

## **And G-d created man in his image, in the image of G-d He created him. (1:27)**

According to Chazal, the creation of man was perfection personified. It was only after he sinned that his stature was diminished, that he became imperfect. Ever since then, no man has been born perfect. He must spend his infancy and youth developing his strength, his physical and intellectual abilities, leading up to a more perfect version of that to which man can and should aspire. This is accomplished through years of study, guidance from those more experienced, and much hard work.

Why is it this way? The animal world does not seem to have this “problem.” Immediately after birth, animals enter the world with all of their faculties in place. Within a few days, they are standing on their own. They recognize which foods are nutritious and those they need to avoid, which creatures are friend and which are foe. Even those who do not develop immediately still do so much more quickly than human beings.

The commentators offer a number of reasons for this disparity. In his *Mishpetai HaTorah*, Horav Tzvi Shpitz, Shlita, suggests a reason based upon a principle cited in the name of the Chasam Sofer in the *Sefer Chut HaMeshulash*. An individual had been making life miserable for the Chasam Sofer for quite some time. The sage lamented, “I do not remember doing anything special for him that would cause him to treat me so miserably.”

The Chasam Sofer was addressing the natural tendency of a human being to feel a sense of gratitude to one who benefits him. Certainly, one will not respond negatively to one who is his benefactor. This is “normal” human nature: You are nice to me; in return, I am nice to you. Hashem commanded the Jewish People not to hate the Egyptians, despite all the misery and persecution which they caused us, because we had been strangers in their land. We owe them. They took us in during the great famine, gave us a place to live and food to eat. We are, therefore, beholden to them. The fact that they followed all this good with so much bad does not diminish our obligation to them. That is the “normal” way of acting. This is how good people respond to someone who has been kind to them.

Regrettably, there are individuals whose self-centered nature induces them to descend beneath contempt, acting in such a reprehensible manner that they not only refuse to show any appreciation

to their benefactor, they even revile those who benefit them. Why? Because they cannot tolerate being in anyone's debt. A person whose human nature is so repulsive that he is unable to do any good for anyone denies that he has received any benefit from another person. Therefore, he will go out of his way to do everything possible to denigrate and belittle any good that he has received. This is a truly troubled man. Sadly, such people exist in proportions that would be better left unstated.

Rav Shpitz applies this principle to Moshe Rabbeinu's remonstrance that the abundance of gold and silver which Hashem gave the Jewish People catalyzed the sin of the Golden Calf. Simply, this means that now that they were wealthy and seemingly self-sustaining, they no longer felt they needed Hashem. Therefore, they rebelled.

In light of the above, we can suggest a deeper meaning to Moshe's lament. The gold, silver and all the wonderful gifts which Hashem showered on the Jews had a negative influence on them. Actually, it backfired because now they had to downplay the fact that they "owed" Hashem. They neither needed a Golden Calf, nor believed in it. They behaved in this manner purely to anger Hashem, so that they could deny His favor. It was against their nature to feel beholden to Him, so they had to neutralize His beneficence in order to disparage the multitude of good that He had rained upon them. The obligation to pay gratitude compelled the Jewish People to rebel against Hashem.

Prior to the sin, Adam HaRishon had been a creation who had no peer. He was absolutely perfect and, as such, clearly recognized his obligation to pay gratitude to his Creator. Once he sinned and the serpent's zuhama, spiritual filth, became suffused in him, he was engulfed in a powerful conflict. He knew what he must do, but the spiritual filth was telling him to renege and do everything within his power to repudiate his obligation of hakoras ha'tov, gratitude. Indeed, the Midrash claims that when Hashem asked Adam whether he had eaten from the tree, he replied, "Yes, I ate, and I will continue to eat!" These are words of gross chutzpah, insolence without shame. How do we explain such impudence on the part of Adam HaRishon? Apparently, he was a victim of his inner conflict, the confrontation of an obligation to pay gratitude acting against the serpent's spiritual filth, which egged him on to renounce Hashem's favor.

We now understand why the ensuing generations of mankind were born "blemished." Therefore, they do not have this acute understanding of the overriding necessity to be makir tov, grateful, and, consequently they reject this obligation by dismissing the favor. While it is obvious that man is helpless without Hashem, there exists room in man's "imperfect" mind to think that he has abilities and that he can achieve. With this notion in mind, he does not feel compelled to demonstrate his appreciation to Hashem, thereby circumventing the desire to repudiate Hashem's favor. On the

contrary, he strives to fulfill his spiritual ambitions to come closer to Hashem and ultimately to cling to Him.