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Bet Horaah
בית הוראה
Shaare Ezra
שערי עזרא

Parshat Chayei Sarah

Zmanim for New York:

Candle Lighting: 4:20pm

Shabbat ends: 5:21pm

R"T 5:50pm

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KANYE WEST AND RABBI PINTO:

WRITTEN BY RABBI SHAY TAHAN

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Kanye West and Rabbi Pinto: Is There Such a Thing as Repentance for Anti-semitism?

One of the most antisemitic figures in the world today—responsible in no small part for the sharp rise in antisemitism in recent years—is the rapper Kanye West. He wrote songs such as "Heil Hitler," and the like, which receive billions of views and are sung at massive concerts around the world. He produced shirts with similar slogans, and speaks openly and casually about Jews being evil, deceitful, controlling every major industry, and more. It can even be said that he normalized Nazi rhetoric, which has recently gained a place of honor across various media platforms.

And now, to the shock of the world, without any prior indication, he suddenly arrived last week to meet Rabbi Yoshiyahu Pinto, to ask the Jewish people for forgiveness and to take responsibility for his actions. Rabbi Pinto received him with humility, with open arms, spoke to his heart, and after telling him that he is a very good person—he even gave him a hug.

The event is nothing short of astonishing. The man who became the most blatant symbol of Jew-hatred in our generation stands before a rabbi, bows his head, and asks for forgiveness.

Whether this represents a sincere inner change or not is too early to know—especially since this is not the first time he has apologized to the Jewish people, only to then return to even more extreme behavior. Yet the mere moment in which the man who normalized Nazi rhetoric apologizes to a rabbi and to the Jewish people carries deep symbolic significance.

This raises a question: aside from symbolic meaning, is there—halachically—such a thing as forgiveness for someone who influences public opinion so massively and then suddenly wants to erase all his crimes? Does Hashem accept him? First, we must ask if there is repentance at all for gentiles; and second—if there is repentance for someone who has caused great harm.

In this week's Torah portion (Chayei Sarah), we learn that Ishmael repented. The Torah states that when Avraham died, Itschak and Ishmael came to bury him. Although Ishmael was older, he placed Itschak before him. The sages understood this as a shift—a gesture of humility and correction. As Rashi writes: from here we learn that Ishmael did teshuvah (repented).

We also find sources showing that gentiles are expected to repent from their evil deeds. In the generation of the Flood, Hashem sent Noah to warn the world and urge them to return from their wickedness. Midrash Tanchuma states (Noach 5): "For 120 years Hashem warned the generation of the Flood, hoping they would repent; when they did not, He said to Noah: Make for yourself an ark." Noah himself repented, and was thus saved; his generation did not, and perished in the Flood.

The most famous example of gentile repentance is the people of Ninveh in the days of Yonah. Yonah was sent to a large, central, and wicked city. His message was sharp and simple: if you do not repent, "Forty more days, and Ninveh will be overturned."

The people of Ninveh did not dismiss the words of the prophet, nor did they attempt to justify their actions. Instead, they took responsibility and changed their ways. Scripture describes their reaction: "The people of Ninveh believed in Hashem … and they proclaimed a fast" (Yonah 3:5). "Hashem saw their deeds—that they turned from their evil way" (ibid. v. 10).

From here we learn that their repentance was

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effective and accepted, specifically because of a practical change in behavior: returning stolen property, correcting injustices, and making ethical and societal improvements.

We learn that repentance does not belong only to Jews. A gentile who sincerely abandons his evil ways— Hashem accepts him.

On the other hand, we find seemingly contradictory statements. Minchat Chinuch (Mitzvah 364) writes: "The mitzvah of teshuvah applies to every Jewish individual. Whether teshuvah applies to the sons of Noah, I have seen lengthy discussions in books of derashot. Some write that repentance does not help them, and regarding the repentance of Ninveh they offer explanations, but this is not the place to elaborate."

