

## LOVE THE LIFE YOU LIVE

### Background

The destiny of the Jewish People is either to be an exalted nation or an oppressed people. At the end of a long prophecy of what will befall the Jewish People if we don't follow the ways of HASHEM, the Torah lays the blame on one issue: *because you did not serve HASHEM, your G-d, amid gladness and goodness of heart when everything was abundant.* It seems the pivotal point of these two extremes is *simcha*, implying that serving HASHEM with happiness is critical to our success as a nation.

Rabbeinu Bachya explains that this is because *mitzvos* must be done with joy and complete devotion. When the *mitzvos* are done without joyfulness, their effect is lacking, and this is the first step in the spiral downward.

He then gives an example of a *mitzvah* that wasn't done with complete motivation. When Reuvain attempted to save Yosef from his brothers, he said, "Let us put him in the pit." His intention was to buy some time to eventually save him. However, had he realized that he would be recorded in history as *the one who saved Yosef*, he would have put him on his shoulders and carried him home to his father. From this, Rabbeinu Bachya concludes, "We see the importance of doing a *mitzvah* with complete dedication and commitment."

### Questions

This Rabbeinu Bachya is very difficult to understand. First, how can the Torah command us to be happy? Being happy isn't an emotion that we can turn on and off like a light switch.

And second, doing a *mitzvah* with joy is a nicety — a minor improvement. How can we compare the effect of doing a *mitzvah* joyfully to the case of Reuvain? Granted, Reuvain was a *tzaddik*, but the fact that he would have been titled "the savior of Yosef" for eternity is something that would propel even such a man to extremes. How can that be compared to something as insignificant as joy in the performance of a *mitzvah*?

#### ספר דברים פרק כח

מז) תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר לֹא עֲבַדְתָּ אֶת יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוֹב לֵבָב מְרֵב כֹּל

*Because you did not serve HASHEM, your G-d, amid gladness and goodness of heart when everything was abundant.*

#### רבינו בחיי על דברים פרק כח פסוק מז

מז) תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלהיך בשמחה - יאשימנו הכתוב בעבדו השי"ת ולא היתה העבודה בשמחה, לפי שחייב האדם על השמחה בהתעסקו במצות, והשמחה במעשה המצוה מצוה בפני עצמו, מלבד השכר שיש לו על המצוה יש לו שכר על השמחה, ועל כן יעניש באן למי שעובד עבודת המצוה כשלא עשאה בשמחה

ולכן צריך שיעשה אדם המצות בשמחה ובכוונה שלמה, וכן אמרו במדרש רות אלו היה יודע ראובן שהקב"ה מכתוב עליו (בראשית לז) וישמע ראובן ויצלהו מידם, בכתפו היה מוליכו לאביו, ואלו היה יודע אהרן שהקב"ה מכתוב עליו (שמות ד) וראך ושמח בלבך, בתופים ובמחולות היה יוצא לקראתו, ואלו היה יודע בועז שהקב"ה מכתוב עליו (רות ב) ותאכל ותשבע ותותר, עגלים פטומים היה מאכילה

*The Torah faults us for serving HASHEM without joy. A person is obligated in joy when he is involved in a mitzvah. Additionally, joy in performing a mitzvah is a mitzvah itself. Aside from the reward that the person receives for doing the mitzvah, he receives reward for the joy. If someone does a mitzvah without joy, he is punished. Therefore, a person must do mitzvos with complete dedication and commitment.*

*We see this concept when Reuvain attempted to save Yosef from his brothers. Had he known that he would be recorded in history as "the one who saved Yosef," he would have put Yosef on his shoulders and carried him home to his father.*