



CHAYAT HASHAVUA: LEOPARD

CAN ANYONE TEACH US THE HEBREW NAME FOR THE LEOPARD?

- It's *namer*, from the root נמר that means to shine or gleam, like the coat of an animal.
- What do leopards look like?
 1. They have tan or yellowish coat with dark spots;
 2. They have short front legs and very powerful back legs; and
 3. They are very fast and very agile.
- When do they hunt? (Mostly at night, so what does that tell us?)

CAN ANYONE TEACH US THE BEST KNOWN VERSE IN THE BIBLE THAT MENTIONS LEOPARDS?

- “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots. Then you can also do good who are accustomed to do evil.” (Jeremiah 13:23)
- One of our great rabbis (Rashi) said that the meaning of this verse is that “The leopard is spotted . . . and it is impossible for them to change, to do evil.”
- But it's kind of confusing, because the second part of the verse says that we human beings, even if we've been in the habit of doing bad things, can change ourselves and do good.
- So the way we understand this verse is not so much in relation to the leopard, which never does evil, but to us: Although our bad habits, like telling lies or being unkind to people, are very hard to change, we can change them if we make a great effort to do so.
- Incidentally, can anyone teach us what are the special days every year when we make a great effort to change ourselves for the better?

IT'S TIME FOR THE LEOPARD QUIZ!

- Where do most leopards live? (Africa and Asia.)
- How long is a leopard, not counting its tail? (Six feet.)
- What do we call leopards that are completely black in color? (Panthers.)
- If a leopard was chasing you, would you be safe if you climbed up into a tree, far off the ground? (No—leopards are agile tree-climbers.)

ONE OF OUR GREAT PROPHETS, ISAIAH, DESCRIBED A TIME WHEN “THE LEOPARD SHALL LIE DOWN WITH THE KID.”

- First, can anyone teach us what prophets did? (They taught people what the consequences of their behavior would be in the future if they acted well or badly.)
- Can anyone teach us what a “kid” is? (A young goat.)

- What do leopards normally do with kids?
- So what was the prophet Isaiah talking about when he said that there will come a time when the leopard will lie down with the kid?
- He was referring to a time when there will be no more war and hatred, when all people will live in peace.
- If each one of us would help to make that time happen, what kinds of things would we have to do?
- If we were trying to make the world a better place for human beings, would it matter how we treated our animals?

THE TALMUD, ONE OF THE GREAT WRITINGS OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE, USES THE LEOPARD TO TEACH US HOW TO DO WHAT GOD WANTS.

- In one of the books of the Talmud, called the Sayings of the Fathers, it says: “Be bold (or ferocious) as a leopard . . . to do the will of God. . . .” (5:23)
- What do you think it means to be ferocious in doing the will of God?



Gather the People

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