

On Eagle's Wings  
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Deuteronomy 32:11

Like an eagle who rouses its nestlings, Gliding down to its young, So did [God] spread wings and take them, Bear them along on pinions;	כְּנֶשֶׁר יַעִיר קִנּוֹ עַל-גּוֹזְלָיו יִרְחֹף יִפְרֹשׂ כְּנָפָיו יִקְחֵהוּ יִשְׂאֵהוּ עַל-אֶבְרָתוֹ :
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I. The Aspirational Model—Rabbi Naftali Tzi Hersh Berlin, HaEmek Davar cf. Deuteronomy 32:11

The mother eagle raises up her young to be like her, just as all parents do.

The unique characteristic of an Eagle is its ability to fly very high in the sky. This is the way it behaves when it is far from its nest. And when it stirs to return to its nest—even though it would be possible to walk with the chicks by foot, or the fly very close to the surface—it still carries the chicks on its wings very high in the sky.

There is the concern that the chicks might fall from the wings of its mother. Nevertheless, the mothers carries her young on her wings so that they can learn to be like her.

II. The Confident Model—Mekhilta DeRabbi Shimon Ben Yochai, cf. Deuteronomy 32:11

It is the way of most birds to carry their young between their knees, for they are afraid that a predator might snatch them away. But an eagle fears no other bird, thus it carries its young on its wings.

III. The Sacrificial Model --Midrash Tanchuma, Eikev 2:1

It spreads its wings, takes them up, and bears them aloft on its pinions.” As it is not confident about them because of other birds who pursue them. What does it do? It places them on its wings and says, “Better that the arrow should go through me and not through my children.”

IV. The Nurturing Model—Elijah of Vilna, Aderet Eliyahu

When the eagles finds its young sleeping, it flaps its wings over them to arouse them from sleep. Afterwards it enters the nest. It hovers over them—touching and not touching, so it won't burden them. When it wants to take them, first it extends the edges of its wings. And when it wants to fly with them, it moves them securely onto its wings so they will not fall.

This is what God did for us, when we left Egypt. First, God aroused them in their exile, then God avenged us by punishing Pharaoh and removing idolatry from our midst.

Just as an eagle does for its young, God bore us the clouds of glory—touching land, but not touching land. The Egyptians catapulted weapons into the air, but the clouds protected us.