

## ~EAGLE (428)

[Hebrew, *ne'sher*, Aramaic, *neshar'*, Greek, *a-e-tos'*]

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### .. A Large Bird Of Prey

- Some believe that the Hebrew name derives from a root word meaning **tear in pieces or lacerate**. Others view it as onomatopoeic, that is, a name whose very sound suggests the thing meant, and believe that *ne'sher* represents a **rushing sound**, or **gleaming flash**, hence a **bird that dives after its prey, plummeting downward** with a **rushing sound** and like **flashing light** through the air.
- In either case, the Hebrew term well describes the **eagle**, whose lightning plunge from great heights causes a whining sound as the air rushes through its widespread pinions, the outer wing feathers. A bird of prey and a drinker of blood
- Or is it at your order that an **eagle** flies upward and that it builds its nest high up. (**Job 39:27**)
- And its young ones themselves keep sipping up blood, and where the slain are, there it is. (**Job 39:30**)
- The **eagle** was included among those birds listed as **unclean** by the Mosaic Law.
- 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**)
- But these are the ones of which you must not eat: the **eagle** and the osprey and the black vulture. (**Deuteronomy 14:12**)

### .. Palestinian Varieties

- Among the eagles to be found in Israel today are the **imperial eagle**, *Aquila heliaca*, the **golden eagle**, *Aquila chrysaëtos*, and the **short-toed eagle**, *Circaëtus gallicus*.
- The **golden eagle**, named thus because of the golden sheen on its head and nape, is an impressive dark-brown bird that measures about 1 meter (3 feet) in length, with a total wingspan of about 2 meters (6.5 feet).
- **Eagles** characteristically have a rather broad head with a projecting ridge above the eyes, a short, powerful, hooked beak, sturdy legs, and sharp, powerful talons.

#### •• Basis For Carried On Wings Of Eagles

- The Sinai region is called **eagle** country, where the birds soar and glide on their strong, broad wings. So, the liberated Israelites gathered at Mount Sinai could well appreciate the aptness of the picture conveyed by God's words, that he had carried them out of Egypt **on wings of eagles**.
- You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, that I might **carry you on wings of eagles** and bring you to myself. (**Exodus 19:4**)
- But the two wings of the great **eagle** were given the woman, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, there is where she is fed for a time and times and half a time away from the face of the serpent. (**Revelation 12:14**)
- Nearly 40 years later Moses could compare Yehowah's leading of Israel through the wilderness to that of an **eagle** that stirs up its nest, hovers over its fledglings, spreads out its wings, takes them, carries them on its pinions.
- For Yehowah's share is his people, Jacob is the allotment that he inherits. (**Deuteronomy 32:9**)
- He came to find him in a wilderness land, and in an empty, howling desert. He began to encircle him, to take care of him, to safeguard him as the pupil of his eye. (**Deuteronomy 32:10**)
- Just as an **eagle** stirs up its nest, hovers over its fledglings, spreads out its wings, takes them, carries them on its pinions.

**(Deuteronomy 32:11)**

- Yehowah alone kept leading him, and there was no foreign god along with him. (**Deuteronomy 32:12**)
- When the young **eaglets** reach the time to begin flying, the parent eagle stirs them up, fluttering and flapping its own wings to convey the idea to its young, and then edges or lures them out of the nest so that they try out their wings.
- Though some have doubted that the **eagle** ever actually carries the young on its back, a guide in Scotland is reported by **Sir W. B. Thomas** as testifying concerning the golden eagle that **the parent birds, after urging, and sometimes shoving the youngster into the air, will swoop underneath and rest the struggler for a moment on their wings and back.** [*The Yeoman's England, London, 1934, p. 135*]
- An observer in the United States is quoted in the **Bulletin of the Smithsonian Institution** [1937, No. 167, p. 302] as saying; **The mother started from the nest in the crags, and roughly handling the young one, she allowed him to drop, I should say, about ninety feet, then she would swoop down under him, wings spread, and he would alight on her back. She would soar to the top of the range with him and repeat the process. My father and I watched this, spellbound, for over an hour.**
- **G. R. Driver**, commenting on these statements, says: **The picture then is not a mere flight of fancy, but is based on actual fact.** [*Palestine Exploration Quarterly, London, 1958, pp. 56,57*]
- Just as an **eagle** stirs up its nest, hovers over its fledglings, spreads out its wings, takes them, carries them on its pinions. (**Deuteronomy 32:11**)

