

קִיקְיֹון – Castor Oil Plant – Ricinus Communis

Castor Oil – The Natural Detoxification Agent

A number of stray castor oil plants are growing in various unexpected locations in my garden. I also own a bottle of castor oil, in Hebrew – קִיקְיֹון /shemen kik. It is hard to imagine any correlation between the content of my bottle and the weed popping up in my garden. Every summer, during my annual liver cleanse, I place a [‘castor oil pack’](#) over my liver, after drinking a mixture of lemon juice and olive oil.

Then I drift off to sleep. [This procedure draws out liver-stones, filled with cholesterol and bile.](#) Castor oil is helpful in drawing out

toxins from the body, especially from the liver. The late healing psychic, Edgar Cayce, believed that castor oil has a vibrational quality that helps harmonize and promote healing within body cells. He recommended using castor oil packs as an economical and efficient method to absorb the healing components of castor oil directly into body tissues. Today, many medical experts recommend them for effectively helping the body to detox. Recent studies have shown that castor oil packs increase the production of lymphocytes and improve the function of the thymus gland and the immune system. Castor oil packs have the ability to promote both the circulation of blood through an organ as well as increase the flow of fluids through the lymphatic system. This speeds up the removal of toxins surrounding the cells and results in a general overall improvement in organ function, while reducing fatigue and depression. Furthermore, an extract of the leaf was shown, in lab rats, to protect the liver from damage by certain poisons.



The Prophet’s Castor Oil Plant

Castor oil dates back to Egypt over 3,500 years ago. It is also mentioned in our holy Bible. The prophet Yonah had fled from prophecy in order to avoid assisting the repentance of the evil Nineveh nation, which eventually would destroy Israel. After many trials and tribulations including being in the belly of a fish for three full days, Yonah finally concede to do Hashem’s bidding. Yet, after Nineveh’s repentance, Yonah is overcome by regret and grief, anticipating Israel’s dire fate. At the peak of Yonah’s depression, Hashem surprises him by causing a castor oil plant to sprout forth, in order to take him out of his ‘evil’ depression:

ספר יונה פרק ד פסוק ו וַיִּמֶן הָשֵׁם אֱלֹהִים קִיקְיֹון וַיַּעַל מֵעַל לְיוֹנָה לְהִיּוֹת צֶלַעַל רֹאשׁוֹ לְהַצִּיל לוֹ מִרְעַת וַיִּשְׂמַח יוֹנָה עַל הַקִּיקְיֹון שֶׁמָּחָה גְדוּלָה:

“Now Hashem, Elokim appointed a kikayon (castor oil plant), and it grew up over Yonah to be shade over his head, to save him from his evil, and Yonah was overjoyed with the kikayon” (Yonah 4:6).

The Message of the Castor Oil Plant

Why did Hashem choose the castor oil plant to teach Yonah a lesson and what was its message? According to Rabbi Rivlin, the main message of the *Book of Yonah* is to reveal Hashem’s unconditional loving kindness, which greatly exceeds that of human beings. Yonah is seeking justice and feels depressed about the undeserved kindness Hashem bestows upon the Nation of Nineveh. The castor oil plant comes to sweeten his negativity. Hashem appoints it “to be a shade over his head.” This is like the yarmulke – an allusion to the limitations of the

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human head, helping him change his mind-set and perspective. The two names of G-d written together in our verse allude to the integration of strict justice (Elokim) with ultimate kindness (Hashem). We do not have the capability to understand Hashem's ways fully and fathom how ultimate kindness and ultimate justice is completely unified in the Divine realm. The heart of the argument between the prophet and his G-d concerns G-d's overflowing kindness which Yonah perceives as damaging to the future of the Jewish people. Although the prophet does have future perspective, he still doesn't see the full picture of how Israel's future exile by the Nation of Nineveh facilitates Israel's teshuvah and helps them achieve their life purpose and ultimate perfection. Through punishment, one can be healed. The kikayon is poisonous, but also has healing properties. Although Nineveh will later arise to exile the Jews from Israel, this punishment is in itself G-d's concealed mercy, which ultimately enables the continued existence of Israel.

Trusting in Hashem's Kindness and Depression Detox

The Kikayon was also created "to save him [Yonah] from his evil." I believe this is to teach his heart to be happy by trusting Hashem's way of running the world. The detoxifying property of castor oil is supposed to cleanse Yonah's heart from feeling sad and depressed. Alshich notes that it states, "to save him from his evil." It saves Yonah from thinking sinful doubts about G-d's mercy, which encompasses all His creatures. The castor oil plant has an internal cleansing effect. The waters surrounding the fish cleansed Yona externally like a mikvah, whereas the castor oil plant, with its strong laxative effect, traditionally used as a remedy to relieve constipation, cleanses him internally, on a more refined level. The kikayon represents Hashem's mercy, even to the one who is unworthy of mercy. The understanding that Hashem's kindness extends to all of His creatures regardless of their deeds, fills Yonah with great happiness. Now, Yonah realizes that Hashem needed to add kindness to justice in the creation of the world, in order for the world to continue to exist. His great happiness for the kikayon testifies that Yonah finally internalized the purpose of his mission. "Hashem raised a castor oil plant over the head of Yonah at night and in the morning it grew 275 leaves and the shade of each leaf was about 30 cm. Four people could sit in its shade. Hashem designated a worm and it cut the kikayon so it dried up and died. Insects and flies caused him [Yonah] pain from every side, until he asked for his soul to die. At that moment, his eyes flowed with tears like rain before Hashem. Hashem asked him, Yonah why do you cry? Do you feel pain about that which you did not grow? You neither gave it compost nor watered it? One night it lived and the next night it dried up, but you had mercy on it; should I not have mercy on Nineveh the big city? At that moment he [Yona] fell on his face and said, run your world with mercy, as it states, 'to Hashem your G-d is mercy and forgiveness'" (*Daniel 9:9*); (*Yalkut Shimoni, Yona, Chapter two, continuation of hint 551*).

