



Ki Tavo

We must be happy; we've got no choice.

That's the message that emerges from Parshat Ki Tavo, where the Torah gives us the Tochecha, a long list of horrific curses which God forbid might befall our people. The reason for these curses, the Torah explains, is "Tachat asher lo avadta et Hashem elokeicha b'simchah". It's on account of the fact that you have not worshipped the Lord, your God, with joy.

Here we are not speaking about people who are not worshipping God, but rather those who do worship, but without joy!

Many of our commentators highlight from here the importance of harmonious communities. When a community is split down the middle, when there is a poisonous atmosphere, the very presence of God is driven from our midst. But if that's the case, is that a reason why such horrific curses could transpire?

The Kotzker Rebbe offers a different interpretation of this verse: Tachat asher lo avadata. It's because your non-observance has been carried out B'simcha - with happiness.

D'VAR TORAH

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In the event that one is not observing but does so with embarrassment, and without flaunting it, there remains hope for the eventual return to doing what is right. You're certainly not encouraging others to be disobedient.

However, when you are Lo avadata, your non-observance is carried out B'simcha, with pride and flaunted openly, it sends a troubling message to future generations. What hope can there be for them? That is why such an atmosphere within our people could be serious and dangerous.

Therefore, from this important statement in the Torah, as we emerge into the High Holy Day period, perhaps instead of doing what is wrong and being embarrassed about it, let's just do what is right.

And let us never forget to worship Hashem with joy!

Shabbat Shalom.

This is a transcript of a video, which is available to view via chiefrabbi.org/dvar-torah