

## Elul Debt Collecting

Special thanks to revach.net for the story

HaGaon Rav Moshe Chadash told a personal story from his days when he was a *bochur*. Once during Elul, he was eating a meal by a family in Yerushalayim. The family had many children. During the meal, he overheard a conversation between the husband and wife.

The wife was telling her husband that they had finished all the food in the house, and there was no money to purchase additional food. She reminded her husband that there were several people who owed them money, and since the situation in the house was becoming dire, she asked him to approach those people and request them to pay back the loans.

The husband answered, "It is now Elul. We will soon enter the Yom HaDin. We will request from Hashem that He may grant us a good and sweet year. When Hashem will start looking at our merits, the Beis Din in *Shamayim* will show all of our debts for our wrongdoings from the past year. And if the debts of the past year are not enough, they will also recall the old debts from past years."

The husband continued, "The only advice I have is that we should not demand from our debtors. Maybe by doing this, as a *mida k'neged mida*, in *Shamayim* they will not mention our debts on Rosh Hashana and our loving Father in Heaven will bless us with a good and sweet year." His wife agreed with him, and they did not demand of those people to pay back. ♦



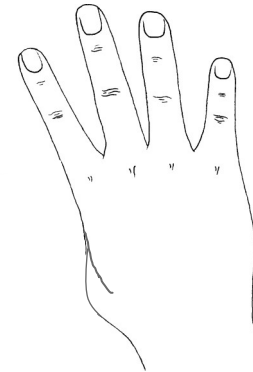
## Halacha Challenge

“ועשתה את צפרניה...” In the entire Torah, this week’s parsha is the only place where fingernails are mentioned.

### How to Look at Fingernails by Havdala

by Shlomo Epshteyn

reviewed by Rav Chaim Malinowitz



Rafi loves Havdala. His favorite part is lighting the Havdala candle. His abba lets him do it by himself. Every time, though, he gets confused about how to look at his fingernails, since it seems to Rafi that everyone is doing it in different ways.

**Question:** How should Rafi look at his fingernails?

**Answer:** If the family does not have a specific custom on this, then Rafi should do it in the following way. He should bend the fingers of his right hand towards the palm, covering the thumb, but not covering the palm (palm facing upwards). Then, he should look at the fingernails and at the lines on his palm at the same time. After doing that, it is also good to turn the hand over to face the palm down, stretch out the four fingers, leaving the thumb tucked under the palm, and look at the fingernails once again.

**Explanation:** What is the reason for the *minhag* of looking at fingernails during Havdala? There are three different reasons for this *minhag*. The first reason is based on a Mishna in *masechet Brachos* (8:6). The Mishna states: "They should not make a blessing over the candle (by Havdala), until they will derive benefit from it." Based on the Rishonim's explanation, this Mishna is saying the following: The *bracha* of *borei m'orei ho'eish* may be said only when a person is standing close to the candle to such an extent that if he will choose to derive benefit from the fire, he would be able to do that<sup>1</sup>.



This week's issue is dedicated  
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## Halacha Challenge (cont.)

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How much benefit does a person need to be able to derive from that fire? Based on the discussion in Gemora Brachos (53b), we have the following definition: If a person would have two identically-sized coins from two different countries, the fire of the Havdala candle should give him the ability to distinguish between these two coins. Consequently, when we look at our fingernails, we are looking to see if we can distinguish between the fingernails and the skin surrounding them, thereby confirming that we would be able to distinguish between two different coins.<sup>2,3</sup>

The second reason for looking at fingernails is that they have a "*siman bracha*" (a sign of blessing). What makes fingernails have this "*siman bracha*"? Fingernails grow without interruption. In other words, they have the continual blessing of "*priya u'rviya*" (*growing and multiplying*). There is a special *inyan* at the onset of a new week to look at something that has a blessing *growing and multiplying*.<sup>4</sup>

The third reason for looking at fingernails during Havdala is that they remind us of the "fingernails" of Adam and Chava.<sup>5</sup> Hashem made "*kosnos orr*" (lit. coats of skin) for Adam and Chava. The Midrash teaches us that those *kosnos* looked smooth like fingernails.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps, as the week begins we remind ourselves that Hashem will be taking care of us, just like He took care of Adam and Chava. Furthermore, it's important to point out that Adam and Chava needed the *kosnos orr* only because they sinned and ate from Eitz HaDa'as. In other words, Hashem fixes problems which we ourselves create.