Many have struggled with his words. In my humble opinion, there is no contradiction at all. The mitzvah of teshuvah—as a formal halachic obligation—applies only to Jews. Gentiles are not commanded in the mitzvah of repentance; it is not among the seven Noahide laws. However, like many other mitzvot, they are permitted to perform them (Rambam, Hilchot Melachim 10:10). Therefore, if they do repent, Hashem accepts them. When it is written that their repentance "does not help," the meaning is as follows:

The Yerusalmi Talmud (Nazir 9:1) states: "It says, 'and he shall atone for him'—this applies only to one who has atonement; excluding gentiles, who do not have atonement." Yet this does not contradict what we wrote. A gentile's repentance may be accepted, but that does not mean that his sins are erased as if they never existed, in the same way they are erased from a Jew. Rather, as long as he does not return to his sinful ways, he is not punished for them. This applies only to this world.

The Mabit writes explicitly (Beit Elokim, Sha'ar HaTeshuvah 14): "After establishing that the essence of teshuvah is for Israel, I will detail certain differences between the repentance of Israel and that of the nations in earlier times. The first and primary difference is that repentance for Israel benefits them in this world and the next, whereas repentance of the nations only protects them from punishment in this world—not in the World to Come."

Similarly, the Bnei Yissachar writes (Discourses of Sivan, Yemei HaHagbalah): "The sages said (Tanchuma, Ha'azinu 4): 'It says, May Hashem lift His face to you, and it says, Who does not lift His face. If one repents— Hashem lifts His face. One might think this applies to all; therefore, it says to you— to you and not to the nations of the world.' Thus, repentance benefits only Israel, not the nations. So rules Remah of Pano and the Mabit in Beit Elokim."

Regarding the question of whether repentance can help atone for someone who caused the public to sin, we can learn from the case of Hordus (Herod). Chazal teach (Baba Batra 3b) that Hordus was not considered a Jew but rather a Canaanite slave. After killing all the sages of his generation, he sought a path to atonement. A sage named Bava ben Buta instructed him to renovate the Beit HaMikdash, telling him that such an act would help repair the damage he had done — and Hordus followed through and rebuilt the Temple in magnificent form. From here we learn that even a sin of such gravity, one that harmed an entire generation and extinguished great Torah scholars, can still be addressed through sincere action and repair.

Not a "Shulchan Aruch," but a Love Story: Why the Torah Tells Stories

In this parashah we learn something unique: the Torah tells of Eliezer, Avraham's faithful servant, sent to find a wife for Itschak. The Torah describes the journey in great detail—from the moment he leaves Avraham's home until he meets Rivka. What is especially remarkable is that the Torah repeats the entire story again, when Eliezer recounts every detail to Rivka's family.

Rashi cites the words of Chazal (Bereishit Rabbah 60:8): *"The conversation of the servants of the Patriarchs is more precious to Hashem than the Torah of their children, for the section of Eliezer is repeated in the Torah, while many core laws are given only through hints."*

These words are puzzling. The Torah was given to teach the 613 commandments—what relevance is there in the conversation of a servant? And even if that conversation is precious before Hashem, the Torah is not a book of stories. Why the repetition? Why dedicate so much space to Eliezer's narrative?

To illustrate the question: imagine opening the Rambam's *Sefer HaMitzvot* or the *Shulchan Aruch* and finding stories of servants, travel descriptions, and narrative details. Unthinkable. So why, in the Torah—which is precise, concise, and where every letter is weighed on a scale—would an entire narrative be repeated for no reason other than "beautiful is the conversation of the servants of the Patriarchs"?

This leads to a larger question: why are there stories at all in the Torah—stories of the Patriarchs, of the Exodus, of the desert journey and battles of conquest—inside a book whose purpose is to teach commandments and prohibitions?

I heard from Rabbi Eliyahu Fivelzon, Rosh Yeshiva of Pitchei Olam, a profound explanation that sheds new light on the entire Torah. He explains that Hashem created the world for a clear purpose:

Hashem created the world to establish a relationship— a bond of closeness and friendship—with His creations.

