



# SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM

HAAZINU • האזינו / "BE LIGHT AS AN EAGLE"

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**HAAZINU / האזינו**

**SERMON TITLE:**

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## HAAZINU "BE LIGHT AS AN EAGLE"

In 1782 the United States of America officially adopted the Bald Eagle as its national bird. Do you know why the Eagle was chosen to represent the U.S.A.? It is because an eagle represents freedom. The eagle by nature has the ability to fly higher and faster than any other bird, which is clearly a sign of greater freedom.

In Jewish tradition the eagle is a symbol of true greatness and our nation's greatest leaders were compared to eagles. The Rambam (Maimonides) for example is referred to as "The Great Eagle" for his greatness in Torah and his unsurpassed leadership of the Jewish nation. As the famous saying goes, "From Moshe until Moshe there was no one like Moshe."

The eagle has many wonderful traits. Eagles can always find their way home. Even if an eagle was held in captivity for a long time and even if it was transported to a different part of the world, when it is set free it will always find the way back to its nest.

The eagle is proclaimed the king of the birds. In the famous prophecy of Ezekiel he had a vision of the heavenly throne being carried by four heavenly beings, a man, a lion, an ox and an eagle. The face of the man looked like the patriarch Jacob, the lion as the king of the wild beasts, the ox as the king of the domesticated animals, and the eagle as the king of the birds.



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In this week's Torah portion, G-d himself is compared to an eagle in the verse, "As an eagle awakens its nest, hovering over its fledglings, [So] the Lord alone guided them [the Jewish people]."

Why is the Alm-ghty G-d compared to an eagle?

Because besides being a symbol of freedom the eagle is a symbol of mercy. Rashi explains that G-d guided Israel with mercy and compassion like an eagle, which is merciful towards its own fledglings and does not enter its nest suddenly. Rather, it beats and flaps its wings above its young, going from one tree to another, from one branch to another, in order that its young should awaken and have the strength to handle its arrival.

What does this say about G-d? G-d too, reveals Himself slowly. When G-d wants to bring a Jew to do mitzvahs He doesn't 'pounce' on him, rather He sends him one sign, and if that doesn't work he sends him another sign and so on. As the Rambam describes the process of contracting leprosy for speaking *lashon harah*, "First the walls of the house get infected, if the man repents the walls will be cleansed, if the man does not repent the leprosy infects the furniture inside the house. If he still does not repent the leprosy will infect the clothing he wears, and if he still does not repent G-d will inflict the man's body with leprosy. G-d awakens his children softly, bit by bit, not to give them a shock and this way He returns them to the Torah path.

G-d also protects His children the same way as the eagles do.



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In Exodus (Shemos) G-d says to Israel, "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and [how] I bore you on eagles' wings, and I brought you to Me." And Rashi explains: *Unlike all other birds that carry their young between their feet since they fear another bird flying above them, the eagle carries its young on its wings. The eagle fears only man, lest he shoot an arrow at it, because no other bird flies above it. It says, 'Rather the arrows pierce me and not my children.'* God did that too when the angel of God came between the camp of Egypt and the Egyptians shot arrows and catapult stones and the Cloud of Glory absorbed them.

Just as the eagle sacrifices himself and places himself between his children and the threat, G-d sacrifices Himself, so to speak, for the sake of His children the Jewish people. He rises above His judgment and protects His people even from that which they deserve.

And most of the Torah's commentaries agree that the clouds which accompanied the Jewish people in the desert are still guarding us till today. That means that the Jewish Nation is being carried on the wings of G-d and this is the secret to the Jew's survival even after all that we've been through.

Dear friends.

Not only is an eagle an eagle but an eagle's child is also an eagle: meaning that not only can G-d be compared to an eagle in all the ways we've discussed but G-d's children, the Jewish people also have many things in common with the king of the birds.



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First of all, just as an eagle can always find its way home no matter how far it has been taken, a Jew no matter how many mistakes he has made and no matter how far he has strayed from the ways of the Torah, will always find his way back to the warm nest of Judaism to Torah and mitzvahs.

Second of all, just like the eagle with the help of its powerful wings can soar up so high that no four legged or winged even creature poses a threat to it, so can a Jew by the power of his wings, the mitzvahs, soar up higher than all other beings. He can soar even higher than the angels, for mitzvah have the power to connect the Jew with G-d himself, and then no nation and no force can have any power over the Jewish people.

Most importantly, the eagle is a merciful bird, and one of the most symbolic traits of the Jewish people is mercy. The eagle's mercy is expressed in that it will carry its children anywhere. The lesson for us is that when a Jew begins to soar higher spiritually and begins to keep more mitzvahs and to draw closer to G-d, he must behave like the eagle and who carries its children on its wings, and does not leave them behind.

There are unfortunately many Jews who leave their wives and children 'below' when they begin their upward journey through Judaism. They attend the Torah study classes and services in shul and get inspired. They forget that their whole family should be 'taking flight' along with them. Their wives and children should also be growing and coming closer to Judaism.



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We must learn from the eagle to always worry about our families and **even if that would mean slowing down the pace!** It's better to go slowly with your family than to fly fast all alone. It's an important move to make because ultimately this is how we will merit "flying upon the eagle's wings" to our holy land with the coming of our righteous Moshiach.

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