

“You shall observe My decrees and My judgments, which man shall carry out and live by them.” (18:5)

In the Talmud Yoma 85, Chazal derive from this pasuk that the mitzvos are given to us to live by – and not to die by. In other words, we are obligated not to allow the fulfillment of a mitzvah to stand in the way of human life, except for the three cardinal sins: murder; adultery, and idol-worship. While there are other places which imply that pikuach nefesh, saving a life or any life-threatening situation, does not override these three sins, there is a profound lesson to be derived from the implication of “vchai bohem”. Horav Yitzchok Goldwasser, Shlita, infers from here that a life of murder, adultery, or idol-worship is not living; it is death! Hence, the command, “Vchai bohem”; “and live by them,” does not apply to these sins.

With this idea in mind, he explains the connections between the destruction of the first Bais HaMikdash, and these three sins, which Chazal say provided the catalyst for its destruction. The Bais HaMikdash is commonly referred to as “Bais Chayeinu,” the house of our life. The Bais HaMikdash is the source of our spiritual sustenance. It supports and sustains our spiritual well-being. When these three sins are rampant in Klal Yisrael, a force runs counter to the life-preserving effect of the Bais HaMikdash, stimulating its premature “demise”.