



## Clanking Chains: Parental Training Includes “Reproof” & “Correction; Roberts Uses Corporal Punishment on Horses: The Buck Stopper vis-à-vis the Switch

Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. “מִסָּר *musar*” (1:386-87):

From the usage and parallels in the Old Testament, one must conclude that *musar* denotes correction which results in education.

The discipline of Yahweh is not to be taken negatively, for the hardships in the wilderness were balanced by his miraculous provisions both designed to test “what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.” The theological basis for an earthly father’s discipline over his son is in the covenant. He bears the image of his covenant Lord, and as such stands in parallel relationship over his children—chastening, correcting, instructing, providing—which are expressions of an interpersonal relationship of love. So e.g., in Proverbs 3:11-12 “reproof” and “correction” are said to come from Yahweh “for whom the Lord loves he reproves, even as a father the son in whom he delights.” Hence, discipline gives assurance of sonship, for *musar* primarily points to a God-centered way of life. Proverbs and other wisdom literature speak of discipline with emphasis on instruction.

- 31) The Bible directs parents to teach and instruct through reproof and correction from the motivation of unconditional love supported by the severity of corporal punishment when necessary:

Walvoord, John F. and Roy B. Zuck (eds.). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*. (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1985), 954:

**Proverbs 22:15.** “Discipline” (*musar*) is moral correction, which includes spankings (the rod), verbal correction, and other forms of discipline.

- 32) Monty Roberts has a “tongue-in-cheek interpretation” of the word “rod” in these Proverbs passages. He translates it as a “fishing rod” not a “whipping rod” in *Horse Sense for People*, page 156. Interestingly, the Greek word ῥαβδος, *rhabdos* is translated “fishing-rod” in some English editions of Homer’s *Odyssey*, Book 12, line 251. The only problem is that this is never a correct translation for any biblical use of the word in the Old or New Testaments.
- 33) We have now examined passages which reference the punishment of recalcitrant children and established that a flexible branch or stem is what is indicated by the word “rod.” It is essential in suppression of rebellion and the development of humility in his soul.
- 34) Because of his father’s brutality, Monty Roberts overreacted to corporal punishment to the point of ignoring it. But does he really? For example, he has no problem using a **Buck Stopper**:

A piece of quarter-inch cord that is tied so it passes just under the upper lip of the horse and circles the head. It usually has a browband and a length of cord that travels the crest of the neck and attaches to the saddle. It causes discomfort when the horse bucks. (From “Glossary” in *From My Hands to Yours*, p. 229.)

- 35) Corporal punishment is intended to stress correction, not pain. Pain is the attention getter that is designed to lead to correction of rebellious behavior. We can see that Roberts’s system for changing the behavior of a bucking horse involves the infliction of corrective pain.

Roberts, Monty. *From My Hands to Yours*. (Solvang: Monty and Pat Roberts, Inc., 2002), 137-141, 145:

***The Horse that Bucks***



Bucking is often a display of pent-up energy, and there is no need to punish a horse for having high spirits. When I start horses in the round pen about 65 percent of them buck with their first saddle. This is a natural reaction to what they consider to be a predator that has suddenly become attached to their back. If I send them back out around the pen and allow them to think the problem through, they will, with very few exceptions, calm down and Join-Up with me.

The remedial buckler can be, and generally is, extremely dangerous. It should be noted that there are thousands of people permanently injured or disfigured by remedial buckers. Tens of thousands of horses have been put to their death because they became habitual buckers and could not be ridden.

### ***The Buck Stopper***

It is with these facts in mind and my desire to save horses and prevent injuries that I have developed the following techniques. I recommend the use of a tool called the Buck Stopper. I have been using this aid for over 50 years, and I can state categorically that I have never injured a horse using this technique. Severe buckers that have tested the Buck Stopper for two or three consecutive days will sometimes exhibit a pink line on their upper gums. But it disappears in a couple of days and I have never known it to be of any lasting consequence.

The Buck Stopper is inert until the horse begins to buck, and allows the horse to discipline himself. If the horse travels with his head in a natural position, he will respond to the rider as if the Buck Stopper did not exist. It will not affect him unless he attempts to put his head down toward the ground. The effective bucking horse often executes this activity with his head right between his front feet.

