

"And He called unto Moshe and He spoke to him." (1:1)

The *Medrash* makes a powerful statement regarding the importance of a *Torah* scholar's ethical character. It states that "*any Torah scholar who does not possess daas (knowledge, wisdom, understanding), is no better than a dead animal.*" The fact that Moshe refrained from entering the *Mishkan* until Hashem called him to enter reinforces this concept. The *Midrash* seems to equate *derech erez* and ethical character with wisdom and understanding. What relationship is there between morality and wisdom? Second, why should the humility which pervaded Moshe's character serve as the paradigm for all people? Obviously, Moshe's relationship to Hashem was neither casual nor mundane. On the contrary, it radiated a sublime and prophetic nature. How can this unique relationship serve as a model of ethical behavior among peers? *Horav Yitzchok Aizik Sher Z"l* suggests that we may derive from this Midrash that a Jew's obligation to act with proper *derech erez* is not a result of the rules of etiquette, but rather originates from a profound perception of the eminence of one who is created in the image of Hashem. This charge is magnified when it relates to a scholar who devotes his life to *Torah* study. How much more is demanded of him to publicly reflect this demeanor in every facet of his interaction with people.

Horav Chaim Mordechai Katz Z"l explains the *Midrash's* statement, maintaining that a *Torah* scholar who is devoid of refinement is more repugnant than a dead animal. Although stench of a dead carcass albeit offensive, is limited to a certain boundary. In contrast a scholar who does not act appropriately displays a disgraceful conduct which emanates far beyond the confines of his immediate circle. The damage which is realized will be consistent with his level of scholarship and erudition. The obligation to act with

dignity is an inherent aspect of the development of a *talmid chochom*.