

# תורה מציון Torah MiTzion

RELIGIOUS ZIONIST KOLLELS כוללים ציוניים בתפוצות

## Shabbat Shalom from Torah MiTzion

### Parshat Noach

**Issue 113: 4-5 November 2005, 3 Mar Cheshvan 5766**

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### A Mighty Hunter

**Rav Dror Brama, former Rosh Kollel, London**

Our parsha devotes a full chapter (10) to the birth of ethnic and political culture in the world after the Flood. The seventy descendants of Noah who are mentioned in this chapter become, over the course of the years, the seventy nations of the world. In the midst of this genealogical list, we are suddenly presented with a curious story:

"Kush gave birth to Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one in the land. He was a mighty hunter before God; therefore it is said - "Like Nimrod, the mighty hunter before God". And the beginning of his kingdom was Bavel, and Erekh and Akkad and Kalneh, in the land of Shin'ar."

The connection between these verses is unclear. The first verse speaks about Nimrod, who began to be "a mighty one in the land". The use of the expression "began" (hehel) usually indicates that this was the first person to do whatever he did in a notable manner, worthy of mention. The text does not elaborate as to what sort of "mighty one" he was; we are told only that his might was "in the land". Was he a mighty warrior? Was he especially courageous in his exploits?

The second verse adds further details, but we are still left with many questions. Nimrod was a "mighty hunter before God". Now, we know what sort of might is usually associated with hunting, but what is the meaning of the phrase "before God"? Doesn't every person in the world do whatever he does "before God"? The Torah goes on to quote what people used to say: everyone used to talk about Nimrod as a "mighty hunter before God". What is the meaning of this idiom?

The third verses adds a further difficulty: "The beginning of his kingdom.". What does any of this have to do with a kingdom? Thus far the text has said nothing about kingship; Nimrod was a "mighty hunter"!

Hazal (in Midrash Rabba) as well as Rashi explain that the Torah is telling us here about the first leader in world history who rebelled against the Kingship of God. Their words serve to answer our questions:

Chapter 10 in its entirety deals with the development of the individuals who survived the Flood into nations. Inter alia, the chapter tells us how groups of nomadic gatherers/hunters became ethnic groups, city states, subject to local rule. This is the story of the birth of kingship within this culture, in Mesopotamia, the cradle of human civilization.

The kings of Shumar, Ashur and Bavel ruled by virtue of their being chosen by God. This is how they memorialize themselves in their inscriptions, this is how they claim religious and moral justification for their rule, and this is how their respective nations accepted them. How did they become God's "chosen"? Were they really divinely chosen? It is these questions that the Torah comes to answer in the above verses, in the description of the origins of human kingship.

It all started with Nimrod. He was a "mighty one in the land": his exploits were recounted at nights around the tribal bonfire. His "might" was manifest in the sphere of hunting. People wondered how it was that he succeeded where others failed; what made this person "mighty". The obvious explanation, in their pagan world, was that he was uniquely blessed and aided by the gods. It is quite reasonable to posit that he himself, too, believed that his success reflected divine involvement in his life.

Thus Nimrod was a "mighty hunter before God" (or "before the god"). Over the course of time this perception came to be accepted universally, and it was common knowledge that Nimrod was successful before God and was chosen. The next stage developed quite naturally: every tribe wanted to be ruled by God's chosen one. This, then, was the beginning of his kingdom - and that of human kingship in general - in the Fertile Crescent: Ur, Bavel, and Nippur ("Uruk") are the most ancient cities in which culture and rulership existed, in the forms recognizable to us.

The same cultural root also sprouted human rebellion against God, and the foundation of the Babylonian nation which eventually destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem. Let us now consider how this came about.

According to the above perception of divinely ordained rulership, who decides who is "God's chosen"? It is not God who chooses. Whoever is strongest, fittest, most successful and victorious - he is the chosen one. God is subject, as it were, to human success. He must be the supporter of the victorious side in any contest - and it makes no difference how the victory is achieved.