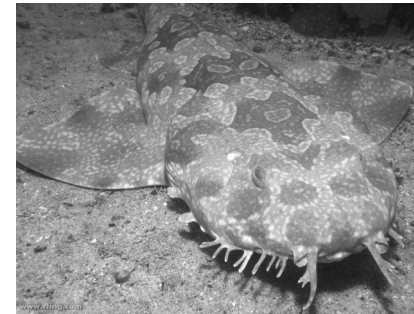
The specific ways to look at the fingernails during Havdala are described by the *poskim*. Their sources are Kabbalistic teachings. The Rama writes that one should look at fingernails of the right hand while having the fingers bent towards the palm (covering the thumb).<sup>7,9</sup> Furthermore, the Rama writes that at the same time, one should also look at the palm lines. The Aruch Hashulchan<sup>8</sup> and the Mishna Berura<sup>9</sup> write about the *minhag* to also look at the fingernails a second time, after turning the hand over and stretching out the four fingers (the thumb should not be stretched out; it should be remain hidden under the palm).<sup>10</sup> ♦

1. פירוש הרב, ה"ה מהל' שבת פרק כט הלכה כה, וכן משמע מפירושו רש"י ברכות נג: ד"ה יאתו ממש, וכן פסק השו"ע א"ח סימן רצח סעיף ד 2. ערוה"ש סימן רחצ אות ז 3. טור סימן רצח 4. טור שם, דרכי משה שם 5. ב"ה סימן רצח 6. עיין ברש"י על בראשית ג:כא שהביא דברי המדרש 7. רמ"א סימן רצח סעיף ג 8. ערוה"ש שם 9. מ"ב סימן רצח ס"ק יא 10. מג"א סימן רצח ס"ק ה ע"פ מ"ה

## Wonders of Creation

### Wobbegongs

By Alex Isaacson



Wobbegong is the common name given to the 12 species of the "carpet sharks". They are found in shallow temperate and tropical waters of the western Pacific Ocean and eastern Indian Ocean. The word Wobbegong is believed to come from an Australian Aboriginal language, meaning "shaggy beard", referring to the growths around the mouth of the shark.

These are bottom-dwelling sharks and spend much of their time resting on the sea floor.

Hashem made these creatures well camouflaged with a symmetrical pattern of bold markings which resembles a carpet. As such, they are referred to as carpet sharks.

While generally not dangerous to humans unless they are provoked, they have bitten people who accidentally step on them in shallow water. They may also bite scuba divers or snorkelers who poke or touch them, or who block their escape route. Wobbegongs are very flexible and can easily bite a hand holding on to their tail. ♦

## Riddles

### Riddle



"Zevy, why didn't they give you lashes?" asked Chaim.

"The bull of Ki Seitze saved me!" answered Zevy.

Which bull? And how did it save Zevy?

### Answer to last issue's riddle

(*Riddle:* Aside from Chanuka and Chol HaMoed, when is the Torah read 5 days in a row? - special thanks to the Orh Someyach's Yiddle Riddle archives for the riddle.)

ANSWER: When the first day of Rosh Hashanah occurs on a Thursday (like this year). The Torah is read the first and second day of Rosh Hashanah, and then on Shabbos. Sunday is "The Fast of Gedaliah," followed by the regular Torah reading on Monday.

## Kids Ask, Zeidy Answers



**Zeidy—why did Hashem need to create bad smells in the world? Wouldn't it be great if everything smelled good?**



**Interesting question, kids. Creating bad smells is also a reflection of His kindness. One reason for bad smells is simple - bad smells prevent a person from eating something spoiled.**