

THUS SPAKETH ZARQBOK
If an animal is extinct, how do we know
that it was ever more than just a fancy?
By J. B. Leftwich
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“What’s a seven-letter word for extinct animal?” she asked with a pencil poised over a crossword puzzle.

“Zarqbok,” I said brightly.

“Zarqbok?”

“Zarqbok. Z-A-R-Q-B-O-K.”

“I don’t believe you. There’s no such animal.”

“Of course, there’s no such animal. It’s extinct. But I can prove there once were zarqboks. Let me get a Bible.”

Opening the Bible, I began: “And the animals went into the ark, two-by-two. The tigers, the lions, the polecats, the wildebeest, the...”

“O.K., O.K., so the animals loaded onto the ark two-by-two.”

“...and the zarqboks.

“And the clouds opened, and it rained for 30 days and for 30 nights. Then Noah sent a dove forth to search for dry land, but the dove found none and returned to the ark. But on the 40th day, the dove returned with a twig in its beak. And Noah knew the waters were receding.”

“You’re not reading from the Bible you’re making that up.”

“And Noah called the male animals together and said unto them: Behold, you are on this ark for a definite purpose. As you can see, the entire world is under water, so you are the sole survivors of your species. Therefore, it is up to you to re-populate the world. When the water recedes and you disembark, you are to go forth and multiply. ‘Oh wow! said the rabbit.”

“Hold it. There’s nowhere in the Bible where a rabbit says, ‘Oh, wow,’ and you know it.”

“This is the New Modern English translation,” I said, continuing.

“And the other animals nodded and talked among themselves except for the zarqbok, which help up its right front paw.

“What is it you want, Zarqbok? Do you need to go to the restroom? ‘Noah asked.”

“They never talked about restrooms in the Bible. They...”

“And thee zarqbok said, ‘No; I want to talk to you after class.’”

“After class?” she said. “They were in school?”

“And Noah said, ‘Come with me outside the room if thou wishesth to talk to me privately.’”

“Wishesth? How do you spell wishesth. I never heard of...”

“And the zarqbok and Noah wenteth out of the room and the zarqbok sayeth unto Noah, ‘Behold, Noah, I have a slight problem.’

“And Noah sayeth, ‘Zarqbok, what is your problem?’ And the zarqbok blushed and turneth aside, saying, ‘Noah, I am sterile.’

“‘Sterile?’ bellowed Noah, smiting his forehead. ‘You are sterile? You can’t go forth and multiply? Of all the zarqboks in the world, I had to choose one as sterile as a cuckoo.’

“And the cuckoo, overhearing the conversation, saideth: ‘Watch it Buster, I may be a cuckoo, but I am not sterile.’

“And on the 40th day of the voyage, the dove returned with an olive branch, and Noah knew that the waters were receding.”

“You said that already. Tell me, if the whole world was covered with water, where did the water receded to?” she asked. I dismissed the question as irrelevant.

“And when there was enough dry land, the animals went forth and multiplied, except for the zarqboks which soon became extinct because Noah madeth a mistake in his selection in this species.”

“Well, the zarqboks may be extinct,” she said, “but the cuckoos certainly aren’t.”

“How do you know the cuckoos aren’t extict?”

“How do I know? Because I’m married to one.”

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