

Above and Below United

In Parshas Yisro, we read the Ten Commandments (*Aseres Hadibros*), which begins with, “And G-d spoke [*Vayedaber*] all these words, to say [*laimor*]...”¹ Usually, when it says *laimor*, it means that it should be repeated to the Jewish People, or to later generations. However, at the giving of the Ten Commandments, all of the Jewish People were present, even the souls of all later generations.² So, what is the meaning of the word *laimor* in this verse?

The Maggid of Mezritch says that it means that we have to put the *Vayedaber* into *laimor* – we have to put the *Aseres Hadibros*, the Ten Commandments, which means the Torah, into the *Asara Maamaros*, the Ten Sayings with which Hashem created the world.

In other words, don’t make the mistake of thinking that the Torah and the world are separate domains. Don’t say, “when I am doing Jewish things, like praying, studying Torah, doing Mitzvos, etc., then I will do as the Torah dictates, but when I am doing worldly things – eating, drinking, business, etc. – I will act as the world dictates.” Hashem wants us to bring our Torah way into worldly affairs, that we should eat, drink and do business the way the Torah wants us to. Even when we talk, it should be apparent that Torah is our way of life.

The Midrash³ tells us that when Hashem gave us the Torah on Mount Sinai, the decree that what is above can’t come below and what is below can’t go above was abolished. Our forefathers studied Torah and did Mitzvos even before the giving of the Torah, but their Mitzvos didn’t affect the physical world, imbuing the physical with holiness – above and below didn’t mix.

All this changed with the giving of the Torah. Now we can infuse the physical with holiness, the mundane and the holy become one.

This is clear from the Ten Commandments themselves. Of all of the 613 commandments that Hashem gave us, He chose to give these ten to us personally, to every Jewish person. One would think that He would have chosen the most spiritually sublime ideas to tell us, and while He did say, “I Am the Lord your G-d,”⁴ and “You shall not have any god before Me,”⁵ which are holy and sublime ideas, it also has, “You shall not murder,”⁶ and “you shall not steal,”⁷ which are the most basic physical no-nos. Even if Hashem wouldn’t tell us these, we would understand that they are wrong.

The fact that Hashem juxtaposes the oneness of G-d together with not murdering and not stealing shows that He wants us to fuse the physical and the spiritual. This works both ways: that which is above comes below and that which is below goes above, as will be explained.

Murder and stealing are wrong, and all of us understand that, but we shouldn’t only keep laws like those because they make sense, we should keep them because of the “I am the Lord your G-d” that is hidden in these laws, meaning, because they are Hashem’s will. This should be the primary reason for keeping them. And the same is true for all the Torah laws that make sense, we should keep them because they are Hashem’s will. This is drawing what is above down below.

On the other hand, those who need commandments to tell them that murder and stealing are wrong, who need Hashem to say it with thunder and lightning, otherwise they wouldn’t get it, they, too, should contemplate on the greatness and oneness of Hashem. This is what is called below going above.

How do we bring the above and below – spiritual and physical – together? Through Mitzvos. Because the 613 commandments that we received at Sinai came from the essence of Hashem, as the

¹ Shemos, 20:1.

² Shemos Rabbah, 28:6.

³ Tanchuma, Vaera, 15.

⁴ Shemos, 20:2.

⁵ Shemos, 20:3.

⁶ Shemos, 20:13.

⁷ Ibid.

first word of the Ten Commandments is “Anochi” – “I Am,” which refers to Hashem’s essence, above all of Creation, both physical and spiritual. It is the part of Hashem that has no name and no description.⁸ Since it is above Creation, it can fuse opposites, above and below, spiritual and physical, together.

This is why our Mitzvos can do this, while our forefathers’ Mitzvos could not. Because with the giving of the Ten Commandments, our Mitzvos gained the power of “Anochi,” Hashem’s essence, which can bring opposites together.

Hashem did this because our essential purpose is to make this physical world into a dwelling place for Him. By infusing the physical world with holiness, we make it ready for Him to dwell in.

This is also hinted at in the first three words of the Ten Commandments, “Anochi Havaya Elokecha.”

The name Elokecha is from the same root as Elokim and Elokeinu. This is the only name of Hashem that is written in the plural,⁹ and it is the only name that is written in the possessive: *Elokecha*, *your* G-d, *Elokeinu*, *our* G-d, etc. This is because this name refers to how Hashem relates to the physical world, and it fills everything in nature with the specific amount of G-dliness it needs to exist. It is also the only name of Hashem that people can relate to somewhat,¹⁰ which is why we say it in the possessive, *Elokecha*, *your* G-d, *Elokeinu*, *our* G-d. This is the name that fills the physical world – it is below.

The name Havaya, on the other hand, surrounds the world; it is beyond any physical limitations. The “Shem Havaya” is an amalgamation of the words *hayah*, *hoveh* and *yehiyeh* (past, present and

future) combined in one word.¹¹ In other words, it is beyond space and time. It is above.

Anochi, as mentioned above, is the essence of Hashem, beyond all of existence, physical and spiritual, and therefore, it can unite opposites – Havaya and Elokecha, above and below – together.

¹²

May we be successful in bringing the two together through our Mitzvos, making this world into a dwelling for Hashem. This is the work that will bring Moshiach. May he come soon.

⁸ See *Likutei Torah*, Pinchas 80b; *Zohar* vol. 3, p. 11a.

⁹ It is written in the plural, but that doesn’t mean that there are more than one, as is explained in Talmud, Sanhedrin: It is like the sun shining in many windows... (Cited in Tanya, end of Chap. 35, p. 45b).

¹⁰ *Likutei Torah*, Balak 73b, Netzavim 53c.

¹¹ *Zohar* vol. 3, p. 257b. *Shaar Hayichud Vebaemuna*, Chap. 7.

¹² *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 1, pp. 148–149; vol. 3, pp. 887–892.