



Bet Horaah בית הוראה Shaarei Ezra שערי עזרא

Parshat Chayei Sarah

Zmanim for New York:

Candle Lighting: 4:24pm

Shabbat ends: 5:25pm

R"T 5:54pm

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BLAME-SHIFTING AND VICTIMHOOD: THE ANCIENT PROFESSIONS OF ISHMAEL

WRITTEN BY **RABBI SHAY TAHAN**

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Playing the victim, also known as utilizing the victim card, encompasses the act of fabricating or intensifying feelings of victimhood for various purposes. These reasons can include making their actions seem okay, changing what's happening around them. When an individual consistently embraces this behavior, they are often termed a "professional victim." This label is used to describe someone who regularly portrays themselves as a victim in diverse situations, often with the aim of eliciting sympathy or leniency from others. Some critics contend that this pattern is observable in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, where initial acts of aggression by Palestinians are followed by a swift shift to a victimization narrative when Israel responds.

Ishmael; The victim.

Last week, we discussed Ishmael's ingratitude towards those who have been kind to him and how he often turns against those who have helped him. However, this is not the only negative aspect of his nature. As we delve into the parshiot and learn more about Ishmael's character, it's fascinating to observe that he continues to exhibit bad behavior. We read about Ishmael, at a very young age (some sources suggest around 16), attempting to kill Isaac by shooting arrows at him. When Sarah imenu witnesses this, she implores Abraham avinu to send Ishmael away from their household. Although Abraham is hesitant to do so, shortly thereafter, Hashem appears to him and instructs him to heed Sarah's request.

As Ishmael and his mother, Hagar, find themselves in the desert, she distances herself from him. The Midrash Raba tells us that, during this time, she began to voice complaints against Hashem for her son's misfortunes. This situation highlights a recurring pattern of playing the victim. Initially, Ishmael engages in aggressive and harmful behavior, including attempted murder and terrorization. However,

when others take measures to protect themselves or respond to these actions, Ishmael and his mother cry to the world about how they are the ones suffering as victims.

Someone who only observes Hagar and Ishmael in their distressing situation might initially perceive them as victims. However, when considering the complete context and the reasons behind their expulsion from Sarah's household, a more comprehensive understanding emerges, revealing that they were not victims but rather the instigators of the situation.

Avimelech; The victim.

The same pattern of behavior emerges when Avimelech, the king of Gerar, takes Sarah away from Abraham. Hashem appears to him in a dream, warning that failure to return her will result in his death. Instead of recognizing his wrongdoing, Avimelech shifts the blame towards Hashem, asserting that Abraham had informed him that Sarah was his sister, as if it was permissible to take her if she were his sibling. The following morning, he angrily confronts Abraham, saying, "What have you done to us? How have I sinned against you that you brought upon me and my kingdom such a grave offense? Deeds that should not be committed have you done to me."

At first glance, someone hearing Avimelech's side of the story might sympathize with the grave danger he found himself in. However, when examining the entire narrative, it becomes clear that Avimelech was not the victim but rather the wrongdoer in this situation.

Avimelech; The victim.

The same scenario unfolded with the Egyptian king, Pharaoh, when Abraham and Sarah arrived in Egypt. Pharaoh's officials, captivated by Sarah's beauty, took her and presented her to



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Pharaoh. Subsequently, Hashem afflicted him and his household with severe plagues. Instead of recognizing his wrongdoing, Pharaoh shifted the blame to Abraham, portraying himself as the victim, and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me she is your wife?" He seemed to suggest that

it was somehow permissible to take her since she wasn't a married woman, which does not justify his actions.

ISHMAEL: THE FATHER OF 'A GREAT NATION'.

והוא יהיה פרא אדם, רבי יוחנן אמר שהכל יהיו גדלים ביישוב והוא יהיה גדל במדבר. רבי שמעון בן לקיש אומר פרא אדם ודאי, שהכל בוזזים ממון והוא בוזז נפשות, ידו בכל ויד כל בו, קרי ביה כלבו, הוא והכלב שוים, מה הכלב אוכל נבילות, אף הוא אוכל נבילות. (מדרש רבה בראשית פרק מה).

