Vayikra 2016

1.

Achdus

“A person when he brings a Korban.” (1, 2)

The Gemara in Yevamos (61a) states Jews are called adam (a person) but goyim (gentiles) are not called adam. What is the simple explanation of this seemingly racists Gemara? Furthermore, how could we make this parsha applicable?

Rav Moshe Shternbach (Taam V’daas page 3) quotes Rav Moshe Shapiro who asks, why does the Gemara say you/אתם in the plural tense but then subsequently says adam/אדם which is in the singular tense? The explanation of this is every Jew needs to view himself as one part of the whole of the Jewish nation. Just like if we have a pain in one part of our body, that pain all over. So too the Jews, even though we are scattered all over the world, it is incumbent upon us to feel the pain of all the Jews. This is a reality. Dissimilarly regarding the goyim, they don’t have the same level of achdus (unity) of feeling each other’s pain as the Jews. **This is the explanation of the aforementioned Gemara we the Jews are like one due to our extreme and exalted level of unity. This is why we are called adam in the singular tense, because it is as if we are one.**

**The explanation of Achdus is to get everyone on the same page of learning Torah, performing mitzvos and serving Hashem properly. That’s when Moshiach will come.**

The trup on the word Adam is a rivei which looks like a diamond. A diamond has four sides. These corners allude to four corners of the world. This symbolizes even though we are located by one corner of the world, we must still be concerned about our fellow brothers and Jews at the other corners of the world.

2.

Derech eretz kadmah LaTorah

“Vayikra el Moshe.” “Hashem called out to Moshe.” (1, 1)

The Vayikra Raba (1, 15) states any talmid chacham (Torah scholar) that doesn’t have daas (knowledge (common sense, derech eretz (proper etiquette))) an animal corpse is better than him! The Tana Debi Eliyahu Raba (Perek 6) says an animal is better than him. The Vayikra Raba proves this from Moshe who was greater than all prophets and he took us out of Egypt and performed many miracles. He even went to Shamayim (heaven) to receive the Luchos. He also dealt with the building of the Mishkan. However he didn’t enter into the Ohel Moed until Hashem informed him that he could enter. The commentators on this Medrash explain; a chacham who doesn’t have daas is worse than a smelly corpse because his bad smell will emanate wherever he goes. Conversely, the smelly corpse only smells where it lies! Moshe didn’t enter into the Ohel moad until he was commanded because he had the proper derech eretz.

Rav Aharon Kutler (Mishnas Rebbi Aharon al Hatorah) says we learn from the aforementioned Medrash that not only is a person obligated to have derech eretz, but if there is a lack in his derech eretz then his Torah isn’t considered chashuv (important). His essence is additionally lacking and is null. **The explanation of /דרך ארץ קדמה לתורהproper etiquette precedes the Torah (Vayikra Raba (9, 3)) is; the Torah is only given to a person after he reaches a shelimos (completeness) in middos. Before this stage of a person having proper middos it’s not shayach (applicable) to tap into higher levels of learning.** That’s why sefer Bereishis precedes the other sefarim (books, such as Shemos) because sefer Bereishis discusses many concepts of derech eretz. This is also why there are not many mitzvos asei (positive) or lo sasses (negative) regarding derech eretz. It’s so pashut (obvious) that it doesn’t need to be commanded**. If a person doesn’t have derech eretz his Torah is like a golden rig in the nose of a pig that is rolling in mud!** A lack of derech eretz is even a bigger problem if it could lead to a chillul Hashem (desecration of God’s name)! (Yuma 81) The obligation to have good middos is more expected and incumbent upon someone who learns Torah than anyone else.

Why does the Vayikra Raba specifically say a talmid chacham who doesn’t have daas? Doesn’t everyone need daas? The answer is because his lack of daas is a much bigger blemish, bigger problem and a greater loss in comparison to anyone else. It’s a disgrace to the Torah and desecration of Hashem’s name. To the extent that if he doesn’t have daas his entire existence isn’t worthwhile and a carcass is better than him.

