

Deuteronomy 22:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young:

Analysis

If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young. This environmental law demonstrates God's concern for sustainability and compassion even toward animals. Taking both mother and offspring would destroy future productivity; preserving the mother ensures continued reproduction.

The phrase chance to be before thee indicates God's law governs even opportunistic situations. Finding a nest with eggs or young birds provides tempting opportunity for food, but God limits exploitation to ensure ongoing provision.

Preserving the dam (mother bird) shows wisdom in resource management. Short-term gain from taking everything results in long-term loss. God's law promotes sustainability, preventing exploitation that destroys future provision.

This law also teaches compassion - separating mother from young immediately would cause suffering. Though animals serve human use, God's people should exercise dominion with mercy, not cruelty.

Historical Context

Wild birds provided supplemental protein for ancient Israelites. This law allowed harvesting eggs or young birds while ensuring the mother could reproduce again, maintaining wildlife populations.

This principle of sustainable use rather than exploitative depletion distinguished Israel's environmental ethics from pagan practices.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does this law teach about God's concern for environmental sustainability?
2. How does preserving reproductive capacity ensure ongoing provision?
3. Why should dominion over creation include compassion toward animals?
4. What does limiting opportunistic exploitation reveal about wise resource management?
5. How do these principles apply to contemporary environmental stewardship?

Interlinear Text

יָכַח	אֵל	קִנּוּ	צִפּוֹר	לִפְנֵי	בְּדֶרֶךְ	בְּכֹל	עֵץ
H3588	chance	nest	If a bird's	to be before	thee in the way	H3605	in any tree
	H7122	H7064	H6833	H6440	H1870		H6086
וְ	עַל	הָאָרֶץ	הָאֶפְרַחִים	וְ	הַבִּיצִים	וְ	הָאֵם
H176	H5921	or on the ground	upon the young	H176	or eggs		and the dam
		H776	H667		H1000		H517
רֹבֵץ	עַל	הָאֶפְרַחִים	וְ	עַל	הַבִּיצִים	לֹא	
sitting	H5921	upon the young	H176	H5921	or eggs	H3808	
	H7257	H667			H1000		
תִּקַּח	וְ	הָאֵם	עַל	הַבְּנִים:			
thou shalt not take		and the dam	H5921	with the young			
H3947		H517		H1121			

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 22:28 (Parallel theme): And whether it be cow or ewe, ye shall not kill it and her young both in one day.

Proverbs 12:10 (Parallel theme): A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.