

Live By Them

In the end of this week's *parsha*, *Acharei Mos*, we find the phrase *Vochai Bohem*, a commandment to keep the laws of *Hashem* and "LIVE BY THEM." *Rashi* comments that to *live by them* is not referring to living by them in this world, but rather in the world to come. His explanation, however, requires further exploration. What *mitzvos* are we doing in the world to come? We are taught by *Chazal* that we do *mitzvos* in this world to enable us to enjoy the next world. The world to come is the world where we reap the benefits from what we did here in this world; the world to come is not a place of doing.

Furthermore, the *Talmud* uses this very same verse to teach us that we need to LIVE BY THEM (the *mitvos*), meaning not to die by them. Therefore, we are not supposed to give up our lives in this world in fulfilling a *mitzvah* (except for the three exceptions of murder, idol worshipping, and immoral relationships). Hence, this verse is speaking about this world and not the world to come. So how do we reconcile these two different interpretations of the same phrase, *Rashi's* explanation with the understanding of the *Talmud*?

The *Slonimer Rebbe z"l* (20th c) resolves this difference in opinion with a simple thought. According to him, both interpretations are correct. The verse is referring to both worlds. *Rashi* is telling us that the reward we earn in the world to come is based on how we kept the *mitzvos* in this world. If we are inspired and we are truly living the *mitzvos* with enthusiasm and passion, in the world to come we will feel a greater connection to *Hashem*. However, if we are just going through the motions while doing the *mitzvos*, we may not feel as connected in the world to come. In other words, what we put in here (in this world), carries over to the next world (the world to come).

The following short story epitomizes this thought. A student once proudly stated to his *Rabbi* with excitement that he just went through a tractate of *Talmud* and completed it. The *Rabbi* commented, "That is nice that you went through it, but did the words you learn go through you, did they touch you?" We need to take the inspiration of how we do our *mitzvos* with us.

Last week we concluded the holiday of Passover providing us with many opportunities to fulfill many *mitzvos*. These *mitzvos* are ones that we generally celebrate with much enthusiasm and inspiration. Let's take that inspiration as a model to LIVE BY THEM throughout the year so in the world to come we will have that stronger connection with *Hashem*.