

And the cloud covered the Ohel Moed... and Moshe was unable to enter the Ohel Moed because the cloud resided there, and the glory of Hashem filled the Mishkan. (40:34,35)

Sefer Shemos concludes with a description of Hashem's *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, entering the *Mishkan*. All of the work of *Klal Yisrael* in planning, gathering the materials and building the *Mishkan* achieved fruition at that moment. They had succeeded in building a "home/Sanctuary" for Hashem in this world. The first *pasuk* of *Sefer Vayikra* begins with Hashem calling/summoning Moshe *Rabbeinu* from within the *Ohel Moed*. Our quintessential leader, who was involved in every aspect of the creation of the *Mishkan*, remained outside its environs. He would not yet enter. *Chazal* (*Vayikra Rabbah* 1:15) explain that juxtaposition of the closing words of *Sefer Shemos* upon the opening words of *Sefer Vayikra* teaches us a critical lesson concerning *derech eretz*, manners, decency. They say that a *neveilah*, animal carcass, is better than a *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar, who has no *daas*, wisdom/knowledge. We see this from the model of Moshe, who was the *avi ha'neviim*, father/greatest of all the prophets; he had been the conduit for the performance of miracles and giving of the Torah, yet he was not able to enter the *Mishkan* until he was summoned by Hashem.

In this vein, *Daas* applies to the scholar's ability to incorporate his Torah knowledge into himself. The Torah does not remain a superficial discipline from which he studies and amasses knowledge. The Torah transforms him into a Torah personality, whose every nuance is inculcated with and guided by the Torah. Having said this, the mere idea of asserting that a *talmid chacham* who lacks *daas* is worse than an animal carcass is incredible. He may be a flawed scholar, but should he be likened to a carcass?

Horav Tzvi Kushelevsky, Shlita, explains this based upon the division of the various elements of our world. *Chazal* distinguish between inanimate and animate as falling into one of four categories: *domeim*, *tzomeach*, *chai*, *medaber*. A *domeim* is an inanimate object – a stone. A *tzomeich* is a living/growing organism – a plant/produce. A *chai* is a living, breathing creature whose life qualities are on a higher plane than that of a plant. Last is the *medaber*, human being, who has the power of speech. A *talmid chacham* is in a league unto himself because his life has purpose – true purpose as Hashem has dictated. As such, he rises above the ordinary *medaber*. The distinction between them is apparent when each is bereft of his unique identifying distinction. When a *chai*, living creature, loses its life, it becomes a carcass. Without its defining quality of life, it is nothing. The distinguishing quality of the *talmid chacham* which distinguishes him from all other *medabrim* is his unique capacity of *daas*. The *talmid chacham* is a repository of Torah, which is his identity. If the Torah he imbibes is a mere discipline or a source of mental gymnastics to develop his cognitive qualities, then he is no longer a *talmid chacham*. He may well still be erudite, but if he does not possess *daas* – the Torah has done nothing for him.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that the "transition" resulting from a loss/lack of *daas* – from *talmid*

chacham status to ordinary *medaber* -- is so great that he is worse off, has sustained a greater loss than an animal that has lost its life. The descent from *chai* to *domeim* is not merely as severe as from *talmid chacham* to *medaber*. Torah should refine its student – or he is not a student.

Accordingly, the greater the scholar, the more knowledge with which he is blessed, his *daas* should grow commensurately. *Horav Ovadiah Yosef, zl*, was a *talmid chacham* without peer, whose *daas* and human decency paralleled his level of erudition. The stories which abound about his sensitivity to people, the respect he gave to everyone, regardless of status in life, are legendary. I found one story that I feel is especially inspiring. During the last twenty years of his life, the *Chacham* lived in a large apartment in Har Nof together with his son, his daughter-in-law and their family. He had a massive *sefarim* library which included over 40,000 *sefarim*. His *Rebbetzin* once remarked that no new volume made its way onto a shelf until after he had learned through it from cover to cover. Furthermore, he did not just peruse the volume; he annotated and added his own commentary to almost every volume that he learned. He would point out areas in which the author had missed some point, noting where else this topic was discussed. The bookshelves were all over the house, even in the hallways. Indeed, the *Chacham's* criterion for selecting an apartment was the height of the ceilings, which would allow him more space to store his precious *sefarim*. [I daresay anyone realizes the magnitude of 40,000 *sefarim*.]

During his early days in the apartment in which he lived, as he aged and the number of *mispallelim*, worshippers, increased, the *kehillah* moved his *Bais HaKnesses*, *shul*, to an apartment on a different floor. When asked why he did not make it easier on himself and keep the *shul* where he lived and studied all day (after all, less walking meant less pain), he replied, “First of all, some notes have recently gone ‘missing’ from my desk. Some of the people who join us in prayer do not realize that each note is precious to me. (They think that they can take it as a souvenir.) More importantly, however, when I write comments on the margin of a *sefer*, I am writing this for myself. It is not for public consumption. At times, these comments may be viewed as derogatory to the author, when, in fact, no offense was intended. Recently, the author of a treatise told me that a friend of his was *davening* in my apartment and noticed his *sefer* on the shelf. He took it down and perused it. He noted that I had written a comment that might be misconstrued as a criticism of his *sefer*. The author was hurt and came to speak to me about it.

“It is worthwhile for me to leave my home for every *tefillah*, rather than take a chance of slighting the feelings of an author.” This should provide the reader with a perspective on the meaning of *daas*.