

Mussar HaTorah

Torah Insights into Human Nature – Dedicated in memory of Rabbi A. Henach Leibowitz zt"l

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Parashas Beshalach

“AND HASHEM SAID TO MOSHE, ‘UNTIL WHEN WILL YOU REFUSE TO GUARD MY COMMANDMENTS AND STATUES?’” (SHMOS 16:18)

The Torah seems to include Moshe, together with B’nei Yisrael, in His rebuke

MOSHE INFORMED B’NEI YISRAEL that the manna would be available to gather for six days. On the Shabbos, Moshe continues, there will be no manna. Nevertheless, members of B’nei Yisrael went out on Shabbos to search for Manna. Hashem took the Jews to task for this act. However, the Torah seems to include Moshe, together with B’nei Yisrael, in His rebuke. The S’forno explains: Hashem was telling Moshe that even though he himself did not go out on Shabbos, it is as if Moshe caused the Jews to go out and collect. Why? Had Moshe taught them the details of which forbidden labors of Shabbos they would be violating by gathering manna on Shabbos, and had he told them the reward and punishment involved, the Jews would certainly have listened and not have even attempted to look for the manna. The S’forno is telling us that due to this shortcoming in teaching B’nei Yisrael all the details of the *mitzvah*, Moshe was considered as if he **caused** them to go out to gather manna on Shabbos.

This accusation seems a bit unfair. Moshe laid down the rules very clearly: Sunday through Friday – you can collect manna; the holy Shabbos day – you may not collect manna. Moshe was their leader and teacher. He had every reason to assume that they would listen to his command. If they chose to turn a deaf ear to his clear, unambiguous command, how could Moshe be blamed? Moshe certainly should not be considered as if he himself caused this sin!

The obligations of a Torah teacher go far beyond what we would imagine

Apparently the obligations of a Torah teacher go far beyond what we would imagine. Teaching Torah is much more than mere transmission of information, of do’s and don’t’s. Teaching a law or giving a command is not sufficient. We must ensure that our students know the details and reasons, the reward and punishment involved in each of the *halachos* we teach them. Torah is more than just intellectual knowledge; it is our way of life and it must be integrated into our very being. To ensure it is truly absorbed into the bloodstream of our fellow Jews, we must deliver the entire package: the beauty and depth of each *mitzvah* and how it can transform and elevate our entire existence. Only with this detailed approach can we be certain that they will properly receive and heed our lessons. Furthermore, and perhaps more sobering, if we fall short in our explanation, Hashem can hold us responsible for their errors.

It could open their eyes to a world they never knew existed

This might possibly be the major reason that many Jews are disconnected from their heritage. A large number may be aware of many of the *mitzvos*. However, they perceive it as a dry, illogical collection of demands and restrictions that seem unreasonable and unpleasant. If we could reach out to them and show them the beauty and wisdom of a Torah life, and how Hashem has created us according to the blueprint of His Torah so that we achieve ultimate happiness through the *mitzvos*, it could open their eyes to a world they never knew existed. If we could give them a taste of the radiance of a real Shabbos, the explanation for a *mitzvah* or the joy of studying authentic Torah with commentaries, it would change their outlook and open the door to reclaim their priceless inheritance. Let us contemplate our obligation, and our privilege, to share the light of Torah with our fellow Jews, and teach it with its full glory and profound meaning, to illuminate their lives with purpose, satisfaction and genuine happiness, in this world and the world-to-come.