

He was like an eagle arousing its nest, hovering over its young, spreading its wings and taking them, carrying them on its pinions. (32:11)

In describing Hashem's relationship with *Klal Yisrael*, the Torah uses the simile of an eagle. The eagle demonstrates incredible compassion for its young. It does not suddenly enter its nest, but rather, stirs the nest up, then spreads its wings – not under, but – above its nestlings, so that, with keen courageous eyes, they fly up to rest on the mother's outspread wings awaiting them above. The eaglets, however, must make the first move, explains **Horav S. R. Hirsch, zl**. Their mother waits for them, but they must bravely and consciously make the decision to leave the safety and security of their nest and fly up by themselves to set themselves upon their mother's outstretched wings.

So, too, does Hashem first awake His People and get them used to having the courage to trust themselves with the free-willed decision and full consciousness to place themselves under His guidance. This free-willed, conscious decision is the preliminary condition that grants them access to the whole future guidance and makes them worthy of it. Only the young eagle has the courage to leave the stability of its nest and trust himself to the upward flight, into the isolating heights where its parent hovers.

It requires great courage to make this move, to take the "plunge" and trust in a Higher Power. We are so used to relying on the secure and comfortable life built upon human power and art that it is difficult to sacrifice a life of materialism and imagined security for a life of spirituality, relying solely on the word of G-d. How many have refused to do so out of fear of the "unknown"? How many have "tip toed" out, only to return quickly, having failed the courage test? To be an observant Jew takes courage and resolution. *Klal Yisrael* was trained during the forty-year sojourn in the wilderness. This courage to trust has been transmitted to their descendants. We have to believe in ourselves, believe that we can do it. Unless we make the move by leaving the imagined safety of the nest, however, we will never soar. We will continue living in the nest until it falls apart and we, who thought that we have been protected, will sadly discover that we are not.

Hashem beckons to us to come to Him, but we must be prepared to leave the nest.