**.. Lofty Nest And Farsightedness**

- The nest-building habits of the **eagle** are emphasized in God's questioning of Job at;
- Or is it at your order that an **eagle** flies upward and that it builds its nest high up. (**Job 39:27**)
- That on a crag **it** resides and stays during the night upon the tooth of a crag and an inaccessible place? (**Job 39:28**)
- From there **it** has to search for food, far into the distance its eyes

keep looking. (**Job 39:29**)

- And its young ones themselves keep sipping up blood, and where the slain are, there **it** is. (**Job 39:30**)
- The nest or aerie may be in a high tree or on the crag of a cliff or rocky canyon. Over the years the nest may grow to be as much as 2 meters (6.5 feet) high, that of some **eagles** nests coming to weigh as much as a ton! The apparent security and inaccessibility of the **eagles** nest were also used figuratively by the prophets in their messages against the lofty kingdom of Edom in the rugged mountains of the Arabah.
- The shuddering you caused has deceived you, the presumptuousness of your heart, O you who are residing in the retreats of the crag, holding the height of the hill. Although you build your nest high up just like an **eagle**, down from there I shall bring you, is the utterance of Yehowah. (**Jeremiah 49:16**)
- The presumptuousness of your heart is what has deceived you, you who are residing in the retreats of the crag, the height where he dwells, saying in his heart, Who will bring me down to the earth? (**Obadiah 1:3**)
- If you should make your position high like the **eagle**, or if among the stars there were a placing of your nest, down from there I would bring you, is the utterance of Yehowah. (**Obadiah 1:4**)
- The farsightedness of the **eagle**, mentioned at;
- From there it has to search for food, far into the distance its eyes keep looking. (**Job 39:29**)
- Is borne out by **Rutherford Platt** in his book **The River of Life** [1956, pp. 215,216], which also shows the unusual design of the eye of the eagle, testifying to the Creators wisdom. The book says:
  - We find the championship eyes of the whole animal kingdom in the eyes of the **eagle**, the vulture, and the hawk. So keen are they that they can look down from a thousand feet in the air and spot a rabbit or a grouse half hidden in the grass.
  - Sharp eyesight of the hunter eye is caused by the reflection of the object falling on a dense clump of pointed, cone-shaped cells. This

tiny spot in the back of the eyeball absorbs light rays from the object through thousands of points, in a special manner which summons up a clear image in the mind.

- For almost all hunters, such as the skunk, the cougar, and ourselves, the single spot of cones is enough, we look straight ahead and approach directly the object of our gaze. But not so the **eagle** or the hawk, which, having fixed the rabbit in the grass with its sharp focusing cones, may then approach by a long, slanting dive.
- This causes the image of the target to move across the back of the eyeball on a curved path. Such a path is precisely plotted for the **eagle** eye so that instead of a clump of cones the diving bird has a curved path of cones. As the **eagle** zooms down, the rabbit in the grass is thus held in constant focus.
- Look! Just like an **eagle** someone will ascend and pounce down, and he will spread out his wings over Bozrah, and the heart of the mighty men of Edom will actually become in that day like the heart of the wife having distress in childbirth. (**Jeremiah 49:22**)

## •• Flight Abilities

- The **eagles** swiftness is highlighted in many texts.
- Saul and Jonathan, the lovable ones and the pleasant ones during their life, and in their death they were not separated. **Swifter than the eagles** they were, mightier than the lions they were. (**2 Samuel 1:23**)
- Look! Like rain clouds he will come up, and his chariots are like a storm wind. His horses are **swifter than eagles**. Woe to us, because we have been despoiled! (**Jeremiah 4:13**)
- **Swifter than the eagles** of the heavens our pursuers have proved to be. Upon the mountains they have hotly pursued us. In the wilderness they have lain in wait for us. (**Lamentations 4:19**)
- And its horses have proved swifter than leopards, and they have proved fiercer than evening wolves. And its steeds have pawed the ground, and from far away its own steeds come. They **fly like the eagle speeding** to eat something. (**Habakkuk 1:8**)

