



KINDER TORAH

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PARASHAS EMOR

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Mr. and Mrs. Victor Groffman ז"ל • Yahrtzeit ז' אדר

THE BETTER ALTERNATIVE

“When you sacrifice a *Korbon Todah* to Hashem, you shall sacrifice it to gain favor for yourselves” (Vayikra 22:29). The Kesav Sofer explains that a person must have a sincere desire to bring a *Korbon Todah*. This statement seems a bit too obvious. A *Korbon Todah* was a thanksgiving offering brought by someone who was saved from a dangerous situation. For example, he had been captured by bandits and was rescued. With this *korbon*, he thanked Hashem for saving him. After such an experience, the person would be ecstatic to be alive. Of course, he would want to bring a *Korbon Torah* thanking Hashem! Why does the verse need to tell us that he must have a sincere desire to bring the *korbon*? It is obvious.

The Kesav Sofer takes a deeper look at the *Korbon Todah*. Would a person rather be put into a dangerous situation and subsequently saved, or not get into danger at all? Of course, he would rather avoid the whole experience. Therefore, he really does not want to be put in a situation where he will ultimately need to bring a *Korbon Todah*. Therefore, he apparently does not bring the *korbon* with the full desire of his heart.

The Kesav Sofer points out a fundamental mistake in this attitude. A person must be happy with the trouble that befalls him. Why? Because it came upon him to cleanse him of his *aveyros* (sins). The heavenly punishment that he deserved for his *aveyros* would have been far worse than the *yissurin* (suffering). Hashem gave him the lighter sentence – the *yissurin* – and then saved him from death. How fortunate is this person! He received his *kapora* (atone-ment) in *olam haze*. This is a “light sentence” compared to the retribution that awaits the sinner in *olam habo*. Therefore, the person should be happy even before the *yissurin* come. He knows they are far more pleasant than the alternative.

There is a story that vividly illustrates this point. A chossid was suffering terrible *yissurin*. He was very poor, there was illness in his family, and his non-Jewish neighbors were tormenting him. He decided to go visit the Rebbe to receive a *bracha* to end the *yissurin*. In the dead of winter, he made the long trip to the town

where the Rebbe lived. The chossid was exhausted when he arrived. There was a line of other chassidim sitting in the well heated waiting room, waiting to see the Rebbe. He took a seat at the end and quickly fell fast asleep. The chossid began to dream a very disturbing dream. He had reached the end of his life, and had ascended to the Heavenly Court for his final judgment. He was called forward and led in front of a huge balance scale. The court first called for the chossid's mitzvos. A group of white angels appeared. He saw the prayers that he had properly prayed, the Torah that he had learned, and the acts of kindness that he had performed. The white “mitzvah angels” went up onto the right side of the scale and weighed it down. Next, they



called for the chossid's *aveyros*. In came a group of black angels. They were more numerous than the white “mitzvah angels”. The time that he wasted when he could have been learning Torah, the money that he should have given to *tse-daka* but did not, the words of *loshon hora* that he spoke, and the missed and rushed prayers, were all faithfully brought up to the courtroom. They ascended onto the left side of the scale and weighed it down heavily.

The chossid blinked his eyes. He could not believe it. How did he accumulate so many *aveyros*? Did he not have any more mitzvos? The *aveyra* side was far heavier! What was he to do? He was doomed. Then a third group of angels made their appearance. One represented a day that he went hungry without food. Another brought a time that he was sick in bed for two weeks with a high fever. They as-

cended onto the right side of the scale, along with the mitzvos. Another angel came, telling of the insults that he suffered. Another brought forth the prejudice from the anti-Semites. They all went up onto the right side of the scale, weighing it down heavily. The two sides were almost equal. They *aveyros* had only a slight edge.

“Bring out more *yissurin*,” the chossid said. “But you have no more *yissurin*,” was the reply of the Heavenly Court. “No, no no! It can't be. I want more *yissurin*! More *yissurin*!” The chossid screamed at the top of his lungs. “More *yissurin*! More *yissurin*!” He jolted himself awake from his dream, opening his eyes to find himself still sitting in the Rebbe's waiting room. He was alive, *boruch Hashem*. However, he was shaken with the reality of the dream. Why had he come here to the Rebbe? To rid himself of the *yissurin*. What a foolish thought! *Yissurin* were the best thing for him. They would save him from a terrible fate in *olam habo*. The chossid got up and left without seeing the Rebbe. Let the *yissurin* come. He would welcome them.

Kinderlach . . .

The best thing is to stay free of aveyros, or to do teshuva on the mistakes that we did make. When we leave ourselves with aveyros that were not corrected, Hashem gives us two alternatives. One is unpleasant, and the other is terrible. Yissurin are unpleasant, but punishment in olam habo is terrible. Which one should we choose? Dovid HaMelech summed it all up. “Fortunate is the man whom Hashem afflicts” (Tehillim 94:12). Kinderlach, we should all be free of sin and never faced with this choice. However, we should welcome yissurin when they come, knowing that they are far better than the alternative.

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