

PARSHAS VAYIKRA: ONE FOR ALL

by Rabbi Yaakov Horowitz

Back in the early years of your elementary school experience, you undoubtedly learned about the singular and plural forms of expression. When grading your papers, teachers would invariably correct any sentences where singular and plural words were inappropriately blended. (An example of an incorrect merge would be, "I spoke to a men".) Certainly in our Torah where every word is so carefully written, there must be a distinct message if we were to find a pasuk that begins in the singular mode and switches to a plural expression.

We find a pasuk with these two forms of expression in the very beginning of Parshas Vayikrah, as Hashem instructs Moshe and the Bnei Yisroel about the halachos pertaining to korbonos. "Adam ki yakriv michem korban ... takrivu es korbanchem - When a man among you brings an offering ... shall you bring your offering (Vayikrah 1:2)" In this pasuk, the Torah moves from singular to plural without a clear reason for doing so, as the words indicate "Adam [singular] ki yakriv [singular] michem korban ... takrivu [plural] es korbanchem [plural].

Rashi offers an explanation for the blend of expressions in this pasuk. He maintains that the Torah is informing us that although bringing a korban is intended to be an individual expression of devotion to Hashem, it is permissible and proper for several individuals to pool their resources and collectively offer a sacrifice to Hashem. To illustrate this point, the Torah begins in the singular, as it is the usual practice to bring a korban individually. Then, the Torah switches over to plural form to indicate that a korban can also be presented as a joint contribution.

Giving of Ourselves

I would like to suggest an alternative explanation for the switch to the plural form. My chaver Mark Grunwald often mentions that the three pillars that support the world -Torah, avodah, and gemilus chasadim (learning Torah, serving Hashem through prayer, and committing acts of kindness, see Avos 1:2) cannot be 'outsourced' to others. In order to bring spirituality to our lives and fulfill our mission in this world, we must engage in these mitzvos ourselves.

Bringing a korban is a very important and meaningful mitzvah. In the broad scheme of things, however, it is only one component of our overall service to Hashem. Our ultimate goal is to give of ourselves - to dedicate our passion and creative energy to Torah, avodah and gemilus chasasdim.

My great rebbi, Rav Pam z'tl, always encouraged us to contribute our time and energy to help others. He often asked us to donate ten percent of our time to help weaker classmates, as he

maintained that we should give ma'asar (one tenth) from all the gifts that Hashem gave us. My rebbi would tell us that helping our classmates with their work was not to be viewed as bitul Torah (spending time unproductively), but rather as an integral part of our growth as b'nei Torah and contributing members of K'lal Yisroel.

Perhaps this is the poignant message of the duality of the singular and plural forms of expression. As we begin discussing the topic of korbonos in sefer Vayikrah, we are informed at the onset, "Adam ki yakriv mi'chem." The Torah is teaching us that a person must give of him or herself. This quintessential form of service to Hashem is personal and all encompassing. It speaks to the notion that each of us need to devote ourselves to the service of Hashem. Once we are introduced to theme of personal sacrifice, we then move on to the topic of korbanos, which can and often should be brought as part of a group - as the pasuk continues, "Min habehemah ... takrivu es korbanchem."

Best wishes for a Gutten Shabbos

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