

When you will go out to war against your enemies, and Hashem, your G-d, will deliver them into your hands and you will capture its captivity. (21:10)

The *Baal Shem Tov HaKadosh* says that the war to which the Torah alludes is none other than the war of our lives – the daily battle which we wage against the blandishments of the *yetzer hara*, evil-inclination. The Torah is teaching us *v'shavisa shivyo*, “And you will capture its captivity,” essentially, we should grab the *yetzer hara*, take it captive, and learn from its strategy. Let one study the *yetzer hara*'s guile, how it ensnares us to sin, disregarding the type or severity of the sin. Who cares? As long as one sins, he is ensnared in the trap of the evil one. We also should derive from the *yetzer hara*'s strategies that it does not make a difference which *mitzvos* we observe; they are all the same. A *mitzvah* is a *mitzvah*. It is Hashem's decree. We do not determine value or significance. Every *mitzvah* that we perform serves as a stepping-stone and catalyst for the performance of other *mitzvos*.

In the *Midrash*, *Chazal* teach that the Torah enumerates forty-seven *mitzvos* whose reward is not revealed. The reason for this is so that we should observe every *mitzvah* equally. It is not the reward that counts. It is all part of carrying out the Will of Hashem. Each *mitzvah* as part of the total collective is invaluable. This *Midrash* does distinguish between *kala sheh'b'kalos*, the least demanding/easy, simple *mitzvah* and *chamur sheh'b'chamuros*, most difficult, *mitzvos* which involve hardship. The *mitzvah* that requires the least effort is *Shiluach ha'kein*, sending off the mother bird which is roosting on its young. The most demanding *mitzvah* is *Kibbud av v'eim*, Honoring one's parents. Each of these *mitzvos* carries the incredible reward of *arichas yamim*, longevity. It is almost impossible to truly repay one's parents fully for all that they have done – from bringing a child into the world and caring for him until adulthood and beyond. Sending away the mother bird provides instant gratification – in a sense. It is a “feel good” *mitzvah*. The knowledge that one is alleviating the mother's pain when her young are being taken from her is in itself rewarding.

Interestingly, the *Baal HaTurim* observes that, concerning each *mitzvah*, the Torah writes that one will be granted the reward of longevity in conjunction with *L'maan yitav lach*, “So that He will be good to you.” There is, however, one disparity between the two *mitzvos*. Concerning honoring one's parents, the reward of *L'ma'an yitav* follows longevity (*Devarim* 5:16), while concerning *Shiluach ha'kein*, *arichas yamim*, longevity, comes after *L'maan yitav lach* (*Ibid.* 22:7). Why?

Horav Zev Weinberger, Shlita, explains that as soon as one sends off the mother bird, he immediately senses the “goodness” derived from performing this *mitzvah*. Acting compassionately generates a good feeling all over. Thus, it is only right that this act of goodness should be **followed** with a promise of longevity. The script changes radically with regard to honoring one's parents. It is not always easy. In fact, in some situations, it is increasingly difficult to execute properly. One hardly sees the benefit of his toil. The appreciation is not always there. The demand

is constantly on the rise. However, one who is blessed with longevity sees the fruits of his labor when his own children carry out the *mitzvah* with him as the parent! Then, he sees the important and valuable lessons that all those years of his fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *Kibud av v'eim* imparted to his children. Therefore, the Torah precedes *l'maan yitav lach* with longevity, because one does not always immediately see the good.