

## You shall surely take away the mother and take the young for yourself. (22:7)

The *mitzvah* of *Shiluach Ha'kein* implies many lessons. The *Rambam* suggests that this *mitzvah* teaches us to demonstrate kindness and consideration to animals. If our search for food requires us to kill an animal, we must do it in the most humane and painless manner. The *halachah* distinguishes between a bird that is presently resting on her nest, protecting her young, and one that was sent away. We are forbidden to touch the mother that rests on her young. **Horav Chaim Ehrentrau, zl**, cites the *Rambam* as the basis for understanding this law. We are not permitted to take advantage of the mother bird who, because she is protecting her young, will not leave. We are not to make use of our superiority over animals to take undue advantage of her. The mother could have left and saved herself. Instead, she chose to remain to guard her young; she deferred to her natural maternal instincts, which to a certain extent she shares with man. *Halachah* takes this into consideration and grants her life.

We derive from this *mitzvah* the overwhelming importance to be considerate of others: those weaker than we are; those poorer than we are; or those who are just different than we are. If the *Torah* cares about a bird who is responding to her natural instinct, how much more so is it important that we be attentive to the needs of our fellow man. The *Torah* is not merely teaching us to show pity to animals. Hashem does not need us to protect His creatures. Rather, He wishes to imbue us with a refinement of character and a sensitivity to all mankind. Is that not exactly what a Jew is supposed to be like?