

STRINGENCIES?

written by Chaim Kramer
December 14, 2020



Rebbe Nachman teaches: Of those who are overly-strict in serving God it is written “You shall live (and not die) by them.” Such people have no life!

Extremism, in any form, is totally unnecessary (*Rebbe Nachman’s Wisdom* #51).

Rebbe Nachman teaches: Of those who are overly-strict in serving God it is written (Leviticus 18:5), “You shall live (and not die) by them.” Such people have no life. They are constantly depressed, because they never ever feel they’ve fulfilled their obligations while performing the mitzvot. Because of their stringencies, they don’t experience any vitality – any *life* – from their deeds (*Likutey Moharan* II, 44).

One doesn't have to be a rabbi or even a lay scholar to be stringent. An ignoramus can also say, "It is forbidden!" On the contrary, "Just as it is forbidden to permit the forbidden, it is just as forbidden to forbid the permitted" (*Beit Yosef, Tur Yoreh De'ah, 115 s.v. Harav Peretz*). The Rebbe's intention was to bring each mitzvah – no matter how exalted – within our reach. With simplicity, we can always feel that we, too, can perform the mitzvah. With straightforwardness, we, too, can fulfill it. and be filled with life by it.

...They are constantly depressed, because they never ever feel they've fulfilled their obligations while performing the mitzvot. Because of their stringencies, they don't experience any vitality – any life – from their deeds!

Nevertheless, there are certain instances where keeping the law stringently is valued. In this regard the Talmud teaches: Rabbi Yosef asked Rabbah's son, "In what observance was your father most stringent?" (*Shabbat 118b*). Each Talmudic sage had a particular mitzvah which he practiced exactly and according to all of its rigorous details.



You shall live (and not die) by them!

With this in mind, the Rebbe advised that every person choose one observance and keep it very strictly, with all its fine points (see *Sefer Chassidim* #529). And even with this observance, you need not be exceedingly strict to the point of foolishness... Keep one commandment strictly, but the others need not be observed with any unnecessary stringencies. If only we would be worthy of keeping all of the Torah's commandments simply, without any excesses (*Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom* #235).

(taken from the book: [CROSSING THE NARROW BRIDGE](#) – A Practical Guide to Rebbe Nachman's Teachings; Chapter 1; Simplicity pp. 17-18).