



Bet Horah

בית הוראה

Shaarei Ezra

עברי עזרא

Parshat Chayei Sarah
Zmanim for New York:
Candle Lighting: 4:14pm
Shabbat ends: 5:17pm
R"T 5:45pm

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DEPORTATIONS AND CLOSED BORDERS: A REFLECTION ON SEDOM VS. THE U.S.
 WRITTEN BY **RABBI SHAY TAHAN**
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The law in Sedom strictly prohibited immigrants from entering the country. This was the most severe law, rigorously enforced with harsh punishments for those who violated it. Not only were immigrants punished for entering Sedom, but those who aided or colluded with them also faced severe penalties. If immigrants managed to enter, the law mandated their mass deportation.

According to Midrashic sources, Sedom was notorious for its cruelty and its laws, which were specifically designed to prevent acts of charity or compassion. The story of a girl who performed kindness in Sedom serves as a poignant example of the city's harshness and moral depravity.

The young girl secretly defied these cruel laws by helping a poor person. She would covertly provide food to a needy individual, showing compassion in a society where such acts were forbidden. She would smuggle food hidden in a jug or bread hidden under her garments to ensure the survival of someone in dire need.

When the people of Sedom discovered her actions, they subjected her to a horrific punishment to deter others from acts of kindness. They executed her by smearing her with honey and placing her on a rooftop to be stung to death by bees. This brutal act exemplified the extent of Sedom's inhumanity and intolerance for mercy.

The Torah tells us that a new appointee was designated as the border czar to enforce the law. His name was Lot. However, on his very first day in the role, Lot himself violated the very law he was appointed to uphold. When he saw newcomers, he invited them into his house, committing what was considered a grave crime. Understanding the danger this posed to Lot, the guests initially suggested that they would sleep in the street, but Lot insisted on hosting them. Word of this act quickly spread, and masses of people—of all ages and from across the entire city—gathered to mob Lot's house and lynch the guests. Hashem's reaction to Sedom was one of absolute justice

and destruction due to the city's extreme wickedness and moral corruption. The Torah describes Sedom and its neighboring cities as places filled with selfishness, cruelty, and an utter lack of compassion for others. Their behavior violated fundamental ethical principles and demonstrated a complete rejection of Hashem's values of justice and kindness.



The final decree of destruction came after Hashem sent angels to investigate the city's moral state, confirming its depravity. Despite Avraham Avinu's pleas to spare the city if righteous individuals could be found within it, not even ten righteous people were present. This sealed Sedom's fate.

Hashem destroyed Sedom and the surrounding cities with fire and brimstone, overturning the land as an eternal testament to the consequences of their behavior. The punishment reflected the severity of their sins, including their institutionalized cruelty, disregard for human dignity, and their corruption, which left no room for repentance or change.

Sedom's Values:

Upon reading this, a question arises: why is today's America different from Sedom? The Republicans ran on a platform of closing the borders and carrying out mass deportations of illegal immigrants. A similar issue can be raised in Israel, which faces a significant challenge with Eritrean immigrants and has made efforts to deport them as well.

We can attempt to answer this by noting that America does welcome new immigrants, but they must enter legally. However, it still seems contradictory to what we have just read—deporting families and closing the door to asylum seekers appears to go against the values of compassion and hospitality that we expect from a just society.

Let's try to answer by examining the essence of the values and ethics that Sedom represents and see if America shares these values. The Mishna in Pirkei Avot

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states (5, 10): "There are four types of character in people, and one of the four types is, 'Whoever says mine is mine and yours is yours'—this is the character of Sedom." This means that Sedom believed in the ethic of "live and let live," or "I won't bother you, and you don't bother me." According to this mindset, if you see someone suffering, you don't offer help as long as they don't ask you for assistance in their time of need.

Chazal explain this to mean that Sedom's philosophy is: even if I won't lose anything by helping the other, I still don't need to help. According to the Torah, this attitude is highly negative, and our sages would actively discourage such behavior.

The Talmud (Baba Kama 20) discusses the idea that if one person benefits from something and the other person is not harmed, it may not constitute a halacha violation. A classic example is if someone uses a piece of land but there is no tangible damage or loss to the property or person who owns it.

For instance, if one person parks his car in a neighbor's driveway while the neighbor is away, and the neighbor does not suffer any loss, the principle of "zeh neheneh v'zeh lo chaser" applies. This is because the benefit to the person parking the car does not cause any financial detriment to the owner of the driveway.

