

פרשת יתרו / Parashat Yitro

Shabbat Sh'vat 22, 5770, February 6, 2010
32:1-32:52 MATSATI.COM / Rightly Dividing The Word of G-d
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On Wings like Eagles

השבועות הזה קוראים / This Week's Reading

תורה: Exodus 18:1-20:23
הפטרה: Isaiah 6:1-7:6 9:5-9:6
הברית: Matthew 5:8-20
החדשה

- 10 In this week's parsha, Parashat Yitro, G-d describes taking the children of Yisrael out of Mitzrayim (Egypt) "on eagles' wings." This is an interesting metaphor that is used frequently throughout the Tanach; interesting because certainly the Lord did not airlift the children of Yisrael out of Egypt. How did G-d bear Yisrael on eagles' wings and what did G-d mean by saying that He bore them on eagles' wings?
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שמות 19:4-8

4 תֹּאמַר רְבִית יַעֲקֹב וְתִנְיָד לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: אֲתֶם רְאִיתֶם
אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי לְמִצְרַיִם וְאֲשָׂא אֶתְכֶם עַל-כַּנְפֵי נְשָׁרִים
5 וְאָבֵא אֶתְכֶם אֵלָי: וְעַתָּה אִם-שָׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹלִי
וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת-בְּרִיתִי וְהִיְתֶם לִי סֻגְלָה מִכָּל-הָעַמִּים
6 בְּיָדִי כָּל-הָאָרֶץ: וְאַתֶּם תְּהִיְוּ לִי מִמְּלַכֵּת כֹּהֲנִים וְגוֹי ס
קָדוֹשׁ אֱלֹהֵי הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר תְּדַבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
7 וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה וַיִּקְרָא לְזִקְנֵי הָעָם וַיָּשֶׂם לִפְנֵיהֶם אֵת כָּל-
8 הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר צִוָּהוּ יְהוָה: וַיַּעֲנוּ כָּל-הָעָם יַחְדָּו
וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר יְהוָה נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁבַּע מֹשֶׁה אֶת-
9 דְּבָרֵי הָעָם אֶל-יְהוָה: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי

- 20 To begin to investigate the usage of the word "eagles," let's look at a few places in the Tanach that use this phrase. The word "Nesharim" in our verse (19:4) refers to great birds of prey and is not specifically the word for eagle. There are a number of raptors in Yisrael, kestrels, black kites, vultures, and golden eagles and there are a variety of Hebrew terms that refer to them (see *Vayikra / Leviticus 11:13*); terms such as that for unclean birds ayah, dayah, and racham. The translators of the NASB and most English translations chose to translate nesharim as eagle. A recent publication titled "The books of Moses" the Schocken Bible volume 1, a translation by Everett Fox also did not use "vulture" as the translation, though, most scholars regard the bird as the Egyptian vulture.
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Shmot / Exodus 19:4-8

19:4 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. 19:5 'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; 19:6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.' 19:7 So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the Lord had commanded him. 19:8 All the people answered together and said, 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do!' And Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord. (NASB)

30 (Note that the Egyptian vulture is titled such because it is used as a symbol in Egyptian hieroglyphs.) In English the vulture has unpleasant connotations whereas the eagle is seen as a noble and imperial bird. In *Micah 1:16*, the context of the verse suggests that the identification with vulture is made clear (i.e. bald head), however, eagle is used as the translation for nesher. (see below) In *Devarim / Deuteronomy 14:12*, the Hebrew root for לשנו (לנחות) means “to fall.”

35 The meaning “to fall” may be a reference to the way these birds swoop down on their prey (i.e. *Job 9:26* “*They slip by like reed boats, Like an eagle that swoops on its prey.*”). Vultures can be seen around the Dead Sea region and in the northern region of Yisrael they can be seen soaring over Gamala, the capital of the Jewish Golan from 87 BCE to 68 CE until it was taken by the Romans. The

40 remains of the Gamala may be seen in the Golan Heights even this day. Watching eagles or vultures soaring on thermals I again ask myself “what is the meaning of this phrase” in *Shmot / Exodus 19:4*? Let’s now look at a few verses.

Shmot / Exodus 19:4

<p>אתם ראיתם אשר עשיתי למצרים ואשא אתכם על כנפי נשרים ואבא אתכם אלי:</p>	<p>19:4 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself.</p>
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Vayikra / Leviticus 11:13

<p>ואת אלה תשקצו מן העוף לא יאכלו שקץ הם את הנשר ואת הפרס ואת העזניה:</p>	<p>11:13 'These, moreover, you shall detest among the birds; they are abhorrent, not to be eaten: the eagle and the vulture and the buzzard,</p>
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Devarim / Deuteronomy

14:12, 28:49, 32:11

<p>ישא יהוה עליך גוי מרחוק מקצה הארץ כאשר ידאה הנשר גוי אשר לא תשמע לשנו:</p>	<p>14:12 ‘The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand,</p>
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2 Samuel 1:23

<p>שאול ויהונתן הנאהבים והנעימים בחייהם ובמותם לא נפרדו מנשרים קלו מאריות גברו:</p>	<p>1:23 ‘Saul and Jonathan, beloved and pleasant in their life, And in their death they were not parted; They were swifter than eagles, They were stronger than lions.</p>
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Yoav / Job 9:26, 39:27

<p>חלפו עם אניות אבה כנשר יטוש עלי אכל:</p>	<p>9:26 They slip by like reed boats, Like an eagle that swoops on its prey.</p>
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Tehilim / Psalms 103:5

המשביע בטוב עדיך תתחדש כנשר
נעורייכי:

103:5 Who satisfies your years
with good things, So that your
youth is renewed like the
eagle.

