

~OSTRICH (238)

[Hebrew, *bath hai-ya-`anah*, *rena-nim* plural]

.. Contrasted With Stork

.. Treats Sons Roughly

.. Forgets Wisdom

- The first of these Hebrew names is understood to mean either **daughter of the greedy one** or **daughter of the barren ground**, terms that may aptly apply to the **ostrich**.
- The second name, regarded as indicating a **bird of piercing cries**, also fits the **ostrich**, whose cry is described as a **hoarse, mournful cry which has been likened to the roaring of a lion**. [The Smithsonian Series, 1944, Vol. 9, p. 105]
- On this account I will wail and howl, I will walk barefoot and naked. I shall make a wailing like the jackals, and a mourning like female **ostriches**. (Micah 1:8)
- The **ostrich**, *Struthio camelus*, is the largest living bird known, at times standing over 2 meters (7 feet) high at the crown of the head and weighing as much as 140 kilograms (300 pounds).
- The head is rather small and flat with very large eyes, the flexible neck is about 1 meters (3 feet) long, and like the powerful legs, both head and neck are bare of feathers. The body plumage, however, is luxuriant, the long soft wing and tail plumes being much prized in ancient and modern times.
- The sleek black and white plumage of the male contrasts with the dull grayish-brown color of the female. The **ostrich** is unique among all birds in having but two toes on each foot, one of them equipped with a clawlike hoof that becomes a dangerous weapon when the bird is forced to defend itself.
- Its height and keen vision, however, usually enable it to spot its enemies from afar, and the huge bird then warily moves away.
- While the **ostrich** feeds mainly on vegetation, it is also carnivorous, including snakes, lizards, and even small birds in its indiscriminate diet. It is found among the list of unclean birds prohibited 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](#))
- 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](#))
- Anciently known as the camel bird, the **ostrich** is able to endure for long periods without water and hence thrives in solitary wastelands. It is used in the Bible, along with jackals and similar creatures, as representative of desert life.
- The wild beast of the field will glorify me, the jackals and the **ostriches**, because I shall have given water even in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to cause my people, my chosen one, to drink. ([Isaiah 43:20](#))
- And to depict the ruinous desolation that became the fate of Edom and Babylon.
- And there the haunters of waterless regions will certainly lie down, and their houses must be filled with eagle owls. And there the **ostriches** must reside, and goat-shaped demons themselves will go skipping about there. ([Isaiah 13:21](#))
- On her dwelling towers thorns must come up, nettles and thorny weeds in her fortified places, and she must become an abiding place of jackals, the courtyard for the **ostriches**. ([Isaiah 34:13](#))
- Therefore the haunters of waterless regions will dwell with the howling animals, and in her the **ostriches** must dwell, and she will nevermore be dwelt in, nor will she reside for generation after generation. ([Jeremiah 50:39](#))
- Job, rejected and detested, sitting among ashes, and mournfully crying out, considered himself like a brother to jackals and a companion to the daughters of the **ostrich**.

- A brother to jackals I became, and a companion to the daughters of the **ostrich**. (Job 30:29)

·· Contrasted With Stork

- Yehowah God later drew Job's attention to the **ostrich**, and the things he pointed out strikingly illustrate some of the unusual features of that bird.

- Has the wing of the female **ostrich** flapped joyously, or has she the pinions of a stork and the plumage? (Job 39:13)
- For she leaves her eggs to the earth itself and in the dust she keeps them warm. (Job 39:14)
- And she forgets that some foot may crush them or even a wild beast of the field may tread on them. (Job 39:15)
- She does treat her sons roughly, as if not hers, in vain is her toil because she has no dread. (Job 39:16)
- For God has made her forget wisdom, and he has not given her a share in understanding. (Job 39:17)
- At the time she flaps her wings on high, she laughs at the horse and at its rider. (Job 39:18)
- In great contrast to the high-flying, majestically soaring storks with their broad powerful wings, the **ostrich** is flightless, its wings are incapable of sustaining the birds weight, and its flat breastbone lacks the keel that supports the flying muscles of birds of flight.
- The **ostrichs** plumes, though lovely, lack even the tiny hooklike filaments that cling together and give the feathers of flying birds the resistance to air that makes flight possible.
- Has the wing of the female **ostrich** flapped joyously, or has she the pinions of a stork and the plumage? (Job 39:13)
- Again in contrast to the stork, which builds its big nest firmly in the tops of trees.
- Where the birds themselves make nests. As for the stork, the

juniper trees are its house. (**Psalms 104:17**)

