



BETTER THAN A BUG?

Shabbos Parshas Tazria 5725*

When the Torah first speaks about *tumah* and *taharah*, is about the *tumah* conveyed by *sheratzim*—crawling creatures. Only afterwards does the Torah discuss the *tumah* conveyed by humans.

Surprisingly, *sheratzim* come first because on a deeper level they are considered superior to humans.

How so?

Animals cannot sin; they have no free choice. People, endowed with free choice by their Creator, can make the wrong choice. The fact that they have the **capability** of sinning places them lower than animals, which cannot sin.

In the beginning of Parshas Tazria, Rashi quotes Rebbi Simlai, who says that just as humans were created last—after the animals—so, too, their laws are taught after those relating to animals. Both are for the same reason: When a person does an *aveira*, he is reminded that “יתוש קדמך”, even the mosquito was created before you.¹”

An obvious question arises: Are people

really lower than mosquitos? After all, people’s shortcomings are restricted to their capabilities—their potential; they **can** sin while animals can’t. However, when it comes to what they are born with—their *yichus*—people have a clear advantage over animals; people have a *nefesh Elokis!* Clearly, people are superior! To this, Rebbi Simlai answers: “Yes, people have a *nefesh Elokis*, but this is not something people must work for or choose to attain; they are born with it. A person merely has better *yichus* than an animal.”

This is why it is specifically Rebbi Simlai who teaches us that animals come first. Rebbi Simlai famously had no *yichus* to speak of. He was a self-made man, and his teachings reflect that. He emphasizes not what a person is born with, but what he can accomplish.

Yes, says Rebbi Simlai, a person has more room for growth but until he realizes that potential, “even the mosquito was created before you.”²”