

Hashem instructs Moshe to give over instruction to the kohanim.

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אָמַר אֶל־הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם לִנְפֹשׁ לֹא־יִטְמָא בְּעַמִּיו:

“And Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Speak [deferentially] to the Kohanim sons of Aharon, and say to them, “You shall not contaminate yourself for any in his nation.”’” (Vayikra 21:1).

Simply, this pasuk is telling kohanim not to become ritually unclean – *tummeh* – for any other in his nation – his kin. The exceptions are in the next pasuk (the seven close relatives). The focus of this pasuk, though is in the beginning. *Speak to the Kohanim*. Moshe is commanded to speak to them. דַּבֵּר and not אָמַר. There is a difference between the two. The former is a softer, more respectful way of talking. It is conversational and with deference. The latter is more direct. Why is Hashem instructing Moshe to use this term now?

The answer is, Moshe could not longer talk directly at the Kohanim. They now outrank him. Moshe was the Kohen Gadol for the inauguration of the Mishkan and its ordination week. Then Aharon and his sons took over. Moshe could not even enter the Ohel Moed anymore. He had to talk to Hashem from the entrance, hearing Hashem from within. The inner Mishkan – *kodesh* and *kodesh kadashim* – was now the domain of the Kohanim exclusively. Now, the Kohanim outranked Moshe. From hereon out he no longer “spoke” to Aharon or his sons. He “said” to them.

There are times when Hashem still says, דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר “Speak to Aharon, saying.” (Ibid 21:17). However, the two terms are synonymous. Hashem commanding *daber* and Moshe using *emor* is a complete following of the instructions. The difference is just how it is said. Hashem is telling Moshe to speak to Aharon and Moshe is doing it differentially. The terms being synonymous is derived from דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל־בְּנָיו וְאֶל־כָּל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם “Speak to Aharon and his sons and to all Bnei Yisroel and say to them.” (Ibid 22:18). *Speak to them* is the same as *say to them*. Hashem commands Moshe to *speak* and he *says*. This is also repeated in *ibid* 17:2. Another pair or pesukim also allude to this. דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל־בְּנָיו “Speak to Aharon and his sons” about being scrupulous in tallying donations. (Ibid 22:2). The command finishes with אָמַר אֲלֵהֶם “Say to them.” (Ibid 22:3).

Moshe did *speak* to Aharon previously. He spoke to him regarding *this is the law of the expiation offerings*. (Ibid 6:18). When finalizing their ordination it says, וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה “And Moshe spoke to Aharon and to Elazar and to Itamar.” (Ibid 10:12). This was *post* the death of Nadav and Avihu. Therefore, it was after the ordination. How was Moshe allowed to *speak* to them? This was because he had to

complete the ordination with the two other sons that took over. The pasuk refers to the left over *mincha* offerings – a final instruction.

Later – also after the death of Nadav and Avihu – it says, דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן אָחִיךָ “Speak to Aharon, your brother.” (Ibid 16:2). The allowance for *daber* is because it is Moshe’s brother. Still, it does not record that Moshe actually *spoke* or *said* to Aharon so it is safe to derive that Moshe ultimately *said* the instructions to Aharon. Just like it is made clear, דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל־בָּנָיו וְאֶל־כָּל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם “Speak to Aharon and his sons and all of Bnei Yisroel and say to them.” (Ibid 17:2). Speak is synonymous with saying. The possible allowance of *daber* is because Moshe was talking as a brother – comforting his brother who just lost his sons. This added on instruction about the Yom Kippur service is tied into the ordination.

When instructing Aharon about how to bless the nation, it says דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל־בָּנָיו לאמר “Speak to Aharon and his sons, saying.” (Bamidbar 6:23). However, this refers back to וַיָּבֹאוּ מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶל־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וַיִּצְאוּ וַיְבָרְכוּ אֶת־הָעָם “And Moshe and Aharon came to the Ohel Moed (Mishkan) and they then went out and blessed the people.” (Vayikra 9:23). Therefore, at that point, Moshe was still teaching Aharon, as it took place during ordination week. After ordination week he never “spoke to him” again. From then on, it was “Moshe said to Aharon.”

There is a third type of command, and that is צַו. There is one instance where Moshe is said to use this. צַו אֶת־אַהֲרֹן “Command Aharon.” (Ibid 6:2). This is prior to Aharon taking over and becoming the kohen. This is not used anywhere else in the Torah. Moshe uses *said* instead. אָמַר אֶל־אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן־אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן “Say to Elazar son of Aharon the Kohen.” (Bamidbar 17:2). This was an order to remove the firepans. When commanding Aharon it says, וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־אַהֲרֹן “And Moshe said to Aharon.” (Ibid 17:11). This was a command to take the firepans and put them on the mizbeach. Also, when conducting the makos, Moshe only “said” to Aharon. (Shmos 7:9, 19). There, Moshe and Aharon were equals in being Hashem’s messengers to carry out the makos. Moshe was deferential to Aharon when they were equals or Aharon outranked him. That is why here, Hashem says to Moshe to “say” because Aharon and the Kohanim now outranked him.