

THE GOLDEN PLOVER

(Condensed from Judaism Online)

The Golden Plover is a bird that lives in Alaska during the summer months. When the winter approaches, it sets off on its epic voyage to Hawaii. This involves a nonstop flight which takes it across the open sea, where no island punctuates the watery expanse. In addition, the bird cannot swim, so that a stop for a rest is impossible. The flight is a distance of at least 2,500 miles (depending on its starting-off point), lasts 88 hours, and involves no less than a quarter-million consecutive wing beats!

Now everyone knows that for nonstop travel an airplane must have sufficient fuel. So does the Golden Plover. To ensure the correct flying capacity the bird must avoid excess weight at all costs, but still have sufficient fuel to complete the flight. The bird's starting weight is 7 ounces, of which 2.5 ounces are stored as layers of fat to be used as fuel. It is known that the Golden Plover converts 0.6 percent per hour of its current body weight into energy and heat. If you calculate this over a period of 88 hours, you will find that the Golden Plover has used almost 3 ounces of fuel. This is more than the available 2.5 ounces! Bear in mind that the bird itself cannot fall below 4.5 ounces. Thus, in spite of flying at the speed which minimizes his fuel consumption, the bird does not have enough fuel to reach Hawaii. The Golden Plover solves this problem, however, by flying in a V-formation which saves 23% of its energy and allows it to arrive in Hawaii with fuel to spare.

When John Alcock and Arthur Brown flew from Newfoundland to Ireland on June 14-15, 1919—the first nonstop transatlantic flight—they became instant heroes. Their remarkable achievement was recognized and praised throughout the world (they were both knighted five days after they landed), all the more so because they ended their historic flight only 10 miles off course. They had a compass, charts, air speed indicator, drift indicator, a clock and a sextant to assist in their historic journey. The Golden Plover, of course, has none of these.

Now consider the following questions. How does the bird know how much fat is necessary for fuel? How does it arrange to have precisely this amount on board before embarking on its momentous journey? How does the bird know the distance and the specific rate of fuel consumption? Even more incredibly, how does the bird know where to go? (The first time it travels, it has never been there before!) And the most perplexing question of all: How does the bird know the way? The bird's navigational achievement is unparalleled in any human activity.

Job said: **“Ask the animals, and they will teach you, ask the birds of the air and they will tell you” (Job 12:7, 8).** The same God who made the Golden Plover also made you. The same God who guides this tiny bird across thousands of miles of trackless sea can also guide you. But the Golden Plover needs more than guidance. It also needs to travel with others that are headed for the same destination. Just as a race car can draft behind the car in front and save energy, the Golden Plover can draft behind others, save energy, and arrive safely.

Someone has said that no one goes to heaven alone. This is true! When we are baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27), we are also baptized into the church (1 Cor. 12:13). The church, as you know, is the “Body of Christ” (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 1:23; Col. 1:18; etc.) A body, of course, is not one part but many! One part of the Body cannot say to another part of the Body “I don't need you” (1 Cor. 12:21). The book of Ecclesiastes reminds us that two are better than one for if one falls down his friend can pick him up (Eccl. 4: 9, 10). Just as one lump of coal grows cold when separated from the fire, so also one member of Christ's Body grows lukewarm and cold when separated from others. Job was right! If we ask the Golden Plover, it can teach us something! That's one reason why we are to exhort “one another” to not forsake the assembly (Heb. 10:25).