

Mussar HaTorah

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

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Parashas Chukas

“AND HASHEM SAID TO MOSHE AND AHARON... ‘YOU SHALL NOT BRING THIS CONGREGATION ...’” (BAMIDBAR 20:12)

He did not reach Moshe’s level in these two respects

MOSHE RABBEINU’S TENURE of leadership ended before the Jewish people entered into the land of Israel. Our nation suffered greatly due to this fact. The Ralbag (ibid., 20:8) explains: Had Moshe led *B’nei Yisrael* into Israel, they would have conquered the nations there, “In a moment.” Instead, Yehoshua led the nation in a prolonged war, lasting seven years, and after which some Cannanite nations remained behind and caused many difficulties for the Jews. The Ralbag pinpoints the source of the difference between the two leaders, focusing on Moshe’s superiority in two areas: his great *d’veykus* – connection – to Hashem and his *z’rizus* – zeal. While Yehoshua was a great *tzaddik* and leader, nevertheless, he did not reach Moshe’s level in these two respects and these factors spelled the difference for *B’nei Yisrael*.

Of these two factors, we can readily understand that a lack of zeal would make a significant difference in how the Jewish people waged war and in the success of those battles. A slightly more zealous leader, with additional enthusiasm and effort, can motivate and energize his troops to fight with more intensity and power. How, on the other hand, does the fact that Moshe had greater *d’veykus* with Hashem make any difference in the outcome of a military campaign? If a general has a bit more *kedusha* – holiness, how would that affect the army’s fighting ability? Surely Yehoshua felt a great connection to Hashem; how would the slight deficiency in this area (in comparison to Moshe) make such a great difference in how long or thorough the conquest of Israel would be?

A parent is not merely a caregiver

A general is more than a military coordinator, a teacher is not just an informational instructor, and a parent is not merely a caregiver. Every leader has a profound impact on his charges, whether they comprise a nation, a class or a family. This pivotal influence is shaped by many varied factors, not the least of which is the spiritual stature of the leader. The closer the leader’s relationship to Hashem, and the higher spiritual plateau the leader has attained, the more effective he or she will be in every facet of leadership – including mundane areas like fighting an enemy on the battlefield or overcoming obstacles in practical situations. This difference can have ramifications for generations.

Do we work on refining our character traits?

Sometimes we see parents, teachers and other leaders who are more successful with their young charges than similar individuals who are equally talented and have invested comparable efforts into their youth. We wonder what magic formula helped them achieve what others could not. Perhaps the crucial difference was not so much their technique or their sweat and toil, as their connection to Hashem. We cannot judge another’s spiritual accomplishment and we can only ask ourselves: Do we daven with all our heart and concentration, as perhaps these people do? Do we work on refining our character traits through the regular study of *mussar*, as many successful, spiritually growing persons do?

Let us turn towards Hashem, the only true Guarantor of success in any endeavor, and seek His closeness. Let us strengthen our faith and trust in Him, by asking His help in all areas, from the most trivial matters, to major, life-defining concerns such as the raising of our children. By connecting with Hashem, we can rest assured that we are never alone on our own, which is the tried and proven recipe for success, in this world and the world to come.