

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

*Rashi* explains that the word *adam* in our *pasuk* is a reference to Adam *HaRishon*, the first human being, with a lesson regarding the laws of *korbanos*, offerings. As Adam did not bring any *korbanos* from stolen property, since essentially the whole world was his, so, too, may no one serve Hashem with anything that came into his possession in a dishonest manner. The *Panim Yafos* explains this idea practically. Adam *HaRishon* was last to be created, following the creation of an entire world with its myriad creations. Adam was fully aware that nothing belonged to him; after all, he had created nothing. He viewed the world much like the *Tanna* in *Pirkei Avos* (3:7), “Give Him from His own, for you and your possessions are His. As David *Hamelech* said (*Divrei Hayamim* 1:29:14), ‘For everything is from You, and from Your own we have given You.’”

Foolish is the man who thinks *Kochi v’otzem yadi asah li es ha’chayil hazeh*, “It is my power and the strength of my hand that wrought for me all of this wealth” (*Devarim* 8:17). It is not one’s hand – it is Hashem’s hand; it is not one’s acumen – it is Hashem’s acumen; it is not one’s wealth – everything belongs to Hashem. Since everything belongs to Hashem, one might begin to think that what his neighbor has in his possession also belongs to Hashem. Following this line of thought, if I want to bring a *korban*, taking from my neighbor is not really stealing, because it does not really belong to him anyway. Thus, the Torah underscores the need to bring the *korban* only from one’s own property. Nonetheless, the person must internalize the idea that everything in this world – including the ability to appropriate it and the idea to offer up a *korban* to Hashem – is all derived from Hashem.

**Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl**, relates an incident which took place when the *sefer Degel HaMasser* by *Horav Gershon Libman, zl*, was compiled by his students and published. The *sefer* was an anthology of the source material for his ethical discourses. *Rav* Libman was the founder and *Rosh Yeshivah* of the *Novaradoker Yeshivah* in France. A brilliant scholar, whose deep understanding of the human psyche was concomitant with his unique ability to relate the words of *Chazal* to the ethical, moral and spiritual issues confronting the *ben Torah*. In celebration of this wonderful feat the completion of this *sefer*, the students prepared a gala dinner in which the primary speaker was none other than *Rav* Gershon.

It, therefore, came as somewhat of a shock that *Rav* Gershon arose and publicly lauded the brilliance of the ideas presented in the *sefer*. He went on speaking about the deep thoughts and illuminating lessons which were taught in this volume of penetrating *mussar*, ethical discourse. When asked, concerning *Shlomo Hamelech*’s sound advice, *Yehalelucha zar v’lo picha*, “The strangers should praise you – but, not your own mouth” (*Mishlei* 27:2), he replied, “This is not my Torah! These are not my novellae. It is all from Hashem. What makes it mine: the fact that Hashem’s Torah passed through my brain? Furthermore, is it my brain? It is Hashem’s brain! Veritably, does anything really belong to us? Is anything really ours? It is all that with Hashem endows us.”

Adam *HaRishon* was acutely aware of this truth. Thus, when we commence *Sefer Vayikra* with the *parsha* of *korbanos*, it is important that this idea be ingrained in our minds. *Rav Galinsky* explains the following. The *Korban Olah* is brought for sins committed through inappropriate thoughts and improper emotions. The *Korban Chatas* is brought for a sin that had been committed unintentionally. The consequences for not bringing these *korbanos* are dire. Why? In the *Yerushalmi Makos 2:6*, *Chazal* state: “*Nevuah*, prophesy, was asked, ‘What is the punishment for one who sins?’ The response was, ‘Let him offer a *korban* and it will atone for him.’”

The manner in which this is effected is that the sinner who offers the *korban*, takes to heart that whatever is happening to the animal should have happened to him. One who carefully considers the proceedings, and understands the significance of the animal taking his place, is worthy of atonement.

With this in mind, our original question becomes stronger: Why? The sinner had an improper thought, an improper passion upon which he acted unintentionally. Is this a reason for him to experience what is now (instead) happening to the animal? *Rav Galinsky* explains that our question indicates a lack of Torah perspective concerning sin and the concept of ownership. We tend to think that “my life” is just that: my life. I can do whatever I please with my life, my health, my possessions – they are all mine. Furthermore (along these lines), if I transgressed slightly – not a major sin, but an error, an indiscretion – nothing terribly spectacular or egregious, my thought process tells me that I deserve – at worst – a simple punishment – nothing serious, just a slap on the hands and business as usual. To lose my life, Heaven forbid, over a simple sin is ludicrous! Or so I would tend to believe.

Whoever thinks along these lines has no idea of the meaning of the word *adam*. He does not understand the perspective of Adam *HaRishon*. We do not realize that nothing – absolutely nothing – belongs to us. Everything belongs to Hashem – our lives, health, wealth – everything! If this is the case, once we sin against G-d, do we deserve to keep our lives? After all, they are really not ours. They belong to Hashem.

Veritably, it is as prophesy said. One who sins should forfeit his life. Torah, however, says, “Let him bring a *korban* and achieve atonement.” This is what Adam *HaRishon* taught. He understood that nothing belonged to him. It was a gift from Hashem, just as nothing belongs to us – it is all a gift from Hashem.