- There are reports of eagles surpassing a speed of 130 kilometers/hour (80 miles per hour). Solomon warned that wealth makes wings for itself like those of a skyward-bound **eagle**.
- Do not toil to gain riches. Cease from your own understanding. (**Proverbs 23:4**)
- Have you caused your eyes to glance at it, when it is nothing? For without fail it makes wings for itself like those of an **eagle** and flies away toward the heavens. (**Proverbs 23:5**)
- While Job mourned the swiftness of life's passing, comparing it to the speed of an **eagle** in search of prey.
- Also my own days have become swifter than a runner, they have run away, they will certainly not see good. (**Job 9:25**)
- They have moved on like reed boats, like an **eagle** that darts to and fro for something to eat. (**Job 9:26**)
- Yet those trusting in Yehowah receive power to go on, as if mounting up on the seemingly tireless wing of the soaring **eagle**.
- But those who are hoping in Yehowah will regain power. They will mount up with wings like **eagles**. They will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not tire out. (**Isaiah 40:31**)
- Modern scientists have wondered at the way of an **eagle** in the heavens, as did the writer of;
- The way of an **eagle** in the heavens, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship in the heart of the sea and the way of an able-bodied man with a maiden. (**Proverbs 30:19**)
- **Clarence D. Cone, Jr**, relates the manner in which observation of the majestic and almost effortless soaring of **eagles**, hawks, and vultures has helped to lead the way to the discovery of a fundamental mechanism of meteorology.
- He shows the manner in which such large birds utilize to the full the dynamic power of the great bubbles of heated air that float up from the land because of the heat of the sun and the way in which the slotted wing tips of the **eagle** are so designed aerodynamically that

they eliminate air drag on the wing. [Scientific American, April 1962, pp. 131,138]

## ·· Figurative Usage

- This powerful bird of prey was a frequent symbol used by the prophets to represent the warring forces of enemy nations in their sudden and often unexpected attacks.
- Yehowah will raise up against you a nation far away, from the end of the earth, just as an **eagle pounces**, a nation whose tongue you will not understand. (**Deuteronomy 28:49**)
- A nation fierce in countenance, who will not be partial to an old man or show favor to a young man. (**Deuteronomy 28:50**)
- And they will certainly eat the fruit of your domestic animals and the fruitage of your ground until you have been annihilated, and they will let no grain, new wine or oil, no young of your cattle or progeny of your flock, remain for you until they have destroyed you. (**Deuteronomy 28:51**)
- For this is what Yehowah has said; Look! Just like an **eagle that pounces**, someone must also spread his wings over Moab. (**Jeremiah 48:40**)
- Look! Just like an **eagle** someone will ascend and pounce down, and he will spread out his wings over Bozrah, and the heart of the mighty men of Edom will actually become in that day like the heart of the wife having distress in childbirth. (**Jeremiah 49:22**)
- To your mouth, a horn! One comes like an **eagle** against the house of Yehowah, for the reason that they have overstepped my covenant, and against my Law they have transgressed. (**Hosea 8:1**)
- The Babylonian and Egyptian rulers were characterized as **eagles**.
- And you must say; This is what the Sovereign Lord Yehowah has said; The great **eagle**, having great wings, with long pinions, full of plumage, which had color variety, came to Lebanon and proceeded to take the treetop of the cedar. (**Ezekiel 17:3**)
- And there came to be another great eagle, having great wings,

and having large pinions, and, look! This very vine stretched its roots hungrily toward him. And its foliage it thrust out to him in order for him to irrigate it, away from the garden beds where it was planted. (**Ezekiel 17:7**)

