

Date: 11 Elul 5785 (September 4, 2025)

Torah Portion: Ki Tetze

Topic: Children of Nest

It is written (Deut. 22:6-7), “When you come upon a bird’s nest along the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, with the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, do not take the mother with the young – let the mother go without fail, and take the young for yourself, so that it might be well with you, and that you shall prolong your days.”

There can be found a commandment for which the reward given for performing it is wealth, and there can be found a commandment for which the reward given for performing it is honor. So, what is the reward given for performing the commandment in the above verse? The Sages explain that “prolong your days” means if one does not have children, Hashem will give children to him, by taking “the young for yourself.” Eitz Yosef suggest that this is learned from the word וְאַתָּה (ve’et), which generally comes to include something not mentioned explicitly. However, Sefer HaChinuch (§545) explains that the Midrash sees the entire phrase, “And take the young for yourself,” as superfluous, and therefore expounds it to mean that one who observes this commandment will merit to take children for himself.

Chasam Sofer explains that this reward is consistent with Rambam’s explanation of the reason for the commandment of sending away the mother bird. According to Rambam, Hashem commands us to spare the mother bird because He does not desire the extinction of any species. Therefore, although we may capture or slaughter individual creatures, we cannot commit any act that resembles the destruction of a particular species. Therefore, Chasam Sofer explains that, as a fitting reward for ensuring the continuation of the species, Hashem blesses a person with children of his own.

On a deeper level, Sefer HaChinuch explains that this *mitzvah* serves to remind us of Hashem’s Providence over all of creation. By observing this commandment, meant to ensure the continued existence of the species, one will recall His Providence over every species, for ultimately it is this Providence that guarantees the continuation of the species. This will lead him to reflect on His wondrous care and guidance over the world: From the time of creation to the present, no general species has become extinct. And he will realize that, similarly, if one observes the commandments and places his trust in YHWH, he, too, will merit His special Providence, enjoying long physical life in this world and eternal bliss in the Hereafter. This is “measure for measure.” Just as he attributes the continued existence of everything solely to Hashem, he will merit that Hashem will turn His attention toward him and ensure his continued existence.

The Talmud (Nedarim 64b) teaches that a person without children is considered to be dead. From this we may infer the inverse: A person blessed with children is considered to be alive in this world, even after he has passed away. In essence, according to these commentators, the Midrash’s promise of children is not a new reward, but an extension of the Torah’s assurance of longevity as reward for this *mitzvah*.

Another rationale for the commandment to send away the mother bird is to instill compassion in people. Generally, parents are more compassionate than non-parents, since parents are accustomed to having to care about their children and address their wants. Thus, a man who is childless is disqualified from judging capital cases, since he has not experienced the pain and effort of raising children, he might fail to feel compassion for the accused (Sanhedrin 36b). Therefore, if a childless individual shows compassion for the mother bird by fulfilling this *mitzvah*, and thereby instills mercy in his selfish nature, he is rewarded with children, providing him further opportunity to cultivate the trait of compassion.

Final explanation: The natural tendency of a bird is to fly away as soon as a human being approaches. So, why does the mother bird not instinctively escape and save herself when someone attempts to take her while she hovers over her young? It is only because her love for young overrides her instinct for self-preservation. Therefore, the Torah does not allow us to exploit this display of maternal love by using it as a means to capture the mother. Hence, the *mitzvah* to send away the mother bird, which pays homage to her parental love for her offspring, brings as one of its rewards the opportunity to shower such love on children of one’s own.

Shalom