

Bereishis: Man is to be Above the Rest of Creation **by Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh**

We are all familiar with the idea that man is the crown and purpose of creation. It is interesting to note, however that the Torah uses the same expression, *nefesh chaya* for both man and animals to indicate that they were living beings. The Targum Onkolos translates the words *nefesh chaya* in Bereishis 1:20 and 1:24, where the creation of animal life is being narrated, as *nafsha chayasa*, living soul, which is perhaps the most literal translation. In Bereishis 2:7 where the Torah is describing the creation of Adam, the Targum Onkolos translates *nefesh chaya* as *ruach mamallela* which means a talking spirit. Only mankind has the power of speech which is meant to be used in avodas Hashem and improving oneself. Only the human race has these gifts of speech and the ability to grow and to better and constantly grow to greater heights of holiness. Rashi also seems to be addressing this issue when he states in Bereishis 2:7 that Adam is the most alive of all of life because of his reasoning abilities and speech. Yet astonishingly, the Torah uses the same expression, *nefesh chaya* for both forms of life, man and animal.

My Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Moshe Feinstein, Zt'l, addressed this issue in one of his drashos recorded in Sefer Drash Moshe. He pointed out that the Torah places the term *nefesh chaya* only after we are told that he breathed life into Adam's nostrils. From here Rav Moshe Feinstein concluded that the Torah is teaching us that man is only a living creature for Torah and mitzvos and to serve Hashem. Without serving Hashem with the breath of life he has no reason to exist. True, he has to eat, sleep and perform the other bodily functions of living things. But these functions are only secondary to his higher purpose of serving Hashem. And that purpose places him above all of creation. [Perhaps the Baal Hatanya, the Alter Rebbe of Chabad in a similar teaching, was bothered by the same issue. He discusses in the beginning of Chapter 2 of Likutai Amarim the second soul that every Jew has and the source for this idea is the same statement that Hashem breathed into his nostrils neshama of life. Although the Baal Hatanya's focus is on the unique neshama that every Jew has, it is possible that he was bothered by the Torah's phraseology of *nefesh chaya* being the same term used for animals.]

Sadly, too many people get caught up on the physical survival aspects of their lives and forget their higher purpose. But here the Torah is teaching us otherwise. Our primary purpose is to serve Hashem and it is for that purpose Hakadosh Baruch Hu breathed life into us.