

By which he shall live. (18:5)

If one cannot/does not live *bahem*, in them (Torah and *mitzvos*), he has no life; he is not living in the true sense of the word. A life without purpose is not living. Torah gives purpose to life. The *Chiddushei HaRim* interprets the enjoinder of *V'chai bahem* as an exhortation to live through *mitzvah* performance; *mitzvos* should be alive, our primary sense of joy, through which we enthusiastically live life to the fullest by observing *mitzvos* to perfection. Anyone who has ever *davened* well, studied through a difficult *blatt*, page, of *Gemorah* will attest to such an ecstatic, rapt feeling. Understandably, this presents a dim view of perfunctory *mitzvah* observance. One who tepidly carries out the will of Hashem, as if the only reason he is performing the *mitzvah* is that he must – not because he desires – undermines the very foundation of *mitzvah* observance. Our day begins with our conversation with Hashem: *davening*. How we *daven* definitely sets the tone for the rest of the day. If our *davening* is expressed with an audible sound that resonates with passion and fervor, which bespeaks before Whom we stand, then our day becomes “alive.” Such a person does not simply perform *mitzvos*; he “lives” them.

Devotion to *mitzvos* manifests itself accordingly in varied circumstances and to different people. Not everyone has been raised in a religious environment, but he might remember something meaningful from his youth, something that warms his heart and keeps him connected to his people. These people, by and large, are victims, *tinokos she'nishbu*, children taken into captivity, who never had a chance, were never availed the opportunity, who were neither encouraged nor inspired to practice Torah and *mitzvos*. Some, however, remember snippets which they heard. These snippets mean so much to them, to the point of self-sacrifice. The following vignette underscores this idea.

A recent émigré from the Soviet Union appeared at the office of the Tel Aviv *Chevra Kadisha*. He asked to meet with the director. He was ushered into the office of the director, introduced himself (in broken Russian/*Yiddish*) and promptly removed from his pocket a small bloodied medicine vial. “I would like to have this buried,” he said. Obviously, the director wanted an explanation, which was forthcoming. “I made numerous attempts to leave Russia. Finally, I was able to procure a visa. I made my good-byes. My family physician, a woman, asked me to come by her office prior to my departure. I came by and she told me the following, ‘I am Jewish, having been raised by parents who did their utmost to maintain a semblance of the religion amidst a country and culture that was rabidly anti-Semitic. While we did not practice much, I was raised with the understanding and yearning that the Holy Land, *Eretz Yisrael*, is the home of the Jews, and, if possible, where we should all live. Because of my position as a physician, it would be futile to apply for a visa. They will never allow me to leave. However, I ask a favor of you.’ She excused herself for moment and returned with this bloodied vial. With tears flowing down her face, she said, ‘I am unable to be buried in the Holy Land, but I plead with you to take this part of my body (she had sliced off the top of her finger) and have it buried in *Eretz Yisrael!*’” With this, the man concluded his story. Needless to say, the finger was buried – and there was even a small monument placed in honor of a woman who wanted to live – and die – as a Jewess.