

HASHEM AND MAN

Background

In this interchange, Adam is demonstrating startling wisdom. He alone was able to discern the inner nature of each animal and in one apt term describe its very essence. Yet when asked by HASHEM to give himself a name, he chose Adam “because I was created from the ground (adamah).”

Questions

This choice of names is quite difficult to understand. What difference does it make what man was created from? Look what he was! Wiser than angels, he was the progenitor of the entire human population. He was the handicraft of G-d Himself.

But even more, let’s grant for a moment that where he came from had relevance. It is still clear that Adam was missing the point. It was his *body* that came from the ground. Even a schoolchild understands that the greatness of man comes from his soul. So why is Adam fixated on his physical manifestation, when clearly that is the least important part of the human?

מדרש רבה בראשית פרשה יז פסקה ד

א"ר אחא בשעה שבא הקב"ה לבראת את האדם נמלך במלאכי השרת אמר להן נעשה אדם אמרו לו אדם זה מה טיבו אמר להן חכמתו מרובה משלכם הביא לפניהם את הבהמה ואת החיה ואת העוף אמר להם זה מה שמו ולא היו יודעין העבירן לפני אדם אמר לו זה מה שמו אמר זה שור זה חמור זה סוס וזה גמל ואתה מה שמך אמר לו אני נאה להקרא אדם שנבראתי מן האדמה ואני מה שמי א"ל לך נאה להקראות אדני שאתה אדון לכל בריותיך א"ר אחא (ישעיה מב) אני ה' הוא שמי הוא שמי שקרא לי אדם הראשון

Rebbe Acha said, "When HASHEM decided to create Adam HaRishon, He took counsel with the ministering angels. HASHEM said to them, "Shall we create man?" They asked HASHEM, "This man, what is his nature?" HASHEM answered them, "His wisdom is greater than yours."

HASHEM brought before the angels the various domesticated animals, wild animals, and birds. HASHEM said, "What is the name of each of these?" The molochim were unable to answer.

Then HASHEM brought these animals before Adam and asked him to name each one. Adam answered, "This one's name is Shor; this one is Chamor, this one is Sus, and this one is Gamal."

Then HASHEM asked, "And you, what is your name?" Man responded, "It is appropriate to call me Adam because I was created from adamah (the ground)." HASHEM then asked, "And what should I be called?" Man responded, "You should be called Adon, because You are the Master of all Your creations."