



CHAYAT HASHAVUA: SPIDER

CAN ANYONE TEACH US THE HEBREW WORD FOR THE SPIDER?

- It's *akavish* (עכביש).
- But we don't know anything about the root meaning of the word.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT SPIDERS?

- The rabbis 2,000 years ago thought that a crushed spider was a cure for a scorpion's bite.
- I'm not sure that the cure wasn't worse than the bite!
- Spiders eat harmful insects, like flies and mosquitoes that carry diseases.
- But they're not picky eaters, they even eat one another.

WHAT MIGHT WE NOT LIKE ABOUT SPIDERS?

- All spiders have fangs and most have poison glands.
- Who knows what fangs are? (Hollow teeth that can put out poison.)
- Who knows what "glands" are? (Cells in the body that can make things like poisons.)
- In North America, six spiders have bites that are harmful to humans.

IT'S TIME FOR THE SPIDER-QUIZ.

- What is it that spiders spin when they make their webs? (Silk)
- Who can teach us where spiders live? (Anywhere they can find food—one kind under water and other near the top of Mount Everest.)
- How many different kinds of spiders are there in the world? (At least 30,000, but probably more like 50,000 to 100,000.)
- How big is the largest spider? (A South American tarantula with its legs fully extended can measure up to 10 inches.)
- How many bones does a spider have? (None—their tough skin serves as a skeleton.)
- How many eyes does a spider have? (Two, four, six, or eight.)
- How long can a spider live? (Some female tarantulas live up to 20 years.)

WHY DO YOU IMAGINE THAT GOD CREATED SPIDERS?

- Once David doubted God's wisdom in creating such apparently useless creatures as spiders. He thought that they do nothing but spin a worthless web.

- But he became completely convinced that even a spider's web may serve an important purpose.
- Once when King Saul was angry at him, David had to hide from him in a cave.
- Saul and his men were about to go into the cave and find David.
- But God sent a spider to weave its web across the entrance to the cave, so Saul told his men to bother searching in the cave, because the spider's web was proof that no one had recently gone into the cave. (Alphabet of Ben Sira 24b)

MORE THAN TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO, ONE OF OUR GREAT PROPHETS, ISAIAH, SAID: BY TELLING LIES WE WILL BE TIED UP IN MISERY, LIKE WITH ROPES. (Isaiah 18:5)

- But what did Isaiah really mean—and what does it have to do with spiders?
- One of our great rabbis, Rashi, who lived almost a thousand after the prophet Isaiah, said that when we tell lies we get in deeper and deeper, because at first our lies seem little, like the thin threads of a spider web—we can hardly see them.
- But Rabbi Assi said that, when we tell lies, at first our lies are like the thin threads of a spider, but they soon become like thick ropes that tie us up. (Sukkah 52a)
- There's an old saying, "O what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive (or lie)."
- Have you ever had that experience and, if so, how did you get out of the tangle?



Gather the People

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