

VAYOMER ELIYAHU

Inspiration and Encouragement on Topics of Trust and Faith in Hashem Yisborach
Based on the Weekly Torah Portion

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In English



בס"ד

It Is Possible That the Greatest Good for a Person is For Him to be Lacking That Which He Most Sorely Desires!

» *Why Does a Poor Man Need to Bring an Additional Korban?*

The pasuk in this week's Parshah states (5:1-7): "A soul that sins... and it will be if he transgressed one of these and he confesses that he did this sin and he will bring his sin offering to Hashem for the sin that he sinned, a female from the flock, either a sheep or goat as a Chatas, and the kohen shall provide atonement for him from is sin. And if he cannot afford to bring a sheep, he shall bring from his sin offering two turtledoves or two young doves to Hashem, one for a Chatas and one for an Olah."

This means that if a wealthy man commits one of the inadvertent sins mentioned in the Parshah, he must bring a sheep or goat as a Korban Chatas. A poor man, who cannot afford this, must bring two birds – one as an Olah and one as a Chatas.

This is hard to understand. Why does a rich man only need to bring one korban – a Chatas – while a poor man needs to bring two – an Olah and a Chatas.

The Ibn Ezra asks this question and quotes Rav Yitzchok as answering: "He must bring an Olah because perhaps the fact that he cannot afford (a rich man's korban) bothers him."

The Meforshim explain that it is very possible that when the poor man sees that he can't afford to bring an animal as a korban he will have complaints in his heart against Hashem, *chas v'shalom*. He may ask why he has to be so poor that he can't bring as honorable a korban as a wealthy man, and he may come to question Hashem's ways. Therefore, the Torah obligates him to bring an additional Korban Olah, as this type of korban atones for improper thoughts (as is stated in Yerushalmi Yoma 8:7).

We also see another wondrous lesson from his words. We know that there is a general rule that Hashem does not consider sinful thoughts to be like actions (Kiddushin 39B), which means that one is not required to atone for thinking that he desires to do an *aveirah*. Still and all, a pauper must bring a Korban Olah to atone for his improper

thoughts. Why is this so?

The answer is that the Gemara (ibid) says that there is one exception to the general rule. It says that if one has thoughts of serving idols, it is considered as if he did a sinful act and he must atone for his thoughts. When a poor man has thoughts of complaint against Hashem, it is considered heresy, and is akin to *avodah zara*. Therefore, these thoughts must be atoned for.

The truth is that whenever a person has complaints such as these in his heart, it is only because of a lack of understanding. In truth, however, everything that Hashem does is for one's benefit.

Furthermore, things that seem bad to us often are the cause of ultimate goodness but we simply lack the ability to comprehend Hashem's exalted ways of perfectly guiding the world, as is stated (Tehillim 92:7): "An empty man doesn't know and a fool doesn't understand this." If something appears crooked to us, it actually is as straight as can be. Only Hashem truly knows what is good for us, as the Rosh writes (Orchos Chaim 69): "You should desire what Your Creator desires. Annul your desires before the Creator's desires because He knows everything", and everything He does is certainly the best thing possible.

» *A Tefillah Can Sometimes be Harmful!*

The month of Nissan is an ideal time to work on strengthening our *emunah*. Rav Menachem Nochum of Boyan-Chernobyl zy"א would say (Tiferes Menachem, Nissan 5695) that just like Chazal say (Taanis 29A) that when Adar comes, our joy should increase, so too when Nissan comes, our *emunah* should increase. This is because it was during the month of Nissan that Klal Yisroel was redeemed from Egypt in the merit of their *emunah*, and during the month of Nissan we will be redeemed from our current exile in the merit of our *emunah* (Yalkut Shimoni, Chelek 2, Remez 519).

The Gemara (Moed Koton 25B) states: "Rav Chanin was the son-in-law of the Nasi and he had no children. He davened and was granted a son but on the day the son was born, Rav Chanin died. The eulogizer began

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his eulogy by saying, ‘The joy was transformed to sorrow. The happiness was transformed to pain...’”

Sefer Iyun Yaakov writes that it had been decreed that Rav Chanin would die. However, since one who has no children is considered to be dead (Nedarim 64B), he was allowed to remain alive. However, since he davened excessively for a child, his prayers were heard and he was given a son, and this caused his decree of death to literally be enacted. Thus, the joy was transformed to sorrow through his *tefillos*.

