

Before the inauguration and initiation of Aharon and his sons into the service of the Mishkan, Moshe makes the following declaration to the entire nation:

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל הָעֵדָה זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת:

And Moshe said to the community: This is the thing the Lord has commanded to do.

Rashi is bothered by the word this - זה. As the dictionary states, “this” is a word that refers to “the person, thing, or idea that is present or near in place, time, or thought or that has just been mentioned.” What exactly is Moshe referring to when he uses this word?

Rashi explains that זה refers to the following:

זֶה הַדְּבָר: דְּבָרִים שֶׁתִּרְאוּ שְׂאֵנִי עוֹשֶׂה לְפָנֵיכֶם צוֹנֵי הַקֶּב"ה לַעֲשׂוֹת

This is the thing [the Lord has commanded to do]: *[Moses said to Israel:] The things you will see me doing before you, have all been commanded to me by the Holy One, blessed is He, that they be done*

According to Rashi, “this” refers to all the aspects of the upcoming initiation ceremony, which Moshe will soon perform on his brother and nephews. This event and all the details were commanded by G-d.

Why does Moshe need to defend his actions and say that this process was a command from G-d? The day was the 23rd of Adar, slightly more than 11 months after Moshe took the people out of Egypt. After witnessing Moshe’s close relationship with G-d and his recent intervention on behalf of the people after the Golden Calf, did the people think that Moshe was acting on his own and making up his own laws regarding inaugurating the Mishkan and the Kohanim serving inside?

Rashi continues and says that, indeed, Moshe was addressing the people who thought that Moshe was coming up with his own ideas, and was actually out for his own honor and the honor of his family. Moshe therefore said to those people:

וְאַל תֹּאמְרוּ לְכַבּוּדִי וּלְכַבּוּד אֶחָי אֲנִי עוֹשֶׂה.

so do not say that I am doing them for my own honor or for my brother’s honor!

Rather, anything he was about to perform was because G-d commanded it to be.

It’s almost mind-boggling to think that there were people who thought that the “humblest of all men” was making up new laws in order to satisfy his ego. The truth is, though, as the Ohr HaChayim states, that a few months after this incident, Korach and his followers rebelled against Moshe and Aharon with the claim that the two of them were taking all the glory and honor for themselves by appointing themselves as leaders. It seems from this *pasuk* that these thoughts about Moshe and Aharon were percolating even before Korach’s rebellion.

Alternatively, as the RaDbam (Rav Dov ben Mordechai Huff, Shlita) explains, Moshe was teaching the people that this is the level of *kavod* that G-d demands when we approach Him. Moshe was expressing that all of this pomp and circumstance was not because of Moshe and Aharon; rather it was to ingrain in the people, over the course of seven days, that when one is coming close to G-d there is a high degree of *kavod* one must have for that encounter. The Ohr HaChayim writes that this was also demonstrated by the washing of the hands and feet and immersing in the *mikvah* which preceded the service. All of these actions were done solely to give honor to G-d, and no one else.

Questions to consider:

1. What was motivating the people to think negatively about Moshe and Aharon? Why would they think that the two of them were out for their own honor and glory, to the extent that they were making up their own ideas and *halachot*?
2. What do you do in order to show honor to G-d before approaching Him in *tefilla* or performing *mitzvot*?