

D'var Torah by Rabbi M. Jaroslawicz for Parshas Matos/Maasei 5775 (2015)

This week's double Parsha, Mattos/Masei, begins with the following Passuk:

"Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes of the Children of Israel, saying, 'This is the matter that Hashem has commanded: If a man takes a vow to Hashem or swears an oath to prohibit a prohibition upon himself, he shall not profane his word; according to whatever comes from his mouth shall he do.'"

Many are troubled by this introduction of Moshe to the tribal heads. Nowhere else in the Torah do we see Moshe giving a command that was not preceded by, "And Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying." This Parsha just begins with Moshe speaking to the heads of the tribes -- without any indication whatsoever that he was told to do so.

I would venture to add a stronger insight. The word, "laimor" ["saying"], is in essence a "permit" for Moshe to repeat to the Children of Israel that which he is being told by Hashem. We call it a "Mahtir." Had the Torah just said, "Vayidahbeir Hashem el Moshe," without adding the word "laimor," Moshe would have been forbidden from sharing with anybody that which Hashem had just told to him.

In our Parsha we see no such Mahtir. Why doesn't the Torah begin with that all-too-familiar introduction of, "And Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying, if a man makes a vow to Hashem...."

The "Mai Hashi'luach" offers the following answer.

All of the Mitzvos in the Torah are commandments that are constantly applicable. However, making a "VOW" comes from an awareness initiated in one's own heart. A person is imbued with an inner knowledge that, at this moment in time, he or she needs to take upon themselves this "vow", the restriction which after being implemented will be gone forever.

It is because of this that the Torah does not say, "And Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying."

This is not a situation where Hashem makes something "Assur"(impermissible). A "vow" is self-imposed. An action initiated by us to fortify our Avodah and focus to Hashem.

There are times in a person's life when they have to voice their opinions and take a stand to secure their beliefs. Individual people will undertake different issues and values to champion. Ultimately, the desire to openly express one's feelings must come from within their own heart, if and when they are ready to do so, and not be imposed upon them by others.

This past week, we were presented with a "deal" signed by the United States and Iran. This is a deal that has come under much scrutiny and has been accompanied by much controversy. For many of us the main issue of concern is how this "deal" affects Israel and the Jewish people all over the world.

As the Rov of our Shul, I feel that it is my obligation to share with the membership the concerns of the Jewish organizations to which we belong and other institutions that share similar opinions.

I AM NOT TAKING A POLITICAL POSITION. I am simply stressing the importance of everybody's need to make themselves aware of all of the issues involved and then to take a stance based on those feelings. For or against, that is your right and that is your choice. I do not have to agree with your opinion and you do not have to agree with mine.

However, if this is, indeed, an issue that touches your heart as strongly as it does mine, NOW is the time to make your "VOW."

Go hear the issues being presented by our colleagues at BRS this Sunday. Get the phone numbers of those to whom you can call or write and make a difference. This is not an issue that should be debated and argued about in Shul. Use that same energy and voice your opinion in a place where it can make a difference.

A vow to act must come from within your heart. If you "feel" it, then do something about it.

May Hashem guide our leaders to have the necessary wisdom to make the right decisions that will protect our land and our people.

Have a good Shabbos.