



## **CHAYAT HASHAVUA: MOTH**

### **CAN ANYONE TEACH US THE HEBREW WORD FOR THE MOTH?**

- It's *ahsh* (אש).
- It means “waster” or “consumer.”
- It comes from the root אשח, which means “to waste away.”
- Why might that be a good name for moths?

### **IS THERE ANYTHING LIKEABLE ABOUT MOTHS?**

- Some moths pollinate the flowers.
- Sometimes it's interesting to watch them fly around a light at night.
- Others make silk.

### **SILK, *MESHI* (מש) IN HEBREW, IS MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE (Ezekiel 16:10, 13), TO DESCRIBE THE BEAUTIFUL GARMENTS OF SOME ISRAELITE WOMEN.**

- Chinese silk was known in Israel nearly 2,000 years ago, but it was very expensive and only wealthy people could afford clothes made from it.
- There was also silk spun by the worms of *local* moths; a number of species are found in Israel, the largest being the moth whose worm spins a large cocoon of white threads.
- The silk of this moth was used by the early Greeks, who wove clothes from it.
- Possibly this is the *meshi* mentioned in the Bible, and it is apparently among the materials which were not to be used for making the wick for the Sabbath lamp. (Mishnah, Shabbat 2:1)

### **WHY IS IT WE DON'T LIKE MOTHS?**

- They destroy clothes, especially woolens.
- The Talmud says they eat Torah scrolls and mantles. (Shabbat 90a)
- And, according to the Bible, they even attack houses of clay. (Job 4:19)

### **IT'S TIME FOR THE MOTH QUIZ**

- What's the only place in the world where moths don't live? (The oceans.)
- They've even been found on icecaps—but don't ask me what they were doing there.
- How many different kinds of moths are there in the world—200, 2000, 200,000? (200,000)

- What's the wingspan of the largest moths? About 12 inches for the Giant Hercules of Australia and the Giant Owl Moth of South America.)
- How long do moths live? (A few days to six months—depending on whether they fly into our houses at night.)
- The moth is a “first cousin” of what insect? (Butterfly.)
- What do moths and butterflies eat? (Nectar of flowers.)
- Can you think of an important difference between moths and butterflies—based on when you usually see them? (Moths tend to fly at night, while butterflies are active during the day.)
- What form does a moth have before it develops wings, and what is that change called? (It's a worm-like caterpillar first, and it's called metamorphosis.)
- How long have moths been around? (About 100 million years.)

### **IS A MOTH KOSHER?—NO!**

- Let's leave it at that!
- Unless there's someone here who has an appetite for moth munchies!

### **DID YOU KNOW THAT MOTHS CAN BE SO DESTRUCTIVE, THERE'S EVEN A STORY ABOUT MOTH-EATEN HAIR! BUT IT WAS ONLY THE HAIR OF A FUR HAT (OR STREIMEL)**

- The Lubliner Rabbi asked Rabbi Bunam how to keep the hair from falling out of his fur hat.
- Rabbi Bunam told him, “If all the moth-eaten hair is combed away, the rest will not fall out.”
- “But if you don't comb out what is already moth-eaten, then the good hair that is left will also fall out.”
- “So,” Rabbi Bunam said, “let this be a lesson to you when you become a leader of the people.”
- What do you think Rabbi Bunam was trying to teach the Lubliner Rabbi?
- If you don't deal with a problem when you first see it is causing damage, eventually it will ruin everything.



**Gather the People**

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