

Story: How to Argue with Your Mother

October 11, 2026

Exodus 32:1-14

Matthew 22:1-14

Sometimes a mother 'amakihi lays two eggs, sometimes she lays three. This season had been a two-egg season. They both hatched. Both chicks grew and thrived. Both chicks quickly developed ideas about how they wanted things to go that weren't precisely the same as their mother's.

Both of them quickly developed very clear ideas about what and when they wanted to eat. Sometimes they agreed, shouting for nectar in chorus. Sometimes they disagreed, with one calling for bugs and another calling for spiders. Taking care of them required a lot of hopping.

They didn't always get what they wanted. They did always get what they needed, even if they didn't think so at the time.

As they approached the time to learn to fly, though, another difference appeared between them. Both of them argued with their mother. A lot. It was frequently about food, since there wasn't much else to argue about as chicks in a nest. They also argued with their mother about how far along the branch they could go from the nest, and how many wingbeats they could take before she told them to stop, and most of all, whether they were ready for that first flight.

They both argued. But the female of the two tended to get more excited in her arguments than her brother. She'd bring in any explanation she could think of for why she should be allowed that first flight now, today, at this moment, here I go, what do you mean I'm not ready, Mom?

The male argued just as hard, but there was one thing he did that his sister didn't. He asked questions. He asked a special kind of question. He asked how his mother would know – and how he might know – that he was ready to fly.

So his mother answered by telling him things that don't make any sense to me, because I don't have wings or feathers. She talked about certain feathers that had to be firmly in place. She talked about wing muscles that had to be strong enough to hold his weight. She talked about what he needed to be aware of in the sky, and she'd ask him about them as he fluttered his wings on the branch. Do you see the tree trunks there? Which way will you go to avoid them? Do you feel the wind? Which way is it blowing? Is it soft or strong?

When he could answer those questions, she told him, he'd be ready to fly.

“Do you promise?” he said.

“I promise,” she said.

A couple days later – which doesn’t seem like long but it’s a long time for a young bird – he checked his feathers. They looked good. He moved his wings back and forth, and realized he could hold himself up with them. He looked out from his branch, and named the things he saw to himself, and checked the wind, and decided how he’d go.

“I’m ready,” he told his mother.

“Are you?” she said.

He told her what I just told you, and she cocked her head to the side to think about it.

“You promised,” he said.

“I did,” she said. “So fly.”

His sister burst into protest. “Why does he get to go? Why don’t I get to go?” she called as her brother beat his wings and leapt into the air. “Why didn’t you promise me?”

“I promise you that you can fly when you’re ready,” mother said. “Are you?” And she ran through the things she’d gone over with her son, now singing merrily in a neighboring tree.

“When you can do these things,” said mother, “it will be time to fly. I promise.”

by Eric Anderson