

HaShem brings the Bnei Yisroel to Mount Sinai and He gives them His Torah. He begins the *Aseres Hadibros*, the Ten Utterings:

וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה לְאַמֵּר: {ס}

“And the Lord spoke all of These Words, saying.” (Shemos 20:1).

We note that it was not “HaShem” who said these words, but *Elokim*. Why did it not say “HaShem said these things,” especially since the next passuk says “I am HaShem”? (Ibid 20:2). Initially, it does not say HaShem spoke the *Aseres Hadibros* but “these things.” If *these things* or these words are the *Aseres Hadibros*, why not just say that?

Gemara Chagigah 3b says, *Lest a person say: Now, how can I study Talmud when it contains so many different opinions? The passuk states that they are all “given from one shepherd.” One leader, i.e., Moshe, said them from the mouth of the Master of all creation, Blessed be He, as it is written: “And the Lord spoke all these words” (Exodus 20:1).*

The Gemara means that plural form “words” indicates that the Lord transmitted all the interpretations of the Ten Commandments. Since the Chachomim invariably utilize the Torah itself or the statements of the prophets as the sources for their opinions, there is a certain unity to the study of Torah, despite the numerous explanations and applications.

Gemara Brochos 30a says, *When the Torah writes: ‘all of these words’ this is a reminder that one cannot accept Torah piecemeal. Anyone who accepts all of the Torah's commandments bar one is considered as having rejected the whole Torah.*

The Midrash says *The Lord spoke these words, the Judge who exacts punishments and gives reward.* (Mekhilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 20:1).

Rashi says, *The word Elokim is a term for a judge. Man is judged by the words in the Torah. This statement (that the Lord spoke all these words) tells us that the Holy One, Blessed be He, said all these words in one utterance, something that is impossible to a human being to do — to speak in this manner.*

Kli Yakar likewise points out, *That the term here is “vayidaber”. Daber is a harsher term and omer is a softer term. These words were spoken direct and harshly to show their seriousness, not to be taken lightly.*

Ohr HaChaim says, *Attributes of justice and mercy are here. Justice in our passuk and HaShem/mercy is used in the next passuk. The Torah was taught with both.*

Chizkuni says, *The reason for this introduction (our passuk) is that the Torah wishes to show that the Lord organizes His words just as human beings organize their words prior to expressing them to outsiders. The word: וַיְדַבֵּר here is to indicate that HaShem said these words to Himself, in a preparatory manner; subsequently, the word: לְאֶמֶר, refers to the final draft of this address by HaShem to the people. This is what is meant in Iyuv 28:27 “then He saw and gauged it; He measured it and probed it and said to man”. The Torah teaches what good manners are. It happened once to Rabbi Akiva in a shul (as Midrash Tanchuma brings on our passuk) that the Chachomim called upon him to read publicly from the Torah. He declined the honor. When his students asked him why he had declined, he answered them that he had declined to do so as he had not previously reviewed this particular portion and it would be an insult to the congregation to presume to read to them unprepared as he had been. He should have first gone over that text at least two or three times.*

We can leave the question about the practice of shnayim mikra v’achod targim and why Rabbi Akiva had not already reviewed the text, for our purposes.

Ibin Ezra has a beautiful piece whereby he brings up many questions and difficulties in how the Torah presents the Aseres Hadibros here and how it compares to how they are presented by Moshe in Devroim 5:6-18. *See there.*

Sforno says, *After Moshe had completed warning the people, the Lord proceeded to utter all these commandments, as we know from the testimony of Moshe later in Sefer Devorim 5:18 “all these words the Lord spoke to your assembled ranks from the Mountain”.*

Thus, it was the same day and it happened spontaneously, without prior warning. And HaShem spoke all of the mitzvos / commandments.

Ohr Chaim says, *Elokim is the same name that HaShem used when He created the world. He is now connecting himself to creation of the world. Just as many utterance of HaShem cannot be understood or need great study, so does creation and so does the Torah. Additionally, another meaning of the word לְאֶמֶר is that it refers to secondary messages not spelled out in the text of the actual Ten Dibros. Some of these were in the nature of general rules, others in the form of allusions.*

In our verse Elokim is used to unify the entire Torah as coming from HaShem. From the beginning of the Torah, as recorded, it uses the term Elokim as the creator of the universe. It is beyond the scope here, but *elokim* is a plural word. It may be mistakenly understood that many

gods created the world. The Bnei Yisroel, itself, in Mitzrayim, thought what was going on was a war between their god versus the Egyptian gods. As they understood the tradition, and certainly Pharaoh's understanding of the entire episode, was gods of Egypt versus the god of Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov. Pharaoh refused to acknowledge who Hashem was. "Who is HaShem?" (Shemos 5:2).

