

PARASHAT VAYIKRA- 2014, 5774
Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

ויקרא אל משה אדם כי יקריב מכם קרבן ליקוק

“He called to Moshe, and HaShem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying.... When a *man* among you brings an offering to HaShem” (Vayikra 1:1-2).

Each word and each letter of the Torah can have many connotations and make a world of difference in its meaning. There are many words that describe “man” as a person; there is “ish”, “enosh”, “adam”, “nefesh”, the Torah could have chosen any one of the four, yet here the Torah chooses the word “Adam” as the representation of mankind, in the opening to our parasha. Rashi suggests that just as the first “Adam” was able to take advantage of all that the world had to offer without concern that it belonged to others (for he was alone in the world), so must every person who brings a sacrifice be certain that the offering to G-d be solely his (or hers). It must not be from stolen money, for in the process of serving G-d one must never violate ethical behavior. In other words, G-d does not want our donations to Holy services if our money comes from stolen or unethical business.

A second lesson from the word “Adam” is that unlike all others, Adam was fashioned by G-d Himself. “And HaShem formed the man of dust from the ground (adamah) and He blew into his nostril the soul of life; and man became a living being” (Bereishit 2:7)

The name Adam evokes the image of the first human being who was intimately connected to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. The use of Adam here appears to express the hope that, through the sacrificial service, the individual will once again, come closer to HaShem.

A third idea comes to mind. “Adam” evokes the image of one who was pure in the Garden of Eden, but in time, Adam together with Chava, violated G-d’s command. When an individual brings a sacrifice, he is attempting to return to the glorious state of Eden, a fixed Eden without sin- an Eden of complete innocence. Thus, when bringing a sacrifice, the individual is called “Adam”, as the korban (sacrifice) is about to correct the estrangement from HaShem and return our relationship as it was in Gan Eden.

A fourth lesson from the use of the term “Adam” could be that Adam represents the universal aspect of mankind. Adam was the parent of all humankind. From him, all human beings emerged. The term Adam by its very definition embraces the entire world. Perhaps the Torah uses the term Adam to remind us that ultimately the Beit HaMikdash in which sacrifices are brought, is a place where all humankind will one day come to worship HaShem, it will be a Beit Tefillah Lechol HaAmim.

Every word and every letter in the Torah is there to teach us something significant. The use of the word Adam confirms this idea as it teaches us so much about how G-d wants us to act toward one another and how to view the world.