America Ethics:

Accordingly, we learn that invaders who enter another land and bring with them the potential for crime and terrorism, take advantage of taxpayer money, and occupy the education and healthcare systems

are definitely not in line with the negative idealism of Sedom. Therefore, America is absolutely correct to secure its borders and deport illegal immigrants. We can easily support this point by referencing the story of Yishmael. As soon as he began to influence Yitzchak negatively and demonstrate harmful behavior, Hashem Himself instructed Avraham to heed Sarah's request and send him away from their home.

Hashem also commands, at the time of conquering the land of Israel, that all inhabitants should be driven out. The reason given is that if they are not removed, they will cause the nation to learn from and adopt their sinful behavior.

Final words:

In conclusion, securing borders and addressing illegal immigration can be viewed as an effort to maintain the integrity and safety of the nation. The teachings from the Torah remind us that allowing harmful influences to take root can lead to a negative societal impact. Just as Avraham was instructed to send away Yishmael to protect his family, so too can a nation take steps to protect its future, ensuring that its values are preserved and that it remains strong in the face of challenges. However, when immigrants do not pose any potential danger and do not drain the country's resources, then welcoming them in aligns with the values of compassion and hospitality, ensuring a balance between safeguarding national interests and extending kindness to those in need.

JEWELS OF WISDOM: RIVKAH'S GIFT OF SENSITIVITY

In our parshiot, we find three distinct models of hachnasat orchim (hospitality).

The first is exemplified by Avraham Avinu, who embodies unlimited generosity. He offers his guests everything without limitations, seeking nothing in return. His hospitality is entirely altruistic, motivated purely by the value of giving.

The second model is that of Sedom. The people of Sedom actively avoided hosting guests, making it a principle to deny entry to outsiders. Even if a guest offered full payment for hospitality, they would refuse, demonstrating their extreme lack of kindness and hospitality.

The third is exemplified by Lavan. When Rivka tells him about Eliezer, Avraham's messenger, and he sees the jewelry Eliezer gave her, he rushes to invite him. However, his invitation is not driven by generosity but by self-interest, with his eyes on the wealth Eliezer might share. Lavan's hospitality is thus conditional and self-serving, hoping to benefit materially from his guest.

But then, there is another form of hospitality that requires deeper exploration and understanding: the hospitality of Rivkah. She invites Eliezer to her home while also accepting the generous gifts he offers. Despite this, the Torah presents her as an expert in kindness and a role model worthy of emulation.

This raises a compelling question: Wouldn't it seem more fitting for Rivkah to emulate Avraham Avinu's model of pure, selfless giving,



ing, offering hospitality without accepting anything in return? Shouldn't her acceptance of Eliezer's gifts disqualify her from becoming Yitzchak's wife and stepping into the role of Sarah Imeinu, who epitomized the ideal of total giving?

Understanding Rivkah's actions requires us to consider a nuanced perspective on kindness. Let us consider a well-known Gemara. According to halacha, for a marriage (kiddushin) to take place, a man must give something of value to the woman. This is why we use a ring during a wedding ceremony. If the man gives nothing, the marriage is

invalid. Certainly, if the woman gives something to the man instead, the marriage does not take effect.

However, the Gemara (kidushin 7a) presents an exception to this rule. If the man is an important person who normally does not accept gifts, and the woman gives him something that he agrees to accept, the marriage can be valid. In such a case, the act of him accepting the gift is considered a benefit to her. This benefit, which holds intrinsic value, serves as the basis for the kiddushin.

We learn from this Gemara that sometimes receiving from another is not truly receiving but is, in essence, an act of giving. With this in mind, we can understand Rivkah's actions. When she accepted the jewelry from Eliezer, it wasn't with the intent to receive for her own benefit. Rather, seeing how excited Eliezer was to give her the gifts, she chose not to reject them, as doing so would have caused him discomfort or disappointment. Her

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acceptance was, therefore, a form of kindness—giving Eliezer the satisfaction of fulfilling his mission with joy.

It is also logical that a guest feels more comfortable when the host accepts something from him, as it alleviates the sense of completely imposing on the host. This concept is similarly reflected in the mitzvah of tzedakah. The Shulchan Aruch teaches that the highest form of tzedakah is providing someone with a job. In this way, the recipient does not feel they are receiving charity but instead earning what they rightfully deserve for their efforts. This principle highlights the importance of preserving the dignity and self-worth of those we help, even in acts of giving.