**Mishley / Proverbs 23:5,
30:17, 30:19**

התעוף עיניך בו ואיננו כי עשה יעשה
לו כנפים כנשר ועיף השמים:

23:5 When you set your eyes
on it, it is gone. For wealth
certainly makes itself wings
Like an eagle that flies toward
the heavens.

עין תלעג לאב ותבוז ליקהת אם יקרוה
ערבי נחל ויאכלוה בני נשר:

30:17 The eye that mocks a
father And scorns a mother,
The ravens of the valley will
pick it out, And the young
eagles will eat it.

Yeshayahu / Isaiah 40:31

וקוי יהוה יחליפו כח יעלו אבר
כנשרים ירוצו ולא ייגעו ילכו ולא
ייעפו:

40:31 Yet those who wait for
the Lord Will gain new
strength; They will mount up
with wings like eagles, They
will run and not get tired, They
will walk and not become
weary.

**Yeremiyahu / Jeremiah 4:13,
48:40, 49:16, 49:22**

הנה כעננים יעלה וכסופה מרכבותיו
קלו מנשרים סוסיו אוי לנו כי שדדנו:

4:13 'Behold, he goes up like
clouds, And his chariots like
the whirlwind; His horses are
swifter than eagles. Woe to us,
for we are ruined!'

Hoshea / Hosea 8:1

אל חכך שפר כנשר על בית יהוה יען
עברו בריתי ועל תורתני פשעו:

8:1 Put the trumpet to your
lips! Like an eagle the enemy
comes against the house of the
Lord, Because they have
transgressed My covenant And
rebelled against My law.

Micah 1:16

קרחי וגזי על בני תענוגיך הרחבי
קרחתך כנשר כי גלו ממך:

1:16 Make yourself bald and
cut off your hair, Because of
the children of your delight;
Extend your baldness like the
eagle, For they will go from
you into exile.

45 The Scriptural use of the word eagle denotes lofty and distant heights, the swooping down upon its unknowing prey and strength suggests that the eagle is a metaphor that portends that no obstacles whatsoever would be allowed to stand before you if you are in G-d's hands. Take for example, *Yeshayahu / Isaiah 40:31* *40:31 Yet those who wait for the Lord Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.* The simple poetic substitution that suggests a comparison between those who wait for the Lord and mounting up on eagles wings indicates the strength that we obtain by trusting in G-d.

50 In *Shmot / Exodus 19:4* HaShem tells Moshe that "*You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself.*" There are three things which are emphasized here, (i) divine judgment against Mitzrayim (Egypt), (ii) divine deliverance out of bondage, and (iii) divine drawing to HaShem, to the place G-d wanted them to be. HaShem reminds the people how he bore them on eagles' wings an image of divine deliverance. At the Red Sea, He told them to stand still and watch what I do for you. In the wilderness, the people wouldn't have survived without the mana (bread from heaven) and meat that was provided by G-d. The children of Yisrael did not gain their deliverance; HaShem had "bore them on eagles' wings." Taking all of these things into consideration, the metaphor here in *Shmot / Exodus 19:4*, in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 32:11*, and elsewhere suggests that the phrase "bore them on eagles' wings" is a picture of G-d's loving protection. This is also consistent with the Chazal, (ל"ח"), the rabbinic writings of Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi) who suggests the Midrash from the Mekhilta that pictures the neshar carrying its babies on its back to protect them.

60 These Scriptures' in *Shmot / Exodus* detail how G-d had rescued Yisrael from their enemies using the metaphor of carrying them on eagles' wings and bringing them to Himself. We have and serve the same G-d as Moshe in the Torah and today HaShem has delivered each and every one of us from the bondage of sin. G-d sent His son to make atonement for our sins, the sins that keep us in the wilderness journey. The scriptures detail G-d's desire to rescue and deliver us, just as he would carry us on mighty wings to bring us to Himself. Though the people of Yisrael saw and felt G-d's presence, they still needed to take human steps to freedom. Thus, there are steps we need to take that are necessary to being freed "on eagles' wings." The first step is to believe in Yeshua, that He is the Messiah, and that he laid down his life by the shedding of His own blood for the forgiveness of our sins. I encourage you today to begin soaring as an eagle through faith in Yeshua the Messiah. Come and say the following prayer with me.

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Heavenly Father,

90 I want to be carried on eagle's wings and I want to be renewed in your strength as it says in *Yeshayahu / Isaiah 40:31*. I believe that Yeshua died on the cross 2000 years ago for the forgiveness of my sins. I believe that His blood was

shed to fulfill the requirement according to the Torah to make atonement for my sins. Thank you Lord for such a wonderful salvation; I give you all of the glory, all of the honor, and all of the praise.

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In Yeshua's name I pray. Amen.

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Be Blessed in Yeshua our Messiah!

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:
Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
"Yeshua" King Messiah forever and ever