**Class # 49 – Did the Rabbi answer the question?**

Advanced Fellowship Parsha Class - Sponsored in memory of Alice Toby Barbanel *Z”l*

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1tWLDhJ6mjQ>

Questions:

1. What is the mother bird doing? In what way is this behavior unlike that normally seen in animals?
2. What are the major tasks a parent bird does to care for its young? What is the first task the parents do?

**Devarim 22:6-8**

(6) If a bird’s nest chance to be before you in the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, and the hen sitting on the young, or on the eggs, you shall not take the hen with the young: (7) you shall surely let the hen go, but the young you may take to yourself; that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days.

**Targum Yerushalmi**

You shalt be sure to send the mother away, but you may take the young for yourself; that it **may be well with you in this world,** and that you may prolong your days **in the world to come.**

1. Why does the Targum change the simple sense of the pasuk?

**“Come Fly With Me” by Rabbi Reuven Mann**

It is no simple matter to evaluate the significance of any mitzvah. Our Sedra illustrates this point. In this week’s parsha, Ki Tetze, we encounter the commandment of the “Bird’s Nest”. This stipulates that if one comes upon a nest in which a mother is sitting upon her eggs or chicks, he may not take the offspring in the presence of the parent. Rather, “You shall surely send away the mother and take the young for yourself, so that it will be good for you, and you will lengthen your days.”

At first glance, this may not seem like the most earthshaking statute, but the Rabbis regard this verse as alluding to eternal life in Olam Habah (the World to Come). **Why is this great reward offered for this seemingly simple mitzvah?**

My interest in this matter increased a few weeks ago when I noticed that a dove had built a nest on a window ledge of my Jerusalem dirah (dwelling). It sat upon 2 eggs for some weeks before they hatched. Mommy was very dedicated to her task, sitting there day and night, except for short breaks in which she left to tend to her own needs, which clearly took a back seat to those of the offspring.

Mom’s dedication persisted with the advent of the chicks whom she nurtured until they reached the point where they could fly off and be on their own. I was fascinated by this whole process and found myself photographing the nest at various stages and sharing the photos with my students. I have given this matter some thought and believe that there are valuable lessons we can learn from a mother dove.

First and foremost is the absolutely steadfast dedication she displayed to her young. She was on the job 24/7, sitting first on the eggs and later on the chicks. At no point did she appear to be bored by or tired of what she was doing. She seemed totally content with her assignment and didn’t regard it as an infringement on her freedom to do as she pleased. All her time, energy, and focus was dedicated to her offspring's wellbeing.

Fortunate is the creature who is absolutely committed to and joyful with the ability to do what they were created for.

This recounting of the bird’s excellent parenting skills and unwavering dedication may arouse pangs of envy or even guilt in some, but that is not my intention. Inevitably, observing birds will cause us to look within, make comparisons, and come up short. This can be a humbling and ego-deflating experience.

In defense of humans, certain things need to be placed in perspective. It’s patently unfair to judge our species by the behavior of animals. They, in general, lead uncomplicated lives. Birds have the luxury of being single-minded. They have no responsibilities aside from tending to their chicks. Mommy can contentedly nest on them endlessly with no distractions. But humans are altogether different. We cannot be single-minded. We have many and diverse needs besides the care of offspring (and many wants and desires that clamor to be satisfied). We also have numerous responsibilities to which we must attend to and which cannot be put aside.

We humans need to be jugglers to master the art of multitasking. The big challenge we face is to balance our obligations so they do not consume us, but leave us the time and energy to engage in “higher pursuits.”

We are also moody creatures who get bored, resentful, and need lots of breaks and diversions. It is inevitable that we will fail at times, have bad days, and make faulty decisions. Our matzav (situation) is more complicated than animals’ lives. When it comes to a mother bird, she spends less and less time with the kiddies as they get bigger and stronger. She doesn’t stay with them more than she has to. She does not want to keep the chicks dependent on her. Her goal is to facilitate their maturation and ultimate independence. Human parents should note this. Do we overly coddle our young ones because we unconsciously seek to keep them dependent on us? That approach can be counterproductive.

The relationship between the mother bird and chicks is limited in time. Once the job is completed, she has no further role to play and retains no connection to her offspring. And she seems none the worse for it. She does not expect any gratitude for what she has done. Nor does she seek any “nachas” from the little ones. Her service is truly one of love. She is happy to do it and serves without expectation of any reward.

As we ponder the wonders of creation, we see that it is embedded with moral principles. Not only do the inanimate constellations of the stars perform the tasks assigned to them but living creatures do so as well. In the blessing for the new moon, we depict the heavens as “joyous and glad to perform the will of their Owner—the Worker of truth Whose work is truth.”

Man is an exception to the rule of “joyous service” found in the universe. We are much more complicated creatures with minds of our own. Our challenge, in the words of Pirkei Avot, is to “cancel our will before His Will.”

When we observe the way a bird fulfills her responsibilities, it causes us to pause and be in awe of the purity of her actions. This realization can lift us to a higher level of divine service. And perhaps this is an additional reason why the great reward of Olam Habah is alluded to here. May we merit to achieve it.

1. Is the act of sending away a mother chick difficult to do, emotionally or physically?
2. What problem does Rabbi Mann have with the mitzva being so “easy” to do?
3. What lesson does the mitzva teach us about Creation? How does the act of sending away the mother bird help us learn this lesson?
4. Why might we miss the lesson to be gained from Creation if we did not have the mitzva of sending away the mother bird?
5. Does the mitzva presuppose a more general approach to exploration of Creation? Is this approach to exploration of Creation limited to children or is it significant for adults as well?

**Eruvin 100b**

**Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Even if the Torah had not been given, we would** nonetheless **have learned modesty from the cat,** which covers its excrement, **and** that **stealing** is objectionable **from the ant,** which does not take grain from another ant, **and forbidden relations from the dove,** which is faithful to its partner, **and proper relations from the rooster, which** first **appeases** the hen **and then mates** with it.

1. Who was Rabbi Kapach? In what way did Rabbi Kapach’s Grandfather expose him to exploring Creation?
2. What are 3 ways in which we can cultivate Rabbi Kapach’s approach to exploration in ourselves? How do we share this commitment to exploration with our children?
3. מָה רַבּוּ מַעֲשיךָ ה'. כֻּלָּם בְּחָכְמָה עָשיתָ - “How great are Your works Hashem! You have made them all with great Wisdom!” *- First Blessing before Shema*