

"If a birds nest by chance be (found) before you . . . and the mother sitting upon the young or upon the eggs, do not take the mother with the young." (22:6)

The *halachah* of *Shiluach Ha'Kain*, sending away the mother while keeping the eggs for oneself, is especially striking in that it applies only to birds and not to wild beasts. Throughout *halachah*, these two are considered the same, i.e. the law of covering blood after *shechitah* applies likewise to a wild beast and a fowl. Why should one be permitted to take a young deer away from its mother? *Horav Zalmen Sorotzkin, z.l.*, suggests an explanation from which we may derive a profound insight into a parent's relationship with his children.

Animals, as well as humans, give birth to offspring which have naturally common physical features and traits. Fowl, on the other hand, lay eggs which do not hatch for a while. During this maturation time, the affinity which is natural in the human and animal world should not logically develop. Nonetheless, an almost unnatural boundless love develops between the mother bird and its "egg." Although birds are not able to distinguish their features and characteristics, they transcend uncertainty to shower maternal love upon their young. This is manifest by the act of resting on top of the eggs until the baby birds are prepared to fend for themselves. Consequently, the mother bird's pain and anguish at losing her young is far greater than that of her animal counterpart.

What a wonderful lesson for us. How often do we base our relationship with our children solely upon our personal proclivity towards them? Our love is all too often expressed in consonance with how much of "ourselves" we see in "them." There are even those who, if they do not "see" a promising potential in their children, tend to ignore them. A parent's love and relationship with his child should not be contingent upon specific characteristics. It should be boundless and unconditional. Perhaps the mother bird's unrestrained devotion to her young could well serve as a lesson for us all.