

You shall surely send away the mother...so that it will be good for you and you will prolong your days. (22:7)

Hashem grants success and longevity in response to the performance of the *mitzvah* of *Shiluach Ha'kein*, sending away the mother bird. Only the *mitzvah* of honoring one's parents effects comparable reward. Why does the *Torah* single out these two *mitzvos* for such a significant reward? Also, what is the relationship between these two seemingly disparate *mitzvos*? Honoring one's parents is a difficult *mitzvah* to perform correctly, while *Shiluach Ha'kein* is a simple task.

Horav Zalmen Sorotzkin, zl, comments that actually a strong parallel exists between these *mitzvos* which accounts for the similarity of the reward. One must set the mother bird free before taking her eggs or her young. Rather than save only herself when a human being approaches her nest, she risks her life by remaining with her young. Although she is only a bird, her actions provide a lesson for us regarding the virtues we should respect in those around us. The *Torah* commands us to respect those who dedicate themselves to their children. These two *mitzvos* have a common denominator in that they both demand respect for those parents who are willing to endanger themselves to raise their child in the proper manner. The disparity that we note between these *mitzvos* is a result of our superficial perspective on life. If we delve into it, we will observe that *Shiluach Ha'kein* is actually a more critical *mitzvah* than honoring one's parents.

In all cases, we owe respect to our parents. We are in debt to them for all of the hardship they have endured to raise us properly. We have a responsibility to repay our parents for all that they have done for us. We understand our obligation because it is a concept to which we can relate. If the same person, however, who advocates respecting parents were to desire to take the eggs or the baby birds from their nest, he must release the mother, although he has never benefited from it. He must demonstrate "respect" towards this mother bird because she is a mother bird who is devoted to raising her children. He must restrain himself even though he feels no responsibility towards this bird.

The *Torah* tells us that we should demonstrate singular respect towards the mother as a result of her serious commitment to raising her child. On the surface, these *mitzvos* appear to be worlds apart. This is not so in the eyes of our *Torah*, which sees beyond our limited vision. The *Torah* demands respect for our parents because they are like the mother bird, who places herself in danger in order to protect her young.

We might add that while it may be easier and personally more satisfying to show respect towards those parents who exemplify devotion to their children, the *mitzvah* of honoring one's parents applies equally to all parents, regardless of their relationship to us, or the nature of their religious commitment.