

# Parsha Pearls

Bo 5768

**And it shall be to you a sign upon your hand, and a remembrance between your eyes, so that the Torah of Hashem might be in your mouth (13:9).**

The Talmud (Shabbos 108a) relates that a heretic once asked Rabbi Yehoshua Hagarsi, "From what verse in the Torah do you derive the law that one may not write tefillin on the skin of a prohibited animal?" He replied, "From the verse, 'that the Torah of Hashem might be in your mouth' – from something permitted in your mouth." "If so, one should not write them even on the skins of permitted animals that died on their own, for they are also forbidden to eat," countered the heretic. "Animals that died on their own are actually more holy than animals slaughtered in the kosher way," said Rabbi Yehoshua. "I will give you an analogy. Two men were executed for their crimes. One was killed by the king and the other by an officer. Which is more respectable? The one killed by the king."

In the beginning of the Book of Vayikra, the Torah says, "And He called to Moshe..." The Midrash comments that Moshe, in his wisdom, knew not to come in before G-d called him. From this we learn, says the Midrash, that a Torah scholar who has no wisdom is worse than an animal that died of itself.

The Chasam Sofer asks three questions: 1) How could someone be called a Torah scholar at all if he has no wisdom? 2) Why is he worse than a dead animal, of all things? 3) If this is such an obvious act of disrespect, why is it necessary to

use Moshe, the greatest of the prophets, as an example? And if, on the other hand, it is such a high level of piety that only someone as great as Moshe knew it, then why is anyone not on this high level considered worse than a dead animal?

He explains that of course it is common knowledge that one must not come in to visit a king without being invited. In Megillas Esther 4:11 we read that whoever would come in to the king without being called would be summarily executed. But here we are talking about a great Torah scholar and righteous man who has reached the point where he is prepared for prophecy, and when he receives no prophecy he is greatly pained and disappointed. For example, Baruch ben Neriya, scribe and disciple of the prophet Yirmiyahu, longed to receive prophecy but did not. "I was exhausted from my groan, and found no rest," he said (Yirmiyahu 45:3). Such a person may be tempted to take exceptional steps to push for prophecy. But he must follow the example of Moshe Rabbeinu, who, despite being the greatest of all prophets, did not enter the Holy of Holies on his own to receive the word of G-d, but waited until he was summoned.

The punishment for taking exceptional steps to push for closeness to G-d without permission can be learned from the Oaths mentioned in Shir Hashirim

(2:7), "I have adjured you, daughters of Jerusalem, by the deer and hinds of the field, not to awaken or arouse the love before it is desired." The Sages explain (Kesubos 111a) that this is the prohibition against Jews forcing the redemption and the end of exile, and the punishment is that G-d will declare their flesh ownerless like the deer and hinds of the field.

Now we understand why one who pushes for prophecy is worse than an animal that died of itself. We have seen

that an animal that died of itself is considered "killed by the King" whereas an animal slaughtered by human hands is considered "killed by an officer" and thus on a lower level. Lower still is an animal that was torn apart by wild predators. One who presses for closeness to G-d in an unauthorized way is, G-d forbid, made ownerless and vulnerable to wild predators, and thus meets an end that is worse than the animal that dies of itself. (Drashos Chasam Sofer, p. 152, Drush for Adar Sheni 7 and Vayikra 5586)