



CHAYAT HASHAVUA: EAGLE

CAN ANYONE TEACH US THE HEBREW NAME FOR THE EAGLE?

- It's *neshet* (נשר)—kind of.
- While the eagle is referred to as *neshet*, the name also includes other birds, like the vulture and the kite.
- The root of the word, נשר, means “to fall off” or “drop”—but another form of the word means “to tear.”
- The specific Hebrew name for the eagle is *ayit* (עיט), which means “bird of prey.”
- But the root of the word means “screaming” or “scolding.”

IS THERE ANYTHING IN PARTICULAR THAT YOU LIKE ABOUT EAGLES?

- They're beautiful.
- They take special care of their young.
- The fifth commandment says that we are to honor our parents, so that we may live long lives.
- We always think of this commandment in terms of people, but it may also apply to the animal world in some way.
- The eagle is affectionate and caring toward its young; they, in turn, are respectful and obedient toward their parents; so they live long lives.
- Why do you imagine that honoring our parents might cause us to live longer?

CAN ANYONE TEACH US WHAT EAGLES HAD TO DO WITH OUR LIBERATION FROM EGYPT?

- The Torah tells us that after we were liberated, God said: “You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I carried you on eagles' wings.” (Exodus 19:4)
- According to one of our great rabbis, the eagle is a symbol of mercy. (Rabbi Judah)
- We are taught: “As the eagle watches lovingly over its own young, but is cruel towards others [who would harm them], so does God show loving-kindness to Israel and severe judgment to the heathen nations” that ignore God's will. (Zohar, Shemot 2:80b)

DOES ANYONE KNOW WHAT HAMAN HAS TO DO WITH EAGLES?

- First, who can teach us who Haman was?
- He was the chief minister of King Ahasuerus in the story of Esther and Purim.
- He wanted to destroy all the Jews.
- In the order he issued to wipe out our people, he referred to the Jews as “the great eagle Israel.” (Legends of the Jews)
- Why do you think he might have compared Israel to a “great eagle”?
- Incidentally, what ever happened to Haman?

IT’S TIME FOR THE EAGLE QUIZ.

- What’s the largest wingspan of an eagle? (About eight feet.)
- How much do the largest eagles weigh? (About 20 pounds.)
- How much weight can the eagle carry? (About twice their own body weight.)
- How long can eagles live? (Usually 20 to 30 years, but up to 50 years in captivity.)
- Will eagles attack people? Probably only when cornered or to defend their young or their nests.)

THERE’S A SAYING ABOUT THE EAGLE:

- “If the eagle goes walking, he will be stepped on like any worm.” (S. Ben Zion)
- What do you think that means?



Gather the People

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