



RABBI DANI SCHON

Revelation, Inspiration, and Growth

This is my G-d and I will glorify Him. (15:2)

"This is my G-d." Hashem revealed Himself in His glory [to those crossing the Red Sea, so clearly that each individual] pointed at Hashem with his finger! A maidservant at the sea saw [revelations of Hashem which even] the [later, greater] prophets never saw. (Rashi's commentary, quoting Midrash Rabbah 23:15 and Mechilta)

RABBI CHAIM SHMUELEVITZ POINTS OUT that even though a maidservant at the Red Sea saw such a clear revelation of

Hashem, she remained a maidservant and did not develop into a prophetess. He asks, how is it possible that this maidservant saw Hashem so clearly, yet remained entirely unchanged, at the lowly status of a maidservant?

Rabbi Shmuelewitz answers that we see from this episode that knowledge of Hashem alone will not make a person holier. Rather, a person must exert effort to build a relationship with Hashem, and he must work to make this knowledge of Hashem his own. Genuine prophets, who have spent much time perfecting themselves, changing themselves, will reach a level where they are fit to receive prophecy.

Throughout history, there have been many individuals who had a clear understanding of Hashem, yet that didn't make them improve as people. Bil'am, the greatest non-Jewish prophet, would be a prime example of this. He understood Hashem to such a degree that he could divine the exact nanosecond of each day when Hashem would get angry, yet this knowledge not only didn't make him a better person, it strengthened him in his wicked ways!

This idea is also found in the Gemara.

Rabbi Yitzchok said: If a person tells you, "I put in effort [trying

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RABBI BERISH EDELMAN

Bog-Standard Miracles

The Children of Israel entered into the ocean, on dry land; the water was a wall to them, to their right and to their left. (14:22)

The Children of Israel went, on dry land, through the ocean; the water was a wall to them, to their right and to their left. (14:29)

THE VILNA GAON POINTS OUT THAT THE Hebrew word *choma*, wall, is spelled differently in each of these verses. In the first, it is written out completely, with a *vav* (representing the long "o" sound). In the second, the *vav* is left out—the

word can also, in theory, be pronounced *cheima*, which means anger. How may this be understood?

Looking carefully at the wording of these verses yields another interesting observation. The first verse says they traveled in the ocean, on dry land. The second switches the order around—it says that they travelled on dry land, through the sea!

I heard, from my Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Eliezer Gibber, an explanation: There were some people who, even in the very midst of the ocean, walked on dry land—meaning to say that they refused

to appreciate and recognize the majesty of the moment, the weight of that which Hashem had wrought on their behalf. Even in the heart of the sea, they saw themselves as walking on dry land, so to speak. For such people, the *choma*, the wall of water, became *cheima*, anger, instead.

However, the first verse refers to those who, even on dry land, regarded the world as one in which they were walking, miraculously, through the sea.

Our everyday lives are saturated with Hashem's presence. Those who are cognizant of this enjoy a life of constant "passage through the ocean," surrounded by Hashem's providence, which shelters them from the raging waters all around them. What a way to live! ❧

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Shacharis
Sunday8:15 AM
Monday–Friday7:20 AM

Mincha
Sunday1:15 PM
Mon.–Thurs. thru January2:35 PM
Sun.–Thurs., Feb.–Mar.5:45 PM
Shabbos2:40 PM

Ma'ariv
In the Beis Midrash:
Sunday–Wednesday9:45 PM
Thursday10 PM

Every Day

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Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....
Sunday 7:15–8:15 AM
Monday–Friday 5:50–6:45 AM

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Rabbi Chaim Heinemann.....
Monday–Friday 6:55–7:20 AM

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Live video conference!
Rabbi Dani Schon.....
Monday–Friday 12:05–12:20 PM

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Rabbi Meir Minster.....
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& Binyamin Teitelbaum
Monday–Thursday 9–9:45 PM

Chavrusa Learning
(private & small groups).....times vary

Revelation, Inspiration, and Growth CONTINUED

to learn Torah], yet I did not acquire [Torah knowledge],” do not believe it. [If he says] “I did not put in effort, yet I acquired [Torah], do not believe it. [But if he says] “I put in effort and acquired [Torah], then you should believe him. (Talmud, Megillah 6b)

In fact, we see this pretty often. A person can be inspired to become a better Jew, and really feel a strong resolve to change, but in the long run he does not really make any significant changes.

But if inspiration alone is not enough to facilitate a change, what is it good for?

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler often speaks about the concepts of *is'arusa dil'sata* (literally, “an awakening from below,” referring to man initiating spiritual inspiration) and *is'arusa dil'eila* (“an

awakening from above,” spiritual inspiration initiated by Hashem). He explains that these two ideas have to work hand in hand. Often, the process of spiritual growth starts when a person experiences inspiration from an external source. A person can hear a great speech, or witness a special event, and he may be really inspired to grow spiritually. However, this inspiration is not really a part of his personality—it's external. If he doesn't act upon it, and commit to strengthen his mitzvah observance or Torah learning in a significant way, then that moment of inspiration will quickly slip away.

We can explain this with an analogy that my teacher, Rabbi Aron Lopiansky, used in a different context: *Is'arusa dil'eila* is comparable to someone lost in the middle of pitch black forest, who sees a quick flash of lightning that il-

luminates the entire forest. That short flash of light is not enough to guide the person out of the forest, but it gives him a general idea how to start out. He then has to work, and stumble, to get out, but he is comforted knowing that he is going in the correct general direction. So, too, an *is'arusa dil'eila* serves as an awakening for a person, so he can realize the spiritual heights to which he can grow. This should serve as an inspiration for him to take the necessary steps to become a better person. However, a person should not mistake these exalted feelings for genuine spiritual growth—they are merely intended to be catalysts, so the person will make the changes necessary to become a better person.

My we merit to transform the inspiration we experience into true spiritual growth. ❧