

# DIMENSIONS IN CHUMASH

## PARSHAS YISRO

### Postscript to the Aseres Hadibros – The Final Section of Parshas Yisro

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה כֹּה תֹאמַר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אַתֶּם רְאִיתֶם כִּי מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם דִּבַּרְתִּי עִמָּכֶם

*Hashem said to Moshe, "So shall you say to the Children of Israel, 'you have seen that I have spoken to you from heaven.'"*<sup>1</sup>

#### INTRODUCTION: WHAT DOES ONE SAY AFTER THE REVELATION AT SINAI?

Our parsha ends with Hashem commanding Moshe to address the people after the *Aseres Hadibros*, during which he presents them with a number of mitzvos:

1. Not to make images of celestial beings, or any graven images of silver and gold.<sup>2</sup>
2. Not to use a sword when fashioning the stones for the mizbeyach.<sup>3</sup>
3. Not to have steps leading up to the *mizbeyach*; instead, to have a ramp.<sup>4</sup>

This section is somewhat enigmatic. Why are these mitzvos specifically chosen to be communicated immediately following the revelation at Har Sinai? In what way do they form a fitting “post-script” to the epic event of hearing the *Aseres Hadibros*?

The commentators explain that with these mitzvos, Hashem was indicating to the people the full impact of what it means to receive the Torah. Let us consider, three of the *Aseres Hadibros* are the three prohibitions against idolatry, murder and adultery. These areas are not only elemental, they are actually already incumbent upon all human beings as three of the seven Noachide mitzvos! Why does Hashem address the His chosen people at Sinai with mitzvos that apply to everyone?

This is the background to the follow-up communication, where Moshe informs the people that part of being Jewish means that even these basic laws assume an infinitely higher level of observance and sensitivity. Not only are those sins themselves forbidden, they cannot exist *even in trace form*. When we

1 Shemos 20:19.

2 Verse 20.

3 Verse 22.

4 Verse 23.



inquired: “Where, may I ask, does the Torah prohibit such a thing?” The Alter replied: “The Torah forbids a person to dig a pit in the public thoroughfare, because passersby can fall in and be injured. The beis midrash is a public thoroughfare and your face is a pit, since people who look at you scowling instantly feel worse. What difference does it make if you damage someone’s arm or leg or you damage his mood?”

And so, Rashi concludes Parshas Yisro with a departure from his general sphere of comment, reminding us that the messages of Torah are communicated not only by the words it uses, but also by the mitzvos it commands.