

HAAZINU

G-d's portion is His People... He discovered them in a desert land, in desolation, in a howling wilderness... as an eagle that arouses its nest, hovering over its young, spreading its wings and taking them, carrying them on its pinions... (32:10-11).

Moshe brings his long and final address to the Israelites towards crescendo with the song that forms most of the content of this Parsha. Its main message is a powerful reminder to the Israelites of the consequences of their future "straying from the path that I have commanded them" (31:29). That is framed within the Israelites' exalted status amongst the nations: "G-d's portion is His People" (32:9), and the assurance that despite all the punishments for their wrong-doings, the Israelites will survive as an entity and their oppressors will ultimately be avenged in the Final Judgment. G-d's "discovering them in a desert land", according to Rashi, is a statement of praise for the Israelites. G-d discovered that the wilderness-travelling Israelites were the only nation that accepted the offer of the Torah. Other nations had rejected it. It was also in that environment that G-d discovered the Israelites' trust and loyalty in following His guidance

towards the Promised Land, despite the series of adverse incidents that considerably extended the time and route of the journey.

Abravanel observes four characteristics of the way that an adult eagle treats its young. It approaches its nest with a whistling sound that signals its arrival without startling and frightening the juvenile birds in the nest. It does not swoop down, but hovers and gently descends. When moving the family home, it takes the whole nest in one go: firmly and deftly, with minimal intrusion and disturbance. To prevent falling, it carries the nest on the strong rather than the weak part of its body.

G-d, Abravanel explains, effected Yetziat Mitzrayim in a similar way. As Moshe reminded them before Matan Torah: "I carried you on the wings of eagles and I brought you to Me" (Sh'mot 19:4). He signaled the start with Moshe and Aharon's persuasion, rather than with fire and brimstone. He hovered over the Israelites by letting them observe the plagues befalling the Egyptians one after the other, over many weeks. He took the Israelites out of Egypt all together, in one go, with their possessions. And He protected them from the fast-pursuing Egyptians by placing Himself between them as a pillar of cloud (Sh'emot 14:19-20). No bird flies higher than the eagle, no power

is stronger than G-d.

It may well be that these are all characteristics and indicators of expert leadership: unassuming, un-intrusive, creating the right connections and atmosphere, focusing on the objective, and achieving it through reserves of power applied sparingly, effectively, and only where needed. 🚧