



Natural Resources (Gen 2, 4b-8.15; Is 5:1-2.7-16)

Discussion Questions

1. What are the natural resources in these texts?
2. How important are they?
3. Who is the manager of these resources?
4. What are the consequences of poor management of natural resources?
5. What was the situation in Israel?
6. What was God's reaction to this situation?

Brief Description

In Genesis, we are told that God created all the earth and then created man and woman, whom God placed in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it responsibly. In the book of Isaiah, there is a vineyard that has been maintained by the owner who had hoped it would produce good fruit, but it only yielded bad fruit. This vineyard is a comparison with the house of Israel, which was to bring forth law and justice, but on the contrary, it produced cries and acts of evil. Thus, God promises to take charge of things to normalize the situation by destroying their pride and their false sense of security.

After creating woman and man, God put them in a healthy environment to live comfortably and in harmony with nature. However, through improper management, they place nature on the path to destruction and they get themselves in trouble. As human-beings, they were created to work and keep nature. They do not work just to satisfy their own need, but because this is their reason for being. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, one notices that other countries in complicity with a few Congolese exploit many of the country's natural resources illegally and improperly. This disturbs the lives of others and provokes, for example, abnormal climate changes, deadly and incessant armed conflicts, extreme poverty, and astute inhuman exploitation.

God has endowed the DRC with many natural resources that are for the good of the entire world. Let's look at some of them.

The Congo **tropical rainforest**, which is the second in the world after the Amazon, covers 50% of forest reserves in Africa, or about 17% of the world reserves. The DRC's forests cover about 135 million hectares of which 99 million are wet dense forests, or about 67 % of the national territory.

Belgian and American researchers have estimated the **natural grazing land** of the DRC to be more than 5 million hectares and estimated that the soil of Congo could feed up to 850 million people for 50 years.

Animals endemic to the DRC: The **Bonobo**, whose scientific name is *Pan paniscus*, is part of the family of five primates listed worldwide, as well as its cousins the gorilla (mountain and plain), the chimpanzee or orangutan. Out of a lack of knowledge, the bonobo was for a long time classified as a subspecies of chimpanzees, but acquired full species status as a species in 1933. Endemic to the Congo, the natural habitation of the bonobo is found in the dense forests of the Equator Region, principally in Salonga National Park as well as in several forestal zones in the central region.

The **Gorilla** is the largest of the primates. It can measure up to 1.80 meters and reach 180 kilograms. Gorillas live in small groups of about 30 with the females and young under the authority of a dominant male, which is recognizable by the silver coat on his back. The gorilla of the eastern plain lives in the DRC in low mountain areas principally at the National Park of Kahuzi-Biega in the east not far from its cousin in the neighboring park of Virunga.

The **Okapi** is a curious and elegant animal, which has the head and tail of a giraffe, its closest relative. The neck and body are more like those of the horse, but the sturdy legs are those of the antelope while the stripes could be borrowed from the zebra. The okapi as an adult mammal weighs from 200 to 300 kilograms and lives uniquely in the humid forest of Ituri, in north east Congo.

The **Congo peacock** (*Afropavo congoensis*) is originally from Ituri. It is a beautiful multicolored bird whose back is covered with green feathers and with metallic reflections. Some are clear yellow and black and covered with reddish feathers on the throat. The male are characterized by their green belly and bluish wings. It resembles more a pheasant than it does a classical peacock with a long tail. The female incubates the eggs, but it is the male who takes care of small ones, keeping them under his protection for the night.

The **white rhinoceros** or *ceratotherium* is one of the oldest terrestrial mammals. The white rhino from the North is extinct, and until recently was found in the Garamba National Park in the Eastern Province near the boundary with South Sudan. Poachers and other armed groups who occupied the area where the rhinos lived during the years of turmoil killed so many that it is unknown whether there is a sufficient number remaining to perpetuate the species.

