

## Polish Language Requirement

Special thanks to Revach L'Neshama for the story

In one of the last years of the Chofetz Chaim's life, the Polish government decreed that every Rav was required to learn the Polish language. In light of the decree, the Chofetz Chaim called for a meeting of Poland's eminent Rabannim. At the meeting, the Chofetz Chaim declared that this decree could cause the *churban* of Torah. The Rabannim decided that it was necessary to arrange a meeting with the President of Poland to attempt to annul the decree. The Chofetz Chaim let it be known that he himself would travel to meet with the President, and several Rabbanim agreed to accompany him. Rav Leib, the Chofetz Chaim's *shamash*, accompanied him to the meeting in Warsaw, and later told over the story of what had occurred there.

The Rabbanim traveled to Warsaw for the meeting, and the Chofetz Chaim was presented as the Chief Rabbi. The members of the Polish government were astounded that that such a feeble man, who was almost unable to walk, was the Chief Rabbi. The Chofetz Chaim began to speak in Yiddish. "Our Torah says to *daven* for the welfare of the kingdom. We're living now in *galus* under the rule of Poland, and every day after *davening*, I *daven* for the welfare of the Polish government. We came here now to discuss the decree that every Rav must know Polish. We are sure that this will be a *churban* for us. If the government of Poland does not interfere with our Yiddishkeit, we submit completely to your rule, and will pay all your taxes. But we are obligated to guard our Yiddishkeit as we see fit. If you interfere with our Yiddishkeit, you'll experience a downfall like all our enemies suffered in all the generations, beginning from Pharaoh."

The Chofetz Chaim finished speaking, and the translator's face paled. How could he possibly translate what the Chofetz Chaim said? On the other hand, he was afraid to change the words of the Chofetz Chaim, because he knew that the Chofetz Chaim had *ruach hakodesh* and would surely realize that his words were not translated accurately. But if he would translate exactly what the Chofetz Chaim said, he could not imagine the consequences. As he was still pondering what to do and say, the President of Poland arose and said to him, "You can sit down, you don't need to translate a word; just tell me in essence what he wants." The translator hurried to say that the Chofetz Chaim is requesting to annul the decree on the Rabannim to learn Polish. The President answered, "There are many languages in the world, and one who speaks Polish may not know English, and one who speaks English may not know Polish, but there is one language which everybody understands, and that is the language of the heart. The Rav spoke with the language of the heart. There is no need to translate, I understood everything." He immediately sat down and signed a paper canceling the decree. ♦

### Menucha sponsors



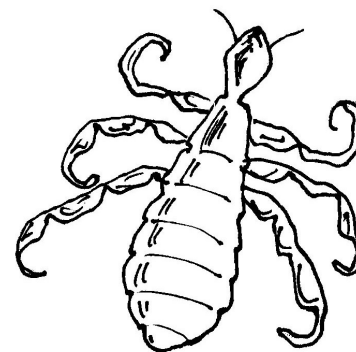
## Halacha Challenge

"...all of the dust of the land was lice..." [Shemos 8:13]

### Killing Lice

by Shlomo Epshteyn

reviewed by Rav Chaim Malinowitz



*Egypt, c. 1200 BCE. The streets of Eretz Goshen, were filled with people running around, getting ready for Shabbos. Yitzy and Yankele were looking for something exciting to do. "Let's go and check out the lice attack in the main part of Mitzrayim!" said Yitzy.*

*"Good idea, Yitzy!" replied Yankele. Once they got there, they spent about an hour checking out the plague. "It's time to go back. Look, it's already dark." said Yankele. "Oh, Oh!" said Yitzy with a worry on his face. "What?" asked Yankele. Yitzy pointed to the ground and explained, "The land is covered with lice. With every step we'll be killing lice, which is the melacha of Shechita." They both screamed out: "We're stuck here for Shabbos! Ahhh!"*

**Question:** Can Yitzy and Yankele walk on top of lice, killing them?

**Answer:** Yes.\*

\* Is killing lice permitted in every situation? Are the "lice" that we have now, the same lice that the Torah speaks about? See the explanation section for the answers.

Dedication

This week's issue is dedicated  
anonymously

**Explanation:** Killing a creature on Shabbos is prohibited under the *melacha* of *Shechita*.<sup>1</sup> *Shechita* was required in the construction of the Mishkan in order to obtain hides from animals. The hides served as the top covers of the Mishkan.

Chazal derive that it's prohibited to kill only those animals which are similar to *eilim m'adamim* (red wool rams, whose hides were used for the cover of the Mishkan). Just like *eilim* are פרים ורבים, so too, it is forbidden to kill on Shabbos only those animals that are פרים ורבים. Chazal tell us that one example of creatures that are not פרים ורבים are lice.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, one is not performing the *melacha* of *Shechita* by killing a louse.

