



CHAYAT HASHAVUA: SCORPION

CAN ANYONE TEACH US THE HEBREW WORD FOR THE SCORPION?

- It's *akrav* (עקרב).
- One of the Hebrew dictionaries says that the word is related to *akev* (עקב), the Hebrew word for “heel.”
- Another dictionary says that the meaning of *akrav* is not only “scorpion” but “a scourge with stings.”
- Who knows what a “scourge” is? (It's like a plague or a lot of bad luck.)

HOWEVER, THE TALMUD, WHICH WRITTEN ABOUT 1500 YEARS AGO, SAYS THAT THE SCORPION WAS USED TO MAKE A MEDICINE THAT CURED CATARACTS—AN EYE DISEASE.

- But it's probably not something you can get at your local drug store.
- The prescription required a dead seven-hued scorpion, dried in the shade, mixed with two parts of ground kohl, a kind of metal, to one part of ground scorpion;
- Three drops of the mixture were applied with a paint brush to each eye—no more, or the eye would burst.
- This is probably *not* a treatment your doctor would recommend, but maybe it was the best available at that time.

HAS ANYONE HERE EVER HAD A PET SCORPION?

- I didn't think so! Truth is stranger than fiction!
- What did you like about it?
- What are the things we don't like about scorpions?
- Are scorpions really dangerous? (Their wounds are painful but rarely deadly.)

IT'S TIME FOR THE SCORPION QUIZ!

- Do you know what kind of insect the scorpion is? (Of course you don't because it's not an insect!)
- What class of animals does the scorpion belong to? (Arachnids, which includes spiders and ticks.)
- How big is the biggest scorpion? (About eight inches.)
- How many eyes does a scorpion have? (Six to 12.)

- If you had to go into a dark place and you were afraid you might get bit by a scorpion, do you know how you could see if there were any around? (Scorpions are fluorescent and they can be seen in the dark with a black light.)

ARE SCORPIONS KOSHER?

- No—and let’s leave it at that!
- Unless there’s someone here who has an appetite for scorpion steak!

THE TALMUD (Yoma 21a) SAYS THAT NEITHER A SNAKE NOR A SCORPION EVER INJURED ANYONE IN JERUSALEM IN THE TIME OF THE SECOND TEMPLE—WHICH WAS THOUGHT TO BE A MIRACLE.

- Assuming that the story is true—even a miracle, is it important to believe that God will help us when we’re in trouble? (Yes—which is one of the reasons why we pray to God.)
- Yet the Talmud also teaches that, “it’s forbidden to rely on miracles” to help us deal with difficult or dangerous situations. (Pesachim 64b)
- On the one hand, we’re taught that God will help us when we’re in trouble; on the other hand, we’re taught that we should *not* rely on miracles in that way?
- How can we make sense of these two contradictory ideas—that God will help us but we should not rely on miracles? (God helps us mostly by giving us the ability to help ourselves.)



Gather the People

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