



Flexibility Rewarded

Based on a teaching of Rav Yehuda Amital zt"l

כי יקרא קר־צפור לפניך בדרך... לא־תקח האם על־הבנים: שלח תשלח את־האם ואת־הבנים תקח־לך למען ייטב לך והארכת ימים:

דברים
כב:ז

שלוח הקן is the mitzva of sending away a mother bird before taking the eggs or young from the nest.

This is one of only three mitzvos in the Torah that specifies a reward for observance of the mitzvah: **אריכות ימים – long life**. The other two mitzvos - honoring one's parents and using proper weights and measures in business - also appear in the parsha.

Difference

Talmud Yerushalmi (*Pe'ah* 1:1) notes the **stark contrast** between שלוח הקן and כבוד אב ואם:
אמר רבי אבא בר כהנא השנה הכתוב מצוה קלה שבקלות למצוה חמורה שבחמורות.
מצוה קלה שבקלות זה שלוח הקן. מצוה חמורה שבחמורות זה כיבוד אב ואם. ובשתייהן כתיב והארכת ימים.

שלוח הקן

כבוד אב ואם

Momentary activity. Simplest of actions.

Ongoing responsibility. Demanding/complicated assignment.

The fact that these **opposite types** of mitzvos offer the **same great reward** of long life indicates to us the value and importance of each and every mitzva; we must, therefore, never attempt to judge the value of one mitzva against another.

Similarity

Interestingly, there is also a lesson to learn by highlighting a **similarity** shared by these two mitzvos... Most mitzvos demand preparation and planning as precursors to our execution of them with the proper mindset. Other mitzvos arise **unexpectedly**. The two mitzvos in question share the characteristic of being the latter type.

שלוח הקן

כבוד אב ואם

The mitzvah arises only when a person **encounters** - כי יקרא - a bird's nest "along the way", and *not* if someone *plans* to take eggs from a nest. Rashi quotes the Gemara in *Chullin* 139b, that "יקרא" excludes a nest that is readily "available".

Similarly, although honoring parents is ever-present and routine, often a parent's wishes/requests/needs will arise unexpectedly. We have no way of predicting or anticipating the nature or timing of every wish a parent might have.

Rav Amital writes that "unexpected" mitzvos like these present us with an **opportunity** and a **challenge**:

- (a) Are we going to make an **immediate adjustment** to an unexpected circumstance, and
- (b) Are we going to do so with a sense of **excitement** that we have an opportunity to fulfill an unanticipated mitzvah.
 - (Granted, the "adjustment" in the case of sending away the mother bird is not overly demanding, as opposed to the potentially more time-consuming obligations that arise to fulfill a parent's request...)
 - Nevertheless, **both** demonstrate the importance of always being **eager for a chance to perform mitzvos, ready** for divine will, **flexible** to make whatever adjustments necessary to properly fulfill unexpected opportunities to perform mitzvos.
 - The Torah promises long life to a person who embraces such mitzvos, because **it demonstrates a strong love for Hashem and a deeply-ingrained commitment to fulfilling His Torah**.

This insight can perhaps connect to **Yaakov Avinu** who embodied the *middah* of תפארת and **readiness to serve**:

[Ideas based on a *shiur* given by Rav Moshe Weinberger *shlit"a*]

- Yaakov is associated with Sukkos; Reb Gershon Henoch Leiner of Radzyn zy"א, in *Sod Yesharim*, explains that a *pnimiyus* meaning for why we leave our homes – דירת קבע – for a temporary Sukkah is to **sharpen our koach of not being stuck**.
- תפארת is beauty, balance, symmetry. Yaakov, the בחיר האבות, represents **life in the Sukkah** – being **flexible**, being **whatever Hashem wants me to be in this moment**; being a **designated servant of Hashem** for whatever He wants and expects.
- The Kotzker Rebbe once asked a *chassid* of Reb Moshe of Kobrin – "what's your Rebbe's greatest characteristic?" The *chassid* replied, "whatever he's doing at that moment". Reb Moshe was committed and overjoyed to do any mitzva at-hand.
- Breishis 29:1 – וישא יעקב רגליו – Rashi says ונעשה קל; Yaakov's movement was "light", i.e., Yaakov **bent** to the will of Hashem.
- ויעקב איש תם ישב אהלים - Yaakov lives in a tent; **he is on call at all times**, and we, his children, try our best to emulate him.