- Buildings, or tall rocks, the **ostrich** merely scoops out a shallow depression in the ground surrounded by a low embankment. Here the female lays the eggs, weighing some 1.5 kilograms (3 pounds) each, and since the **ostrich** is often polygamous, unlike the stork, which is renowned for its fidelity to one mate, there may be a good number of eggs laid in the nest by the two or three hens.
- The male **ostrich** warms the nest eggs during the night and the hen incubates them by day, but she is known to leave the nest for periods during the day when the sun is hot.
- At such times the eggs, though very thick-shelled, are, nevertheless, vulnerable to damage or despoiling by animals or man.
- For she leaves her eggs to the earth itself and in the dust she keeps them warm. (**Job 39:14**)
- And she forgets that some foot may crush them or even a wild beast of the field may tread on them. (**Job 39:15**)

.. Treats Sons Roughly

- The statement that the **ostrich** does treat her sons roughly, as if not her's.
- She does treat her sons roughly, as if not hers, in vain is her toil because she has no dread. (**Job 39:16**)
- And reference to **ostriches** as being **cruel** with respect to their offspring.
- Even jackals themselves have presented the udder. They have suckled their cubs. The daughter of my people becomes cruel, like **ostriches** in the wilderness. (**Lamentations 4:3**)
- Have been objected to by some who claim that parent **ostriches** are quite solicitous in caring for their young. While it is true that the **Hebrew** term, *rena-nim'*, used at;
- Has the wing of the female **ostrich** flapped joyously, or has she the pinions of a stork and the plumage? (**Job 39:13**)

- May grammatically apply to either male or female **ostriches**, some lexicographers understand it to refer to the female birds. This would seem to be the case in view of the connection with the eggs laid, obviously, by the hen bird.
- When understood as applying to the female, there is certainly good basis for this poetic expression concerning the **cruelty** of the bird in the fact that, once the young are hatched, the male **assumes all their care while the hens generally go off together**. [All the Birds of the Bible, by Alice Parmelee, 1959, p. 207]
- It is also true that these powerful birds, both male and female, quickly abandon the nest and their young when sensing danger, and even though they may use diversionary tactics to draw enemies away from the nest, this is still **rough** treatment for the unprotected young. Only the protective coloration given by the Creator is what may save the undefended and abandoned chicks, causing the enemy beasts to overlook them and chase after the fleeing parents.
- The **ostrich** may properly be termed, **cruel**, then, as compared with many other birds and particularly in contrast with the stork, whose affectionate attention and constant concern for its young are proverbial.

•• Forgets Wisdom

- The **ostrich** is said to forget wisdom and not share in understanding.
- For God has made her forget wisdom, and he has not given her a share in understanding. (Job 39:17)
- Modern observers have acknowledged this. The Arabs have a saying, **more foolish than an ostrich**. [Soncino Books of the Bible, edited by A. Cohen, London, 1946, Job, p. 205]
- The **ostrich** tends to run in a large curve, which permits its pursuers, if sufficient in number, to surround it. But on a straight course the **ostrich's** powerful legs enable it to laugh at the horse and at its rider.
- At the time she flaps her wings on high, she laughs at the horse and at its rider. (Job 39:18)

- When running, its strides lengthen out to cover as much as 3.5 meters (11 feet) at a time, and its pace may reach as high as 70 kilometers/hour (44 miles/hour). The wings, useless for flight, nevertheless help to give lift to the birds heavy body as it runs.
- The **ostrich** has certain characteristics that are said to stagger scientists, who tend to class the **ostrich** as among the lower or more primitive of living birds.
- It has a bladder collecting uric acid, an organ characteristic of mammals but not possessed by any other family of birds. It also possesses eyelashes that protect its eyes from the blowing sand. Thus, though low in intelligence, the powerful, speedy **ostrich** gives credit to the wisdom of its Creator.
- The Arabian **ostrich**, *Struthio camelus syriacus*, once abundant in Palestine and Arabia, is now extinct. Since 1973 C.E, a related African variety has been reintroduced into Israel.