



## **CHAYAT HASHAVUA: TURTLE**

### **CAN ANYONE TEACH US THE HEBREW WORD FOR THE TURTLE OR TORTOISE?**

- It's *tzav* (צב).
- The word seems to be related to a couple of Hebrew roots: צבה and צבב.
- The root צבה means to swell or swell up.
- The root צבב means to hug or cover the ground.
- But it also means “upholstered wagons.”
- We might think of turtles with their rounded shells as swelled up and hugging or covering the ground, but upholstered wagons. . . ?

### **HAVE YOU EVER HAD A PET TURTLE?**

- How big was it?
- How long did it live?
- What did you like about it?
- Sometimes when we're very young and we have a pet turtle, when it disappears into its shell, we don't know if it's going to come back out again.
- Can anyone teach us why it's not a good reason to keep turtles as pets? (Some carry bacteria that cause salmonella poisoning, which can be very dangerous—and the Food and Drug Administration outlawed their sale as pets in 1975.)

### **IT'S TIME FOR THE TURTLE QUIZ!**

- How many different kinds of turtles are there in the world? (About 250.)
- What animal group are turtles classified in? (Reptiles.)
- How big is the biggest turtle? (About eight feet and 1500 pounds; ancient turtles that lived 25 million years ago grew up to 12 feet long.)
- How long can some turtles live? (Over 100 years.)

### **ARE TURTLES KOSHER? I'VE ALREADY GIVEN YOU A HINT!**

- They're not, but can anyone teach us why not? (Because they're reptiles and reptiles are not kosher.)
- In the Bible (Leviticus 11:29) it says regarding reptiles, “And this is unclean. . . ,” which means not kosher—and so it includes the turtle.
- Rashi says this doesn't refer to the teaching against eating turtles but that we actually will become spiritually unclean by eating them.

- But can anyone teach us what it might mean to become “spiritually unclean”? (One possibility is that we would be farther away from God and Torah!)

**THE ZOHAR, WHICH IS ONE OF OUR SACRED BOOKS OF MYSTICISM, TEACHES THAT AT THE TIME OF CREATION, BEFORE HUMAN BEINGS WERE PRESENT ON EARTH, THE WORD OF GOD WAS NOT YET HEARD IN THE WORLD.**

- First, can anyone teach us what Jewish mysticism is? (Mysticism teaches us to understand things that are mysterious, but not based on our experience or ability to think logically.)
- Anyway, back to the Zohar: When human beings appeared in the world, so it says, “the voice of the turtle was heard in our land.”
- Rabbi Hiya taught that, “the voice of the turtle” is the word of God. (Zohar, Bereshit 1:97a-97b)
- Rabbi Eleazar taught that “the voice of the turtle” is the voice that comes from the “innermost” part of us. (Zohar, Bereshit 1:97b)
- Why should we think of the word of God as coming from the innermost part of ourselves—and why should we call it “the voice of the turtle”?



**Gather the People**

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