If the Torah had been written only as a legal code, in the style of the *Shulchan Aruch*—chapters, sections, and paragraphs—we would be left with a system of Commander and commanded, Master and servant. We might know what to do, but we would not form a connection with the One for whom we are doing it.

That is why the Torah is not a concise halachic manual. The Torah is a book of relationship.

The stories are not decorative additions—they are the foundation upon which the entire relationship stands. The commandments make up only about 25% of the Torah. The majority of the Torah is devoted to the developing relationship between God and humanity:

how He chooses Avraham, loves Itschak, watches over Yaakov, and builds a connection of loyalty, trust, prayer, and conversation with Klal Yisrael.

Therefore, specifically the story of Eliezer's conversation is

Not a "Shulchan Aruch," but a Love Story: Why the Torah Tells Stories

repeated. The Torah teaches that a relationship—words, trust, emotion—is so precious to Hashem that *"the conversation of the servants of the Patriarchs"* is dearer than the legal sections of their descendants.

Not only to perform commandments— but to live a relationship with the One who gave them. This idea of recounting stories in detail is similar to a parent telling their children how the parents met, how the child was born, and stories from the child's early years. By telling these stories, a bond is created between them, and it gives the child a sense of connection to their past.

Hashem's choice of Avraham as His beloved friend.

Let's explain this more deeply:

The Ramchal (*Derech Hashem*, Part 4, ch. 2–3) writes that after Adam sinned, he fell from his exalted spiritual state to a much lower one, and all of humanity fell with him. A new stage began: humanity was given the opportunity to anyone who volunteers to uplift himself and become the chosen root. Hashem waited to see who would rise, prepare himself for the task, and earn the right to become a precious root—until Avraham came. Through his own actions, Avraham elevated himself and became the noble and chosen tree.

Siftei Chaim (Emunah and Hashgachah, p. 301) explains that after Adam's sin, each generation had the opportunity to reveal Hashem to the world and merit becoming the root from which the chosen people would arise. Ten generations angered Hashem and failed, until Avraham arrived. From within tremendous darkness and concealment he stood against the entire world—*"the whole world on one side, and he on the other"* (Bereishit Rabbah 42:13). Avraham revealed Hashem's oneness and, through his self-sacrifice, earned the merit that the mission of revealing Hashem would be given to him and his descendants.

The Ramchal's insight reframes everything above. Hashem was seeking a *friend* in the world—a human being who would rise above the rest of humanity in morality, goodness, sensitivity to others, and above all, a genuine yearning for a lasting relationship with his Creator.

The first who could have achieved this was Adam, but through his sin, he lost the opportunity. After him, Hashem waited ten generations until Noah. Noah was a candidate for this crown, but by failing to influence his generation and bring them to repentance, he too lost that status.

Hashem then waited ten more generations—until Avraham. Avraham endured ten tests and demonstrated unwavering loyalty and love that could not be questioned. Through this, he became the friend of Hashem, chosen to reveal His oneness to the world—and his descendants after him inherited that mission.

It is forbidden to cut ahead in a line

It is forbidden to cut ahead in a line — because of fairness and honesty, due to the concern of theft, of encroaching on another's rights, and of causing a chillul Hashem. Likewise, one may not "hold a place" for someone else in line. One may also not cut ahead of others in a line while driving. If the people ahead explicitly permit him to go first, it is obviously allowed.

The Shulchan Aruch (Choshen Mishpat 15:1) rules that a judge must hear the case of the person who arrived first. This is based on the Gemara (Sanhedrin 8a), and Rashi explains: "If a case involving a small amount of money comes before you, and afterward a case of a large amount arrives — the one who came first should be judged first."

Similarly, the Gemara (Sanhedrin 32b) teaches that when two boats enter a narrow passage, priority is given to the boat that is loaded over the empty one, and to the boat that is closer over the one that is farther. The Meiri comments: "If everything is equal, they give precedence to the one that arrived first." Meaning, if neither has any advantage, preference goes to the one who came first.

