

Mussar HaTorah

Torah Insights into Human Nature – Dedicated in memory of Rabbi A. Henach Leibowitz zt"l

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Parashas Vayikra

“IF A MAN (אָדָם) AMONG YOU SHALL BRING AN ANIMAL SACRIFICE...”
(VAYIKRA 1:2)

THE MIDRASH TANCHUMA (Vayikra 13) questions why this *pasuk* refers to the man who needs to bring an offering as an אָדָם instead of the more common, אִישׁ. The Midrash explains that the Torah was telling us that even if a man as great as Adam HaRishon shall sin; he must bring a *korban* – a sacrifice. As a second point, the Midrash goes on to comment that the use of the less specific term of an “animal” – as opposed to the more precise term of “cattle” or “sheep offerings” – alludes to the fact that the sinner brings a sacrifice to separate himself from the animals. He must remember that the souls of animals descend to the Lower World, while a human soul ascends to the heavens.

He was on one of the highest levels a human can reach

The Midrash tells us that this *pasuk* is referring to a great man sinning; A man as lofty as Adam HaRishon. Adam was so great that the angels thought he was godly. He was on one of the highest levels a human can reach. But yet, the Midrash continues to say that this man who sins must take care to separate himself from the animals, to insure that he does not fall to the lowest of depths. Granted that a man as great as Adam HaRishon may commit a small sin. But would we ever imagine that this sin could drag him to the animalistic depths? Is he truly in danger of sinking so low?

Any process of growth that we begin can multiply

The *Yetzer Hara* is a crafty and sophisticated warrior. When he sees a foothold – even a just a small crack – he grabs on and does not let go. If we do not make every effort to shake him off, it is a quick ride down to the depths of sin. Even the greatest among us are vulnerable to fall down this slope if we do not quickly reverse course. This is why the *Yetzer Hara* is satisfied with even the smallest victory – he knows that he can easily leverage it for even greater conquests (see *Chovos HaLevavos*, Shaar Yichud HaMaaseh, Chap. 5). Luckily, the opposite is also true: Any process of growth that we begin can multiply and continue unabated as long as we focus our energies in the direction of advancement.

Unfortunately, there is a common misconception that, “The small stuff doesn’t matter.” People think that they can give in to their desires, “Just this little bit, just this one time.” They don’t realize how much they are putting themselves in danger of a continuation of that negative behavior. If we properly view our purpose on this earth, it will enable us to appreciate the importance of every miniscule gain or loss in our lifelong battle for spiritual improvement. Each small achievement is important, not only inherently, but as the beginning of a process. Once the momentum exists in a particular direction, it is even harder to stop and reverse the movement.

We are dealing with eternity

Let us realize that the *Yetzer Hara* is the greatest enemy we can ever have, and let us try to learn from our nemesis, who never surrenders without a struggle and fights tooth and nail for the smallest gain. He knows quite well that the stakes are extremely high, because we are dealing with eternity. If we make the effort to be vigilant and to avoid even the smallest lowering of our spiritual level, and seize every opportunity to grow, we will find ourselves making consistent strides forward in the positive direction, onward and upward as we elevate ourselves and everything around us to accomplish the ultimate purpose of our existence.