

WE NEED YOU TO TAKE ACTION RIGHT NOW



“Darfuri man protesting for his rights in Tel Aviv, Israel - 2012”

Eritreans and Sudanese are 90% of asylum seekers in Israel. They flee genocide, political persecution, indefinite military conscription, torture, and human trafficking. 75% of Eritreans and 71% of Sudanese receive refugee status in other Western democracies.

BUT ONLY 0.3% OF ERITREANS AND SUDANESE HAVE RECEIVED REFUGEE STATUS WITH BASIC RIGHTS IN ISRAEL.

THE RIGHT NOW COALITION

Right Now is an international coalition of volunteers advocating for the human rights of the non-Jewish African asylum seekers in Israel through awareness-raising, direct advocacy, and grassroots campaigns. Email us to join the coalition and work toward change.

JOIN RIGHT NOW AND TAKE ACTION!

website: www.asylumseekers.org

email: info@asylumseekers.org

facebook: [rightnowisrael](https://www.facebook.com/rightnowisrael)

twitter: [@rightnowisrael](https://twitter.com/rightnowisrael)

WE CALL ON THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT TO:

- Develop a **fair Refugee Status Determination procedure** that allows for each individual to apply for asylum and provides protection and support for refugees in line with all other Western, democratic countries.
- **Cease its deterrence policy** of coercing asylum seekers to “voluntarily return” to their countries of origin or to a third country, where their lives may be in danger.
- **Provide refugees with social residency** and the right to work, which would include work permits, health care, and welfare benefits.
- **Stop referring to asylum seekers as “infiltrators.”**
- **Sternly condemn racist rhetoric** and violent incitement towards the asylum seekers.

**Right
Now**

Advocates for African
Asylum Seekers in Israel

Text Study: Early Zionists on asylum seekers in Israel

Theodore Herzl – Altneuland (Quoted in Golda Meir - *My Life* p. 266)

“There is still one other question arising out of the disaster of nations which remains unsolved to this day, and whose profound tragedy, only a Jew can comprehend. This is the African question. Just call to mind all those terrible episodes of the slave trade, of human beings who, merely because they were black, were stolen like cattle, taken prisoner, captured and sold. Their children grew up in strange lands, the objects of contempt and hostility because their complexions were different. I am not ashamed to say, though I may expose myself to ridicule for saying so, that once I have witnessed the redemption of the Jews, my people, I wish also to assist in the redemption of the Africans.”

Menachem Begin - Speech on Independence Day 1948 (Quoted in his *The Revolt* p. 375)

“And within our Homeland: justice must be the supreme ruler, the ruler over all rulers. There must be no tyranny. The Ministers and officials must be the servants of the nation and not their masters. There must be no exploitation. There must be no man within our country – be he citizen or foreigner—compelled to go hungry, to want for a roof over his head, or to lack elementary education. “Remember ye were strangers in the land of Egypt”—this supreme rule must continually light our way in relations with the strangers within our gates “Righteousness, Righteousness shalt thou pursue!” Righteousness must be the guiding principle in our relations amongst ourselves...”

Israel's Declaration of Independence



THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be open to the immigration of Jews from all countries of their dispersion; will promote the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; will be based on the precepts of liberty, justice and peace taught by the Hebrew Prophets; will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of race, creed or sex; will guarantee full freedom of conscience, worship, education and culture; will safeguard the sanctity and inviolability of the shrines and Holy Places of all religions; and will dedicate itself to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

מדינת ישראל תהא פתוחה לעליה יהודית ולקיבוץ גלויות; תשקוד על פיתוח הארץ לטובת כל תושביה; תהא מושתתה על יסודות החירות, הצדק והשלום לאור חזונו של נביאי ישראל; תקיים שוויון זכויות חברתי ומדיני גמור לכל אזרחיה בלי הבדל דת, גזע ומין; תבטיח חופש דת, מצפון, לשון, חינוך ותרבות; תשמור על המקומות הקדושים של כל הדתות; ותהיה נאמנה לעקרונותיה של מגילת האומות המאוחדות.

Discussion Questions

What older Jewish texts, stories, and values do these modern voices draw on? What claims do they make about the State of Israel and its responsibilities? Where do these texts agree with one another and where do they diverge? How do you think they would address the current crisis of African asylum seekers in Israel? Are there competing values that oppose the values expressed here in the current situation?

Text Study: Rabbi Yuval Cherlow-Should Israel Assist Haiti?

Question: I wanted to ask whether from the perspective of Halacha, the State of Israel needs to help those who have been injured in the tumult and the earthquake in Haiti. Or maybe this is not the case because of the halachik principle that the poor of your village take precedence and we have not yet resolved all the economic problems here in Israel.

