

Date: 5 Elul 5786 (August 18, 2026)

Torah Portion: Ki Tetze

Topic: Compassion and Unity, Part 1

It is written: “If a bird’s nest happens to be before you on the road, on any tree or on the ground—young birds or eggs—and the mother is roosting on the young birds or the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young. You shall surely send away the mother and take the young for yourself, so that it will be good for you and prolong your days” (Devarim 22:6–7). At first glance, the mitzvah of *shiluach hakein*—sending away the mother bird before taking the young—appears to be a small and narrowly defined commandment. Yet the Sages discern within it a profound principle that reaches far beyond the nest itself. The Midrash connects the Torah’s emphatic expression, שְׁלַח תְּשַׁלַּח (*shalleach teshalach*), “you shall surely send away,” with three forms of release and restoration: the freeing of a bondservant, the coming of Eliyahu to announce the Redemption, and ultimately the arrival of Moshiach and the restoration of the Davidic monarchy.

The connection to Eliyahu is especially striking because the prophet Malachi uses the same root: “Behold, I am sending [שְׁלַח, *sholeach*] you Eliyahu the prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of YHWH” (Malachi 4:5). The following verse explains the purpose of Eliyahu’s mission: “And he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers” (Malachi 4:6). Eliyahu’s mission, therefore, is fundamentally one of reconciliation. He comes to heal separation, restore relationships, and prepare the people for an age of renewed unity. This raises an important question: What connection can there be between sending away a mother bird and the great events of Redemption—the coming of Eliyahu, the restoration of Yerushalayim, and the reign of Moshiach?

The answer begins with the Torah’s understanding of consolation. The Talmud (Berachos 48b) describes the rebuilding of Yerushalayim in terms of *nechamah*, “consolation.” Yet the rebuilding of the city by itself does not constitute the fullness of that consolation. Rambam teaches that the blessing concerning Yerushalayim must also include a plea for the restoration of the Davidic monarchy. The consolation of Yisrael is incomplete until Yerushalayim is restored together with the throne of David.

This idea is already reflected in the words of Yishayahu: “Rejoice with Yerushalayim and be glad with her, all you who love her; rejoice greatly with her, all you who mourn over her, so that you may nurse and be satisfied from the breast of her consolations” (Yishayahu 66:10–11). He portrays the consolation of restored Yerushalayim through the tender image of a mother nursing her child. This metaphor reveals something profound about the nature of consolation itself.

For nine months, an unborn child exists in extraordinary closeness to its mother. Its nourishment, protection, and very environment are inseparable from her. Birth brings life, but it also brings separation. Suddenly the child that had known almost complete attachment experiences itself as a separate being. The mother responds by drawing the infant again to her body, holding and nursing it. Although the separation of birth cannot be reversed, the child is reassured that the bond has not disappeared. The relationship remains. This is the essence of consolation: Consolation does not merely remove pain; it restores the awareness of a bond that separation seemed to have broken.

The same principle applies to human grief. A person who suffers loss often experiences more than sadness. He experiences separation. Someone who had been woven into the fabric of his life is suddenly absent. In such a condition, one of the deepest forms of consolation is the presence of others—the embrace, companionship, and solidarity that remind the mourner that although one bond has been broken, he has not been abandoned. Yerushalayim possesses precisely this consoling power for Yisrael.

Maharal explains that Yerushalayim and the Temple served as powerful forces of unity among the people. Yerushalayim was not merely the political or geographical center of the nation. It was the place toward which the tribes ascended together. Three times each year, Yisrael gathered there for the Pilgrimage Festivals. The Temple contained the one Altar upon which the nation’s offerings were brought. In Yerushalayim, the many tribes encountered themselves again as one people serving one Elohim.

Shalom.