

WINGS AS EAGLES

What do eagles' wings tell us about the blessings of keeping covenants?



Wingspan

Hollow bones

Concave underside

EAGLES' WINGS

Wing type: Broad and long, with long, slotted feathers.

Wingspan: Between 6 feet (1.8 meters) and 9 feet (2.7 meters).

Eagles' wings are built for soaring and gliding on updrafts of warm air (thermals). The long feathers are slotted and can separate to allow air to flow smoothly and to prevent the eagles from stalling when flying at slower speeds.

The outermost wing feathers display gradual narrowing (emarginations) or abrupt narrowing (notches) toward the tip of the feathers to create greater lift during flight.

Eagles and other soaring birds have been seen at heights of over 20,000 feet (6,100 meters).

“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”

Isaiah 40:31

Eagles' bones, while strong, are hollow, making up less than 10 percent of their total body weight. This, of course, makes it easier for them to fly.

The slow gliding and soaring facilitated by eagles' wings enable eagles to spot prey from afar with their keen eyes.



Slotted feathers

BIBLE FACTS

The generic Hebrew word for *eagle* used in the Old Testament (*neshar*) could refer to a number of different soaring birds, including the golden eagle, the imperial eagle, or the griffon vulture.

The figure of eagles' wings was also used in the Old Testament to represent the strength and loving-kindness of the Lord in delivering His covenant people (see Exodus 19:4; Deuteronomy 32:11). Anciently there was a popular (though erroneous) belief that eagles would molt and replace their feathers in old age, receiving renewed strength.

WHAT WE CAN LEARN

Having “wings as eagles” helps us:

Rise toward the heavens. When we “wait upon the Lord” by patiently trusting in Him and keeping our covenants, He blesses us with His divine help. In His strength we are lifted up so that we can receive “peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come” (D&C 59:23).

Move away from the earth. When we turn to the Lord, obey His commandments, and keep our covenants with Him, we separate ourselves from the world. We are less weighed down or heavy laden and are able to obtain a higher and more advantageous perspective—an eternal perspective. God blesses us with the Holy Ghost, and we feel our spirits rise above the trifling concerns of worldly living.

Find nourishment. Just as eagles' ability to soar on their wings can help them use their eyesight to receive their nourishment, we receive spiritual nourishment as we keep our covenants and stay alert to the things of the Spirit. We see this truth particularly in the ordinance of the sacrament as we partake of bread and water and renew the baptismal covenant.



SANCTIFYING RENEWAL

“I know that in times of fear or fatigue, ‘they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint’ [Isaiah 40:31].

“We receive the gift of such majestic might and sanctifying renewal through the redeeming grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has overcome the world, and if we will take upon us His name and ‘walk in His paths’ [Isaiah 2:3] and keep our covenants with Him, we shall, ere long, have peace. Such a reward is not only possible; it is certain.”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Peaceable Things of the Kingdom,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 84.

PHOTOGRAPH OF EAGLE BY VISU/ISTOCK/THINKSTOCK