The halachic authorities write that cutting the line is forbidden for several reasons:

A. In *Teshuvos V'Hanhagos* (vol. 4, siman 318), it is prohibited as a form of theft, since monetary laws of the Torah are based on logic and reason. Clearly, fairness requires respecting the order of the line, and it is included in "you shall do what is right and just." One who disrupts it is considered a thief. In *She'al Avicha*, it is related that once Rebbetzin, the wife of Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer, was moved ahead in a line to receive kerosene. When she came home, the Rav told her that this was theft.

B. In *Pischei Choshen* (Geneivah, ch. 15, end of note 3), it is considered stealing time. This was also the opinion of Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (*Shvilei HaParsha*, p. 342).

C. In the name of the Chazon Ish (*Maaseh Ish*, vol. 5, p. 146), it is considered encroaching on another's boundary.

D. Also recorded there (vol. 1, p. 147) that it constitutes breaking the boundaries that society has set.

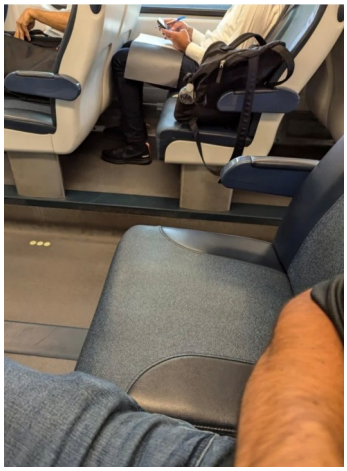
E. In *Kochvei Ohr* (p. 72) he explains the Mishnah (Rosh Hashanah 16a) "All creatures pass before Him like sheep," comparing it to people at a port standing in a line — whoever arrives first goes first.

F. According to Rav Y. Zilberstein (*Torat HaTor*), one violates "Love your fellow as yourself," for just as a person does not want others to cut ahead of him, he may not cut ahead of others.

This prohibition applies even toward non-Jews. As written in *Sefer Chassidim* (siman 151): "If a person is walking on a road and there is mud nearby, and he meets someone carrying a burden, he should step aside and let the one carrying pass. And even if

It is forbidden to cut ahead in a line

the one carrying is a non-Jew, it is written: 'You shall find favor and good understanding in the eyes of God and man' (Mishlei 3:4). Better that a person be pushed aside for another, rather than he push another aside."



Even though, strictly speaking, one may reserve a seat for a friend on a bus or train, he should still make every effort to do so in a way that avoids arguments and prevents a chillul Hashem.

The Gemara (Bava Metzia 10a) teaches: *"One who seizes property on behalf of a creditor, in a situation where it harms others, does not acquire it."* Rashi explains: "He has no right to seize something on his own initiative when doing so harms others, since the creditor did not appoint him as his agent."

According to Rashi, a person may reserve a seat for someone else only if that person explicitly appointed him as an agent – meaning he asked him to save the seat. However, Tosafos (Gittin 11b) disagrees and writes that he does **not** acquire the item even if he was appointed as an agent. The Shulchan Aruch (C. M. 105:1) rules in accordance with Tosafos.

This leads to a question: may one reserve a place for a friend on a bus, train, or in a line for an event? On one hand, perhaps it is forbidden, since it resembles "seizing property for someone else in a way that harms others," because it causes others to lose out. On the other hand, perhaps reserving a place is not considered taking a tangible item — only preventing others from gaining a temporary usage — and thus it may not fall into that prohibition.

There is also a dispute among the Rishonim whether the rule applies only when a person takes something that causes others a **loss**, or even when he merely prevents them from a **potential gain**. Based on this, since here one does not take someone else's money, but only prevents others from benefitting, there may be room for leniency.

In any event, one must be very careful to avoid arguments and to prevent any chillul Hashem. Everything should be done with wisdom, respect, and proper manners.

