

Shiluach HaKan

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Parshas Ki Seitzei contains more mitzvos than any other parsha in the Torah—74 mitzvos: 27 mitzvos asay and 47 mitzvos lo sasay.

One of those mitzvos is Shiluach HaKan, the mitzvah of sending away the mother bird.

The Torah says:

כִּי יִקְרָא קוֹן־צֶפֶר לְפָנֶיךָ...

“If you encounter a bird’s nest, And the mother is sitting on the eggs or the young:

לֹא־תִקַּח הָאִם עִלֵּיהֶבָּנִים

“You shall not take the mother together with the young.”

But rather, send away the mother, and take the young for yourself,

לְמַעַן יִיטֵב לָךְ וְהָאֲרָכָתָ יָמִים

so that it will be good for you and you will have a long life.

We find another mitzvah where the Torah promises the reward of long life, the mitzvah of honoring our parents.

The Torah says:

כְּבֹד אֶת־אָבִיךָ וְאֶת־אִמֶּךָ

Honor your father and your mother

לְמַעַן יָאָרִיכֶן יָמֶיךָ

so that your days will be lengthened

עַל הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ

upon the land that Hashem gives you.

| But there is an interesting difference between these 2 mitzvos.

By honoring parents, the Torah says that you will be rewarded with long life *עַל הָאֲדָמָה* “upon the land”

However by Shiluach HaKan, the Torah simply says:

“לְמַעַן יָאָרִיכֶן יָמֶיךָ” — “you will have long life.

But there is no mention *עַל הָאֲדָמָה*,

| So why the difference?

And there is an even more fundamental question: What is the underlying reason for the mitzvah of Shiluach HaKan?

On the surface, it almost seems cruel. You take away a mother from her children. Why would the Torah command us to do something that seems to cause pain to a mother?

The Rabbeinu Bachya offers a fascinating explanation.

He says, when we perform the mitzvah of Shiluach HaKen, we bring rachamim—we bring mercy—into the world.

How so?

Because when The mother bird sees us taking her young. She experiences pain and distress, and she cries over what has happened to her nest. That suffering arouses a demand for mercy in Heaven.

And when HaKadosh Baruch Hu responds with mercy toward this tiny creature, that mercy triggered by the mother bird spreads throughout the world.

Because Hashem's rachamim has no boundaries.

It is not limited to one particular person or one particular place.

And THAT is why the Torah simply says “והארכת ימים — and does not add the words al ha'adamah.

Because the beracha of long life is not limited to the person performing the mitzvah. The mercy generated by that mitzvah can bring relief and compassion to yidden throughout the world who are suffering.

What a powerful idea from the rabbanu b'chaya.

Now let me share with you a fascinating Midrash regarding the reward of Shiluach HaKen.

The Midrash says that the mitzvah of Shiluach HaKen is a segulah for having children.

The pasuk says: send away the mother bird

וְאֶת־הַבָּנִים תִּקַּח־לָךְ

“And the young you shall take for yourself.”

Says the Midrash that when a person performs the mitzvah of Shiluach HaKen, he will be zoche to children of his own.

But there is an obvious question.

If the Torah tells us explicitly that the reward for this mitzvah is long life, why does the Midrash say that the reward is having children?

The answer is children and Arichas Yamim are really one in the same.

How so?

The Rambam writes in a letter to his son that every person has a finite amount of time in this world. Once a person fulfills his mission and accomplishes what he was meant to accomplish, his time in this world can come to an end.

But what if someone has accomplished his personal mission and still wants to live longer?

The Rambam explains that there is a way to extend your life: Have a positive impact on other people.

Although your own personal avodah may be complete, if you have children, grandchildren, students, or people in your community who rely on you for your Torah, your chesed, your guidance, or your positive influence, you have a reason to remain here.

| Now we can understand the connection between children and arichas yamim.

The Torah says that through the mitzvah of Shiluach HaKen, a person can be zocheh to children.

Children are people whose lives we can influence profoundly.

We teach them Torah. We teach them mitzvos. We teach them good middos. We guide them and inspire them. And that becomes part of our mission in this world.

As long as there are people whose lives we can impact, our mission is not yet complete.

And this is the connection between children and arichas yamim.

| As we approach Rosh Hashanah, we are all looking for ways to be zocheh ba'din, to merit a good judgment and a long life.

Perhaps there is a powerful lesson here for all of us.

| If you want Hashem to have a reason to keep you around, become someone that other people need.

Build a network of people who rely on you and their lives are better because they are connected to you.

- Do chesed for someone.
- Give someone chizuk.
- Visit someone who is lonely.
- Call someone who needs encouragement.
- Give someone a warm smile.

We have no idea what one small gesture can mean to another person.

You might be the highlight of someone's day.

And if there are people on this world who depend on you—people you help, inspire, encourage, and bring happiness to— then Hashem will say:

“I still need you here.”

| Give Hashem a reason to extend your life, not just for yourself, but for all the people whose lives you touch.