



Fly, Kinderlach, Fly

"Come, Avi. Let's learn the parasha together."

"Thank you, Abba! Learning with you is my biggest treat."

"Let's read the first verse, Avi."

"It was on the eighth day, Moshe summoned Aaron, his sons, and the elders of Israel' (Vayikra 9:1). This is one of the many places in the Torah that the *zekaynim* – the elders of Israel – are mentioned."

"Who were they, Abba?"

"The Medrash Rabba (Vayikra 11:8) expounds upon this very subject, Avi. Rebbe Akiva said, 'Yisrael is compared to a bird. Just as a bird cannot fly without wings, so too Klal Yisrael cannot do anything (to sustain themselves) without their *zekaynim*.' Rebbe Shimon Bar Yochai added, 'Hashem granted honor to the *zekaynim*, not in one place in the Torah, not in two places, rather in many places. They are honored at the *sneh* (burning bush), when Hashem said, 'Go and gather the *ziknei Yisrael*' (Shemos 3:16). Similarly, in Mitzrayim, at Har Sinai, and at the *Ohel Moed* (Tent of Meeting) Hashem summons them by name, giving them special *kovod* (honor). In the future, in the times of Moshiach (speedily in our days), they will also receive special treatment."

"Why are our *zekaynim* given such special treatment, Abba?"

"That is a good question, Avi."

Let us first see who they are.

The Gemora (Kiddushin 32b)

states that a '*zoken*' is a *chochom* – one who has acquired wisdom. The *ziknei Yisrael* are our *chachomim* – our greatest Torah sages – who guide the nation with their wisdom. They receive the special honor of *Kovod HaTorah*, honor given to the Torah, which they represent. They are also the wings that enable Klal Yisrael to fly."

"That parable is a bit difficult to understand, Abba."

"Rav Zalman Sorotzkin, in his sefer 'Oznayim LiTorah' also felt that this needs explanation. Therefore, he expounds on this parable. What is the difference between the bird and other animals?"

"Other animals can only move on the

ground. A bird can fly in the air."

"Excellent, Avi. A bird can reach the highest heights. In order to do this, he needs a different set of limbs from all other animals. Land bound creatures travel on their legs. One step at a time, they get to their destination. Birds also have legs. The Almighty could have made them fly with their legs. He did not, however. He gave them special limbs – wings. So too it is with the Jewish people. We have 'legs' like the other nations of the world. However, we have something special that they do not have – 'wings'. Our 'wings' are our *zekaynim*. They give us the ability to fly to the greatest spiritual heights. When we follow their sage leadership, guided by the Divine wisdom of the Torah, we soar to exalted *madraygos* (spiritual levels). When we are inspired by their saintly deeds, we glide up to the heavenly levels. Sadly, if we do not listen to them, we are like a bird that does not use his wings. We just plod along the ground like everyone else, stuck in the muck with the other nations."

"Abba, I want to fly!"

"You will, Avi, you will. Just keep listening to your Rebbe and learning from him. Absorb the Torah of your Rosh Yeshiva. Learn from the righteous deeds of your *Mashgiach* (spiritual mentor). They all follow *Daas*

Torah – the wisdom of our Gedolim, who are the *ziknei Yisrael* of our generation. When you follow them, you yourself are following the *ziknei Yisrael*. They will give you the wings to fly, Avi. May Hashem help you to soar to the highest heights."

"Amen!"

Kinderlach . . .

Take a look up into the skies and watch the birds fly. They flap their wings to reach the height that they want, and then they glide. If they want, they can soar higher and higher. For them, "the sky is the limit." So too it is with us. We also have wings, kinderlach. Our gedolim, the Torah leaders who are the ziknei Yisrael of

bird can fly

our generation, are our wings. Their Torah wisdom, guidance, and exemplary deeds give us the ability to fly. Listen to them! Learn from them! Emulate them! Kinderlach, you will use your "spiritual wings" to soar to the greatest madraygas. Fly, kinderlach, fly!

It's Hard For Me

"Danny, it's time to get up."

"Oh. Already? But I just went to sleep, Abba."

"Believe it or not, you went to sleep eight hours ago. Now it time to begin your day."

"But it's so hard for me to get out of bed."

"I know. I empathize with you. Let me tell you about Aharon HaKohen. It was hard for him to carry out a mitzvah also. He had to approach the Holy Altar and perform the *avodah* (service). The Imrei Emes relates that this is the way of the *Yetzer Hara* (Evil Inclination). He makes mitzvos seem difficult. However, the point goes deeper than that."

"Really?"

"We were sent down to this earth to perfect ourselves. Each one of us has his own *middos* that need work. How do we know which areas we have to work on?"

"The ones which are the most difficult for us?"

"Excellent. The *Yetzer Hara* makes the most important things seem the most difficult."

"That is such an important thought, Abba!"

"Use it well, Danny, and overcome that evil *Yetzer Hara*."

Kinderlach . . .

What is your job in this world? What middos were you sent here to work on? Just think about which are the most difficult for you. Is it hard for you to get up in the morning? How about speaking quietly; is that difficult? We all have our challenges. Difficult mitzvos and middos need work. That is your job in life.

Parasha Questions:

- Which blessing did Moshe and Ahron give the nation when they left the Ohel Moed? (Rashi 9:23)
- Which two words mark the middle of the Torah (by word count)? (10:16)
- Which letter marks the middle of the Torah (by letter count)? (11:42)