The **fauna and flora**, potential **underground mineral reserves** and the huge agricultural potentials are scandalous. Some of the known **natural reserves** include:

- 20 billion tons of manganese
- 110 million tons of copper
- 10.5 million tons of cobalt
- 20 million tons of zinc

- 15 million tons of iron
- 150 million tons of ore niobium
- 730 million tons of diamonds
- 750,000 tons of cassiterite
- 175,500 tons of lithium.

In addition to these resources, nearly forty other commodities, yet untested, have names such as: Amblygonite, silver, clay, smectite and bastnaésites, bauxite, beryl, bismuth, cadmium, coal, chrome, diatomite, tin, natural gas, germanium, granite, gypsum, marble, monazite, nickel, oncre, phosphate, platinum, lead, pyrite, rhenium, asphalt sand, salt, rock salt, silica, spodumene, talc, tantalum, tungsten, uranium, vanadium, rubber, sulfur and the list goes on...

Oil has been found throughout the country. The reserve of **asphalt** found in the southwestern corner of Congo is the fourth largest in the world and remains untapped until now.

The peculiarity of the Congo is that a large number of these mineral reserves constitute some of the largest and most important in the world and have not yet been tapped.

The country has **40 million tons of gold**, one of the largest in the world with an estimated value of \$ 50 billion US dollars. Studies have shown that the gold reserves can be exploited for industrial use. It must be noted that gold no longer constitute a simple precious metal. It is also used as a reserve for central banks. Gold is being used in the manufacture of communication satellites and spy satellites. It is also an excellent conductor and is used in the manufacture of essential computer components namely microprocessors.

Other resources such as copper, zinc, and cobalt are in considerable quantities. According to geological studies carried out in the past few years, with Congo's underground deposits of copper, silver, cadmium and exceptional concentrations of gold experts believe that the DRC will in the future be the economic engine of Africa and Europe simply from its mining.

The DRC also has rare metals used in high-tech industry: **beryllium**, used in reactor technology and nuclear industry. **Tungsten** is resistant when exposed to extremely high temperatures under high pressures (for example when launching rockets and space shuttles). Fifty percent of the world's production of **cobalt** comes from the DRC.

The DRC has the world's largest reserves of **nickel, indium and tantalum** classified as the most wanted metals in construction technology of rockets and airplanes. **Tantalum** or **niobium tungsten** together with what we call Taitung is special alloys that resist wear and extremely high temperatures.

Recent geological studies have revealed significant reserves of **lithium, nickel** and **chromium** in the DRC. **Lithium** is used as a major component in the manufacture of batteries for long life: computer

batteries, cell phones. It is also used as fuel for atomic bombs and hydrogen bombs. Some components of lithium are used in nuclear plants where nuclear fission takes place.

Nickel is associated with iron ore to produce special steels used in heavy industries: manufacturing locomotives, tractors, heavy weapons such as tanks.

The DRC is a producer of **tin**. It is also the largest producer of **industrial diamonds**. It produces **jewelry diamonds** in the regions of the two Kasai, in Bandundu in the eastern province and the the Equator province.

Need you be reminded that it was **uranium** from Katanga in the Congo that allowed U.S. to develop the atomic bomb that ended World War II. DRC still has this mineral underground.

The DRC has other strategic resources. Nearly all the materials needed to run sectors of the modern industry such as technology, telecommunication, production of nuclear energy, aerospace armaments, metallurgy, pharmacies, household appliances are from material in the Congo.

We will not forget **coltan** used in the manufacture of telephones and computers, one of the main causes of the war in eastern DR Congo. *(This section added to text: Coltan (short for columbite–tantalite and known industrially as tantalite) is a dull black metallic ore from which the elements niobium (formerly "columbium") and tantalum are extracted. The niobium-dominant mineral in coltan is columbite, and the tantalum-dominant mineral is tantalite.)*

It is inconceivable that such a country is among the poorest in the world. No country can stand on its own. Hence, a good collaboration with other countries wishing to be beneficiaries of Congolese resources must enhance the lives of both the Congolese people and others. This is contrary to what is happening today, where the “other” benefits at the expense of Congolese women and men.

