



Bet Haraah

בית הוראה

Shaare Ezra

שערי עזרא

Parshat Vayera

Zmanim for New York:

Candle Lighting: 4:26pm

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R"T 5:56pm

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MAMDANI IS JUST THE SYMPTOM, NOT THE DISEASE

WRITTEN BY RABBI SHAY TAHAN

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The current events surrounding the New York elections signify something deeply concerning. Behind the curtain of the candidates running for office lies a global movement of antisemitism that is now taking a firm hold in America at large—and particularly in New York. A candidate only represents what the people feel and desire. The fact that a majority of New Yorkers want an antisemitic mayor—and even more so, if one deducts the Jewish vote, revealing that an overwhelming majority of non-Jews support him—shows that our New York neighbors are either harboring hatred toward Jews or, at best, indifferent to their Jewish neighbors. Even more troubling is that the Democratic candidate was elected while openly campaigning on anti-Jewish themes—mocking Jewish holidays such as Chanukah, cheering on the intifada, and supporting antisemitic protests on college campuses.

We, as Jews, know what comes next—and it is not pleasant. Now, I don't know if real danger is imminent, and I don't claim to have authentic Da'at Torah to make decisions of what Klal Yisrael should do, but at the very least, we can discuss this as a potential option if it becomes necessary.

Tanach Illustrations:

We learn from Yaakov Avinu that when his mother sensed danger from Esav, she sent him away; similarly, when King David was pursued by King Shaul, he fled. These examples illustrate the principle that one should not remain in a place that is unsafe for oneself or one's family.

Eliyahu and Yermiyah also provide examples of how even the greatest of prophets had to flee in order to preserve their lives.

Eliyahu, after boldly confronting the idolatry and corruption in Israel under King Achav and Queen

Izavel, faced immediate mortal danger when Izavel vowed to kill him (Melachim1 19:1–3). Despite his extraordinary spiritual strength, he did not remain in place; he fled into the wilderness, seeking safety while continuing to serve Hashem in exile. This illustrates that when the environment becomes hostile

even a prophet must remove themselves from harm.

Similarly, Yermiyah endured constant persecution for his prophecies, warning the people of Yehudah about the consequences of idolatry and moral decay. At times, the threat to his life was so severe that he had to seek protection, hiding in cisterns or fleeing from the authorities (Yermiyah 37–38). His actions show that preserving one's life

to continue Torah service is not only permitted but necessary when surrounded by hostility.

Our Rabbi's Perspective:

Let us review what our greatest rabbis instructed us to do when times become difficult. The Rambam addressed this in his letter *Iggeret HaShmad*, written during a period when Jews were persecuted.

The Rambam writes clearly that the following advice applies to places where there is *no* forced conversion or coercion to abandon our faith. In such a scenario, one is absolutely obligated to leave that place. However, the Rambam explains that his advice here refers specifically to places where Jews are persecuted and harassed — in those cases, one must do everything possible to leave and find a peaceful place to live.

He writes: "And the advice that I give to myself, and the counsel that I desire for myself, my loved ones, and anyone who seeks my guidance, is this: He should leave those places and go to a place where he can uphold his religion and fulfill the Torah without coercion. He should not be afraid, but rather abandon his home, his children, and all his pos-



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sessions.

Moreover, even if there were two Jewish communities, and one of them was more righteous in its conduct, more careful in mitzvot, and more submissive to the commandments than the other, one who fears Hashem is obligated to leave the less upright community and go to the better one. Our Sages have already warned us: *A person should not dwell in a place that does not have ten righteous people.* They brought proof from Sodom, as it is written (Bereishit 18:32): *"Perhaps ten will be found there," and He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of the ten."*

All this applies when both places are Jewish communities. But if the place is among gentiles, how much more so is a Jew obligated to leave that place and go to a better one. He should make every effort to do so, even if it means putting himself in danger, until he is rescued from the evil place where he cannot properly uphold his faith, and travel until he reaches a good place.

The prophets have already explained that one who dwells among heretics is considered like one of them, as it says (I Shmuel 26:19): *"For they have driven me out today from attaching myself to the heritage of Hashem, saying: Go, serve other gods."* From here we see that dwelling among non-believers is equivalent to serving other gods.

