

# Torah Talk—מאמרי תורה



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**Parashat Vayikra**  
**April 1, 2017**

**פרשת ויקרא**  
**ה' בניסן תשע"ז**

Torah Reading: *Vayikra* (Leviticus) 1:1-5:26

In this *parasha*, Hashem commands Moshe regarding various types of offerings, under what circumstances they should be offered, and what they should consist of.

The Torah chooses two interesting words for those bringing offerings. Instead of utilizing the common term איש – *ish*, meaning “man” or more generically “person” – it utilizes the following words (underlined in the examples below):

**א:ב** דְּבַר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם, אָדָם כִּי-יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם קֶרְבָּן, לַה' -  
מִן-הַבְּהֵמָה, מִן-הַבָּקָר וּמִן-הַצֹּאן, תִּקְרִיבוּ, אֶת-קֶרְבַּנְכֶם.

**1:2** Speak to the children of Yisrael, and say to them: When any human being of you brings an offering to Hashem, you shall bring your offering of the cattle, even of the herd or of the flock.

**ב:א** וּנְפֶשׁ, כִּי-תִקְרִיב קֶרְבָּן מִנְחָה לַה'--סֶלֶת, יִהְיֶה קֶרְבָּנוֹ; וְנִצַּק עָלֶיהָ שֶׁמֶן, וְנָתַן עָלֶיהָ לְבֹנָה.

**2:1** And when any soul brings a meal-offering to Hashem, his offering shall be of fine flour; and he shall pour oil upon it, and put frankincense thereon.

**ד:כז** וְאִם-נֶפֶשׁ אַחַת תִּחַטָּא בְשִׁגְגָה, מֵעַם הָאָרֶץ: בַּעֲשֻׂתָהּ אַחַת מִמִּצְוֹת ה', אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תַעֲשִׂינָהּ--וְאָשָׁם.

**4: 27** And if any soul of the common people sin through error, in doing any of the things which Hashem has commanded not to be done, and be guilty...

אָדָם – *adam* refers to humanity. Hashem created הָאָדָם – *ha'adam* – in the book of Genesis. One of my Bible professors translated *ha'adam* as “the earthling,” playing on the fact that *adam*, the human species, was created from the *adamah*, the earth. The usage of this particular word here may indicate the inclusion of any person, man or woman, and possibly non-Jew in addition to Jew.

נֶפֶשׁ – *nefesh* means “soul” or “spirit.” It is similar to a נֶשְׁמָה – *neshama*, but according to some, is of a lower order of spirituality. Perhaps this word is used to indicate that bringing offerings is an activity on a spiritual plane which has little to do with the physical object being offered.

Or perhaps the text simply wanted to avoid the use of the word אִישׁ – *ish*, which is sometimes used to mean not just a person, but a person of moral worth, a *mensch*. We see the word אִישׁ used in this way in *Pirkei Avot* – the Ethics of the Sages, chapter 2, mishna 6: “בְּמָקוֹם שֶׁאֵין אַנְשִׁים, הִשְׁתַּדַּל לִהְיוֹת אִישׁ” – in a place where there are no *menches*, try to be a *mensch*.” It is possible that the text in this week’s *parasha* wanted to make crystal clear that it is talking about anyone and everyone who brings an offering or who sins, not just the upper echelon of society and not just the *mensches* of the world, but rather each and every one of us who, on occasion at the very least, will go astray.

Shabbat Shalom.

For Discussion:

- Why do you think the Torah chose to use the words *adam* and *nefesh* in place of *ish*?
- What is a *nefesh* or a *neshama*? Where does it reside?
- What makes one a *mensch*?