

יְיָ שָׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֶת-קוֹל הַנֶּעֱר וַיִּקְרָא מֵאֵד אֱלֹהִים  
**God heard the cry of the child and an angel of God called out...**  
(Genesis 21:17)

As we wait----and wait for worthy and bipartisan legislation that will establish a fair and just immigration policy, we have been witnesses to the pain and frustration expressed by vulnerable families and children. A nation's laws are fundamental to the proper function and well-being of our society. And yet, the moral compass that guides us should not be strictly the letter of the law. One of the most honored principles of Judaism is:

“לפנים משורת הדין” *lifanim mi-shurat ha-din* ---acting beyond the letter of the law.”

Yes, those who break the laws of this land should face the consequences. Yes, the laws are absolutely necessary because without them society would devolve into chaos. Yes, there are those who use this and every other opportunity to push a partisan political agenda. But no, we do not have to interpret the laws or enforce the laws contrary to common sense or common decency. Ultimately, we must pause and consider the ramifications of our actions and how they impact others.

The quote above, “God heard the cry of the child,” comes from a heartbreaking passage in the Torah. Sarah, fighting fiercely for the preeminence of her child Isaac, turned against Hagar and her son Ishmael, who she saw as a threat. She laid down the law to Abraham and insisted that he cast Hagar and Ishmael out. Abraham was distressed but reluctantly carried out Sarah's command. Hagar, wandering with her child in the wilderness, thought that all was lost. “She left the child under one of the bushes and went and sat down a bowshot away thinking, 'Let me not look on as the child dies.' And sitting thus afar, she burst into tears.” It was at that moment that God heard the cry of the child and an angel of God called out to Hagar and provided both with the resources and the encouragement to survive.

The Torah's message on this moving and relevant passage, one that does not put our ancestors Abraham and Sarah in cosmetically correcting light, is that all of God's children are worthy of our compassion.

The cries of vulnerable children and families have been heard. This is not a time for partisan gamesmanship. Rather, it is a time for compassion and generosity of spirit. May it be that this noble nation of ours responds with open-hearted goodness to all who cry out.