

When a man among you brings an offering to Hashem. (1:2)

Rashi explains that the Torah uses the word *adam*, man, by design-to recall the *Adam HaRishon*, Primordial Man. Just as Adam *HaRishon* did not offer anything from *gezel*, that was stolen (since everything belonged to him), so, too, may we not offer a sacrifice from an item that has been stolen. We wonder why Adam *HaRishon* is used as the paradigm to teach the absolute requirement that the *korban* that is offered may not be derived illegally. After all, everything in the world belonged to Adam. Would it not have been more appropriate to bring a proof from someone who could have stolen – but chose not to?

The **Chafetz Chaim, zl**, explains that one must introspect himself and his actions to make completely certain that whatever he uses for himself has no taint, no vestige whatsoever, of *gezel*. This is specifically the purpose of the *Midrash* cited by *Rashi*. Adam *HaRishon* was alone in the world. This being the case, he was certain that everything in the world belonged to him. As he was assured that whatever he used was thoroughly his, so should we be certain that our actions are not tainted by any form of misuse.

The *Chafetz Chaim* was *naeh doresh*, *naeh mekayim*, or, in contemporary vernacular, he practiced what he preached. The thought of using something that did not belong to him was unfathomable. He was once asked to speak in Bialystok, Poland, to raise awareness concerning the laws of *taharas hamishpachah*, family purity. The *shul* in which he spoke was packed, standing room only. When the *Chafetz Chaim* ascended to the lectern, the members of the congregation that had assembled to hear him were at a loss. Diminutive in height, the lectern towered over him. The *Chafetz Chaim* feared that, if the congregation did not see him, the effect of his speech would quickly dissipate. A suggestion of having the venerable sage stand on a chair was quickly overruled for a practical reason: the chair might tip over, and the *Chafetz Chaim* would fall. Then the wealthy members of the community offered to remove their thick, warm coats, lay them on the floor and allow the *Chafetz Chaim* to stand on them. It was a great idea which the sage accepted – reluctantly. Why?

A short while later, the *Chafetz Chaim* met one of the city's *rabbanim* and said, "You should know the *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice, which I expended in order to speak on behalf of *taharas hamishpachah*." When the *rav* looked at the *Chafetz Chaim* somewhat incredulously, the sage explained, "When I was supported (being physically elevated) by the material possessions of my fellow men, I felt very ill at ease. Indeed, it felt like standing on a bed of needles. Nonetheless, I agreed, due to the significance of the matter at hand."

Horav Chaim Kreisworth, zl, related that the *Chafetz Chaim* once visited Warsaw to attend a rabbinical meeting. At one point during the conference, he needed a piece of paper to jot down a Torah thought. On the table of the home where he was staying overnight lay a small piece of paper which seemed ownerless. The *Chafetz Chaim* asked if anyone knew to whom the piece of paper belonged. Those who heard the question were stymied by it. Surely, whoever owned the paper

would be overjoyed to have the sage use it, especially since it was for the purpose of a *mitzvah*. Furthermore, the paper was worth less than a penny, of no significant value. The *Chafetz Chaim* replied, "True, the piece of paper may have little value, but the material for the prosecuting Angel that would be created by such a lapse in sensitivity to another person's property could destroy all of Warsaw!"

Rav Yosef Leib Nendick, zl, offers an alternative reason for gleaning the prohibition of offering a sacrifice derived through inappropriate means specifically from Adam *HaRishon*. The *Zohar HaKadosh* explains that, prior to creation, *Hashem histakel b'Oraisa*, looked into the Torah and then created the world. The *Mashgiach* explains that only through such circumstances (of first delving into the Torah) prior to creating the world, could man, the product of Hashem's Creation, function and serve Him in this world. In order for the Torah to be man's blueprint for life, his creation/life must be attuned with the Torah. Thus, Adam was created in such a manner and with such capabilities that observing the Torah coincides with his characteristics. Indeed, *Chazal* teach that Adam was created alone, so that every one of his descendants would be empowered to say, "*Bishvili nivra ha'olam*, the world was created (especially) for me." The world was created specifically to "fit" with man.

Therefore, explains the *Mashgiach*, the fact that Adam did not offer sacrifices from *gezel* was not merely because everything belonged to him, but rather, the world was created in sync with Adam. Hashem abhors stealing; therefore, man could not offer a sacrifice to Him from that which was not his. Hashem gave Adam everything, so that he would never have to resort to stealing. In other words, the world was created upon the premise and basis that theft is evil and contradicts the very underpinnings of Creation. The fact that everything belonged to Adam was Hashem's way of intimating to him that "I want only what is yours." To steal is to undermine the integrity of Creation. It is as simple as that.