In view of the dire consequences that horses and people can suffer because of remedial bucking, the use of the Buck Stopper is without any question appropriate and reasonable.

### ***What Makes a Bucker?***

If the horse exhibits a particular behavioral pattern and feels he has gained something, he is likely to repeat the behavior. If the horse tries a particular pattern and finds it to be a nonproductive exercise, he is likely to cease the behavior.

A horse bucks, and during the course of this action, he unloads his rider. This, in the Language of Equus, is reward. It provides incentive to repeat the experience—thus he is apt to do it again.

### ***Curing the Bucking Horse***

I feel strongly that whenever you are dealing with a remedial problem you need to put yourself in a position where you can smile. When the horse acts out exhibiting his remedial behavior, if you cannot remain calm and comfortable, you have not created the proper environment.

Be certain that the Buck Stopper is in place during each and every one of these schooling sessions because it is essential that the horse learns early and well that everytime he bucks he will discipline himself by bumping into the Buck Stopper.

I believe that the Buck Stopper should be used for a minimum of 2 to 3 weeks on most buckers.

With the use of the Buck Stopper, I have helped hundreds of horses to change their behavioral patterns and stop their habit of bucking in short order.

- 36) We have cautioned parents to be sure that the behavior of boys might be pent-up energy and spizzerinktum rather than misbehavior and rebellion. As there is no need to punish a horse for “high spirits” neither should you punish a child for such.



- 37) Just as horses run off pent-up energy so do children. And once small children become mobile this pent-up energy seems to be perpetual.
- 38) However, once they learn certain boundaries and orient to what is allowed and what is not then parents need to be alert for “remedial bucking.”
- 39) If “remedial bucking” isn’t stopped in a child then he will eventually throw his “riders,” that is, his parents and later on he will take on society in general.
- 40) Early childhood is when a child needs to learn that the odds are against him to buck the system, much like those who played the nineteenth century card game of Faro:

**Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th ed., s.v. “Faro”:**

One of the oldest of all gambling games played with cards, supposedly named from the picture of a pharaoh on French playing cards imported into Great Britain. A favorite of highborn gamblers throughout Europe in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Faro was ... in 1894 termed the “national American card game.”

The Faro bank, a house where Faro was played, was marked traditionally by a picture of a tiger as an advertisement, and playing Faro was known as bucking the tiger.

And of course you remember Doc Holliday’s admonishment of Wyatt Earp after learning of his acquisition of a quarter-interest in the Faro game at the Oriental: “Only suckers buck the tiger. The odds are all on the house.”

- 41) Parents have all the odds: age, knowledge, wisdom, and most of all, divine approval to establish and enforce policy and divinely delegated authority over their children. Therefore, their children should soon come to an early understanding that they are suckers to buck this tiger since the divinely imposed odds are all on the house.
- 42) And the power to enforce policy includes the “instrument of remedial punishment” called *shebet* in Hebrew, *rhabdos* in Greek, and “rod” in English.
- 43) Monty Roberts invented an “instrument of remedial punishment” of horses which he calls the Buck Stopper. He claims never to have hurt a horse with this device but he admits there is some irritation of the horse’s gums that last for a couple of days.
- 44) Because Monty views corporal discipline as violence he does not correlate its proper use as being similar to the Buck Stopper.
- 45) But corporal punishment properly applied is designed to inflict just enough pain to serve as an attention getter so that the child will concentrate on correcting his behavior.
- 46) The parent is to use a device called a “switch” as his Buck Stopper. The lashes are to be administered to the back side. The whelps they raise are painful but not harmful and go away in a couple of days.
- 47) Consistently utilized in the early years, it will effectively break rebellion, orient the child to parental authority, and develop genuine humility.
- 48) But this is maximum punishment for the most egregious form of disobedience. Parents must develop other methods of dealing with lesser forms of misbehavior.



- 49) And in this area, Monty Roberts does have some excellent suggestions and techniques. I will pass along a couple as illustrations but every parent must learn the disposition of each of their children in order to develop the best system of punishment for each child.