

INSIGHTS

Into The Weekly Parsha

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This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Zavel Meir ben Chaim Alter. "May his Neshama have an Aliya!"

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Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

PARSHAS VAYIKRA

You Know Who

And he called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him [...] (1:1).

There is an enigmatic *Midrash Rabbah* on this *posuk*: "From this verse we see that any *talmid chacham* that doesn't have *da'as* (knowledge) is worse than a dead animal carcass. We learn this from Moshe, who was the paradigm of wisdom and prophecy, took Bnei Yisroel out of Egypt, performed many miracles in Egypt and *Yam Suf*, ascended to heaven and brought down the Torah, and constructed the Mishkan. [Even with all these impressive accomplishments] Moshe refrained from entering the holy Mishkan until Hashem called to him" (*Vayikra Rabbah* 1:15).

What does Moshe's modesty have to do with a *talmid chacham* who doesn't have *da'as*? In fact, the listing of Moshe Rabbenu's accomplishments may actually serve to disprove the *Midrash's* point. After all, perhaps Moshe's vaunted resume required him to have a level of *da'as* that a "normal" *talmid chacham* would not routinely require. So, why do we compare an ordinary *talmid chacham* to Moshe? It seems rather unfair.

In order to understand this difficult *Midrash* we must first properly define the term *da'as*. We first find the word *da'as* used in the Torah by the *Eitz Hada'as* (Tree of Knowledge), about which Hashem explains to Adam that its fruits are forbidden to him (*Bereishis* 2:17). Fascinatingly, the Torah says regarding the creation of man and

woman, that although they were both naked they were not ashamed (2:25). Yet, once Adam and Chava sinned by eating from the Tree of Knowledge, the Torah says, "Their eyes were opened and they 'knew' they were naked" (3:7).

We see from here that *da'as* refers to an understanding of oneself, a self-knowledge as it were. As Rashi (ad loc) explains, they became intellectually aware. True *da'as* is a real understanding of yourself and who you are. Once a person achieves this self-knowledge he can then relate to others in an objective manner. That is, a person no longer defines himself by how others see him; he has a healthy self-definition. Therefore, all his interactions with others will be pure and impartial because he isn't concerned about his image and what others think of him.

This objectivity allows him to connect with others in a very pure form that is not clouded by the superficiality of image consciousness and the related complications of emotional insecurity. In other words, his interactions with the world around him aren't about him. This actually is what the snake said to Chava, "Your eyes will open and you will become God-like [...]" (3:5). The snake was explaining that self-knowledge gives one an understanding of their potential. Man has the potential to create, and in this way man is God-like.

The *Midrash* is telling us that Moshe



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Rabbeinu, with the most incredible accomplishments ever achieved, never lost sight of who he was. His modesty was a reflection of his internal self-knowledge that his accomplishments were a fulfillment of his enormous potential, not that it conferred upon him any special privileges. This is why he was chosen as the transmitter of Hashem's Torah – he was able to act as a crystal clear lens for what Hashem wished to convey. Thus, the Jewish people were able to receive the Torah in its purest form, as Moshe never made it about himself.

Often, even accomplished *talmidei chachamim* become delusional that their achievements somehow make them better than others. In fact, many religious people see themselves as having a higher standing than others, and this sometimes causes them to create their own morality of what is right and wrong. The *Midrash* is teaching us that we must have the self-knowledge of who we are and not take liberties. As the *Midrash* points out, even Moshe did not enter the Mishkan until Hashem called to him.

Wholly Peace

If his offering is a sacrifice of a peace offering, if he offers it from the cattle – whether male or female – unblemished shall he offer it before Hashem (3:1).

Parshas Vayikra introduces the topic of *korbonos* (sacrifices), which is discussed throughout much of the book of *Vayikra*. One of the types of sacrifices that we learn about in this week's *parsha* is the *korban shelamim*, known as a peace offering. Rashi (ad loc) explains that this sacrifice is known as a peace offering because it brings *shalom* to the world. Whereas some sacrifices are wholly burnt on the altar, and others are both burnt on the altar and shared with the Kohanim, the peace offerings are shared by all: the altar, the Kohanim, and the owners all receive their share of the sacrifice.

Fascinatingly, both the *Targum Onkelos* and *Targum Yonasan Ben Uziel* translate the words *korban shelamim* as "holy sacrifice." On the surface this is understandable, as sacrifices are referred to as *kodshim* and this is a prevailing theme throughout book of *Vayikra*. Yet, one must wonder why specifically the *korban shelamim* is called a "holy sacrifice." What is the relationship between this type of *korban* and the concept of holiness?

There is a common misconception that being *kadosh* means being connected to Hashem and that we judge holiness by how close a relationship someone has with Hashem. However, we know this cannot be the precise definition of the word *kedushah* because we are enjoined to be "kadosh like Hashem is kadosh" (19:1-3). Obviously, Hashem being *kadosh* isn't judged by His connection to Himself.

Rather the more correct definition of *kadosh* is to set aside. This is why a woman who gets married is referred to as "mekudshes." She hasn't suddenly become holy; she is set aside for her husband.

Hashem is *kadosh* because in essence He has separated Himself from creation; He has acted not in His self-interest, but for the sake of man. Hashem in His perfection has no need for anything. All His actions are for our sake. We are enjoined to be *kadosh* like Hashem is *kadosh*: to separate from our own self-interest and self-centered desires, and focus on interests outside our own.

The *korban shelamim* is the only

sacrifice in which all the parties have a share. This *korban* in particular, as Rashi explains, is different than the other sacrifices in that everyone's interest is being served and it brings peace to the world. This is why both the *Targumim* translate *korban shelamim* as the *kadosh* sacrifice.

The Talmud (*Zevachim* 99b) derives from the verse above that prior to the burial of an immediate family member a person may not bring a *korban shelamim* (this *halachic* status is known as *Aninus*). The Gemara explains that this is because the word *shelamim* originates from the word *shalem* (whole).

In other words, these sacrifices are only brought when a person is "whole" (i.e. when one's mind is calm and clear). A person who is an *onein* is in anguish over his loss, and is therefore ineligible to bring the *korban shelamim*. The state of *Aninus* is when one must focus on his own personal loss and begin the process of recovering from that loss. In fact, the word for self is "ani." Thus he is ineligible to bring a *korban shelamim* – which is the antithesis of self-interest.



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