If there are several empty seats available, he may certainly reserve one for his friend without any concern.

אין לסמוך על בעל המסעדה שאומר שהאוכל כשר

אין לאכול במסעדה אלא אם כן יש בה משגיח כשרות המוחזק כירא שמים הבקיא בהלכות הנוגעות אל עניני המאכלים שמכינים במטבחו.

פשוט שאין לסמוך על בעל המסעדה שאומר שהאוכל כשר, ואף על פי שקבעו חז"ל שעד אחד נאמן באיסורין (גיטין ב, ב), והסביר רש"י (שם ד"ה עד) שהרי האמינה תורה כל אחד ואחד מישראל על הפרשת תרומה ועל השחיטה ועל ניקור הגיד והחלב. ונלמד זה מהפסוק 'וספרה לה', שנאמנת אשה נידה לספור לעצמה (תוספות בגיטין שם ד"ה עד).

דהנה איתא בגמרא (ע"ז לט, ב) אין לוקחין ימ"ח מח"ג בסוריא, (והם ראשי תיבות של) לא יין, ולא מורייס, ולא חלב, ולא מלח סלקונדקית, ולא חילתית, ולא וגבינה אלא מן המומחה. ופרש"י (ד"ה אין) שחנוונים בסוריא חשודים, דלא קפדי אלפני עור לא תתן מכשול, ומזבני לישראל דברים שלקחו מן הכותים.

ואף שדייק בערוך השולחן (יו"ד סימן קיט ס"א) שדין זה אינו אלא בסוריא מפני שהיו חשודים, אבל בשאר העולם כל ישראל בחזקת כשרות קיימי ומותר לקנות מהם, מכל מקום הרמב"ם (פרק י"א ממאכלות אסורות הלכה כה, כו) כתב שבזמן הזה אין לוקחין מאכלים מכל אדם אלא מאדם שהוחזק בכשרות, ולכן אין לחלק בין סוריא לחוץ לארץ.

והסביר הערוה"ש (שם ס"ד) שטעמו דאף על גב שהאמינה תורה לכל אחד מישראל על האיסורים, מכל מקום חנווני קבוע שמוכר תמיד בכל עת ובכל שעה שאני, דהוא מורה היתר.

וכן הביא הטור (יו"ד סימן יח) בשם הרא"ש שאף שעד אחד נאמן באיסורים, כבר נהגו כל ישראל שלא להאמין לקצבים, וממנים אנשים ידועים על השחיטה ועל הבדיקה.

וביאר הרב אשר וייס (שו"ת מנחת אשר ח"א סימן לז) את החובה להקים מערכת כשרות שתעמוד כחומה בצורה על מנת לבדוק שכל הנמכר בחנויות ובמסעדות שתחתיה תהיה תחת השגחה מעולה, והביא את דברי הישועות יעקב (יו"ד סימן טו סק"א) שבכל תקנה שעושים עבור הרבים יש לחשוש בו אפילו למיעוטא דמיעוטא ולא לסמוך על הרוב.

Shaare Ezra is a one of a kind, multi-faceted organization that's there for the community. Under the leadership of HaRav Shay Tahan שליט"א. Shaare Ezra feels that proper Halachic guidance should be accessible to everyone, therefore we offer the community the opportunity to call, text, WhatsApp, or e-mail any halachic questions they may have, through the Bet Horaah, where qualified, trained and ordained Rabbis are available to answer your questions in English, Hebrew and Russian. Shaare Ezra is from the community—for the community.

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אורלי בת בתיה שרה
Manzal Bat Shelomo
Tune Bat Bahiya

Refuah shelema
אילנה שיראן בת בתיה שרה
בתיה שרה בת טובה
Stella Esther Bat Tzipora Lida

May Hashem send special strength in Torah and all the Berachot to David Akiva and Rachel Leon.

Lev Mavashev from Alpha Realty Hatzlacha and Parnasa Tova.

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