בש"ד

כיצד

Why the hyrax\(^1\) cannot be the Biblical *shafan*?

Regrettably in many books\(^2\), *chumashim* and *gemarot*, it is written and/or illustrated with pictures, that the Biblical “*shafan*” mentioned in Parashot Shemini and *Ree* is the hyrax (daman or rock badger). In my humble opinion this identification is not possible because of the 8 reasons explained below.

1. The Torah in Leviticus 11:5 described the *shafan* as “*maaleh gerah*”, but we have not found any evidence that the hyrax practices rumination, cecotrophy or even merycism, so the *hyrax is not “maaleh gerah*”.

But anyway, merycism (practiced by the kangaroo) is not equivalent to “*maaleh gerah*”, because nutritionally it does not resemble rumination or cecotrophy.

2. The hyrax has short legs\(^3\) so it is a *sheretz* (short-legged creature) and not a *chaya* (the *shafan* is a *chaya*\(^4\) \(^5\)) and every *sheretz* is already forbidden to be eaten as it is clearly stated in Leviticus 11:41. For the definition of *sheretz* see Rashi *ad loc.*, Rashi on Genesis 1:24, Baba Kama 80a, Rashi, Tosfot *ad loc.*, etc.

3. The hyrax has hoof-like claws\(^6\) and is plantigrade\(^7\), see Pesikta Zutrata on Shemini 29b where the *shafan’s* foot is described as similar to a cat’s foot. A cat’s foot is not hoof-like, nor plantigrade, but digitigrade.\(^8\)

4. The Rashbatz\(^9\) (*Yabin Shemua*, page 11) wrote explicitly that the *shafan* has long ears; however the hyrax has short ones.\(^10\)

5. The Rashbatz (*Yabin Shemua*, page 11) wrote explicitly that the *shafan* has a thin skin; in contrast, the hyrax has a thick one.\(^11\)

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\(^1\) *Procavia capensis*.

\(^2\) Some of them have been already modified or at least meanwhile the authors have changed their opinions.

\(^3\) "*Hyrax*," Microsoft (R) Encarta. Copyright (c) 94

\(^4\) Pesikta Zutrata on Shemini 29b

\(^5\) Because in Perashat Shemini the *shafan* appears in the section of the *chayot* and not in the section of the *sheratzim*.

\(^6\) "*Hyrax*," Microsoft (R) Encarta. Copyright (c) 94

\(^7\) http://wfscnet.tamu.edu/tcwc/WFSC401/Lab%2020-Mammalian%20Orders.ppt accessed 16/jul/06

\(^8\) http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/topics/mammal_anatomy/running_fast.html accessed 16/jul/06

\(^9\) 1361; - 1444 והרי שמעון דרואן מתקרא מרשבי ומכם הדרויר ר.דרואן היה עם תלמידי תורה של הרבי ישו בשת נוחים היה חכם והרב מובטח תחרא ס.ויי.חDDRואן מתקרא מרשבי יייו תשובה שמעון ר. זכאי יא אזו בפיו ס.

\(^10\) "*Hyrax*," Microsoft (R) Encarta. Copyright (c) 1994

\(^11\) מונע אבוח.
6. The Rashba (Chulin 59a) wrote explicitly that the *shafan* has many superior (upper) front-teeth. In contrast, the hyrax has only two.\(^{12}\)

7. The hyrax’ geographic distribution is not\(^{13}\) the one stated as the *shafan’s* by Rav Jonah Ibn Janach.\(^{14}\) Rav Ibn Janach z”l lived in Cordoba and Saragossa, Spain.\(^{15}\) He wrote in his *Sefer HaShorashim*:
   
   “And the *shafan*. It is the *‘wabr’*, an animal the size of a cat, which is found [only] a little in the East, but is abundant among us [in Spain]. Nevertheless the masses do not know it by that name, but by the name *‘conilio’*, a Spanish name [for rabbit]”.\(^{16}\)

As can be seen illustrated in the following map, the hyrax indeed is widely found in the [Middle] East and is not found in Spain.

8. The hyrax does not match with explicit translations stated by the Rishonim as the *shafan*’s identity. The *shafan* is translated as *“conilio”* (i.e. rabbit in a foreign language\(^{17}\) \(^{18}\)) by Rav Jonah Ibn Janach, *Rambam* Perush Hamishnayot on *Ukatzin* 3:3 (on their original Arabic texts) and Rav Yosef Ben Nachmias on *Proverbs* 30:26.

   Following is the scanned page of the *Rambam* published by N. Dirinburg, Berlin 1887:

   ![Rambam page](image)

   **Conclusion:**

   For the eight reasons listed above, we consider B”H that the hyrax cannot be the Biblical *shafan*. This information is analyzed in detail in the 2nd edition (2019) of the book “The Enigma of the Biblical Shafan” which includes Torah and scientific research suggesting that the rabbit is the *shafan*.

   P.S. According to my humble opinion, important ramifications can be the result of this issue.

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   T.O.V.

   A Hebrew version of this document is available on request.

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16. Ibn Janah, op. cit. (Translation from the original in Arabic).
17. פירוט רבי יוסי בן חמאון הוא משה בן יעקב פרווכי (יוסי בני יעקב פרווכי). XX