Whichever mighty hunter hung a greater number of skulls on his belt than anyone else, any wicked dictator who managed to seize control of territory and to subjugate its people - he was God's chosen, and by virtue of this he would reign. This view of rulership led humanity through rivers of blood, gave legitimacy to the reign of some of the most despicable specimens of humankind, and at times - for example, in the relationship between the Popes and the monarchies of Europe during the Middle Age - even sanctified their reign.

This is the story of the first king in the Babylonian culture: the foundation of the ideology that spawned imperialism with its mantle of religious justification; the first attempt to "force" God to select a human leader, to place human kingship above the kingship of heaven.

"And from these the nations divided in the land after the Flood".

In next week's parsha, there arises in the east a man who will be the "father of many nations", the one truly chosen by God - Avraham the Hebrew.

### **Hunting as a Hobby** **Rav Moshe Speter, former Rosh Kollel, Greater Washington**

God blesses man after creating him, and gives him the power to rule over all the animals: "God blessed them, and God said to them: Be fruitful and multiply and fill the land and conquer it, and rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens, and over the creatures that swarm upon the earth" (Bereishit 1:28).

What is it that allows man to rule over animals? Are there any limitations on our treatment of animals?

Rabbi Yehezkel Landa (1713-1793), the Rabbi of Prague, known by the name of his work "Noda Bi-Yehuda", was asked whether it is permissible to hunt animals as a hobby. Clearly, if an animal is shot - even a species of animal that is kosher to start off with - the corpse is considered a "nevela" (if it died immediately) or a "tereifa" (if it was injured), such that it is not fit for Jewish consumption.

The question was worded as follows: "A person whom God blesses with an expansive estate, and he has villages and forests, and in the forests live all kinds of forest animals - is it permissible for him personally to go about and shoot with a gun, to hunt, or is it forbidden for a Jew to do this?"

In his answer, the Noda Bi-Yehuda brings two possible reasons for prohibiting such hunting, and rejects both:

1. Causing suffering to animals: killing animals is not considered "causing suffering". The prohibition involves causing suffering to an animal while it is alive.
2. Needless destruction:
  - a. The prohibition against needless destruction applies only to property that belongs to someone. In this case, we are talking about wild animals. [Possibly today, with much greater public awareness of environmental and animal-related issues, wild animals should be considered public property. It is certainly forbidden today to hunt species of animals that are protected by law.]
  - b. The prohibition against needless destruction applies only when there is no benefit to man as a result of the destruction. In this case, the hunter may use the skins, and so the act does not fall into the category of needless destruction.

Although he maintains that neither of the above considerations makes for a prohibition, the Noda Bi-Yehuda adds: "However, I am most surprised at the very question. For the only hunters we find in the Torah are Nimrod and Esav; this is not the way of the children of Avraham, Yitzhak and Yaakov. But if someone has a need for this and makes his living from it, then there is no issue of cruelty involved: after all, animals and birds are slaughtered, and fish caught, for man's benefit, and what is the difference between his slaughter of kosher animals for their flesh to be eaten, and killing of non-kosher animals to make a living? But if his main intention is not to make a living, then it is cruelty."

Thus, man is permitted to kill animals for the sake of making a living, but he may not be cruel and kill animals purely for entertainment. Hunting for pleasure is a form of cruelty, and destroys a person's inner qualities and traits.

Further on, the Noda Bi-Yehuda writes that it is forbidden to hunt because going into the forest for the purposes of hunting involves mortal danger. The Torah permits a person to endanger himself to some extent in the interests of sustaining himself and making a living, "but someone whose main intention is not to sustain himself, and it is out of his heart's desires that he goes to a place where wild animals gather, and he places himself in danger - such a person transgresses the commandment, "You shall carefully guard your lives" (Noda Bi-Yehuda Tanina, Yoreh De'a siman 10).

From the above we learn that hunting to make a living is permissible, but hunting for pleasure is not. The Torah permits us to make use of animals - even to kill them - for our needs, but not to be cruel towards them for no reason. Also, we learn that a person is permitted to endanger himself to some extent for the sake of making a living, but he may not endanger himself in the name of entertainment and pleasure.

