

בס"ד
ח' אלול תש"פ
August 28, 2020

פרשת כי תצא

One of the more interesting commandments in this week's parsha is the mitzvah that we should not despise someone from Edom because he is a brother of Bnei Yisrael, or an Egyptian, because we were once a stranger in their land.¹ But why are we commanded to do this? The Egyptians only befriended Bnei Yisrael because of their successful agricultural contributions, and then subsequently turned on the nation, while the Edomites were known for showing both hostility and hatred towards Klal Yisrael.² Is there a deeper reason behind this commandment?

The *Da'as Zekenim* comment³ that even though Bnei Yisrael eventually became enslaved to the Egyptians, we nonetheless have a duty to remember how they first welcomed us and treated us well in their country, regardless of any ulterior motives. Additionally, the *Da'as Zekenim* says⁴ that the fact that the forefather of the Edomites (Esav) was a brother of Yaakov is enough of a reason to not hate them; despite the glaring differences of values and virtues, there is still a common blood bond linking the two nations. Rabbeinu Bechaye adds⁵ that the kinship means both kingdoms share lineage from Yitzchak and Avraham; while the Edomites may have a very different third patriarch than us, it is imperative to remember that the other two *avos* of their nation are the very same as ours. The Netziv points out⁶ that the Edomites are called "people of Edom" and not "children of Esav" because they reside in *ארץ שעיר*, a portion of land belonging to Avraham Avinu, a shared forefather. When it comes to how we act towards other nations or even other people, one common denominator can ultimately override everything else if it means that we will conduct ourselves with a greater sense of kindness and compassion towards them.

In the Gemara in *Berachos*,⁷ a story is told of R' Yehuda, R' Yosei, R' Nechemiah, and R' Eliezer ben R' Yosei HaGelili when they were in the vineyards of Yavneh. At one point, each of them spoke in honor of their hosts, the locals who were accommodating them, and their guests, the students. R' Yosi began to speak in honor of the hosts by bringing a *kal v'chomer* from the commandment to not hate an Egyptian. The Egyptians, who only hosted and befriended Bnei Yisrael for their own benefit,⁸ are treated properly; all the more so should one who hosts a *talmid chacham* in his home, provides him with food and drink, and provides him benefit from his possessions without concern for personal gain be treated appropriately. There is no excuse for a person's stature to enable and entitle them to act with insolence and impudence to one who is providing for them. Moreover, Rabba bar Mari uses this pasuk as evidence⁹ that if a person drinks from a well, they should not throw a stone into it, as one should not "bite the hand that has fed them" and act poorly towards someone who has treated them well, even if that is no longer the case.

¹ דברים כג:ח

² במדבר כ:יח-כ

³ דעת זקנים מבעלי התוספות דברים כג:ח ד"ה לא תתעב אדומי

⁴ דעת זקנים מבעלי התוספות דברים כג:ח ד"ה לא תתעב מצרי

⁵ רבינו בחיי דברים כג:ח ד"ה לא תתעב אדומי

⁶ העמק דבר דברים כג:ח ד"ה אדומי

⁷ ברכות סג:

⁸ בראשית מז:ו

⁹ בבא קמא צב:

The *Sifri*¹⁰ remarks that to create a great sense of *achdus*, one must be willing to overlook the sins and misdemeanors of his fellow to bring him back into the fold; in a sense, this is the commandment of *kiruv krovim*, the idea of bringing those who are close even closer. Rabbeinu Meyuchas echoes this statement and says that this *pasuk* comes to teach us that it is a *mitzvah* to treat others with respect even they act improperly. The Rambam comments in *Moreh Nevuchim*¹¹ that if we find a person in trouble, and we once enjoyed their assistance or received some benefit from them, we must bear in mind their previous good conduct, even if that person has subsequently wronged us since then. As the New Year and *Yom HaDin* draw even closer, it is more important than ever to leave behind the offenses of others and choose instead to only view their good deeds or the links that create a relationship and a common sense of ground. If we can do this, we will gain a greater sense of altruism and understanding and be able to narrow the detachment and distance that we have with others, which will take away our label of “strangers in the land.”

¹⁰ ספרי רנב

¹¹ ספר מורה הנבוכים חלק ג פרק מב