



The Parish of St. Mary York

Faith in Action

Building hope for tomorrow in the face of climate change

Not My Circus? *Kabash*

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*And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and **subdue** it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." ~ Genesis 1:28*

The second word that we need to look at from the Book of Genesis is the word *kabash*, which is even less common than *radah*, so we must be very careful about its meaning.

Kabash is translated in a variety of ways:

- 'subdue' etc. 8 times
- related to 'bondage' 2 times
- related to 'subjection' 2 times
- 'force', 'keep under' 2 times.

But, to better understand its meaning we need to look at other Hebrew words which can be translated as 'subdue' or 'bring into subjection', such as: *chashal* (to make feeble), *kana* (to humble), *kara* (to cause to bow), *shephal* (to make low), *lachats* (to press or crush). All these speak of subduing something against its own nature or will. In one form or another they all speak of conquest.

By contrast, *kabash* is mainly used to speak of how God subdues the land; not by humiliation or force, but by making things as they should be, by *shalom* (peace). That is, subduing something **in line with its nature** and **for its own good** and for the good of all else; not in the way that a tyrant crushes a revolt, but in the way that a parent with a crowd of noisy children, calms them down – subduing them – and they become happier as a result.

If this is true, then humanity's subduing of the creation implies effective action to bring it into the state that it should be – a state of dynamic balance and peace in which blessing emerges. And if we understand the text correctly, in God's plan human beings are a necessary part of this process.

We're not given a mandate to oppress creation or destroy it or deny its nature, destructively treating creation and its creatures as mere resources. Like *radah*, *kabash* speaks of how we are given the responsibility of subduing what God has made for the good of the things being subdued, rather than just for our own convenience or pleasure.