So too, the pious and those who fear Hashem are obligated to despise evil and its doers, as David said (Tehillim 139:21): *"Do I not hate, Hashem, those who hate You? And do I not contend with those who rise up against You?"* And he also said (Tehillim 119:63): *"I am a companion to all who fear You and to those who keep Your*

precepts."

Likewise, we find with Avraham Avinu that he rejected his family and his homeland, fleeing for his life to escape the ways of the heretics".

When the Magen Avraham lists some halachot that the Shulchan Aruch omitted (Siman 157), he writes that from the story of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who fled his home to escape the Romans, we learn that one should seek to escape danger. He adds that this obligation applies even if doing so might cause pain or inconvenience to others.

Still, we should maintain the proper mindset: if we decide to leave, it is not merely out of fear, but primarily out of disgust—similar to the feeling one would have when leaving a city infested with rats and roaches, plagued by drug addicts, crime, and ruin—which, in many ways, describes the current state of the "Big Apple."

It seems that the decision to leave New York for a safer and more stable environment is not limited to Jewish residents; many others recognize that relocating may be the best option as well.

According to a new poll reported by the *Daily Mail*, nearly 765,000 of New York City's 8.4 million residents say they are preparing to leave the city if socialist candidate Zohran Mamdani wins the mayoral race. The survey found that about 9% of New Yorkers would "definitely" move away under his leadership — a potential mass exodus that could mark the largest population flight in U.S. history. The alarming findings were released early Monday, suggesting that hundreds of thousands are ready to bolt from the Big Apple if Mamdani becomes the city's 111th mayor.

THE POWER OF FAITH VS. THE ALLURE OF MIRACLES — THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE NATIONS

Throughout the generations, the people of Israel have faced numerous trials, including encounters with false messiahs, false prophets, and other misleading figures. While a few were swayed by the new movements that arose from time to time, the overwhelming majority of Israel remained steadfast in their faith, without flaw.

By contrast, the nations of the world were often drawn to new religions that emerged following leaders who claimed divine revelation. These leaders performed miracles that captivated the masses—but not the Jewish people. Why? This week's Torah portion reveals the secret of Israel's enduring faith compared to the faith of the nations.

When Avraham met Avimelech, Avimelech said to him, "Hashem is with you in all that you do."

Rashi explains how Avimelech knew this:

"Hashem is with you—because he saw that Avraham had left Sedom in peace, fought with the kings and defeated them, and his wife had a child at an old age." Avimelech recognized through the miracles that Avraham's success stemmed from divine assistance, and he was deeply impressed.

Miracles impressed others too. A notable example is Naaman, the commander of the army of Aram, a respected man who

became leprous. Upon hearing of Elisha, a man of God, he sent a request to be miraculously healed. Elisha instructed him to immerse himself in the Jordan. Naaman was furious, saying, "Are not the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel? Why should I wash there and be cleansed?" (Melachim 2 5:11–12).

Naaman wanted miracles, not simple divine instruction, and was disappointed by Elisha's guidance.

Similarly, when Hashem commanded Moshe to speak to Pharaoh to demand the Israelites' release, He warned him in advance: "For Pharaoh will say to you, 'Show me a miracle'" (Shemot 7:9). Pharaoh only accepted proof through tangible signs and wonders. By contrast, when Moshe was commanded to speak to the Israelites, no miracle was needed—they were already believers. Moshe, concerned, repeatedly

said, "But they will not believe me" (Shemot 4:1), until Hashem reassured him. The Jewish people's faith was not dependent on miracles; their belief was inherent. (Hashem provided him several signs only to encourage him to accept the mission, even though they were not truly necessary).

When Elisha the Prophet came to the home of the "Great Woman," she testified about him to her husband: "Now I know that



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this is a holy man of God, who constantly passes by us" (Melachim 2 4:9). The Talmud (Berachot 10b) explains that she recognized his holiness based on his character, not on miraculous deeds. Again, we see that Israel does not judge the holiness of a man by the miracles he performs, but by his actions and sanctity.

The Torah also openly warns us not to be impressed by outward miracles: "If a prophet or a dreamer arises among you and gives you a sign or wonder, saying, 'Let us go after other gods whom you have not known,' do not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer, for Hashem is testing you to know whether you love Hashem with all your heart and soul" (Devarim 13:2–3).

