

Everything's Ready for the Meal! – Parshat Tazria

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We all know that man is the crown of creation, so why was man created last, after G-d created everything else in creation? And why is “Torat Ha’Adam”—everything that is connected to the creation of man—explained only after the laws of the living beasts and the fowl?

This week's Torah portion is *Parshat Tazria*. There are two central topics in this *parsha*. The first subject is related to the birth of a boy or a girl and the laws of purity and impurity associated with childbirth. The second topic is the laws of *negaim*, lesions, that appear on clothing or on a person's body. We dealt with the second issue in our article

on *Parshat Tazria* last year.

We will begin with the words of the Talmud: "Rabbi Simlai said: Just as in the Creation, man was created after all domestic animals, wild beasts, and birds, so too, the law [concerning the cleanness] of man is stated after the law [concerning the cleanness] of domestic animals, wild beasts, and birds [*Vayikra Rabbah* 14:1]" (Rashi on Leviticus 12:2). In this *parsha*, the Torah teaches us the laws related to the birth of a boy or a girl only after it taught us in the previous *parsha*, *Parshat Shemini*, the laws connected to domesticated and wild animals and birds, as it is written: "This is the law regarding animals, birds, all living creatures..." (Leviticus 11:46).

In other words, the Gemara teaches us that just as in Creation, G-d first created the whole universe, all the animals, beasts and birds, and only then was man, who is the crown of creation, created; so too, when the Torah came to give over the laws related to man and beast, first it explains the laws related to beasts and fowl and only then does it discuss the laws concerning man, the laws related to the creation of man connected with birth.

And what is the actual reason why HaKadosh Baruch Hu first created everything else in Creation and only afterwards did he create man, the crown of Creation? Let us return to the beginning of Creation. The Gemara has an interesting and wonderful explanation: "Why was man created last? So that he may straight away start the meal (as the whole world was already prepared for him). Another reason is that if he will become arrogant, they will tell him: Even the mosquito was created before you" (*Sanhedrin* 38a).

To be honest, these things are all wonderful ideas, but their meaning is unclear. On the one hand, we see the virtue of man who was created last so that everything would be ready for him, but the other reason says the complete opposite, that it

was so man should not become proud and instead he should feel as if he is the lowest thing in the world. How do such polar opposites make sense in relation to one another?

Let us see the wonderful explanation of Rabbi Natan that connects the words of the Gemara in the most brilliant way. Rabbi Natan teaches:

The two reasons in the Gemara are actually making the same point: the main purpose for which man was created is so that he may know the Creator and worship him properly. This is the simple meaning of the words of the Gemara: "Why was man created last? So that he should immediately be able to start the meal," that is, for man to have everything ready for him to be able to engage in the purpose for which he was created. Everything is ready for him, and nothing is missing.

"Why was man created last? So that he may straight away start the meal. Another reason is that if he will become arrogant, they will tell him: Even the mosquito was created before you!"

This is how it was when G-d created Adam HaRishon (the first man). The entire creation was completed in six days, and man was created on Friday close to Shabbat after the whole creation was already prepared for him "so that he should be able to immediately commence the *seudat Shabbat* [the Shabbat meal]." This means that all of man's needs would be prepared for him in advance in order that he shouldn't get confused and be forced to wait. On a deeper level, this means that he would have an immediate opportunity to serve G-d without any unnecessary difficulties. This is the purpose of the Shabbat meal which hints at the meal that will be in the World to Come when the whole world will achieve its rectification and the righteous will enjoy the fruits of their labor and the reward reserved for them in the World to Come. If Adam HaRishon would have kept G-d's commandment not to eat from the Tree of

Knowledge—a mere few hours of self-restraint—the entire world would have achieved its complete rectification, and everyone would have enjoyed the special meal.

Unfortunately however, Adam HaRishon and in fact this included all of us, as the entire creation was included in Adam HaRishon did not pass the test, so we were denied this wonderful meal. And this brings us to the other reason given in the Gemara: “If you will become arrogant, remember that the mosquito preceded you.” That is, if a person indeed strives to fulfill the purpose for which he was created, it justifies the fact that he was created after the creation of all the animals and birds, so that everything should be ready for him so that he could busy himself with the purpose for which he was created. But if man does not involve himself in the purpose for which he was created and becomes arrogant, that is, he begins looking for other things to do—getting involved in different things where he is pulled toward other desires apart from the purpose of engaging in Torah and serving G-d—he will be reminded with a jarring hint: “The mosquito was created before you,” because a person is not any more important than an animal unless he busies himself with learning Torah and the purpose for which he was created.



Adam HaRishon did not pass the test, so we were denied this wonderful meal!

And in fact, this is the intention behind why man was created after every other creation, domestic and wild animals and birds, so that man would humble himself and worship HaKadosh Baruch Hu with all that G-d had graced him, and not be overly proud of himself, G-d forbid, as if everything were created for him and for no other reason. Therefore, as soon as a man starts to think that he was created last because he deserves everything, due to his honor, he is reminded: "The mosquito preceded you." It is not the goal that everything was created before you so that you would become proud. There's a little creature, a mosquito, that was created even before you, so you have nothing to be haughty about! Everything was created for you for one purpose: to allow you to serve G-d without hinderance.

Those two reasons given in the Gemara have the same objective. Man is indeed the crown of creation, but that is dependent on the fact that man will humble himself and not be proud, as if he was the main purpose of creation. This is also the significance of the order in the Gemara, that the laws of man are explained after the laws regarding the animals, for similarly, his creation was after the creation of the animals. It all has the same intention that man should humble himself and thus merit to the Torah and serving G-d, and just as his creation in the end was in order to humble himself and merit to the Torah, so too the laws regarding man are explained last. That is, when a man merits to understand the real reason why he was created last, then he will merit to the laws regarding man which are explained after the laws of the animals in the same way that he was created last. For it is impossible to merit to the Torah other than through humility and meekness.

Thus, the other part of the *parsha* dealing with lesions is also connected with this idea, as our sages have taught

(*Archin* 16a) about the seven reasons a person may get a lesion, and one of which is due to arrogance. For through humility a person merits to Torah and is saved from afflictions that come upon him because of arrogance.

(Based on *Likutei Halachot, Orlah* 5:19)