

קדושים

THE INDIVIDUAL IS SPECIAL

There is a phenomenon within the psyche of each mentally healthy individual: that of self. Children exhibit a mental viewpoint in which the entire universe revolves around them. Children ultimately grow out of this phase, but even in adults there remains an element of selfishness. Hence, people tend to view the world from a self-oriented perspective.

This attitude is reinforced by the *Mishnah* (*Sanhedrin 37*•) which states:

לפיכך נברא אדם יחידי

Man was created singly

as opposed to the insects, birds, fish, cattle and beasts which were created in a multitude. Why was mankind not created as a community, so that the world could be populated immediately? The *Mishnah* answers:

לפיכך כל אחד ואחד חייב לומר בשבילי נברא העולם

So that each individual will say, “the world was created just for me.”

Each individual must comprehend his own self-worth in the universal scheme of things. He must feel important enough to be considered equal to a fully populated world, so that he will not want to sin and risk the destruction of his world (Rashi, *ibid.*).

The ingredient which marks the distinction of man is his creation in the *Tzelem Elokim* — the Divine Image:

ויברא אלקים את האדם בצלמו בצלם אלקים ברא אותו

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

Rashi comments:

שהכל נברא במאמר והוא נברא בידיים

Everything was created by Divine decree, but man was created by the Hands of Hashem (*ibid.*).

The Maharal (*Gur Areyeh*, *ibid.*) explains: that which was created by the Hands of Hashem is closest to Hashem.

ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים ויהי האדם לנפש חיה

[He] breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living soul (*Bereishis 2:7*).

That breath transferred an element of Hashem into mankind (Ramban, *ibid.*); Hashem imparted His being into Adam. This translated itself into the *Tzelem Elokim*.

The *Mishnah* (*Pirkei Avos* 3:14) proclaims:

חביב אדם שנברא בצלם

Beloved is man, for he was created in the image of Hashem.

A special love exists between Hashem and mankind, because mankind was created with an element of Hashem. The *Tiferes Yisrael* points out that the *Tzelem Elokim* is possessed by gentiles as well as by *Klal Yisrael*. This means that every individual, any member of any race, creed, or color should proclaim, “The world was created just for me.” Naturally this is only applicable to one who follows the path of righteousness. Hashem could justify the creation of the world for the existence of even a single righteous gentile.

The *Mishnah* (*ibid.*) then continues:

חביבין ישראל שנקראו בנים למקום

Beloved is Israel for they are called children of G-d.

As much as humanity is beloved by Hashem, *Klal Yisrael* occupies a special place with Him. *Klal Yisrael* is elevated from the arena of humanity, and in a spiritual sense is considered “super-man.”

From time immemorial man has offered *karbanos* to Hashem (Ramban, *Vayikra* 1:9). This *karban* was always a *karban olah*, which is totally consumed by the fire. Never did it occur to man to partake of the *karban* together with Hashem. An animal offering to Hashem was to be for Hashem alone. Once *Klal Yisrael*, Hashem’s beloved nation, came upon the scene, all this changed. For the first time in human history, man was given the privilege of joining with Hashem in the consumption of *karbanos* (*Vayikra* 5:13). The atonement which up until now could only be achieved through the sacrifice’s total immolation could now also be accomplished by human consumption of it (see *Midrash Rabbah, Bereishis* 34:9).

The *Gemara* states:

מלמד שהכהנים אוכלים ובעלים מתכפרין

The priests eat of the offering, and the owners achieve atonement (*Pesachim* 59:).

Klal Yisrael was thusly elevated from a state of mere mortal to a state of spiritual super-man, a partner of Hashem.

ואבדל אתכם מן העמים להיות לי

“I have separated you from other nations, that you should be Mine” (*Vayikra* 20:26).

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