

PARASHAS MATTOS

1. The Sanctity of the Sages' Words

וידבר משה אל ראשי המטות לבני ישראל לאמר זה הדבר אשר צוה ה'

Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes of the Children of Israel, to say: This is the thing that Hashem has commanded (30:2).

While the simple meaning of the phrase, וידבר משה אל ראשי המטות לבני ישראל, is *Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes of the Children of Israel*, this phrase can also be interpreted as: *Moshe spoke about the heads of the tribes to the Children of Israel*. [The term אָל can mean *about*, as in *Shemos* 6:13; see *Rashi* there.] What did Moshe tell the Children of Israel about the heads of their tribes? ה' לאמר זה הדבר אשר צוה ה', [You are] to say: *This is the thing that Hashem has commanded*. I.e., when a Torah leader issues a ruling or gives an instruction, your attitude should be "This is the Word of Hashem" coming from the mouth of the Sage. It is indeed so, for the shepherds of Hashem's flock merit to have *Ruach Hakodesh*, the Spirit of Holiness, speaking from within them (*Chasam Sofer al HaTorah*, p. 146ב א משה וידבר ה' (ד"ה וידבר משה א

2. The Sanctity of Man's Word

זה הדבר אשר צוה ה' איש כי ידור נדר לה' וגו' ככל היוצא מפיו יעשה

This is the thing that Hashem has commanded. If a man will take a vow to Hashem ... in accordance with whatever emerges from his mouth shall he do (30:2-3).

Why does Moshe introduce this mitzvah with the words ה' זה הדבר אשר צוה ה', *This is the thing that Hashem has commanded*? After all, Hashem commanded us about *all*

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the mitzvos of the Torah! There is, however, an allusion in these words that applies specifically to *nedarim* (vows), as follows:

What is the benefit of taking a vow that forbids oneself something which the Torah permits? The Mishnah teaches (*Avos* 3:17): נדרים סייג לפרישות, *nedarim are a protective fence for abstinence*. When a person wishes to elevate himself spiritually by abstaining from some form of material indulgence, but feels he is not strong enough to withstand temptation, he may undertake a *neder* that will *obligate* him to abide by his resolution. This type of *neder* is praiseworthy, and is the subject of our passage [as the verse says, איש כי ידור נדר לה', *If a man will take a vow "to Hashem"*].

When a man takes a vow with this good intention, he may rest assured that Hashem is guiding him. Indeed, whenever a person expresses a worthy thought, the words emerging from his mouth are driven by Hashem, as it is stated (*Mishlei* 16:1), לאדם מערכי לב ומה' מענה לשון, *Man can arrange feelings, but eloquent speech comes from Hashem*. Thus, a person may decide in his heart to seek spiritual elevation through abstinence from some form of pleasure, and when he then expresses his inner wish in the form of a *neder*, it is actually Hashem Who places the words in his mouth.

This is alluded to in the words, בכל היוצא מפיו יעשה. The simple meaning is *in accordance with whatever emerges from his (the person's) mouth shall he do*. But since the previous verse mentioned Hashem, this phrase can also be interpreted to mean: *in accordance with whatever emerges from His (Hashem's) mouth shall he do*. The words of the *neder* that emerge from the person's mouth actually originate from *Hashem's* mouth, for it is He Who places those words in the mouth of the one whose heart inspired him to climb to a higher spiritual level.

We can now explain Moshe's introductory words, 'זה הדבר אשר צוה ה', *This is the thing that Hashem has commanded*. *Rashi* notes that most prophets would say, כה אמר,

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ה', "So" says Hashem, which means that the prophet is conveying his own understanding of Hashem's Word. Only Moshe was able to say, 'זה הדבר אשר צוה ה', "This" is the thing that Hashem has commanded, meaning "This is precisely what Hashem commanded." That is because Moshe was on the highest level of prophecy, at which שכונה מדברת מתוך גרונו, *The Shechinah would speak from within his throat*. When Moshe uttered prophecies, it was Hashem's Word itself emanating from his mouth.

Of course, we are not on Moshe's level. But the fact that the *Shechinah* spoke from within Moshe should be a lesson to us that it is *possible* for Hashem to let his Word emerge from the mouth of a human being. This makes us realize that when we utter a *neder* for the sake of spiritual growth, it is Hashem Who places the words of the *neder* in our mouth, for each person according to his own level. As the verse states (ibid.), לאדם לשון מענה לשון, *Man can arrange feelings, but eloquent speech comes from Hashem*. We may thus be confident that any *neder* taken for the sake of Heaven is guided by Hashem (*Chasam Sofer al HaTorah*, p. 147 ב'ד"ה זה הדבר).

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