



CHAYAT HASHAVUA: RABBIT

CAN ANYONE TELL US ANOTHER *ENGLISH* NAME FOR THE “HARE”? (Rabbit)

- But it’s the “hare” that’s mentioned in the Bible and in other Jewish books.
- Can anyone teach us the Hebrew name for the hare?
- It’s *arnevet*, from the root ננא, which comes from the ancient Akkadian language and means “to spring” or “to leap.”
- Is that a good name for rabbits, or what?

HAS ANYONE HERE EVER HAD A PET RABBIT OR HARE?

- What do you like about rabbits?
- They are very timid animals and not frightening to us.

IS THERE ANYTHING ABOUT RABBITS OR HARES THAT ISN’T LIKEABLE?

- They often become pests because they eat farm crops.
- They have baby rabbits very quickly, so we may find ourselves with many more rabbits than we want.

IN ISRAEL THERE ARE THREE KINDS OF HARES.

- One lives near the coast, one lives in the mountains, and one lives in the desert.
- A lot of people hunt them, but since they have young so quickly, they’re not wiped out.
- Why might hares be hunted in Israel if they’re not kosher? (Some people eat them anyway and others hunt them for their fur.)

IS THE HARE OR RABBIT KOSHER?

- No, because it’s said in the Torah that although it chews its cud (Leviticus 11:6), its hoof is not parted.
- In fact, however, the hare does not chew its cud; it only seems to do so because it’s always moving its jaw.
- If you had nothing else to eat but rabbit or hare, would the Torah say it’s okay to eat it? (Yes, because the Torah teaches that the most important thing is to save life.)

IT’S TIME FOR THE HARE QUIZ!

- Are hares and rabbits the same? (No: Hares give birth on the ground, and their young are born covered with fur and with their eyes open. Rabbits are born in a fur-lined nest, they're blind and without fur.)
- How old does the female rabbit have to be before she can have babies? (Six months.)
- How long is it before the baby rabbits are born? (About a month.)
- How many litters a year can a hare or rabbit have? (Four to eight litters a year, with three to eight young in each litter.)
- How big is the biggest hare? (About 27 inches long and eight pounds in weight.)

THERE'S A STORY IN ONE OF OUR SACRED BOOKS ABOUT THE POWERFUL KING OF BABYLONIA WHO WAS EMBARRASSED BECAUSE HE WAS CAUGHT EATING A HARE. (Lamentations Rabbah 2:14)

- The Babylonians had overrun the land of the Jews.
- The Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, made Zedekiah the king of the conquered Jewish land.
- Zedekiah once surprised the much more powerful Nebuchadnezzar, when the Babylonian king was cutting a piece from a *live* rabbit and eating it *raw*.
- Nebuchadnezzar was terribly embarrassed, and he pleaded with Zedekiah to promise that he would not tell anyone else what he had seen.
- Why do you think the powerful Babylonian king cared whether Zedekiah, who was completely under his control, told anyone that he had seen Nebuchadnezzar tear a piece from a live rabbit and eat it raw? (It's barbaric to tear a limb from a living animal, which would make him look like a barbarian.)
- Why do you think the Torah teaches us never to do such a thing? (Because it's a form of cruelty and thus makes us cruel not only to the animals but to one another.)



Gather the People

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