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בשבת



אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS
ACHAREI MOS

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS
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LIVE LIFE TO THE FULLEST

In the middle of our *Parshah*, *Parshas Acharei Mos*, Hashem tells Moshe that not only should *Klal Yisrael* follow Hashem's laws and commandments, but the *Bnei Yisrael* should 'live by them.'¹ The *passuk* can be understood to mean that one must live their life according to the Torah that Hashem has given us. However, many explain the words, 'live by them' as having multiple deeper meanings.

Rashi² states that this verse refers to *Olam Habah*, the idea that eternal reward waits for us if we follow Hashem's commands. The Chizkuni³ explains that this verse implies that one who does not properly follow the Torah will be under the penalty of death, and the Gemara⁴ explains that these words teach us that one may violate a mitzvah in order to save a life.

However, the *Shelah Hakadosh*⁵ (R'Yeshaya Horowitz, 1555-1630) explains the words, "live by them," refer to a sense of animation, energy and liveliness. Sometimes we might approach our *mitzvos* and the Torah out of habit, doing our actions by rote. Instead, Hashem urges us to act with excitement, joy, and a sense of newness.

In fact, *Rabbeinu Bachya* states that the joy that one feels while doing a *mitzvah* is another *mitzvah* in it of itself. This aspect of our *avodas Hashem* is so important that *Klal Yisrael* is warned that we may be expelled from *Eretz Yisrael* if we don't serve Hashem with joy.⁶

There may be instances where we find ourselves 'just going through the motions,' simply doing the *mitzvos* out of habit. We might think that it's not so important to infuse our actions with joy - after all, we are doing the *mitzvos*, aren't we? This sort of thinking fails to recognize the amazing nature of *avodas Hashem*. We are not simply given tasks to perform; rather, we are constantly being given exciting opportunities to come close to Him.

1 *Vayikra* 18:5

2 *ibid.* s.v. וחי בהם

3 *ibid.* s.v. וחי בהם

4 *Yoma* 85b

5 *ibid.* in *Derech Chaim*

6 *Devarim* 28:47 s.v. תחת אשר

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

It is not easy to feel joy for every mitzvah that we do. We get used to things, the novelty wears off, and with that, the emotional high that one feels. How can we capture the feeling that we are doing something special, and that we are connecting to something special, every time we do a mitzvah?

At different times, different strategies may be employed. Sometimes it is important to remember our sense of duty, how we agreed, thousands of years ago, to be the representatives of Hashem.¹

Other times, it may be helpful to think about the great reward that is awaiting us for the *mitzvos* that we perform.

Another way to inspire ourselves is to remember how much Hashem loves us, and all that He has done for us all of our lives. The more we understand what Hashem has done for us, the more we will be excited to serve Him.

1 *Mesillas Yesharim*, Chap. 8

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How do you bring yourself to do mitzvos with joy? Through Mussar study... contemplating that a mitzvah opportunity is a great gift granted to you by Hashem. - Rav Chaim Kanievsky *shlit"a*, "Rav Chaim Kanievsky on the Yamim Nora'im" pg. 61

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

"Hi Rebbi!" said Yoni.* "I have a question, if Rebbi has a moment."

"Of course," replied Rabbi Hochberg. "What's on your mind?"

"Well, I noticed that Rebbi concentrates very deeply when saying the *brachah* of *Asher Yatzar*. Now, I understand that it's always important to focus when *davening*, but I was wondering if there was something specific to this *brachah*."

"Well, I suppose that's a roundabout way to say that you've noticed that I only concentrate during this *brachah*!" Rabbi Hochberg said with a laugh. "But you are correct, there is something special about this particular *tefillah*."

"A couple of years ago, my wife and I were blessed with a beautiful baby boy. However, soon after his birth, we realized something was wrong. He cried like any other infant, but his cries sounded like he was in pain. That, and the fact that he was crying just about twenty four hours a day led us to bring him to the pediatrician. The doctor agreed that something seems to be wrong, but couldn't pinpoint the issue.

"Well, we took a whirlwind tour of other doctors, finally finding ourselves at a pediatric gastroenterologist. After multiple tests, the doctor determined that our dear son was suffering from a particular stomach ailment. Once we knew the cause, he was able to give us the treatment. It wasn't a simple matter of taking a pill - my son had to have a very specific diet, one that we couldn't 'cheat' or his symptoms would come right back.

"We were determined to do everything we could to help our son. We kept him to this strict diet, and *Boruch Hashem*, he is doing much better.

"After this episode, my wife and I were so grateful to Hashem, we wanted to do something. We decided to try to have *kavannah* during the *brachah* of *Modim*, in *Shemonah Esrei*, and also whenever we say *Asher Yatzar*. Going through these months with our son really gave us an appreciation of the great kindness that Hashem does for us every single day. When I think about that, I'm excited to give thanks to Hashem. It's really the least I can do."

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**Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

DID YOU KNOW?

- Even the greatest *talmidei chachamim* will do *mitzvos* out of habit, and without thinking.¹
- Hashem created human beings as naturally sluggish; it takes a special effort to overcome this character trait.²
- Even the prophets would not be able to have *nevuah* without first putting themselves into a state of joy.³

1 *Mesillas Yesharim*, Introduction

2 *Mesillas Yesharim*, Chap. 6

3 *Mishnah Torah*, *Hilchos Yisodei Torah* 7:4