- It is notable that in many ancient nations, including Assyria, Persia, and Rome, the figure of the eagle was regularly used on the royal scepters, standards, and steles, even as it has been used in modern times by Germany, the United States, and others.
- Some have questioned the use of the word **eagles** at;
- Wherever the carcass is, there the **eagles** will be gathered together. (**Matthew 24:28**)
- So in response they said to him; Where, Lord? He said to them; Where the body is, there also the **eagles** will be gathered together. (**Luke 17:37**)
- Holding that the texts must refer instead to vultures, gathered around a carcass. However, although the **eagle** is not primarily a carrion eater, as is the vulture, it does feed on such dead bodies at times. [**Palestine Exploration Quarterly, 1955, p. 9**]
- So too the eagle, though usually a solitary hunter, unlike the gregarious vulture, is known to hunt in pairs occasionally, and the book **The Animal Kingdom** [Vol. II, p. 965] reports an instance in which a number of them launched a mass attack upon a prong-horned antelope. [**Edited by F. Drimmer, 1954**]
- Jesus prophecy mentioned above was given in connection with his promised presence. Hence, it would not apply merely to the desolation in **70 C.E.**, of the Jewish nation by the Roman armies, who had their standards emblazoned with the figures of **eagles**.
- **Eagles** are used in Revelation to represent creatures attending God's throne and announcing the judgment messages of God for those on earth, doubtless to indicate swiftness and farsightedness.
- And the first living creature is like a lion, and the second living creature is like a young bull, and the third living creature has a face like a man's, and the fourth living creature is like a **flying eagle**. (**Revelation 4:7**)



- And I saw, and I heard an **eagle flying in midheaven** say with a loud voice; Woe, woe, woe to those dwelling on the earth because of the rest of the trumpet blasts of the three angels who are about to blow their trumpets! (**Revelation 8:13**)
- And as for the likeness of their faces, the four of them had a man's face with a lion's face to the right, and the four of them had a bull's face on the left, the four of them also had an **eagle's face**. (**Ezekiel 1:10**)
- And each one had four faces. The first face was the face of the cherub, and the second face was the face of earthling man, and the third was the face of a lion, and the fourth was the face of an **eagle**. (**Ezekiel 10:14**)
- Another text that many scholars view as applying to the vulture rather than to the **eagle** is;
- Cause baldness, and shear your hair off on account of your sons of exquisite delight. Broaden out your baldness like that of the **eagle**, because they have gone away from you into exile. (**Micah 1:16**)
- Which speaks of Israel's figuratively broadening out its baldness like that of the **eagle**. The **eagles** head is well feathered, even the North American **bald eagle** is referred to as **bald** only because its white head feathers give it the **appearance of baldness** from a distance.
- The Griffon vulture, *Gyps fulvus*, still to be seen in Israel, has only some soft white down on its head, and the neck is sparsely feathered. If the text applies to it, this would indicate that the **Hebrew, ne'sher** has broader application than to the eagle only.
- It may be noted that the griffon vulture, while not classed by ornithologists as of the same species or genus as the **eagle**, is counted as of the same family, *Accipitridae*. Some, however, believe;
- Cause baldness, and shear your hair off on account of your sons of exquisite delight. Broaden out your baldness like that of the **eagle**, because they have gone away from you into exile. (**Micah 1:16**)
- Has reference to the molting that the **eagle** undergoes, although this is said to be a gradual and rather inconspicuous process. This

molting process, bringing some reduction of activity and strength and followed by a renewal of normal life, may be what the psalmist meant by ones youth renewing itself just like that of an **eagle**.

- Who is satisfying your lifetime with what is good, your youth keeps renewing itself just like that of an **eagle**. (**Psalms 103:5**)
- Others see in this a reference to the relatively long life of the **eagle**, some having been known to reach an age of 80 years.
- The name Aquila is Latin for **eagle**.
- And he found a certain Jew named **Aquila**, a native of Pontus who had recently come from Italy, and Priscilla his wife, because of the fact that Claudius had ordered all the Jews to depart from Rome. So he went to them (**Acts of Apostles 18:2**)