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***"What is our responsibility as Jews toward Syrian refugees?"***

***Response by Rabbi Peter Schweitzer***

Who will speak up and who will remain silent? Who will speak up hastily and lead the charge and who will test the winds first and see how they blow before responding? And who will speak up and frame their pleas in Jewish-centric language – full of Biblical quotes and allusions to our own familiar refugee history – and who will speak up with no need for these citations for this is, after all, a tragic and devastating humanitarian crisis that transcends any one particular nation, group or religion?

I have to admit that I am bothered by the way the initial question gets framed. Surely, our response to any tragedy of this magnitude ought to be because of our compassion as one human to another. Our desire to assist ought to be driven by our instinctive human responsibility, and should not depend on some appeal to our “Jewish experience” or teaching.

What if, for example, we did not have a “Jewish parallel” from our memory bank to draw on? How many devastating floods or hurricanes have we literally experienced as a Jewish people? Should we sit those particular crises out? Of course not. We will and should respond because it is the right humanitarian thing to do, and if it happens to have a Jewish proof text to “legitimate” the response, that is icing on the cake.