### **Family Learning: Parshat Noach Bluma Zalcman**

- 1) How does Rashi explain the word "B'dorotav"? (6:9)
- 2) How many pure animals did HaShem tell Noach to bring and how many impure animals?
- 3) What does Rashi say is the reason for the dove bringing back an olive branch? (8:11)
- 4) What is the brit HaShem makes with Noach, and what is the symbol of that brit?
- 5) Why was "Bavel" called so? (11:9)

*Answers follow below*

### **Looking Back: We Will Only Disembark in Our Country!! Bluma Zalcman**

Exodus is the name of the illegal immigrant ship that left the docks of southern France on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July, 1947, with the hope of reaching Israel.

The ship was purchased by Mossad Le'aliyah Bet, the illegal immigrant aid for Israel. The ship's original name was "President Warfield", and it had been the property of the American Navy and was used during World War II.

*"It was at that moment I realized we were in for a bad adventure; the ship could barely hold 800 people. We were forty five hundred." The boat left the dock from Marseilles, a small town in southern France, with forty-five hundred people on board. The British navy caught onto the ship and boarded it some 20 miles from the shore.*

*"We prepared for battle. Women, children and sick were brought below deck. Men and teenagers assembled on deck. The English ships drew closer and closer and completely surrounded us from all sides, rammed into us and hit us hard. The battle, with uneven sides, had begun".*

After a tough battle between the British and the passengers, which caused the death of 3 immigrants and wounded several, the ship was towed to the port of Haifa. Once there, the passengers were forced off the ship and onto different ships that would take the immigrants back where they came from (usually, illegal immigrants were put in detention camps in Palestine or Cyprus).

The immigrants refused to get off in France, under the banner "We will only get off in our Country". While on the ship for three weeks, the passengers were able to live normal, independent lives, with the help from the Jews of France. Their stay in France created a worldwide commotion, and general outrage at the British. The immigrants decided to have a hunger strike in order to prove their determination to get to Israel.

The ships were sent to the port in Hamburg, Germany, which was under British control at the time, where they were forced off the boat and attempts were made to bring them back to the D.P. camps they came from.

However, after an extended stay in Germany, all the passengers were allowed to board and sail to Israel.

The importance of The Exodus was in the media commotion it created worldwide. The shocked reaction displayed by most of the world was one of the reasons that the Americans and British realized that they couldn't deal with the Jewish refugee 'problem' and that the United Nations should be the ones to deal with the issue.

In 1958, the American Jewish author Leon Uris, wrote the book 'Exodus' based on The Exodus chapter. In 1960, a movie was made based on the book, and was a box office hit (due mainly to the lead actor Paul Newman). The film was mostly shot in Israel, and the movie became Israel's ambassador to the world.

The Exodus chapter was a pivotal turning point for Jews. It led the world to realize how important it is for the Jews to have their own land.

**Torah MiTzion** establishes Religious Zionist Kollels (centers of Jewish learning and outreach) in Diaspora Jewish communities to strengthen the study of Torah, Jewish identity, the unity of the Jewish people, and the connection between Torah study and Israel.

The Kollels, led by a Rosh Kollel, are comprised of Israeli shlichim (emissaries) - married men and their wives, and single young men, graduates of Yeshivot Hesder in Israel - who serve in the communities for a period of one-three years.

Torah MiTzion is also proud to be a partner of the "**Jewish Learning Initiative**" program on college campuses: [www.jli.co.il](http://www.jli.co.il).

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Family Learning Answers:

- 1) That only because Noach's generation was so corrupt, he was special. If he would have lived in the time of Moshe, he wouldn't have been considered special.
- 2) Pure- 7 of each, impure- 2 of each
- 3) An olive branch is bitter, according to Rashi, the dove wanted to tell Noach that he would rather have something bitter from HaShem than something sweet from Man.
- 4) The brit- there will never be another flood. Symbol- the rainbow.
- 5) Bavel milashon Bilbul- confusion.