

NOACH 5774

Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

“And He blotted out all existence that was on the face of the ground—from man to animals to creeping things and to the birds of the heavens...”(7:23).

Chazal ask a pertinent question (Sanhedrin 108a)- If man sinned why should the animals and creatures be punished and destroyed? Two answers are given, A- because even the animals became perverted and immoral by mating with other species than their own kind. I am personally not fond of this answer because the animals had no *bechira chafshit*, no free-will, and besides they were never “commanded” to mate with their own- exclusively. I personally prefer the second answer, B- “*Amar HaKadosh Baruch Hu, K'lum barati beheima vechaya elah bish'vil haAdam, ach'shav sheh'Adam chotei, beheima vechaya lama li?*” HaShem said, the animal kingdom I created only for the benefit of mankind, so after man is destroyed there is no further need for the animals. Rashi at end of parashat Bereishit cites these opinions.

With this concept in mind we can understand our relationship with the animal world. In anticipation of the Mabul (which according to one opinion began in our month, Marcheshvan) No'ach is commanded to gather in his Teivah two of each kind of creature, male and female, so that the species could be replenished after the Mabul. In the case of “kosher” animals that could be used for Korbanot (sacrifices) No'ach was commanded to gather seven pairs. We know that No'ach, being an Ish Tzaddik, toiled very hard, 24/7, for one full year, to satisfy the needs of each and every animal. Undoubtedly, in the course of time he developed a fondness towards them, like household pets. Yet, at end of Mabul, No'ach takes the “kosher” animals and birds and offers them as Korbanot to HaShem (8:20). This was a kind of Korban Todah, a thank you to HaShem for saving him from the waters of the Mabul. Rambam notes that there was a tradition that the place where No'ach built the altar for the Korbanot was non other than Har HaMoriah in Yerushalayim (Bet HaBechira 2:2)

No'ach had no qualms or guilt-feelings about taking an animal that he cared for and treated kindly as a house-hold pet and Shechting it for a Korban. Likewise, when told (9:3) that all animal and creatures are now permissible for human consumption just as the vegetation of the ground, No'ach and mankind do not feel inhibited about eating animal flesh. That is all because we believe that the animals were created only to serve and benefit human beings.

We Jews are not permitted to “hunt” animals for the sake of satisfying our lust for killing. We have laws concerning “tza'ar ba'alei chayim” , causing pain or harm to any living creature. Yet, we are permitted to Shecht Kosher animals for our consumption and benefits, e.g.- making Retzu'ot (straps) for Tefillin, parchments for Sefarim, or using their skin for clothing. Even G-d, made garments of skin for Adam and Chava (3:21)

Rav Kook was known to be a vegetarian, but he dissuaded others from following his example. He even advised his own son to become a “Shochet”..

From all the above we see that animals though they do not possess the “Tzelem Elokim” of human beings, nevertheless they have a place and serve a function in this world, and we have to respect that function. But at the same time we have to remember that we are uniquely different and must distance ourselves from them.