Castor Oil in the Talmud

Castor oil is mentioned in the Mishna as one of the oils disqualified for lighting the Shabbat candles (*Mishna Shabbat 2:1*). Rambam comments that the castor plant has fatty seeds that produce a thick oil. The gemara (*Shabbat 20b*) gives several possibilities for the identification of the castor oil plant. The final suggestion is that castor oil is a product of a tree similar to that which grew (miraculously) for Yonah. In accordance with the Talmudic view that castor oil and Yonah's kikayon are synonymous, the commentaries on the *Book of Yonah* write that the kikayon is "a plant with many wide and large leaves that grows tall and provides shade" (Rashi, Metzudot, *The Book of Yonah 4:6*). Its oils are used for its medicinal properties for people who have colds" (Radak, *ibid.*). The consensus is that Yonah's kikayon is *Ricinus communis* or the

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castor oil plant. This plant grows wild in the Land of Israel it has large shady leaves and can become up to 5 meter tall. Aside from its medicinal benefits and use as fuel, castor oil is used to manufacture soaps, lubricants, paints, dyes, inks, plastics, perfumes, and more (Dr. David G. Williams – Alternatives Newsletter, Vol. 6, No.1, July 1995).

Medicinal Properties of Castor Oil

Castor oil has anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, antimicrobial, antihistamine, analgesic and lymphatic stimulant properties. It is a triglyceride of fatty acids. Almost 90 percent of its fatty acid content consists of ricinoleic acid, not found in any other substance. The high concentration of this unusual, unsaturated fatty acid may be responsible for castor oil's remarkable healing abilities. Ricinoleic acid has been shown to be effective in preventing the growth of viruses, bacteria, yeasts and molds. (J Am Oil Chem Soc 61;37.323-325.) By rubbing or massaging the oil directly into the skin, castor oil successfully treats ringworm, acne, skin inflammation, chronic itching, abrasions, muscle strains, ligament sprains, warts, 'liver' spots, and prevents abdominal stretch marks. It also treats fungal-infected fingernails and toenails by wrapping the area in cloth soaked with castor oil each night, or using a castor oil soaked Band-Aid. Nursing mothers in the Canary Islands applied the poultice of castor leaves to their breasts to increase milk secretion and relieve inflammation and milk stagnation. Taking castor oil orally has traditionally been used for constipation. The recommended dose is 1 tablespoon for adults and 1 teaspoon for children. You can usually expect a 'purging' of the system in about four to six hours.

The Beauty Benefits of Castor Oil

Castor oil is one of the most beneficial beauty products. It has been known for ages to treat various skin conditions and infections, and for increasing hair health. It protects hair against split ends and dryness and alleviates scalp itchiness and hair loss. Applying castor oil on the skin around the eyes refreshes the skin and reduces tired look. Daily appliance of castor oil on the skin prevents wrinkles and fine lines. Rubbing it on eyebrows and lashes helps them grow healthier.

Hands On

Castor oil and coconut oil is a winning combination. Mixing them together creates an ideal balanced texture, perfect for skin application, especially for dry skin. It makes a great night face serum that helps prevent acne breakouts. It promotes a clear complexion that stays smooth and moisturized. This same formula is perfect for whole body application too. It also fades stretch marks, soothes sunburn, and is a healing massage oil for stress relief.

Coconut Castor Oil Night Serum

1. Combine ½ cup castor oil with ½ cup coconut oil in a glass container or jar. Mix it well until even.
2. Wash your face with warm water and gentle cleanser to open the pores. You can also try using steam from a pot. Simply drape a towel over your head and lean your face over the steam for 5 to 10 minutes.
3. Apply the solution to the face in a circular motion.
4. Let the oil sit overnight.
5. Rinse with lukewarm water in the morning and pat dry.

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Castor Oil Face Cleanser

¼ cup castor oil

¼ cup virgin olive oil

6 drops of any of these oils:

lavender essential oil, frankincense essential oil, geranium essential oil

1. Pour all the ingredients in a dry glass jar.
2. Cover the lid tightly and shake well to mix thoroughly.
3. Pour some of the mixture on your palm. Rub them together and apply the oil on your face. Massage in a circular motion.
4. Wet a cotton cloth in hot water. Wring out excess water and place over your face for about 1 minute.
5. Gently wipe all areas of your face to remove dirt, dead skin cells, and makeup.
6. Rinse the cotton cloth and repeat steps 4 and 5 for 1 to 2 more times.