

March, 2020

Dear Acheinu Bnei Yisroel everywhere,

In these days of anxiety and anticipation, as Klal Yisrael prepares to greet Moshiach, I had some thoughts I wanted to share with you.

At first, I hesitated. Who am I to speak *hashkafah* and give suggestions to the *olam*? But then I thought: If I have an idea of value that even one person may benefit from, why should I deprive him of it?

In these challenging times of the Coronavirus crisis, apart from working on thanking Hashem *b'simchah* for the difficulty itself, as Chazal require us to do, there are two other things I felt it would be worthwhile to give our attention to.

The first thing is to try **to find the silver lining in the challenge**. One silver lining I've seen is its effect in **revitalizing our bitachon**. In Mesila, *bitachon* is the first on the list of efforts for *parnassah* and is the only one that guarantees success. When everything is going well, it's hard to discern if one is a real *boteiach*. In times of plenty, it is difficult — though not impossible — to genuinely realize that everything is from the Ribono shel Olam and that we are totally in His hands. But when things aren't running so smoothly — when we are faced with health issues, financial issues, and all the other challenges that the current crisis presents, that is when our *bitachon* is put to the test and emerges in its true colors. Do I feel *menuchas hanefesh*? Am I totally reliant on Hakadosh Baruch Hu? The crisis enables us to draw on everything we've been learning and preaching all along. Also, when things get tough, we automatically feel closer to Hashem. In a way, it is easier now than ever before to remember that, even if we've been laid off, our true Boss remains the same and He will always provide for us.

The second thought I had was **a proposal to turn the challenge into an opportunity**. It occurred to me that the situation affords us, together with our wives and children, the golden opportunity to take a fresh look at our lives and at the comforts we've gotten used to. In the last half century, the culture that we live in has accustomed us to a growing dependency on ever-growing comforts and technological conveniences. During this time that we're home together with our families, **let's take the step of dropping one comfort, and then an additional comfort each week** — *b'simchah*. Obviously someone who's had a drastic cut in his income doesn't need to be told to do this; he has no choice. But for those who don't have to, I'm suggesting to grasp the opportunity, get the entire family on board, and make a conscious decision to cut out one comfort of your own accord, happily and creatively. It can be done with very little pain, and, once it becomes a habit, it is barely felt at all, yet the benefits are inestimable. We'll learn to identify with all the people who are in financial straits, to focus on what's really important in life, and to redefine our priorities. And the greatest benefit of all will be for the long term, because lowering material standards is good for all of us.

Now, as we are about to begin reading *Vayikra* and the *parshiyos hakorbanos*, consider this conscious "sacrifice" as a *korban* you're bringing to the Beis Hamikdash, and it will be a *zechus* for protection for you and for Klal Yisrael, in the hope that it will bring us that much closer to offering *korbanos* in the rebuilt Beis Hamikdash, *b'meheyra v'yameinu, Amen*.

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