



Kopher

Transcript

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“When you take a census of the sons of Israel to count them, then each shall give a *kopher* for his life to Yahweh.” (Exod. 30:12)

A *kopher* is something valuable given to ensure a person’s well-being or even to spare their life. It’s sometimes called a ransom or redemption payment.

For example, let’s say someone owns a notoriously violent ox that kills a neighbor. According to ancient Israel’s law, the ox and its careless owner can both be put to death as an equal exchange of life for life. However, the grieving family can choose to accept a *kopher* payment instead, which the owner can give to preserve, that is, redeem, their life.

The poet of Psalm 49 shows how death is a ruthless equalizer. There’s no amount of money you can offer as a *kopher* to keep death from coming for you.

Only God’s mercy can do that.

“No one can truly ransom a brother; there is no *kopher* one can give to God, for the redemption of their life is costly ... Only God can redeem my life from the power of Sheol ...” (Ps. 49:7-8, 15)