

## ~GULL (95)

[Hebrew, *sha'chaph*]

- One of the birds hunting prey or eating carrion that were prohibited as food according to God's Law given to the Israelites.
- And these are what you will loathe among the flying creatures. They should not be eaten. They are a loathsome thing. The eagle and the osprey and the black vulture. (**Leviticus 11:13**)
- And the ostrich and the owl and the **gull** and the falcon according to its kind. (**Leviticus 11:16**)
- But these are the ones of which you must not eat: the eagle and the osprey and the black vulture. (**Deuteronomy 14:12**)
- And the ostrich and the owl and the **gull** and the falcon according to its kind. (**Deuteronomy 14:15**)
- Although the **King James Version** renders the Hebrew name of this bird as cuckow or cuckoo, this translation has generally been abandoned in favor of **sea gull**, sometimes called **sea mew**.

## See Also CUCKOO

- Some lexicographers understand the name to be derived from a root meaning be thin, slender, or lean, which might describe the **gull** from the standpoint of its trim appearance and the relative narrowness of the body as compared with the long, pointed wings.
- Others believe the Hebrew name *sha'chaph* is in imitation of the shrill cry made by this generally noisy bird. The older versions, **LXX**, **Vg**, also understood it to refer to the **seagoing gull**.
- The **Hebrew** term *sha'chaph* may be understood to be a generic term for a web-footed seabird resembling a **gull**. This group includes the **true gulls**, terns, skimmers, and skuas.
- **Gulls**, members of the family Laridae, are generally powerful fliers, and in addition to swimming well, they rest and even sleep on the water.

- The **gull** alternately flaps its wings, soars, wheels, and glides downward to pick up food in the form of fish, insects, and practically any kind of offal and garbage, thus serving as a valuable scavenger in ports and harbors.
- Herring **gulls** carry mussels or other mollusks up into the air and then drop them on rocks to break them open and make possible the eating of their contents. Despite its avid appetite for carrion, the **gull** is exceptionally clean in its habits.
- Several varieties of **gulls**, including the **herring gull**, *Larus argentatus*, and different types of the **black-headed gull**, *Larus ridibundus*, are found in Palestine along the Mediterranean seacoast and around the Sea of Galilee.
- Their color is usually white, though the back and upper side of the wings may be a pearl gray. The bill is strong and slightly curved. They usually live in colonies, nesting on cliff ledges or along the shores.
- Ranging in body size from that of a pigeon up to some 76 centimeters (30 inches) in length, the gulls wingspan may be as much as 1.5 meters (5 feet) across.
- A restless and seemingly tireless bird, the **gull** is able to continue flying even in stormy gales. Its abundant and overlapping feathers, as many as 6,544 being counted on a single large **gull**, keep the body warm and dry during sustained periods of rest in the water.
- The tern, a member of the family *Sternidae*, is also abundant on Palestine's shores. It has a leaner body than the **gull**, is not a carrion eater, and has a forked tail and long tapering wings that are narrower than those of the **gulls**.
- Most terns are white, though generally wearing a black or gray cap. Feeding mainly on small fish, the tern hovers about and then darts quickly into the water with its long, straight, slender bill pointed downward to seize its prey.
- The tern is the greatest long-distance migrator of all birds, the arctic tern, *Sterna paradisaea*, covering as much as 35,400 kilometers (22,000 miles) annually. Some terns, however, prefer the coastal waters of the warmer regions.

- Their rapid-moving, very graceful flight has earned them the name of swallows of the sea.
- Like the falcon and the ibis, the **gull** was viewed as a sacred bird in ancient Egypt.