We can explain that Eliezer was testing whether Rivkah possessed the sensitivity to make others feel good. This can be inferred from

the sequence of events. At the well, the Torah describes how Rivkah first gave Eliezer water to drink and then offered to draw water for his camels. After she completed this generous act, the pasuk states that Eliezer was still waiting to see if Hashem had made his mission successful. What was he waiting for?

The answer is that he was observing whether Rivkah would accept the jewelry he gave her immediately afterward. By taking the gifts, Rivkah demonstrated her sensitivity—not out of personal gain but because she recognized Eliezer's joy in giving and did not want to diminish it. This subtle act showed her refined character, confirming that she was suitable to join Yitzchak's household and continue the legacy of kindness exemplified by Sarah Imeinu.

AMSTERDAM RIOTS: THE TORAH'S PERSPECTIVE ON PROTECTION AND REVENGE

As we witnessed the recent attack on our people in Amsterdam, we are reminded once again of how important it is to have the means to protect ourselves and our families, and to be prepared for potential threats. There is a reason why in America the Second Amendment allows one to protect themselves with arms. If a person seeks to harm another, they will likely think twice and reconsider if they know that their target has the ability to defend themselves. The fact is that these cowards often look for easy targets. They seek out the weak, just as Amalek did, and spare those whom they believe could fight back.

But is that the Torah's view? Maybe the Torah wants us to accept our fate of being constantly persecuted? Let's delve into some cases in the Torah to better understand this perspective.

Avraham war against the four kings

In the previous parasha, we read how Avraham went to war to rescue his nephew Lot, who had been kidnapped by a coalition of four kings. These kings had defeated the kings of the cities of Sedom, Amorrhah, and others, and had taken Lot and his possessions as spoils.

When Avraham heard that Lot had been captured, he immediately mobilized his trained men, who were born in his household— 318 men. With these men, Avraham pursued the captors, and he managed to defeat the kings and their armies. He rescued Lot, along with the other captives, and recovered the spoils.

This story demonstrates Avraham's courage and determination to protect his family, even at the risk of his own life. Despite his great faith in Hashem, Avraham was not passive. While relying on Hashem for success, he took decisive action to ensure the safety of his loved ones. Avraham didn't view the situation as a divine decree that he should passively accept; instead, he understood that in order to live with dignity and stop oppression, he had to take action. He put himself in grave danger, fighting a war that seemed almost certain to be a suicide mission, against four trained and armed armies.

Through this, Avraham paved the way for us to understand that we, too, should not be passive when attacked. Aggression invites more aggression, and we must stand up for ourselves and protect those who are vulnerable.



Yaakov preparation for a war

Similarly, we see with Yaakov after he learns that Esav is threatening his safety. Yaakov takes the necessary steps to ensure he is prepared for a meaningful war, while also attempting to resolve the conflict diplomatically by appeasing Esav in various ways. Yaakov prepares for battle, but he does not rely solely on war as his first option.

Yaakov could have surrendered to Esav, who was stronger and possessed a trained army. Surrendering would have spared his life and the lives of his large family. However, Yaakov chose a different path. He demonstrated that, while one should always seek peace and resolve conflict through peaceful means when possible, it is also necessary to be prepared to defend oneself when faced with aggression.

Through this, Yaakov teaches us the correct approach to aggression: first, try to resolve the situation diplomatically, but when faced with real threats, we must also prepare to stand our ground and defend ourselves.

Yehudah prepares to fight the king

Later, when Yosef wanted to keep Bin-yamin as a slave for Pharaoh, Yehudah understood the injustice and decided to speak to him harshly, threatening to kill him and Pharaoh (Rashi). This act was by any means punishable by death, and Yehudah clearly knew this. However, he felt that he had no choice but to stand up to the aggression Yosef was displaying. Today, such an approach might be seen as an act of suicide, and some might blame Yehudah for his own fate. Yet, we see that this was how the Shvatim understood how to respond to aggression—through direct confrontation and standing firm in the face of injustice.

Their willingness to stand up, even at great personal risk, demonstrates the principle of fighting for justice, even if the odds seem insurmountable. Yehudah's actions show that sometimes one must confront aggression head-on, knowing the risks, and standing firm in what is right.