Answer: Greetings and blessings. Regarding matters of charity and the distribution of charitable funds one needs to distinguish between two situations, on the one hand the normal situation in which the question arises how to distribute a person's charitable donations. This question has many aspects some of which are found in the *Shulchan Aruch* (for example: that redeeming captives takes precedence over anything else), some arise from the many discussions in the responsa literature (small sums to many people or a large sum to solve one individual's problems), some through our scale of values (priority is given to scholars for through this we achieve two things in one act), some through the principle that the poor of one's city come first, and some through the donor's personal preferences. This is the normal and normative situation since *the poor will never disappear from the land*. (Deut. 15:11)

Nevertheless, there are also emergency situations in which all of these considerations are put aside because of the threatening and terrifying situation when funds donated really save lives for the multitudes that are in this difficult situation of an earthquake. In such circumstances, one does not make complicated calculations, rather one gives as much as possible in order to help. Clearly, this is so long as one can be sure that the money really goes to help. This principle of aid is a covenant between all humanity - who are created in the Image of God - and simple and basic sensitivity, compassion and cooperation. The Netziv wrote about this in another context in his well known introduction to the Book of Genesis and his explanation of Abraham's struggle to save the people of Sodom.

Moreover, this creates a sanctification of God's name and the uplifting of the name of the Holy One Blessed Be He in the world like one who does justice and brings healing to those in pain and anguish. And when the Jewish people who bear God's name participate in an international campaign for those who were severely injured in the tumult.

Therefore, at this stage, we do not make calculations rather we should participate in this mission and participate together with much of the world for the good of Haiti. Best wishes.

What older Jewish texts, stories, and values does Rabbi Cherlow refer to? How does he leverage them to answer this question, and what do you think of his conclusion? How is the situation of refugees in Israel similar to and different from that of Haiti post-earthquake? Do you think Rabbi Cherlow would apply the same reasoning to refugees in Israel? Do you think it should apply?

This responsum was received from Rabbi Yuval Cherlow 29 Tevet 5770 (15 January 2010), Israel. Rabbi Cherlow is head of the Hesder Yeshiva in Petach Tikvah, Israel.

תוכן השאלה: רציתי לשאול האם מצד ההלכה מדינת ישראל צריכה לסייע לנפגעי הרעש והרעידה בהאיטי, או שמא לא, בגלל הכלל ההלכתי שעניי עירך קודמים, ועדיין לא פתרנו את כל הבעיות הכלכליות כאן בארץ.

תוכן התשובה: שלום וברכה. בענייני צדקה וחלוקת כספים יש להבחין בין שני מצבים: מצב אחד רגיל, בו עולה השאלה כיצד לחלק את כספי הצדקה שאדם נותן. זו שאלה שיש לה היבטים רחבים מאוד, חלקם נמצא בשולחן ערוך (כגון הקדמת פדיון שבויים לכל דבר אחר), חלקם עולה מדיונים רבים בשו"ת"ם (מעט להרבה או לפתור את הבעיה של אחד), חלקם לפי סולם ערכים (עניים תלמידי חכמים, שזו העדיפות הראשונה, שהרי עושים בצדקה זו שני דברים כאחד), חלקם לפי הכלל של "עניי עירך קודמים", וחלקם לפי נטייתו האישית של האדם. זהו המצב הרגיל והנורמלי, כיוון שלא חדל אביון מקרב הארץ.

ברם, ישנם מצבי חרום, בהם כל השיקולים האלה נדחים מפני המציאות האיומה והנוראה, כשכספי הנתינה הם פיקוח נפש של ממש, להמונים המונים שנמצאים במציאות הקשה ביותר של רעידת האדמה. זהו הזמן שלא עושים חשבונות מסובכים, ונותנים את מה שאפשר כדי לסייע, כאשר מוודאים כמובן שהכסף הולך אכן לסיוע. יסוד הסיוע הזה הוא הברית שבין כל באי עולם, בהיותם צלם א-לוהים, והרגש הפשוט והיסודי של ההומניות, החמלה והשותפות. דברים מעין אלה כתב הנצי"ב בהקשר אחר בהקדמתו הידועה לספר בראשית, ובהסבר מאבקו של אברהם למען הצלת סדום.

מעבר לכך, יש בדברים קידוש השם, ונשיאת שמו של הקב"ה בעולם, כמי שעושה צדק ומביא מרפא לכואבים ולדוים, ושעם ישראל הנושא את שמו שותף בהתגייסות העולמית למען הנפגעים קשה ברעש.

על כן, בשלב הזה לא עושים חשבונות, אלא שותפים במשימה הזו, ומתגייסים יחד עם הרבה מבאי עולם לטובת האיטי. כל טוב.