When he had no children, it seemed like a tremendous *tzara*. In truth, however, it was for his own benefit, as this was the only reason he was still alive. And having children seemed like a great source of joy, but this ended up being the cause of great sorrow.

The Chofetz Chaim zt”l says a similar thing to explain the *pasuk* in Tehillim (30:2): “I will exalt You, Hashem, for You have made me poor (*dilisani*), and You have not allowed my enemies to rejoice over me.” He writes: “Sometimes, it is decreed that a person should die as a result of a sin he committed but Hashem is kind and, instead, decrees that he should become impoverished, as a poor person is considered dead. The *pasuk* is saying that one should thank Hashem for making him poor and thereby saving him from death and not allowing his ‘enemy’ – i.e., the Malach Hamaves – to rejoice over him.”

»» *The Connection Between Salt and Suffering*

The verse states (Vayikrah 2:13): “And you shall salt every one of your meal offering sacrifices with salt, and you shall not omit the salt of Hashem’s covenant from upon your meal offerings. You shall offer salt on all your sacrifices.”

The Gemara (Brachos 5A) speaks about the benefit of suffering that are accepted with love and says that all types of suffering, both those that prevent one from learning Torah and those that do not, are sent out of Hashem’s love. There is a dispute in the Gemara as to how we know this. Rav Yochanon says we learn this from the law that a slave goes free if his master knocks out his eye or tooth. He says that if someone goes free when one part of his body is harmed it is certain that he merits freedom and salvation if his entire body suffers.

Rav Shimon ben Lakish says that we learn this from the salt brought together with the *korbanos*. (The word

“*bris*” is stated both by the salt and by suffering as an indication that they should be compared to each other.) He says that just like salt sweetens meat, so too suffering “sweetens” one’s sins.

Rav Shimshon Ostropolier zt”l explains the difference between Rav Yochanon and Reish Lakish by saying that salt has a natural ability to sweeten meat. It makes no difference who is doing the salting – whether it is the owner of the meat or someone else. The law that a slave goes free when he is struck in the eye or tooth, however, only applies to the owner. If someone else would knock out a slave’s eye, he would not go free.

Thus, according to Reish Lakish, who compares suffering to the salting of meat, whether one receives his suffering at the hand of his “owner” – Hashem – or at the hands of one of His messengers, it makes no difference. He will have the benefit of the suffering in any case. But according to Rav Yochanon, who compares suffering to a slave being struck in the eye or tooth, one only benefits from suffering if they come directly from Hashem, and not if they come through one of His messengers.

He says that according to this, we can understand Hashem’s words to Moshe (Shemos 6:5): “And I also heard the groans of bnei Yisroel because the Egyptians enslaved them, and I remembered My covenant.” He says that since the suffering came through the Egyptians, they were not sufficient reason according to Rav Yochanon to provide salvation for Klal Yisroel, because these suffering came through a messenger and not directly from Hashem. However, Hashem then says that he remembered the “*bris*”, a reference to Reish Lakish’s explanation that sufferings are compared to the *bris* of salt. Once this explanation was recalled, the nation was able to be redeemed even though the suffering came through a messenger.

I once heard a different explanation of the difference between Rav Yochanon and Reish Lakish said in the name of Rav Yaakov Galinsky zt”l. He explains that a difference may be if someone is struck with sufferings, but instead of accepting that they were sent to him from Hashem chooses to believe that his illness is “natural”.

He says that according to Rav Yochanon, such suffering will be of no benefit. As we said, a slave only goes free if his owner strikes him on the eye or tooth, but not if someone else does. So too, suffering is only of benefit to the individual if he believes that Hashem is his master and He is hitting him to cleanse him of his sins and

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bring him to repent. If he refuses to accept that the suffering is from Hashem, he is akin to someone who has no master, and his suffering is not considered to have come from his “owner”. Therefore, it will not benefit him.

Reish Lakish, however, compares suffering to salt. As we said, any salt can sweeten meat. It makes no difference whose salt is used. So too, any suffering can cleanse a person of his sins, even if he fails to accept where they come from or why they were sent.

>> *Yissurim Can be Learned From a Kal V'Chomer or a Gezeirah Shava*

In this vein, the Divrei Yoel (Parshas Ki Savo) explains the words of a Medrash.

