumped up, seized his bow and arrow and drove the thieves away. Then he patted Doggie.

"Good dog," he said. "You are a wise animal. Stay with me always. You will find Father Adam kind."

"Father Adam!" cried Doggie, in alarm. "I must not stay here."

"Nonsense. I say you must," answered Adam, and Doggie was compelled to obey.

In the morning, Pussie learned that the dog had joined the household and she complained to Adam.

"The dog has violated the oath he swore not to come to the place where I am," she said.

"He did not know you were here," said Adam, desirous of maintaining peace. "He is very useful. I want him to remain. He won't hurt you. There is ample room for both."

"No, there isn't," said Puss spitefully, arching up her back and getting cross. "He broke his oath. He is a wicked creature. You dare not overlook his offense."

Poor Doggie stood dejectedly apart, with his tail between his legs.

"I didn't know it was Adam's house, and I was so hungry and miserable and tired," he said.

But Pussie would not be pacified. She thrust out her ugly claws and tried to scratch her former partner. The dog kept out of her way as much as possible, but she quarrelled with him at every opportunity, and at last he determined to tolerate her conduct no longer.

"I must leave you, Father Adam," he said. "Pussie is making my life unbearable."

"But I want you," said Adam.

"I'm sorry," said Doggie, firmly, "but it is really impossible for me to continue in your service. I've got another situation at the house of Seth. He wants me, too."

"Won't you make friends with Pussie?" asked Adam.

"With pleasure, if she will let me, but she won't."

"You blame each other," said Adam, losing patience. "I can't make you out. You look like quarrelling for ever."

Adam's words have proved true. Ever since that time the cat and dog have failed to agree, and Pussie will never consent to be friendly again with Doggie.