



WOMEN'S LEAGUE FOR CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM

Women's League Shabbat 2015/5775

READING II

L'Dor v Dor Glueckel of Hameln

In the opening pages of her remarkable – and quite unique – memoir, Glueckel of Hameln reflects on the universal subject of parental responsibility.

How thoroughly modern was this woman of the 17th century! When her husband died, leaving her with 14 children, Glueckel took over his business and became very successful, yet still had time to write a book – part memoir, part ethical will.

Within the family structure, each generation bears responsibility to the other – but she qualifies it. In her memoir she records the following parable:

A bird once set out to cross a windy sea with his three fledglings. The sea was so wide and the wind so strong that the father bird was forced to carry his young, one by one, in his claws. When he was halfway across with his first fledgling, the wind turned to a gale, and he said, “My child, look how I am struggling and risking my life in your behalf. When you are grown up, will you do as much for me and roved for my old age?”

The fledgling replied, “Only bring me to safety, and when you are old I shall do everything you ask of me.”

Whereat the father bird dropped his child into the sea, and it drowned, and he said, “So shall it be done for such a liar as you.”

Then the father bird returned to the shore, set forth with the second fledgling, asked the same question, and receiving the same answer, drowned the second child with the cry, “You, too, are a liar!”

Finally, he set out with the third fledgling, and when he asked the same question, the third and last fledgling replied: “My dear father, it is true you are struggling mightily and risking your life in my behalf, and I shall be wrong not to pay you when you are old, but I cannot bind myself. This, though, I can promise: when I am grown up and have children of my own, I shall do as much for them as you have done for me.”

Whereupon the father bird said, “Well spoken, my child, and wisely; your life I will spare and I will carry you to safety.”

From The Memoirs of Glueckel of Hameln