If humans continue on this unhealthy course, without paying attention to the warnings of God, the future is uncertain. And neighboring countries who enjoy the support of foreign powers must realize the meaning of a Mongo (one of the languages in Congo) adage that says: " *nkelianto takelek'ont'omo* " (a person who enjoys destroying others for his/her own selfish interests, will not be satisfied with destroying one person but will continue to take advantage of others at different times. Another proverb says " *sambela lindi, akobamba the we.* " (The person who supports and benefits from the actions of the wasp should know that the same wasp will turn against the person later).

Much has been written about the genocide of Rwandan Tutsis, but the time will come when we talk about the genocide of Rwandan Hutus and the massacre of the Congolese population. It is a reality that can clearly happen when one considers the spirit of domination exemplified by the ruling Tutsis of Rwanda and the power party in Uganda. It was this spirit of domination that led to wars, looting, rape and destruction of others, especially people in the DRC.

This story can help us understand the situation. In a certain kingdom, there was a man who inherited a forest area from his ancestors with lots of game. His name was Ikongo . He subsequently became a good hunter. Near him was a very conniving man who unfortunately inherited a desert from his ancestors. His name was BOBE. In order to feed himself better, BOBE worked or collaborated with much stronger men. He and this group of men would wait for the Ikongo, the good hunter, and take by force the game he hunted. In the village, he would boast and say, "I have inherited a desert and yet I find a lot more game than he who inherited a large forest because he is lazy." Nobody wanted to believe the explanations given concerning the good hunter.

One day, the evil man, Ikongo, and his team did as they were accustomed to doing. They took the hunter's bag by force. Back in the village, the cunning BOBE called the people to come and buy the meat according to their financial means. A large group of people surrounded him because it was during a period when it was difficult to get meat. BOBE bragged and said, "I am the incomparable hunter in this village. Without me, the village would hardly be able to live". But when he opened the bag, it was the corpse of the king's servant. Everyone considered Bobe to be an assassin and the king was informed of the situation. At the trial, the cunning BOBE justified himself by saying: "I must tell the truth, it is not I who killed the king's servant but rather it was Ikongo." "And how is it that he body was found with you?" asked the king. Bobe spoke again saying, "It was to denounce the crime Ikongo, the most dangerous person in his village". The furious king ordered the arrest of Ikongo. At the trial, Ikongo said to the king: "I found your servant dying in the forest because he was bitten by a dangerous snake. He just pointed out to me where he had hidden his treasure for his children's future and begged me not to leave his body in the forest. After these words, he died. That's why I could not go hunting. I simply packed his body in my bag rushed to bring the body to the village. As usual, I met BOBE with his team, and they took the body believing it to be the game. I knew that this time it will cost him dearly because the king and the whole village would know that what I have been saying about BOBE's malicious game was true." After careful examination of the body, the king was able to discover that indeed his servant was bitten by a snake. BOBE was convicted and expelled from the village.

Lesson: Today we give the country of Rwanda as one example of a BOBE. The international community is made to believe that the Congolese are lazy. The time will come when the world will understand the true reality of those whose truth is still hidden. Congo has problems only because of its great wealth alongside some malicious neighbors supported by certain external powers and unscrupulous government officials.

Questions for reflection after study

- What must be done to provide a healthy management of natural resources so that the people of God can benefit from them?

Prayer

Lord God, we thank you for the natural resources given to the DR Congo. Help this country and the world understand their importance and especially how to manage them in the right way. Let the wealth that you have given to the Congo no longer be curse and a cause of war, but may the wealth bring happiness to the Congolese people and other people so that your glory may be known. Lord, when will our children have an opportunity to speak of “enough” for everyone everywhere? We are tired and weary from hearing the monotony of the same sentence from our children when they are ready to sleep at night and when they wake up, “I am hungry”. We place our hope in You for a solution. In the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen!