

# Live or Die?

**BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE**

“I shall not die but live and recount the deeds of God.” So reads Psalm 118. Is it redundant? Obviously if one does not die, one lives. Yet life is not living; people die while still alive. The point is not simply to draw breath, but to live. Stephen Vincent Benet wrote: “Life is not lost by dying; life is lost minute by minute, day by dragging day, in all the thousand small uncaring ways.”

Judaism is a way to live so that life does not slip from our grasp. At each moment we are urged to realize the urgency and beauty of life. We cannot put food unthinkingly in our mouths; blessing it reminds us of the gift. The forward inertia of work is broken by Shabbat; the frictionless progress of each day arrested by prayer. Torah teaches: “Pay attention to the fast fading moments. Live.”

Why did Thoreau take his famous trip to Walden Pond? Because “I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.” May we all take to heart the Psalmist’s words and indeed live each day of our lives.