One of the more interesting commandments in this week’s parsha is the mitzvah that we should not despise someone from Edom because he is a brother of Bnei Yisrael, or an Egyptian, for we were once a stranger in their land. But why are we commanded to do this? The Egyptians only befriended Bnei Yisrael because of their contributions to the sustenance of the land and agricultural success, then turned on the nation, while the Edomites were known for showing hostility and hatred towards the people. Is there a deeper reason behind this commandment?

The Da’as Zekeanim comment that even though Bnei Yisrael eventually became enslaved to the Egyptians, we nonetheless have a duty to remember how they first welcomed us and treated us well in their country, regardless of any ulterior motives. Additionally, Da’as Zekeanim say that the fact that the forefather of the Edomites (Esav) was a brother of Yaakov is enough of a reason to not hate them; despite the glaring differences of values and virtues, there is still a common blood bond linking the two nations. Rabbeinu Bechaye adds to this that the kinship means both kingdoms share lineage from Yitchak and Avraham; while the Edomites may have a very different third patriarch than us, it is imperative to remember that the other two avos of their nation are the very same as ours. The Netziv points out that the Edomites are called “people of Edom” and not “children of Esav” here because they reside in ארצם שעיר, which is the portion of land belonging to Avraham Avinu, a shared forefather. When it comes to how we act towards other nations, one common denominator can ultimately override everything else if it means that we will conduct ourselves with a greater sense of kindness and compassion towards them.

In the Gemara in Berachos, a story is told of R’ Yehuda, R’ Yosei, R’ Nechemiah, and R’ Eliezer ben R’ Yosei HaGelili when they were in the vineyards of Yavneh. At one point, each of them in honor of their hosts, the locals who were accommodating them, and the guests, their students. R’ Yosi began to speak in honor of the hosts by bringing a kal v’chomer, an a fortiori inference, from the commandment to not hate an Egyptian. The Egyptians, who only hosted and befriended Bnei Yisrael for their own benefit, are treated properly; all the more so should one who hosts a talmid chacham in his home by providing him with food and drinks while allowing the guest to benefit from his possessions without concern for personal gain be treated appropriately as well. There is no excuse for a person's stature to enable and entitle them to act with insolence and impudence to one who is providing for them. Moreover, Rabba bar Mari uses this pasuk as evidence that if there is a well that a person drank from, they should not throw a stone into it, as one should not “bite the hand that has fed them” and act poorly towards someone who has treated them well, even if that is no longer the case.
The Sifri\textsuperscript{10} remarks that to create a great sense of achdus, one must be willing to overlook the sins and misdemeanors of his fellow to bring him back into the fold; this in a sense is the commandment of kiruv krovim, the idea of bringing those who are close even closer. Rabbenu Meyuchas echoes this statement and says that this pasuk comes to teach us that it is a mitzvah to treat others with respect even they act improperly. The Rambam comments in Moreh Nevuchim\textsuperscript{11} that if we find a person in trouble, and we once enjoyed their assistance or received some benefit from them, even if that person has subsequently wronged us since then, we must bear in mind their previous good conduct. As the New Year and Yom HaDin draw even closer, it is more important than ever to leave behind the offenses and efforts of others and choose instead to only view their good deeds or the links that create a relationship and a common sense of ground. If we can do this, we will gain a greater sense of altruism and understanding, and will be able to narrow that detachment and distance that we have with others, which will take away our label of "strangers in the land."

\textsuperscript{10} ספרי רב
\textsuperscript{11} ספר מורה הנבוכיםlek פך McCabe
Jonathan Kurz
תורת קוח

דברי תורה על הפרשה ל"פ