

Insights from the Meshech Chochma

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פְּרָשַׁת צוֹ תִּשְׁפֹּׁ

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וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל הָעֵדָה זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת. (פרק ח' ה')

Moshe said to the assembly, "This is the thing that Hashem commanded to be done."

Our pasuk is positioned at the beginning of the narrative of the inauguration and sanctification of Aaron and his sons as Kohanim. The perek begins with Hashem telling Moshe to "take Aaron and his sons with him... Gather the entire assembly to the entrance of the Ohel Moeid. And Moshe did as Hashem commanded him; and the assembly was gathered on the entrance of the Ohel Moeid." Our pasuk's phrase לַעֲשׂוֹת אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' is Moshe's dramatic opening statement regarding the consecration-this is what Hashem wants done-but, and Rashi is bothered by this, he does not relate to them what that directive was, as the next pasuk, וַיִּקְרַב מֹשֶׁה אֶת אַהֲרֹן וְאֶת בְּנָיו וַיִּרְחֹץ אֹתָם בַּמַּיִם / *Moses brought Aaron and his sons forward and he immersed them in water*-introduces the inauguration service? Rashi answers that זֶה הַדְּבָר is actually a disclaimer i.e., "All the things that you will see me perform before you, HKBH commanded me to do. Do not say that for my own honor and for the honor of my brother I am acting." Both the Ohr HaChaim and Sifsei Chachomim similarly elaborate that Moshe informed the people of what Hashem had said so that they would not register a protest later claiming he had made all these appointments of his own accord. Seeing that the Torah reported here that everything that was done was at the request of Hashem, Korach had no basis for the claim that he had acted "innocently" when he contested Aaron's position, for he also was present at *this* time and had not challenged Moshe when the latter presented these appointments as having been made at Hashem's direct command. According to Rashi, וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה, Moshe was basically telling the people, "לַעֲשׂוֹת אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' everything you will see me do is 'עַל פִּי ה'."

Rav Meir Simcha presents another approach to this pasuk, based on a question/answer from R' Yochanan in the name of R' Shimon ben Yochai in יומא ה': "From where is it derived שְׂאֵף נִשְׂאָף that also the reading of the Torah portion is essential? It is from (our) pasuk which states, וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל הָעֵדָה זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת. This implies that the speech is also essential." What does this even mean? Rashi there explains that in our Parsha we read that on the twenty-third day of Adar, the onset of the seven days of the מִילוּאִים, Moshe gathered the entire *Klal Yisrael* and told them הַדְּבָר זֶה. R' Shimon ben Yochai had the same issue with these words as Rashi struggled with here i.e., after Moshe told the people הַדְּבָר זֶה, we would expect him to follow with a message from Hashem-what is the *this*? Yet the Torah does not go on to record that Moshe told the *Bnei Yisrael* anything? R' Shimon ben Yochai therefore expounds the pasuk to mean that before commencing the מִילוּאִים ceremony, Moshe read to them all the step-by-step instructions recorded in פְּרָשַׁת תְּצַוֶּה which he had received regarding

this ceremony. And had he not done that, R' Shimon ben Yochai asserts, the מילואים ceremony would have been invalidated! From where did he see this?

Continues Rav Meir Simcha: The opening pasuk of this perek also bothers him. וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לְאָמֹר / Hashem said to Moshe, saying. He contends that וַיְדַבֵּר ה'... לְאָמֹר usually means that Hashem told Moshe to tell the people *something*. And yet here, the pesukim continue to relay commands, as mentioned earlier, given by Hashem to *only* Moshe: *Take Aaron and his sons with him and the garments, and the anointing oil, and the bull of sin-offering, and the two rams, and the basket of matzos.* Rav Meir Simcha therefore proposes that what Hashem wanted Moshe to tell the people *now* was the entire המילואים פְּרָשָׁה that he heard back in תְּצַוֶּה. וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל הַעֲדָה זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה, וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לְאָמֹר. is Hashem telling Moshe to tell them *that* Parsha which Hashem told him earlier. Rav Meir Simcha understands our pasuk, וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל הַעֲדָה זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה, as the Torah using הַדְּבָר as the short form for the *entire* פְּרָשָׁה מִלִּלְוִיָּם from תְּצַוֶּה and that on the opening day of the inauguration-the twenty-third of Adar-Moshe told them ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה i.e., all that Hashem told *him* to do back then. If Hashem commanded Moshe to repeat the פְּרָשָׁה מִלִּלְוִיָּם on the opening day of the inauguration then certainly R' Shimon ben Yochai can conclude נִשְׁאַף מִקְרָא פְּרָשָׁה מֵעַבֵּב i.e., that had Moshe not read it, the service would be invalidated!

Consistent with his style throughout Sefer Meshech Chochma, this is yet another brilliant example of Rav Meir Simcha's connecting an esoteric חז"ל מֵאָמֵר to a שִׁבְכָתֵב source, thereby giving us a refreshingly original approach to the נְשִׁיטוֹ שֶׁל מִקְרָא.

לזכר נשמת אבי מורי ר' ישראל מנחם בן ר' שלום ז"ל
לזכר נשמת אמי מורתי רחל בת ר' אלחנן אביגדור ע"ה
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