

"See I have placed before you today the life and the good, and the death and the evil." (30:15) - "And you shall choose life, so that you will live, you and your children." (30:19)

Once the *Torah* equates the *tov*, good, with life itself, it seems unnecessary to adjure us to choose life. After all, what really is the alternative? Also, why does the *Torah* implore us to choose life? Would it not have been more significant to say, "Choose good"? We suggest that the mere fact that life and good are correlated indicates that choosing good is equated with choosing life. In other words, life is not simply a *result* of choosing good. Choosing a life of "good," one that is dedicated to Hashem, His *Torah* and his *mitzvos* is the essence of life. Anything else is simply not living.

We still must endeavor to understand why the *Torah* must give us a reason for choosing the good. Is not doing the right thing sufficient reason for choosing the good? *Horav Moshe Feinstein, z.l.*, suggests that the *Torah* is not just telling us to do good; its intent is to teach us what kind of good to choose. Only a "good" that is powerful enough to leave a lasting impression on our children and students is defined as truly good. If our children choose not to follow in our footsteps, if they have not been sufficiently inspired to choose good, then we have conveyed a dismal perspective of the value of "good."

It was necessary for the *Torah* to define good as that which is alive and vibrant. Ultimately, our values are reflected in that which we choose to bequeath to our children. There are people who may be observant, but take no pleasure or satisfaction in *mitzvah* observance. They regrettably give the impression that they would rather devote their time and energy to more mundane pursuits. They show no excitement in the life they lead and no vibrance in their chosen endeavors.

One who observes *mitzvos* in such a crude manner gives his children a very clear message -- to live as a Jew is a difficult burden, something to which we are obligated whether we enjoy it or not. Ostensibly, this person's children will not want to emulate their father's way of life. Why should these children exert an effort to be observant when they clearly perceive the lack of enthusiasm displayed at home?

Rather, Hashem wants us to serve Him with joy and enthusiasm, as if our entire satisfaction from life is derived from serving the Divine. Our children must see that mundane pleasures are deceptive, and physical gratifications are as fleeting as the passing moment. The value of anything is measured by its permanence, an attribute which can only be ascribed to the spiritual dimension. Eternity can be attained through the pursuit of *Torah* and *mitzvos*. Eternity is transmitted to the next generation only when we observe *mitzvos* and learn *Torah* with enthusiasm and joy.

The *pasuk's* message is simple. Choose life! Choose to live a life of *Torah* and *mitzvos* with such ebullience that it carries over to your children. As we prepare to ask the Almighty for continued life, it behooves us to be introspective and to determine whether we really know the meaning of life!