

# Mussar HaTorah

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

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Parashas Korach

“THE EARTH BENEATH THEM OPENED ... AND ALL THE MEN WHO WERE WITH KORAH AND ALL THE PROPERTY.” (BAMIDBAR 16:32)  
 “KORAH’S SONS, HOWEVER, DID NOT DIE.” (BAMIDBAR 26:11)

**The sons of Korach were sent back from the World to Come**

KORACH’S SONS did *teshuva* at the very last moment and were saved from sharing Korach’s fate. The Yalkut Shimoni (751 and 753, Tehilim 46) explains that the sons of Korach were sent back from the World to Come. They reported back to their fellow Jews what they had seen there: Evil people who had relied on their wealth accumulated in this world to save them and were nonetheless punished – their wealth did not spare them from the ultimate judgment. They also saw the righteous who remained safe in all situations.

What an incredible journey and how much they must have seen! One would expect that the testimony of the sons of Korach from their back-from-death experience would be of earth-shattering importance. And yet what lesson did they glean from their miraculous experience? The well-known concept, “You can’t take it with you.” The wealth of the evildoers did not help them one iota, and the goods deeds of the righteous protected them. Is this such a startling lesson? Why were the children of Korach so impressed with this truth? Isn’t it a very basic article of our faith that what remains in the next world is our *mitzvos* and our wealth will make no difference whatsoever?

**The farthest distance in the human body is from our brain to our heart**

Apparently, the most obvious and simple truths of *emuna* are not always so obvious or simple to us. Intellectually, we all repeat the fact that our money is worthless in the next world, and that only Torah and *mitzvos* have value there, in our eternal and permanent place of existence. Yet, we still get blinded by the glitter and gleam of gold and we are brainwashed by the culture around us that worships the shiny trinkets of materialism. Emotionally we don’t feel the reality of the World to Come, and the eternal value of spiritual achievements, even as we loudly proclaim our unshakable belief in these tenets of our faith.

**The study of mussar was intended to address this critical need**

The *ba’alei mussar* teach us that the farthest distance in the human body is from our brain to our heart. There are many ideas that are clear to our logical mind, and yet, our emotional heart does not completely make that connection and we do not act on this knowledge. We can know in our brain that we should not sacrifice time with our family even for that substantial raise, yet our hearts tell us otherwise. We can emphatically agree that eating certain foods or doing certain activities are harmful to our spiritual and even physical well being, yet we fall prey to temptation again and again. We are blinded to the truth by our desires and we make the wrong decision. Had we made the connection from our brain to our heart, we would have seen the truth more clearly.

The study of *mussar* was intended to address this critical need, to bridge the gap between conceptual knowledge and tangible reality. If we constantly reinforce our *emuna* through the emotional study of *mussar*, clearly visualizing in our mind’s eye of the reality of the Torah’s teachings, we can make these ideas become so real that they will affect our decisions and mold our behavior. We will see through the temporary darkness and physicality of this world and penetrate its fog and distortions, to focus on the enduring and meaningful rewards that lie waiting for us in the World to Come. There, at our final and eternal destination, we will bask in the glory of Hashem’s dazzling radiance, and enjoy the fruits of difficult challenges that we fought and won.