

## ~OSPREY (56)

[Hebrew, *pe'res*]

- One of the flying creatures decreed as **unclean** and not to be eaten, according to the Law covenant.
- 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**)
- Its **Hebrew** name *pe'res* literally means, **the breaker**. Understanding this to refer to the breaking of bones by a bird of prey, the **King James Version** renders *pe'res* as, **ossifrage**, a name derived from Latin and meaning, **bone-breaker**.
- Others understand the **Hebrew** name to indicate a bird, **tearing its prey apart**, and hence not necessarily denoting a breaker of bones.
- The **osprey**, *Pandion haliaetus*, appears to be related to the hawk but with certain distinct features, including feet with some similarity to those of the owl. The **osprey's** head and beak resemble those of the hawk, the body and wings are dark brown above and the underparts are white with streaks of brown.
- Measuring about 65 centimeters (26 inches) in length, it has a wingspan of nearly 1.8 meters (6 feet). The **osprey** is found throughout the world, living near large bodies of water, where it feeds on fish that swim near the surface. The bird glides almost effortlessly above the water, wheeling gracefully and hovering until it locates its prey.
- Then it plunges swiftly downward, striking the water forcefully feet first, at times disappearing beneath the surface. It is admirably equipped for this type of attack, having dense compact plumage on its underparts to withstand some of the impact of hitting the water, and long, curved, very sharp claws that extend out from rough toes, enabling the bird to get a firm grip on its slippery prey.

- Observers say that in flying with the fish to shore to devour it, the osprey always grips the fish so that its head faces forward, thereby reducing air resistance. The **osprey** is fairly common on the coast and islands of southern Sinai.
- Other suggestions for the bird designated by the Hebrew *pe'res* include the sea eagle, *Haliaeetus albicilla*, distinct from the **osprey**, and the lammergeier, *Gypaetus barbatus*, a vulture known to carry bones and tortoises to some height and then drop them on rocks in order to break them open.