Is it prohibited on a rabbinic level to kill lice? This question is traced back to Beis Hillel and Beis Shamai.<sup>3</sup> As in most cases, here we rule like Beis Hillel that there isn't even a rabbinic restriction on killing lice.<sup>3\*</sup> [There is actually one exception to this rule: a person cannot kill lice when he is מפלה בגדיו – a process of cleaning a garment from lice. This rabbinic *g'zeira* was enacted due to the concern that while cleaning a garment from lice, a person will find and kill a flea. Killing a flea on Shabbos is prohibited *m'deoraisa*.]<sup>4</sup>

Many poskim, including the Mishna Berura, permit removing and killing lice found in person's hair - i.e., without the concern that a person may rip out a hair during the process.<sup>5</sup> This is permitted due to the fact that it's not a case of *pesik reisha*.<sup>6</sup> The *sefer* Shemiras Shabbos Kehilchosa, however, takes a stringent view in this, citing an opinion of the Kaf HaChaim, who bases his ruling on *Sefer Chasidim*<sup>7</sup> (from the words of the *Sefer Chasidim* it appears that this stringency is based on the *minhag* of the Rishonim).<sup>8</sup>

It appears that some of the characteristics of lice that we see today do not match to the characteristics of the lice (as described in the Gemora) in the time of Chazal (see Note A). Nevertheless, some modern day poskim hold that the lice that we see today is the same specie as was in the time of Chazal.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, Rav Shalom Yosef Elyashiv zt"l, is quoted saying that one should not kill lice on Shabbos, due to the uncertainty if today's lice is the same specie that Chazal were referring to.<sup>10</sup> [R' Elyashiv does permit, however, spraying a lice-killing solution on hair of a child who is suffering greatly from lice].<sup>10\*</sup> ♦

\* **Note A:** I. Eggs: Chazal say that lice don't have eggs.<sup>11</sup> The lice today, however, have eggs (nits). II. Ability to jump: Chazal discuss whether one may be מולל (lit. roll) a louse on Shabbos.<sup>12</sup> Rashi explains that a person would want to be מולל a louse before throwing it away, in order to weaken the strength of the louse so that it does not come back to the person.<sup>13</sup> From this it appears that lice were able to leap on a person. The lice that we see today, however, do not leap.

1. שבת עה. מ"ב סימן שטז ס"ק לח. 2. שבת קז. 3. שבת יב. \*3. שו"ע א"ה סימן שטז סעיף ט. 4. שו"ע שם, מ"ב שם ס"ק מב. 5. שו"ע שם, מ"ב שם ס"ק מג. 6. מ"ב שם ס"ק מב. 7. ששכ"ה פרק יד סעיף גט (במהדורה חדשה). 8. ספר חסדים סימן רסה. 9. אורחות שבת פרק יד סעיף ל, הערה מב. 10. אורחות שבת שם הערה מג. \*10. שם. 11. שבת קז, פירושו רבינו הנגאל. 12. שבת יב. 13. רש"י שבת יב. ד"ה מולל וזורק

## Crocodiles



Chewing is one thing that crocs know how to do best. Hence, Hashem gave them probably the best teeth in the world. Crocodiles are polyphyodonts and able to replace each of their 80 teeth up to 50 times in their life! Next to the full grown tooth there are a small replacement tooth and a odontogenic stem cell in the dental lamina in standby that can be activated if required.

Hashem created crocodiles also with an ability to survive and remain strong even in times when food is scarce. Crocs have shown that after devouring ten pounds (4.5 kilograms) of meat in one sitting, they will digest the meal for the next two weeks.

After consuming a large animal such as a wildebeest, a wild croc might not hunt again for a month or more. And if food is unavailable, crocs can stop the production of stomach acid (essentially slowing down their metabolisms) and survive for up to a year until conditions improve! However, even in that motionless state, they remain alert, sentient, and ready to attack. ♦

## Riddles



### Riddle

Rashi in last week's parsha cites the words of Chazal which tell us that Pharaoh commanded his servants to throw even the Egyptian babies into the river.

If so, how did Basya (the daughter of Pharaoh) know for sure that she found a Jewish baby?

[The hint is in the cry.]

### Answer to the last issue's riddle

(Riddle: Where in parsha's Shemos is there a hint to the mitzva of Sh'nayim Mikra v'Echod Targum?)

ANSWER: שמות is an acronym for Sh'nayim Mikra v'Echod Targum. The Ba'al HaTurim teaches that actually the first four words of sefer Shemos spell out a phrase which when paraphrased in English says: "And the person who learns the weekly *parsha shnayim mikra v'echad targum* in a pleasant voice, will live a long life on a straight path."