

Jeremiah 8:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD.

Analysis

This verse introduces a powerful nature contrast: 'Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times.' The Hebrew chasidah (חָסִידָה, stork) derives from chesed (חֶסֶד), emphasizing the bird's faithful, loyal nature in following migratory patterns. 'The turtle, and the crane, and the swallow observe the time of their coming' (tor, agur, sis)—three more migratory birds instinctively following God's natural order. 'But my people know not the judgment of the LORD' creates devastating contrast. Birds possess natural instinct (yada, יְדָה, know) to follow divine order; God's covenant people, with Scripture, temple, prophets, and direct revelation, fail to recognize (yada) God's mishpat (מִשְׁפָט, judgment, ordinance, way). Creatures without reason obey their Creator more faithfully than rational beings with revelation.

Historical Context

Palestine lies on major migratory bird routes between Africa and Europe. Ancient Israelites observed these seasonal patterns closely. The stork's Hebrew name reflects its perceived loyal family behavior. These observations became wisdom tradition metaphors, appearing also in Job 39:26. Jeremiah's contemporary audience would immediately grasp the shaming comparison—irrational creatures surpass them in responding to their Creator.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does the example of migratory birds obeying natural law shame our failure to obey revealed spiritual law?
2. What 'appointed times' and divine ordinances should characterize Christian faithfulness today?

Interlinear Text

וְתִרְאֵנִי מִזְמָדֵד יְהִי בְּשָׁמָן יְהִי יְמִינֵךְ הַצְּדִיקָה
H1571 Yea the stork in the heaven know her appointed times and the turtle
H2624 H8064 H3045 H4150 H8449

בְּאָנָה בְּעֵת שְׁמָר אֶת עַתְּבָה וְרִיאֵל
and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming
H5483 H5693 H8104 H6256 H935

יְהִי מִשְׁפָט לֹא אֶת יְדָעָה לְעַמְּךָ
but my people know not the judgment of the LORD
H5971 H3808 H3045 H4941 H3068

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 1:3 (Parallel theme): The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

Isaiah 5:12 (References Lord): And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of his hands.

Song of Solomon 2:12: The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;

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