

Date: 6 Elul 5786 (August 19, 2026)

Torah Portion: Ki Tetze

Topic: Compassion and Unity, Part 2

This helps explain why *sinat chinam*—baseless hatred—was so destructive. Hatred creates distance; Yerushalayim represented unity. Hatred divides what should be joined; the Temple gathered what had been scattered. Once division became deeply rooted among the people, the very spiritual principle represented by the Temple had been contradicted. The physical destruction that followed reflected an internal fragmentation that had already taken place. Exile then intensified the separation. Yisrael was scattered among the nations, Yerushalayim lay desolate, and the people mourned not merely the loss of buildings but the loss of national wholeness and belonging.

The future rebuilding of Yerushalayim therefore represents far more than architectural restoration. It represents the gathering of children who have been separated from their mother. As Yishayahu describes it, Yerushalayim will once again draw her children to herself and console them as a mother draws an infant to her breast. The long experience of estrangement will give way to reunion.

Yet even this restoration requires something more. National unity cannot reach its fullness without a common center of righteous leadership. Therefore, the restoration of Yerushalayim is joined to the restoration of the Davidic monarchy. Moshiach gathers and leads the restored people under the sovereignty of YHWH. Only then does the consolation become complete: the people, the city, and the kingdom are restored together.

We can now return to the seemingly small mitzvah of sending away the mother bird. The Sages teach: “Whoever has compassion upon creatures, Heaven has compassion upon him” (Shabbos 151b). Maharal explains that compassion creates connection. When a person feels another creature’s distress and responds to it, he refuses to remain detached. He allows another being’s condition to matter to him. Compassion therefore opposes alienation and participates in the greater principle of unity.

Cruelty works in the opposite direction. The cruel person separates himself emotionally from the suffering of another. He may see the pain, but he regards it as belonging to someone else and therefore as having no claim upon him. Cruelty is thus not merely the desire to inflict suffering; it may also arise from indifference—the failure to recognize another creature as connected to oneself.

This principle helps illuminate *shiluach hakein*. When a person encounters a nest, the Torah does not permit him simply to seize everything before him without restraint. He must stop. He must recognize the bond between the mother and her young. Even though he is permitted to take the offspring, his power is limited by a command that trains him not to become insensitive to the relationships that exist within YHWH’s creation.

The mitzvah therefore educates the heart. The person who sends away the mother bird demonstrates that possession and personal benefit do not give him permission to become indifferent. He learns to restrain himself out of consideration for another living creature. In doing so, he strengthens within himself the qualities of compassion, connection, and unity.

This explains why the Midrash connects *shiluach hakein* with Eliyahu and the Redemption. The person who practices compassion at the smallest level is aligning himself with the very principle upon which Redemption rests. He protects a bond rather than exploiting it; Eliyahu comes to restore broken bonds between fathers and children. He rejects indifference; Yerushalayim gathers the scattered children of Yisrael. He practices unity; Moshiach brings the nation into its complete unity under the restored Davidic kingdom. The nest, therefore, becomes a miniature lesson in Redemption.

A person walking along a road encounters a vulnerable creature and must decide whether he will act only according to what he can take or whether he will allow compassion to govern what he does. That seemingly private decision reflects the same spiritual choice that confronts an entire nation: Will we live as isolated individuals concerned only with ourselves, or will we recognize the bonds that YHWH has placed between His creatures?

Shalom.