"And he (Ishmael) will be a wild man; Rabbi Yochanan said that everyone else will grow in civilization, and he will grow in the wilderness. Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said, 'Certainly, a wild man, for while everyone seizes wealth, he seizes souls. His hand is with everyone, and everyone's hand is with him. He is called a dog. He and the dog are equal. Just as the dog eats carcasses, so does he eat carcasses.'"

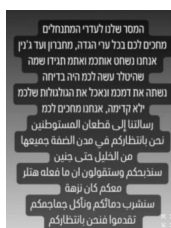
"Thanks, but no thank" would be the response of all mothers upon hearing from an angel that their child will be like a wild beast, a murderer and have traits of a dog, but Hagar appears to receive such news with contentment.

After she escapes from the home of her master- Sarah imenu, an angel approaches her and reassures her, presenting 'great news'- she'll have a child. She wholeheartedly accepts the message and is now willing to return to her master's house to work. Let's analyze what the angel told her in light of the Midrash Raba explanation, with a close focus on how the angel's prophecy precisely came to fruition. The angel conveyed that she would have a child who dwells in the desert while all other societies live with civilization, and he would be like a beast in the desert. The angel further explains that while criminals around the world often seek to steal wealth, the descendants of Ishmael are driven by a different motivation - they pursue killing for the sake of killing, often associated with the concept of jihad. Additionally, while many people may be repelled by corpses, they have a strong affinity for them.

One of the terrorists' slogans involves disturbing notions of drinking Jewish blood and consuming their hearts. This week, a young female terrorist named Ahed Tamimi (posted a message in this regard. The post reads as follows: "My message to you, Jews, is that whatever Hitler did was merely a joke. We are preparing to consume your blood and devour your skulls."

She is correct. Even as brutal as the Nazis were, they did not engage in the gruesome acts of indulging in blood and dead bodies. In contrast, these neo-Nazis have a disturbing affinity for such horrors, making those evil terrorists comparable to creatures like dogs, which exhibit a similar inclination.

When Avraham Avinu embarked on the journey to the Akeidat Yitzchak, he instructed Ishmael to stay behind with the donkey.



Chazal's explanation was that he intended to draw a comparison between Ishmael and the donkey. Before Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld arrived in Israel, he pondered why Avraham Avinu would compare Ishmael to a donkey, given that every human being was created in Hashem's image. However, upon his arrival in the Land of Israel and encountering Ishmaelites, his wonder turned in the opposite direction. He questioned how Avraham Avinu could liken a donkey to Ishmael, indicating that his perception changed based on his experiences with the Ishmaelites in the region.

In Tehilim (120), King David mourns, saying, "Woe is to me, for I have dwelled among the people of Meshech and resided among the tents of Kedar (according to the Metsudat Tsion Kedar is Ishmael). My soul has long dwelt with those who despise peace. I seek peace, but when I speak, they are eager for conflict."

נגלה על בני ישמעאל, אמר להם מקבלין אתם את התורה, אמרו לו מה כתוב בה, אמר להם לא תגנוב, אמרו לו בזו הברכה נתברך אבינו, דכתיב והוא יהיה פרא אדם, וכתוב כי גונב גונבתי. (מכילתא יתרו פרשה ה)

Hashem revealed to the sons of Ishmael and said to them, "Will you accept the Torah?" They asked him, "What is written in it?" He said to them, "You shall not steal." They responded, "Our father was blessed in that," as it is written, "And he will be a wild man," and it is also written about Yosef, "For I have stolen."

The characteristic of stealing that Ishmael was associated with is indeed related to kidnapping, or stealing people, as the proof it brings from stealing Yosef. In the Torah, one of the Ten Commandments states, "You shall not steal." Rashi explains that this commandment is not about stealing items but rather about the prohibition of stealing people. Ishmael's rejection of the Torah can be understood as stemming from his nature, which inclines him toward kidnapping, a behavior incompatible with the ethical and moral principles of the Torah.