The verse states (Shemos 1:13): “And the Egyptians worked bnei Yisroel with ‘parech’, hard labor.” The Medrash (Shemos Rabbah 1:11) further brings two opinions regarding the meaning of the word “parech.” One explanation is that it means that the Egyptians treated the Jew with a “*peh rach*”, soft mouth. The other explanation is that it means “*prichah*”, hard work that shatters the body.

The Divrei Yoel cites the aforementioned disagreement about suffering between Rav Yochanon and Reish Lakish and states another difference between the two. He explains that if one learns like Reish Lakish, that suffering is learned from a “*gezeirah shava*” in that it is comparable to salt, it can be said that it only is effective in moderate amounts. Salt sweetens meat if a bit is sprinkled on, but if a lot of salt is used it will ruin the meat. So too, suffering is effective to help a person if he receives it in moderation; however, if one receives an abundance of suffering, it will only harm him.

However, according to Rav Yochanon’s explanation – that we learn a “*kal v’chomer*” that if a slave goes free when he is struck in one spot, it is certain that a person who suffers in his whole body will “go free” from his sins – this is certainly true if he suffers a lot. The more suffering one receives, the more it is obvious that he will benefit from them and he will be cleansed from his sins.

He adds that the two opinions in the Medrash are based on this disagreement. The opinion that the Jews were tortured with backbreaking pain that broke their bodies agrees with Rav Yochanon that an abundance of suffering is beneficial to a person. Therefore, he learns that the Jews were sent indescribable pain and suffering. The opinion that they were treated with a “soft mouth” holds that one only benefits from a little suffering, and not from an overabundance. Therefore, he learns that the suffering was in moderation.

The Divrei Yoel adds that this is why the *tochacha* in Devarim (28:69), which hints at all the suffering our nation would undergo during the course of the exile ends with Moshe Rabenu saying: “These are the words of the *bris*.”

This is meant as a comfort to us. Moshe is telling us that suffering is learned from the *bris* of salt, and will never be sent in abundance. They will set us free, in the same way being struck in the eye sets a slave free, and they will be like salt in that they will only be used in moderation.

Rav Shimshon Pinkus zt”l (Tiferes Shimshon) notes that Chazal refer to suffering as a “*bris*”, as they are like a covenant that binds Klal Yisroel to Hashem. He says that this concept has numerous connotations.

One way to understand this is that when one lives an easy and good life and lacks nothing, he may fail to recognize that Hashem is taking care of him. Only when one is missing something does he realize that Hashem was taking care of him all this time. Therefore, suffering is something that connects a person to Hashem in the sense that when one feels a bit of pain, he comes to recognize all that Hashem has given him.

Rav Pinkus stresses that when someone has a headache, he should know that Hashem gave him this headache because He loves him and wants him to appreciate the very fact that he has a head equipped with eyes, ears and a mouth, as well as a livelihood, family and otherwise good health. Therefore, this is a very auspicious time to express gratitude to Hashem.

With this in mind, he explains the verse in Tehilim (9:1): “To the conductor, upon the death of a son, a song of Dovid.” Some say that Dovid composed this song of praise when one of his sons died. When one of Dovid’s sons died suddenly, he recognized that life of a child is not certain; rather, even a child can die without warning. This led him to become grateful of the fact that he was alive and that he had living children. He accepted Hashem’s kindness, which led him to sing a song of praise to Him.

This adds another dimension to the comparison between suffering and a slave being struck in the eye or tooth. If someone is struck by someone else, and certainly if he is hit so hard that he loses an eye or a tooth, he would certainly be furious at the one who hit him. If he were a person with a temper, he would probably want revenge. But if he were a slave who gains his freedom by being struck, he would also be happy about what happened. Even though the slap hurts, and even though he lost a tooth, he gained his freedom. He would certainly consider it a good deal.

This is how one should feel when he is struck with suffering. When our Master sends us a painful blow, we should not focus on the pain we feel. This should not be our main concern. Rather, we should realize that the suffering is freeing us from our sins. Thus, we should be happy that Hashem sent us the suffering to free us and save us from a much worse fate. This is as Chazal say (Brachos 20A) that suffering cleanse a person of his sins and without them, one would have to suffer much more in Olam Haba.