

# Mussar HaTorah

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

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Parashas Beshalach

“AND THEY WENT THREE DAYS IN THE DESERT AND DIDN’T FIND WATER...” (SHMOS 15:22)

**This schedule of minimum regular Torah study was a solution**

**What would have helped?**

**Those few minutes can be more powerful than the greatest miracles in world history**

THE DAAS Z’KEYNIM, Ramban and others quote the gemara in Bava Kama (82a) which says, on homiletic level, that the “water” referred to in this verse is actually the Torah, as we see elsewhere that water represents Torah (Yeshaya 55). The Jews had left the Red Sea and went into the desert for three days without any Torah study. The result was a spiritual failing expressed in the sin of complaining to Moshe about the lack of physical water. In response to this episode, the prophets of that time – Moshe and his court – enacted a decree that the Jewish people should read the Torah publicly in shul on Monday, Thursday and Shabbos, so that 3 days would not pass without learning Torah study. Apparently, this schedule of minimum regular Torah study was a solution to this problem that arose with the Jews in the desert. In other words, had they been required to study Torah every three days this event would never have occurred.

Let us put the situation in perspective. We are dealing here with a generation of unparalleled spiritual experiences, the greatest in human history. These were people who had witnessed the amazing miracles of the Ten Plagues, and the splitting of the Red Sea. One would assume that these people had received a dose of spiritual reinforcement of such magnitude that sinning would be an impossibility. Despite all these exercises in seeing Hashem’s wondrous hand again and again, it wasn’t enough to inoculate them against any rebellion against Hashem. What would have helped? What medicine would be powerful enough to be effective when the greatest miracles in history were not sufficient? A little bit of Torah study, taken once in three days, even without water. How can a few minutes of reading the Torah have such power?

The gemara in Kiddushin 30b states “The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Israel: ‘My son, I have created the evil inclination; and I have created the Torah, its antidote. If you involve yourself in the Torah, you will not be delivered into its hands.’” Torah possesses such powerful antibodies to the *yetzer hara* that even in tiny doses, it can have life-changing effects. Even when earth-shaking miracles couldn’t protect the Jews a mere three days after they happened, the injection of a little Torah into their bloodstream would have provided the critical ingredient to immunize them from “rebellious” against Hashem.

Do we appreciate the awesome power that Torah study can have on our behavior? Are we aware of how essential it is to our spiritual survival? Imagine a patient with a life-threatening illness that has been diagnosed by the world’s foremost doctor in the field, who prescribes one single medicine, the only antidote to this deadly illness, and tells the patient that his life depends on taking it regularly. The patient, without any medical knowledge, decides on his own to experiment with something else instead. Is there anything more foolish and reckless? Can we expect him to survive? (Mesilas Yesarim, Zehirus)

Let us energize our commitment to regular Torah study, and let us value even small snatches of time – the five or ten minutes while waiting for an appointment, or while commuting – and not listen to the *yetzer hara* taunts that it’s too short to be effective. Those few minutes can be more powerful than the greatest miracles in world history, to change our behavior, protect us from sin and elevate our deeds to sanctify Hashem’s name in all that we do.