הַיְהוָה יוֹם-בָּא לָהּ וַיְחַלֵּק שְׁלָלָהּ בְּקִרְבָּהּ: וְאַסְפֵּתִי אֶת-כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם אֶל-יְרֵשָׁלַם לְמַחְמָה וְנִלְכְּדָה הָעִיר וְנִשְׁפָּסוּ הַגִּבּוֹרִים וְהַנְּשִׁימִים תִּשְׁלַנָּה (תִּשְׁבְּרָנָה) וַיֵּצֵא חֲצֵי הָעִיר בְּגוֹלָה (זכריה יד)

It's intriguing to observe that in the prophecy of Zechariah regarding the end of days, it is foretold that Hashem will gather the nations around Jerusalem (Jerusalem usually refers to the land of Israel). These nations will subsequently besiege the city, invading it. As part of this invasion, they will breach the city's defenses, enter homes, and devastate them, while also committing acts of violence against the women and taking many

ISHMAEL: THE FATHER OF 'A GREAT NATION'.

captives.

The Radak provides an explanation that when it mentions the people going into exile, it refers to those who will be kidnapped. It's important to recognize that the term "half the people" may not be taken literally, as seen in various instances in the Torah

where "half" does not equate to precisely fifty percent. Rather, it signifies a significant and substantial number of kidnapped individuals. The verse underscores the vast scale of those who will be taken captive. (בשם שחצי שיעור אסור מן התורה אינו חצי ממש אלא) אפילו כל שהוא, וכן ראה רש"י זבחים קט, ב ד"ה חצי

SHABBAT AND THE SCREEN: HALACHIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR NEWS CONTENT

During stressful times like these, many of us frequently visit news sites to stay updated on current events in Israel and abroad. However, a question arises regarding accessing news from Jewish sources on Erev Shabbat when it is already Shabbat in Israel (due to the 7-hour time difference with New York), and similarly after Shabbat when one wishes to catch up on news that was reported during Shabbat. This issue necessitates a discussion to determine whether it is permissible according to halacha principles to access news from sources that may violate the observance of Shabbat.

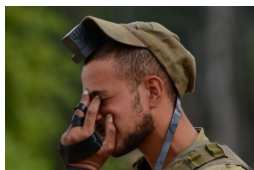
This issue raises the question of whether it is permissible to derive benefit from a violation of Shabbat. Let's distinguish between reporting by a Jew and reporting by a non-Jew.

Jew's reporting:

According to basic Halacha (ראה סימן שיח במג"א סק"ב), if a non-Jew performs an action on behalf of a Jew that is forbidden on Shabbat, the Jew may benefit from it after Shabbat has ended, but only after the amount of time it would take to complete that action. Conversely, when a fellow Jew violates Shabbat to perform an action for us, we are allowed to benefit from it immediately after Shabbat. The distinction between these two cases lies in our concern that when a non-Jew performs the action, he may be asked to do so again the following week. Thus, we wait until the requisite time has passed before benefiting from it. However, when a Jew undertakes the action on our behalf, we assume that they would not violate Shabbat for us again, allowing us to benefit from it right away.

In line with these principles, when a Jewish individual takes a photo or video on Shabbat, it should generally be permissible to view it after Shabbat, or before Shabbat (as there is no distinction between before and after Shabbat). However, it's important to note that an unobservant Jew might be subject to the same rules as a non-Jew (ראה פמ"ג א"א סי' שכה ס"ק כב שהסתפק בזה), and therefore, it should not be permitted to view such a photo until the time required for taking such a photo after Shabbat has passed. Moreover, If the photo documents something that occurred on Shabbat and cannot be retaken afterward, it may be considered forbidden to view permanently (הובא באורחות שבת פרק כה אות טו).

There is a responsa from the Ktav Sofer (siman 50) that addresses this matter. The Ktav Sofer was consulted regarding a Jewish-owned restaurant that prepares food for its clients on Shabbat, and the question was whether it is permissible to consume



their food (assuming it is kosher) that was cooked on Shabbat immediately after Shabbat. As we discussed earlier, the principle allows for immediate benefit from food prepared by a Jew on Shabbat. However, the Ktav Sofer's conclusion is that, in the case of the restaurant, since the cooks will continue to cook for their clients on Shabbat the following week, one may not benefit from the food that was cooked on Shabbat.

