

Mussar HaTorah

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

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Parashas Chukas

“AND YOU SHALL SPEAK TO THE ROCK ...” (BAMIDBAR 20:8)

MOSHE AND AHARON were refused entry into *Eretz Yisrael* because they should have made a greater *kiddush Hashem* at the episode of bringing water from the rock. The Da’as Zekaynim (ibid.) pinpoints their error: When Moshe and Aharon addressed *B’nei Yisrael*, they said, “Do you rebellious ones think that **we** could possibly be the ones to bring water from a rock?” They should have explicitly added that only Hashem could make such an amazing miracles. This, the Da’as Zekaynim explains, resulted in a reduced *kiddush Hashem*.

What exactly did Moshe and Aharon do wrong?

What exactly did Moshe and Aharon do wrong? When they said, “We could not bring water from the rock,” it was obvious that they meant only Hashem could perform such a feat. The entire point of their rhetorical question was to let their audience finish the dialogue with the thought: “Of course it’s not you, only Hashem can make miracles!” Why did they need to state the obvious more explicitly and what difference would it make to everyone?

We see an important psychological insight from this Da’as Zekaynim: Hearing something explicitly mentioned creates a different impact than having to figure it out yourself. Had Moshe and Aharon unambiguously stated the obvious – that only Hashem can perform this miracle, this fact would have influenced the hearts of *B’nei Yisrael* to acknowledge the miracle to a greater degree.

We know that the hand of Hashem is behind these unnatural occurrences

We often are aware of miraculous events: in our own lives, in the history of our people and in the news we hear from *Eretz Yisrael*. We know that the hand of Hashem is behind these unnatural occurrences. They are well known and acknowledged by all. Yet, we can benefit from hearing it spelled out again, “This was an astounding miracle from Hashem, Who caused this event to happen!” Each time we hear the plagues in Egypt, the splitting of the Red Sea, and the many other miracles in the Torah being read – it has a greater impact on our minds and our souls to deepen our awareness of Hashem’s power and omnipotence. Of course we know it already and we have been taught it many times, but it makes a difference to hear it stated clearly and emphatically.

Almost all these ideas are common knowledge

Much of the power of *mussar* study derives from hearing ourselves repeat basic truths about Hashem’s greatness, about reward and punishment, about our purpose in the world and how much we need to accomplish. As the Mesilas Yesharim writes in his introduction, almost all these ideas are common knowledge. Yet the benefit to be gained from his book, writes the illustrious author, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato, is from reading and rereading it, through constant study and repetition to drive the points home, from our brain into our hearts and ultimately to affect our actions and choices in life.

May we merit to appreciate the critical need for constant *mussar* study, and constant review of these eternal truths that we must live by. May we ignore the *yetzer hara’s* persistent cynical attacks, “You know this already – why are you wasting time studying it again for the hundredth time when you could doing something more profitable and more enjoyable?” The most profitable minutes of our day are the few minutes we snatch for ourselves for *mussar* study, to connect with our souls and our purpose of existence. In the merit of our enunciating these facts and hearing what we need to achieve, may we witness great miracles and wonders with the coming of the redemption speedily in our days.