

Sparks

by Rabbi David Aaron
*Founder and Dean, Isralight
Rosh Yeshiva, Orayta*

Identity Crisis is a Gift:

Awakening to the Role and Goal of Your Soul

Kirk Douglas, z"l, the actor, once told me that when people compliment him on a performance, they often tell him how great he was at losing himself in the part. "You just became Vincent Van Gogh! You were so wonderful." And he answers, "No, you lost yourself in the part. I can't afford to lose myself in the part. I have to pay attention to the director, to the cues. I have to hit the mark just right so the action is in the camera frame. I must stay aware that I am an actor playing a role."

A good actor plays his part, but he doesn't get lost in his part. He can't even begin to think he is the character he is playing. On the other hand, he still embraces that role with a tremendous amount of love and gives everything he's got to play his character. But he doesn't get lost in the part and start to think he is in fact Van Gogh, or Napoleon, or the President of the United States.

Similarly, you -- the soul ---are playing a character. And you must always be aware of that.

I am not David Aaron. I am a soul. I play the character David Aaron. I play the role of a short red- headed rabbi, founder and dean of Isralight, Rosh HaYeshiva of Orayta, an author of several books. I may come back in a different life and play another character.

Another way of putting this is to compare your character to a garment. Your garment is never your essence. The clothes you wear are not you, they are on you. Similarly, your character is not your "self." So you must never confuse the two. You must know the difference.

You do not *have* a soul. You *are* a soul. But you *have* a character. And you--the self-- are a soul, a part of G-d - the Soul of all souls, the Supreme Self.

The key question in your search for true identity and self worth is what do you choose to identify with? Do you identify with your character?" Or do you base your identity on your service to G-d - the Supreme Self -the Soul of all souls?

Great artists have confided in friends that they have looked at their own work on the gallery wall and wondered "Where did this come from?" Writers, composers, sculptors, have expressed the same thing. Bob Dylan was asked "How do you write your music?" And he said, "I put my pen on the page and I know it's going to be alright." Go to school to learn how to do that.

I met a famous screenwriter who told me that everyday before he writes he says a little prayer "Please, G-d, use me." He explained that none of the films he wrote *he* wrote. Rather he experiences himself as only the typist in service of the true Writer. He sees himself as a tool for a G-d and believes that G-d is writing through him.

I told him that he was right about the good films, but the bad ones are his.

Creative inspiration can sometimes be a very faint hint to the dynamics of prophecy. When the Torah says, G-d speaks to a prophet, it does not mean like a person speaks to another person. The prophet must transcend his character, free the soul and thereby bond and commune with the G-d - Source of all self; the Supreme Self. Only then can they hear "I--G-d--am your Lord."

The Torah teaches us that Moses was the greatest prophet ever. This is what Hashem said about Moses, "If there shall be prophets among you, in a vision shall I, Hashem, make Myself known to him, in a dream shall I speak with him. Not so My servant Moses, in my entire household he is the trusted one. Mouth to mouth do I speak to him, in a clear vision and not in riddles...." (Numbers 12:6-8) Moses sometimes reached prophetic peaks where Hashem would even speak out of Moses' mouth. This is apparent in number of places in the book of Deuteronomy where Moses talks about Hashem in third person and then suddenly pops into first person. Here is one such example, "It will be if you hearken to My commandments that I commanded you today, to love Hashem, your G-d, and to serve **Him** with all your heart and with all your soul, then **I** shall provide rain for your land in its proper time, **I** will provide grass in your fields for your cattle and you will eat and you will be satisfied." Obviously, it is not Moses who will provide rain, at this prophetic point G-d is speaking through Moses.

When we take a brief look at Moses early life, we begin to see the roots of his amazing ability for transcending his character and living in humble service of G-d's wisdom and words. Moses was born to a Jewish family during the time of their bitter oppression by the Egyptians. King Pharaoh issued a decree to kill all the Jewish baby boys. In desperation, Yocheved puts her newborn baby in a basket and placed it among the reeds at the bank of the Nile river. Thanks to providence, the princesses of Egypt comes along and finds this abandoned baby, names him Moses and takes him home. Ironically, she ends up hiring Moses real mother to nurse the child so Moses grows up knowing he is a Jew and yet receiving the royal upbringing of an Egyptian prince. Moses, however, was a restless soul and wanted to share in the suffering of his Jewish brethren who were enslaved by the Egyptians. The first day he goes out of from being isolated in the palace he sees an Egyptian beating a Jew. Without hesitation he kills the Egyptian to save the Jew. Realizing the implications of what he had done he quickly hid the body and returned to the palace. You would think after a day like that he would just stay put and never go out again. However, the very next day Moses goes out. This time he sees a Jew about to beat another Jew. He is shocked. "Why would you strike your fellow?"

"Who appointed you as a dignitary, a ruler, and a judge over us? Do you intend to murder me as you did the Egyptian?" Moses was devastated--- the word was out. The Jew that he had saved must have spread the word. Pharaoh also heard, and immediately issued orders to kill him. So, Moses fled to the land of Midian. There he married a Midianite woman whose family was excommunicated and harassed by the community. He moves in with her family and shepherds his father-in-law's sheep. We can understand why Moses named his first son Gershom which alluded to his intense feeling of alienation. "I have been a stranger in a foreign land."

It's just after these painful words of Moses that the bible narrates his first encounter with prophecy--- the vision of the burning bush. This is no coincidence. Imagine the identity crisis of this man. He was a Jew but rejected by his people. He was the prince of Egypt but now a wanted fugitive. He once enjoyed royal status living in the palace of the king of Egypt and now, he is a simple shepherd grazing in the desert. Here is a very lonely man. He has no real identity. However, it's precisely his being stripped of his identity that freed his soul to bond with G-d. This identity crisis, the abandonment, loneliness, and alienation freed Moses soul from getting lost in his character, identifying with any persona, and thereby freed him to only identify with G-d.

Most spiritual journeys start with an identity crisis. It is G-d's gift to us; to awaken us to the truth that only He is our source of self worth. As a soul we know that the only role worth playing is a humble servant of G-d; a vehicle for His loving presence on earth.

Rabbi David Aaron

Author of *Endless Light*, *Seeing G-d*, *The Secret Life of G-d*, *Inviting G-d In*, *Love is My Religion*, *Soul Powered Prayer*, *Living A Joyous Life*, and *The G-d-Powered Life*

An excerpt from [*Endless Light*](#)