There is indeed a significant distinction between these cases and the situation involving a news site that displays current photos and videos of ongoing events. The food and other products that were created were primarily intended for sale and profit, making their use forbidden. However, a news website doesn't directly profit from individual viewers, so it should be allowed (ראה מנחת יצחק ח"ג) (סימן עט אות יט).

Moreover, Since the poskim have uncertainties regarding whether the status of a non-observant Jew aligns more closely with that of a Jew or a gentile, we generally adopt a lenient stance due to the principle of "safek derabanan lekula," which means that in cases of doubt involving rabbinic laws, we lean towards leniency (משנה ברורה סימן שיח סק"ב).

Goi's reporting:

Now, let's explore a scenario where the news site is not of Jewish origin, and their reporting is intended for a non-Jewish audience. As mentioned earlier, when a non-Jew performs an action involving Shabbat violation on our behalf, we should clarify that this is applicable only if the non-Jew genuinely did it for us. However, if the non-Jew's actions were intended for their non-Jewish audience, then we are generally permitted to derive benefit from it.

This Halacha finds its basis in the Shulchan Aruch, which states: "When a Gentile lights a candle at an assembly of Jews and gentiles; if the majority present are gentiles one may benefit from the light of the candle, but if the majority present are Jews or even half-half, it is forbidden. If it is obvious that he lit it for a Gentile, for example – we see that the Gentile himself uses the light, even if a majority of Jews are present, it is permitted." In our case, the majority of people benefiting from the reporting are gentiles, which aligns with this principle, and therefore, we are generally permitted to view it.

In situations where the news pertains to matters of public safety, such as instances where rockets are being fired, it is certainly permissible for anyone to seek this information, even if it

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is not directly related to them. This is because the news is being presented with the consideration of "pikuach nefesh," the principle of saving lives, which makes it permissible for everyone who have access to such information.

In cases where the photos or videos were captured by a gentile and then shared on a Jewish website, it is generally permissible for a Jewish individual to view them. This is based on the con-

cept outlined in the Biur Halacha (סימן שי"א ד"ה אחת), which states that only items that were actively created or altered on Shabbat are forbidden to derive benefit from. In this context, if the material was neither created nor altered by a Jew on Shabbat, it is considered permissible to access, much like a situation where someone delivers an item on Shabbat with violating the sanctity of the day, as the item itself remains unchanged.

בלויים בעת צרה.

וכן נפסק בשולחן ערוך (סימן תקעד ס"ה): "כל הפורש מן הציבור אינו רואה בנחמתו, וכל המצטער עמהם זוכה ורואה בנחמתו". והנה הסבירו המשנה ברורה (ס"ק יג) וכן הכף החיים (ס"ק טז) שהכוונה היא שדוקא בדבר שיוכל להועיל לציבור, וכגון בתפילה, בתענית או בממון, אולם אם אין לו שום תועלת לא נאמר דבר זה. ואף על פי כן הסביר בכף החיים (ס"ק יז) שיש לאדם לעצור עצמו עם הציבור כשם שמצינו במשה רבינו שציער את עצמו בשעה שעם ישראל לחמו בעמלקים, שנאמר וידי משה כבדים. ולכן ודאי שאין ראוי לבלות וכן לצאת לטיולים בזמן שאחינו נמצאים בלוחמה ורבים נמצאים תחת איום טילים תדיר.



שלום לרב. אנו כמה חברים שכבר זמן רב מתכננים טיול, והתעוררה לנו השאלה אם בזמן מלחמה ראוי לצאת לטיולים. כמו כן אנו נוהגים כבר שנים לצאת לבלויים מדי שבוע, וגם בזה הסתפקנו אם הדבר מתאים עכשיו. תודה מראש. שלום וברכה לשואלים.

למדנו בגמרא (תענית י"א, א): "בזמן שישראל שרוין בצער ופירש אחד מהן, באין שני מלאכי השרת שמלוין לו לאדם ומניחים לו ידיהן על ראשו ואומרים: פלוני זה שפירש מן הציבור אל יראה בנחמת הציבור" וכן נמצא גם בפרקי אבות (פרק ב' משנה ד'): "אל תפרוש מן הציבור". והסביר רבי עובדיה מברטנורא שיש להשתתף עם צער הציבור.

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