Is this applicable to us? Do we currently have someone who has the real caliber and knowledge of the talmid chacham that the Medrash is referring to? Yes, anyone who learns nowadays has a din (halachic status) of a talmid chacham! Anyone who learns nowadays is included in the category of the type of talmid chacham the Medrash is referring to. The more people are around this talmid chacham the more careful he must be. He must be more careful to have proper derech eretz because he can influence others to do good and conversely create a chillul Hashem!

The Mishna (Avos perik 3) states if there is no Torah there is no derech eretz and if someone doesn’t have derech eretz he has no Torah. It’s easy to understand the later part of the Mishna; because if someone doesn’t have derech eretz then he will not have Torah because proper etiquette precedes the Torah as explained above. What’s the explanation of the first part of the Mishna ‘if there is no Torah there is no derech eretz’? Aren’t there many Jews who (unfortunately) don’t learn and nevertheless have proper derech eretz? The answer is **there is only one way for us to completely cleanse ourselves and be totally scrupulous and careful to have proper derech eretz and middos. This is solely accomplished via learning Torah properly. Especially through learning Mussar Sefarim will our middos and derech eretz naturally change for the better.** With this we can answer the previous question. If there is no Torah there is no derech eretz means it is impossible for a person to have completely good derech eretz and proper middos if he isn’t learning properly. (**There are exceptions to this concept** of the only true way to have proper derech eretz and proper middos are via learning. **However this is the general rule.**)

Even so, we must realize that it is still very difficult to change our middos. Rav Yisrael Salanter said it’s harder to change one midah than it is to learn the entire Shas! We nevertheless should not give up on trying to refine ourselves and try fixing our middos because it is so difficult. One of the main purposes of our lives is to strive to perfect our middos! (Maggid speaks page 85)

The Mishna in Avos (perik alef) says make for you a Rebbi. The Mesivta (Avos, Yalkut beorim page 52) quotes the sefer Mussar Avos that before a person sins he should make himself into a Rabbi and say I’m an adam chashuv (important person) how can I sin? A proof to this point can be deduced from the Mishna in Pesachim (4, 5) a person should always make himself into a talmid chacham. A person should view himself as a great person and see how he impacts and affects others so he needs to act in a certain way! (Footnote 10) Rav Moshe Feinstein says we say in davening (ahava raba) we learn and teach. It’s easily understandable how everyone can learn, but how can everyone teach? Rav Moshe says we are really all teachers! Our actions teach! Reb Krohn (the footsteps of the Maggid (pages 158-159)) elaborates on this by means of an analogy of a pebble. Just like if someone throws a pebble on a river it will have a ripple effect, the effects of our good deeds and bad deeds spread far beyond the immediate arena. Now we can understand a deeper idea in another Mishna in Avos (perik 4) that says one mitzvah leads to another mitzvah and an aveira (sin) leads to another aveira. The Mishna isn’t merely informing us that the performance of one mitzvah mitigates the yeitzer hara (evil inclination) somewhat so that the performance of another mitzvah will be more easily forthcoming on the heels of the first one. Rather the Mishna is additionally saying that the performance of one mitzvah by one person will eventually lead to another person doing another mitzvah. Our actions effect everyone around us no matter where or who we are.

Rabbi Shimshon Pinkes (Tiferes Avos page 22) says the Shulchan Aruch teaches us the proper Halacha primarily regarding mitzvos between man and God (בין אדם למקום). Sometimes when it comes to mitzvahs between man and his friend (בין אדם לחבירו) a person may feel he doesn’t need to look at the Halacha. This is so false and can lead to many errors and strife!

Even though not all halachos between man and his friend are in Shulchan Aruch, the Mussar Sefarim are our Shulchan Aruch for bein adom l’chaveiro (man and his friend)!

It is related in the biography of **Rav Pam** (Rav Pam page 330) that he **would have a paper with him which he wrote a statement of the Gra** (Even Shlomo Perek 1) that **‘the main avoda (service) in this world is to fix ones middos, if not why is he alive!’** Rav Pam explains that it is worthwhile to constantly review this statement because every time one sees this statement, it brings new chizuk (strengthening of the spirit). **This was found 18 months before Rav Pam Zt’l passing. Even at this point in Rav Pam’s life he felt that he needed chizuk with regard to middos. What should we say about ourselves!**

Thank you Yair Moshe Ausabel for typing this up.