

Mussar HaTorah

ת"ב

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

5 Iyar, 5768 Vol. 9, No. 2

Parashas Emor

“COMMAND THE JEWISH PEOPLE ...” (VAYIKRA 24:2)

THE MIDRASH RABBAH (Vayikra 31:5) tells us that anyone who toils to understand the Torah is guaranteed that other people will listen to him. This, the Midrash tells us, is the meaning of the *pasuk* above: Hashem is telling Moshe that since he labored greatly to understand the Torah and its teachings, he can, “command the Jewish people” and they will heed his authority.

Moshe Rabbeinu was the greatest Jewish leader of all time, with many qualities that qualified him for his position. He cared for and loved every member of B’nei Yisrael with endless patience (see Rashi, Devarim 11:12). Moshe reached the highest level of prophecy ever achieved by a human being – speaking to Hashem, “face to face,” and was able to do so whenever he needed Divine guidance. Despite these extraordinary attributes, Moshe remained so modest that the Torah itself testifies (Bamidbar 13:3) he was the most humble of all men and that he was a, “servant of Hashem.” These are all character traits that are critical for a leader of B’nei Yisrael. Any one of them could be assumed to be the crucial prerequisite that gains the trust and compliance of the people. Why then, does the Midrash point to Moshe’s sweat and toil to understand the Torah – and not any of these other traits – as the reason that B’nei Yisroel will accept his leadership and command?

Expending energy – being *amel b’Torah* – is a necessary component for truly understanding the Torah and guaranteeing that it is absorbed accurately. We see that this is even true for Moshe Rabbeinu who heard the Torah first-hand, directly from Hashem. One cannot imagine a greater teacher than Hashem Himself, nor a better educational setting than forty days in *Shomayim*, in a prophetic interaction between Hashem and Moshe. Even so, had Moshe not worked so hard to ensure that his understanding of Hashem’s words was precise, it would have made a difference in his grasp and clarity in Torah. B’nei Yisrael would have sensed that difference, that lack of effort, and their trust in Moshe and his commands would have been lacking. It was only Moshe’s hard work and effort to plumb the fathomless depths of Torah that earned him the Jews’ unswerving loyalty and full commitment to follow his instructions.

This insight is not only relevant to teachers and rabbis. It is basic equipment for any head of a family, for any role model or any peer who seeks to guide his fellow man. To be successful and gain the confidence of your charges, you must have a solid grasp of Torah, which can only be acquired through hard work and genuine exertion. As the Gemara (Megilla 6b) teaches us: “R’ Yitzchak said, ‘If a person says, “I toiled and didn’t find,” - don’t believe him; “I didn’t toil and I found,” - don’t believe him.’” The greatest, most humble *tzaddik*, able to learn directly from Hashem on the most sublime level of prophecy, simply cannot gain complete comprehension, and his followers’ cooperation, unless he exerts himself in studying Torah. Moshe Rabbeinu only earned our nation’s loyalty through his painstaking effort to achieve total understanding of the Torah.

Let us summon all our energies to apply ourselves fully to the study of Hashem’s holy Torah, and in the merit of that toil, may we be blessed to “find” the treasure of clarity and comprehension of its timeless truth and beauty. We are then promised by the Midrash that we will merit another gift: the trust and loyalty of all those who follow our example and our teachings.

Moshe reached the highest level of prophecy

It would have made a difference in his grasp and clarity in Torah

Moshe only earned our nation’s loyalty through his painstaking effort

Based on the talks of Rabbi A. Henach Leibowitz zt"l, Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim – RSA

© 2008 by Rabbi Aryeh Striks & Rabbi Shimon Zehnwirth. For more information call (818) 505-7999 or e-mail mht@vths.org