From this, we see that even when someone performs acts that appear miraculous—like walking on water, as their followers might claim—Israel does not follow them, because a miracle alone is not proof of divinity or true mission. What determines the truth is adherence to Torah and proper conduct.

This principle is echoed by the Rambam (*Yesodei HaTorah* 8:1), who explains that Moshe's miracles did not serve as proof of his prophetic authority; true belief stems from Sinai, not from supernatural acts. He writes: "Moshe Rabbeinu was not believed by the Israelites because of the wonders he performed, for one who believes based on miracles has a flaw in his faith — since it is possible that the miracle was done through magic or sorcery. So why did they believe in him? Because of the revelation at Mount Sinai — our own eyes saw, not those of a stranger; our own ears heard, not those of another. We witnessed the fire, the voices, and the lightning; Moshe approached the thick cloud, and we heard the voice speak to him, and we ourselves heard, 'Moshe, Moshe, go and tell them such and such.' As it is written, 'Face to face Hashem spoke with you,' and, 'Not with our fathers did Hashem make this covenant [alone].'" And from where do we know that the revelation at Mount Sinai alone serves as the ultimate proof that his prophecy was true beyond all doubt? As it says, 'Behold, I will come to you in the thickness of the cloud, so that the people will hear when I speak with you, and they will believe in you forever.' From this we learn that before this event, their belief in him was not yet eternal, but belief that could still be followed by doubt and questioning."

The *Sefer Maor VaShemesh* (Devarim 13:2) clarifies when one should attach oneself to a rabbi or tzaddik and the reason for following them: "When the masses hear that someone performs a miracle or wonder, they immediately travel to him and believe all he says. But this is wrong, since one should travel to a tzaddik only to learn from his ways, but not for the purpose of miracles and wonders"/

The Talmudic story of the Oven of Achnai (Bava Metzia 59b) further illustrates this principle. Rabbi Eliezer attempted to prove the law through miracles, but the sages rejected them. A heavenly voice affirmed him, yet Rabbi Yehoshua declared, "It is not in heaven," meaning that the Torah was already given at Sinai, and human interpretation based on majority rulings is decisive.

after Rabbi Eliezer answered all possible arguments, still the sages did not accept his words. He continued with proving his point through wonders. He said to them: 'If the halacha follows my opinion, let this carob tree prove it!' The carob tree was uprooted from its place. They said to him: 'One does not bring proof from a carob tree.'

He then said to them: 'If the halacha follows my opinion, let this stream of water prove it!' The water of the stream turned and began to flow backward. They said to him: 'One does not bring proof from a stream of water.'

He then said to them: 'If the halacha follows my opinion, let the walls of the study hall prove it!' The walls of the study hall began to lean, as if to fall.

He then said to them: 'If the halacha follows my opinion, Heaven will prove it!' A heavenly voice (bat kol) went forth and proclaimed: 'The halacha follows R. Eliezer in every place!'

Rabbi Yehoshua stood on his feet and said: '*It is not in Heaven!*' What is meant by '*It is not in Heaven?*' Rabbi Yirmiyah explained: Since the Torah has already been given at Mount Sinai, we pay no attention to a heavenly voice.

Rav Nissim Gaon emphasized that this story demonstrates how truth is determined not by miracles, but by Torah law and the sages' understanding. Thus, recognizing a true tzaddik (righteous person) is not based on the wonders they perform, but on their dedication to Torah, their character, and their conduct.

SEEING AND BEING SEEN: THE VISION OF VAYEIRA

In *Parashat Vayeira*, the Torah repeatedly uses the concept of *seeing* (*re'iyah*), but each instance carries a different meaning and context. Let us explore them.

The parashah opens with two psukim that both mention seeing, yet they differ significantly:

"And Hashem appeared to him in the plains of Mamre" (18:1). "And he lifted his eyes and saw, and behold, three men were standing before him" (18:2).

Why, in the first pasuk, does Avraham not need to *do* anything to see Hashem, whereas in the second, he must *lift his eyes* to see the men?

There is a fundamental difference between seeing the Hashem and seeing another person. The presence of Hashem can be perceived without external action—anyone who truly desires can

sense Him. If one does not perceive Him, it is because he has closed his heart to that awareness.

