

# Mussar HaTorah

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

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Parashas Vaeschanan

“... AND HE SWORE THAT I WOULD NOT CROSS THE JORDAN ...”  
(DEVARIM 4:21)

**It was their last chance to hear it from Moshe**

THE RAMBAN explains: Moshe was repeating to *B'nei Yisrael* that Hashem would not allow him entrance into *Eretz Yisrael* to make a point: the Jews needed to pay special attention as Moshe reiterated the laws that apply to the Holy Land because it was their last chance to hear it from Moshe; he will not be there in *Eretz Yisrael* to teach it to them yet again.

**This was the ideal situation**

Let us picture the situation. We are talking about the “Dor De’ah” – the “generation of wisdom” – the one that was privileged to experience the miracles in the desert. Many of them had witnessed, as children, the amazing wonders of the plagues in Egypt, the splitting of the sea and the revelation at Sinai. They all lived a completely spiritual existence of a life devoted to Torah study, without any cares of livelihood. It was the greatest yeshiva in history – 3 million-plus people living literally in Clouds of Glory, providing climate-controlled air conditioning and heating to just the right temperature, perfect lighting at night, shade from the hot sun during the day, and protection from the elements, dangerous animals and any enemies. They were secure, well fed and completely focused on only one thing: learning Torah from the greatest teacher, the greatest prophet that ever lived – Moshe Rabbeinu, the one who went up Sinai into the very heavens and debated with the angels to get the Torah. The Jews knew that their beloved *rebbe* was the only human being who ever spoke face-to-face with Hashem and the one brought the Torah to them, loved them and gave his every waking moment to teach them and guide them. If there was ever a setting that was conducive for students to appreciate the greatness of their teacher, this was the ideal situation. They certainly valued every word of Torah in general, and they especially treasured the words of their beloved teacher and leader. They also were well aware that Moshe days were numbered.

**Why did Moshe need to give this introduction now?**

With such a close relationship, such love and appreciation, why did Moshe need to remind them of his imminent demise? They certainly would listen to him regardless of his reminder! Furthermore, his reminder did not add anything that they were not aware of. He had just told them again in the previous chapter (3:27-8) that he would not enter the Land and Yehoshua would be their new leader. Why did Moshe need to give this introduction now?

Just as Torah is infinite in its wisdom and profundity, so are the levels of motivation to study Torah infinite. No matter how interested and motivated we may be to learn Torah – or to perform any other *mitzvah* – an extra measure of motivation can be added. When the Jews were reminded that Moshe would not be with them in the Land of Israel to answer their questions, it added even more motivation to their great pool of existing motivation and interest. And this extra enthusiasm could spell the difference in whether they truly understood the laws Moshe was teaching them.

R. Dovid Leibowitz, zt"l, used to say that a *lamdan* – a scholar – is not necessarily someone who spends lots of time learning, but one who delves as deeply as possible while learning. There is always more room to motivate ourselves to increase our dedication to Torah study, and in that merit, we can truly connect with our Creator by studying his gift to us – the blueprint of all creation.