

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

Background

Rabbeinu Bachya is teaching us about the importance of doing *mitzvos* with *simcha*. To do this, he makes a comparison: the Medrash tells us that Reuvain would have performed the *mitzvah* of saving Yosef's life differently had he known that his actions were being recorded for generations. Motivation greatly affects the actions that we do. Rabbeinu Bachya now compares that to "doing a *mitzvah* with *simcha*." In other words, if a person performs an action with *simcha*, it will greatly affect the way that he does it.

Questions

One of the greatest motivating forces in man is being noticed. We all react differently when we are being watched than if we are alone. So we can understand the Medrash when it says that had Reuvain known that his actions were being recorded for generations, he would have acted differently. After all, it would give him a huge motivating force: his actions would be on record for generations.

How does Rabbeinu Bachya compare the super-powerful motivational force of being written in the Torah itself to doing a *mitzvah* with *simcha*? Granted, doing a *mitzvah* with *simcha* may make some difference in the performance of that *mitzvah*, but surely one can't compare the motivational force of being observed and recorded for generations with the seemingly minor change brought about by doing an action with *simcha*!

ספר דברים פרק כח

מז (תחת אשר לא עבדת את יְדוֹד אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוֹב לֵבָב מְרֵב כֹּל

Because you didn't serve HASHEM your G-d with joy and gladness of heart when you had abundance.

רבינו בחיי על דברים פרק כח פסוק מז

מז (תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלהיך בשמחה - אישימנו 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 בכאן למי שעובד עבודת המצוה כשלא עשאה בשמחה, ולכך צריך שיעשה אדם המצות בשמחה ובכוונה שלמה, וכן אמרו במדרש רות אלו היה יודע ראובן שהקב"ה מכתוב

The posuk blames the method with which Klal Yisroel served HASHEM — they didn't serve with joy. A person is obligated to do the mitzvos with simcha, and there is reward for the joy one has when one does a mitzvah. In fact, the joy in the mitzvah is itself a mitzvah. So, aside from the reward for doing the mitzvah, a person gets reward for the simcha he had in doing it. Therefore, one who doesn't serve HASHEM with simcha is punished.

Therefore, a person must do the mitzvos with joy and complete kavanah. So, too, it says in Medrash Rus, "Had Reuvain known that HASHEM would write about him that 'He saved his brother's life,' he would have taken the boy on his shoulders and brought him to his father. And had Aharon known that HASHEM would say about him that, 'He saw his brother, and there was joy in his heart,' he would have gone out with drums and flutes to meet his brother.