Armed and ready

In Shemot (13:18), the Israelites left Mitzrayim "armed for battle" to be prepared for any potential threats on their journey to Eretz Yisrael. While Hashem protected them with the pillar of fire and the cloud of glory, they still took weapons with them to ensure they were ready

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to defend themselves if needed. This teaches that while we place our trust in Hashem, we are still required to take the necessary steps to protect ourselves and do our part in safeguarding our wellbeing.

Moshe last war

In Bamidbar (31:1-7), Hashem commands the Israelites to fight against the Midianites, even though at that point the Midianites did not pose an immediate threat to the nation. The purpose of this command was simply for revenge, as Hashem instructs them to avenge the cruelty the Midianites had inflicted upon the Israelites. This was not just a passing statement, but rather, the last command Moshe Rabbenu had to fulfill in his life, as Hashem informed him that immediately after carrying it out, Moshe would pass away.

Moshe Rabbenu, in accordance with Hashem's command, quickly mobilized the army to carry out this mission, demonstrating the importance of responding to aggression and injustice with consequences. It underscores the principle that Israel should not be attacked without repercussions, teaching that there is a time to take action against those who harm us, even when the threat is not immediate, in order to prevent further harm.

Avenging Amalek

Another example is Hashem's command to forever seek revenge

against Amalek for attacking our people in the desert. Why didn't Hashem instruct us to forgive and forget, as modern psychology often recommends for emotional healing? The reason, as explained earlier, is that forgiveness and forgetting are possible when the threat has ended and the dignity of our nation and Hashem's honor are not at risk. However, when Am Yisrael is attacked, it sends a message to others that they too can act with impunity. This message can linger for eternity, as it did with Amalek. Therefore, Hashem commands that such brutality must be eradicated at its core, to prevent further harm and send a clear message that such actions will not be tolerated.

Final words

In conclusion, the Torah presents a balanced approach to protection and justice, showing that while we must rely on Hashem, we are also expected to take necessary steps to safeguard ourselves and uphold our dignity. When our people are harmed, the Torah advocates a response to prevent further aggression, maintaining that unchecked harm or injustice against the Jewish people should never be tolerated. This outlook underscores our responsibility to defend against threats while upholding a sense of divine purpose and justice.

אם מותר להשאיר טיפ לנכרי הנותן שירות

וראיתי בחוברת הפרדס (תשובת הרב עזריאל טאובר שנה סה תשנ"א חוברת ט) שיש רצו להקל מטעם שהוא מתבייש לא ליתן, ובאמת שאין צורך בכל הסברות הנ"ל שכן אם דרך מקבלי שירות ליתן טיפ, הרי שזה נכלל בשכר המלאכה. זאת ועוד שיש מקומות שהטיפ הוא חובה על פי דינא דמלכותא ויש גם סכום מינימלי המחוייב. וכן יש כאן משום דרכי שלום כמו שכתב שם בחוברת הפרדס (שנה סו תשנ"ב חוברת ב סי' יג), וראה עוד בזה בשו"ת שרגא המאיר (ח"ד סימן קנא).



ישאיר טיפ כפי הנהוג אפילו לגוי אחר קבלת שירות ואין בזה משום 'לא תחנם'. וכן מותר לברכו בברכת 'ברכה והצלחה'.

הנה יש לראות אם מותר להשאיר טיפ לנכרי הנותן שירות כגון נהג מונית או מלצר, והפועל שמעלה את המזוודות לחדר המלון וכדומה. והצד שהיה נראה למנוע הוא ממה שחז"ל דרשו מן הפסוק 'לא תחנם', ולמדו ממנו שאסור ליתן לגוי מתנת חינם והוא להלכה בשו"ע (יו"ד סימן קנא).

ובפסקי הרב אלישיב (אשרי האישי יו"ד פ"י אות לג, וחושן משפט פרק לה אות כז): "שבזמנינו חובה לשלם למלצרים טיפ בסיום תנונה לפי שהוא מנהג המדינה", והוסיפו (ובהערה כט) שאם מנהג המקום לשלם טיפ אזי חייב להשאיר מן הדין.

אכן בכל מקום שיש ליהודי טובת הנאה אין בזה איסור, ורבותינו כינו זאת בלשון 'כמוכרו לו', דהיינו שבין שיש לו הנאה מלתת לגוי לכן נחשב זה שווה כסף כאילו הוא קונה מהגוי דבר ומשלם עבורו.

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Leylul Nishmat Tune but Bahiye

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