

You shall observe My decrees and My laws, which man shall carry out and by which he shall live. (18:5)

Chazal have derived from the words, "*V'chai bahem*", "*by which he shall live*," that the *mitzvos* were given for the sake of life, not death. Consequently, if the performance of a ritual becomes life threatening, such as during a life threatening situation on *Shabbos*, life certainly takes precedence. This is not considered to be a violation of the laws of *Shabbos*. The exceptions to this rule are the three cardinal sins: idolatry, murder or adultery -- or *chillul Hashem*, in which violating a *mitzvah* would desecrate Hashem's Name.

We suggest another interpretation of "*V'chai bahem*". Many people would give up their life for Judaism, would fight to the bitter end, accepting any challenge regardless of the consequences, all for the sake of Judaism. Are these same people, however, prepared to live for Judaism? Are they willing to observe Hashem's *Torah* even if it does not mean having to relinquish their lives for it? Regrettably, we see wonderful Jewish men and women in today's society who stand ready to do whatever they can to further Judaism --- everything but observe the *Torah*. We are admonished, "*V'chai bahem*", the *Torah* should be our lifestyle, our reason for living - not our reason for giving up our life.

It is necessary to make concessions to be observant. These are concessions only if one considers them to be concessions. If one views the *Torah's* commandments not as restrictions, but rather as sound advice, as guidelines for enhancing our lives, then they become a source of joy, a fount of goodness, a basis for success and *nachas*. **Horav Moshe Swift, zl**, derives this lesson from a well-known *Chazal*, which states, "The pairing together of two people in marriage is as difficult as the parting of the Red Sea". It is enigmatic that *Chazal* would use as their analogy an example of something divided, rather than something which is united. Why compare the creation of a *zivug*, the harmonious melding of a young couple, to the splitting of the Red Sea? The parting of the Red Sea divided a unit, while a *zivug* is the combining of two separate entities. In order to create a symbiotic unit of two distinct people, of two divergent personalities, it is sometimes necessary to make a *Krias Yam Suf*, splitting of the Red Sea. We must cut away certain parts, hone some edges, cut away such superfluities that would hamper a harmonious relationship. In order to make it fit, we have to do some splitting. Each member of the marriage unit must be willing to concede, to give a little of himself in order to gain so much as a couple.

Many of us are unwilling to make those adjustments, whether it is in marriage, in our relationship with our spouse, or in religion in our relationship with Hashem. We want it all - our way. We have the secular and the religious aspects of life. The world of work is in one compartment - in no way under the purview of religion, while religion is something we do only at specific times. Yet, these same people stand ready to die for Judaism, for their People, for their Land. What Hashem really requires of us is to live for Him, not just to die for Him.