However, when it comes to seeing *others*, it requires deliberate effort. Human nature does not automatically notice or empathize with others; one must *raise his eyes* to see beyond himself. That is why Avraham needed to *lift his eyes* to notice the three visitors.

We find the same principle with Moshe Rabbeinu: "And it came to pass in those days that Moshe grew up, went out to his brothers, and saw their burdens" (Shemot 2:11).

Rashi explains: "He set his eyes and heart to be pained for them."

If Moshe had remained where he was, he would not have truly *seen* their suffering—because man's natural state is to overlook the pain of others unless he actively directs his attention and empathy toward them.

SEEING AND BEING SEEN: THE VISION OF VAYEIRA

There is yet another form of sight—a person's awareness of his own life and Divine providence. One must recognize that all his needs are already prepared by Hashem and will come at the right time and in the best possible way. Later in the parashah, when Hagar's son Yishmael is dying of thirst, she fails to notice the well of water right before her, until Hashem *opens her eyes*, as it says: "And Hashem opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water" (21:19).

Chazal teach (Bereishit Rabbah 53:14): "All are blind until Hashem opens their eyes."

At the beginning of the parashah, we learn that one can perceive Hashem through inner vision, without physical sight. Yet the most profound vision appears at the end of the parashah, following the *Akedah*: "And Avraham called the name of that place 'Hashem Yireh,' as it is said today: 'On the mountain, Hashem will be seen'" (22:14).

This pasuk is difficult to understand literally, and many commentators explain it allegorically. Rashi and Onkelos interpret "seeing" as Hashem choosing the site for offerings.

However, the *Kli Yakar* offers an inspiring interpretation: one who

stands at the site of the Beit HaMikdash and looks there sincerely can perceive the Divine Presence. He writes:

"The Temple below aligns with the Temple above, the dwelling place of Hashem's might. Whoever gazes upon that holy place is immediately filled with purity and holiness, and with his very sight alone he attains spiritual perfection. For as it says, 'Hashem will be seen,' the word may also be read 'will see,' for just as the Shechinah sees him, so does he see the Shechinah. Instantly he becomes illuminated and attached to the radiance of His Presence, a taste of the World to Come."

The *Kli Yakar* concludes that this spiritual benefit extends to Avraham's descendants forever, for although the physical Temple may be destroyed, the heavenly counterpart remains eternal, continuously channeling blessing to the children of Avraham.

Thus, from Avraham's *lifting his eyes* to see others, to Hagar's *opened eyes* to see Hashem's providence, to the ultimate *seeing and being seen* on Har HaMoriah—the Torah teaches that true sight begins with awareness, continues with empathy, and culminates in the vision of the Divine.

ששכח במכוניתו דבר הנצרך לו ביום השבת רשאי

אורח ששכח במכוניתו דבר הנצרך לו ביום השבת רשאי לבקש מן הנכרי שיפתח את דלת המכונית ויביא לו את הדבר.

כן נראה להתיר, הואיל ואין כאן אלא פסיק רישא בדבר שאינו מתכוין, ובכהאי גוונא התירו רבים מן הפוסקים אמירה לנכרי בפסיק רישא. וכמו שכתב הרמ"א (סימן רנ"ס) שמותר לנכרי להשיב קדירות שנתקרו סמוך לתנור בבית החורף, ואחר כך רשאי לומר לשפחה להבעיר את התנור כדי לחמם את הבית, ומתוך כך הקדירה מתחממת. זאת מכיון שאין כוונתה אלא לחמם את הבית ולא לחמם את התבשיל, ואף שזהו פסיק רישא לגבי חימום התבשיל, מכל מקום פסיק רישא באמירה לנכרי הותר (משנ"ב שם ס"ק צט).

וכן כתב הרמ"א (סימן של"ב) לענין כיבוד הבית, שאף שלישאל אסור לכבד את הבית משום שהיו פסיק רישא שישוה גומות, מכל מקום על ידי נכרי מותר, הואיל וכוונתו לכבוד הבית בלבד ולא להשוות גומות. ומעתה ה"ה בנידון זה, כיון שאין כוונת הנכרי אלא לפתוח הדלת ולהביא את החפץ, אף שעל ידי כך נעשית מלאכה נוספת (כגון הפעלת חשמל) — הרי זה פסיק רישא בדבר שאינו מתכוין ומותר באמירה לנכרי.

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