Now HaShem is saying, Elokim, the gods, is really *The Lord*. *Elokim said I am HaShem. The maker of the universe is revealing itself as HaShem and I, HaShem, am revealing myself as Elokim. I am one and the same.* All these aspects that HaShem has as Creator, driver of destiny, destroyer of foreign gods, is, fact, HaShem. If it merely said "HaShem said" it can be mistakenly taken as, *HaShem said these things but other gods may say different.*

Consequently, "I am HaShem, your Lord, who took you out of the Land of Egypt, from the house of slavery." (Ibid 20:2). This is then followed by "There shall be no other gods besides Me." (Ibid 20:3). This follows because HaShem revealed Himself as the one and only. How else can HaShem adjudicate that there be no other gods? Either there is or there isn't. The passuk doesn't say *do not follow other gods*. It says, "there shall be no other" / there are no others. How can there be others if they do not exist? As the next passuk tells us, "*do not make for yourself.*"

The Ibin Ezra asks, how can "I am Hashem" and "there shall not be other gods" be commandments or mitzvos? How does one fulfill these? So, the first two things that HaShem is telling us is what follows from our passuk. HaShem is the one and only, there are no others, the same Elokim that created the world is the HaShem that took Bnei Yisroel out of bondage. Do not create or believe in any other gods, as they do not exist; so, any other gods would simply be a human creation. Therefore, mitzvah one is *do not contradict the fact that HaShem/Elokim is one and the same and He took Bnei Yisroel out of bondage and is giving over His Torah*. Mitzvah two is *there shall not be in your heart or mind the existence of other gods. Do not create any others and don't believe that those created by others actually exist*. Therefore, saying or thinking *the gods of Egypt were real but HaShem is more powerful* violates these mitzvos. Even if not worshiping them but acknowledging that other gods exist violates the second Mitzvah and thinking HaShem has to compete with other gods violates the first Mitzvah. Obviously, saying *yitziyos mitzrayim never happened* also violates the first.

It says in our passuk *these things* or *these words* because these are not individual 'commandments' per se. They are chapters, sets of directions. These ten utterings encompass the

entire Torah. The entire Torah can be found in them. The concept that HaShem uttered them in one breath really means He uttered the entire Torah at once. It was all given through these words.

Proof of this is the ten breaks. The breaks in writing the *dibros* do not follow the individual commandments, but by the specific subject. They are really just ten breaks. *I am HaShem* and *do not create other gods* is in one break. Then *Do not raise up the name of HaShem* is by itself. Then the breaks follow Shabbos, Honoring parents; and then not to kill, commit adultery, steal or swear falsely. Coveting others and their belongings are broken up into two.

When we look carefully, we notice full (Ⓢ) and partial (Ⓣ) breaks. *I am HaShem, no other gods*, partial break. *Do not use My name in vain*, full break; end of section. *Shabbos*, partial break, *honoring parents*, partial, *don't kill*, partial, *don't commit adultery*, partial, *don't steal*, partial, *don't lie*, partial, *don't covet*, partial, *don't covet*, full; end of section.

HaShem spoke these things as He did the entire Torah, with breaks by subject. Multiple commandments can be comprised in one section and one idea can be broken up into multiples. If we look carefully, the entire Torah can be derived from within the words of these ten utterings. In Devorim when there are no full breaks (*see* Devoim 5:6-18) the partial breaks still follow the breaks here.

This also explains the discrepancy between our passuk and the Gemara in Makkos 24a that says the first two commandments were given by HaShem directly to the Bnei Yisroel and the final eight were given through Moshe. The Gemara homiletically uses the word “תּוֹרָה” and its gamatria (numerical value) of 611 to derive this. The Ibin Ezra, Ohr Chaim, Rabbeinu Bechaya, Kli Chizkuni, Daas Zekeinm, and others, point to the fact that the first two commandments are written in first person (‘I am’ and ‘me’) while the remaining eight are in third person. However, given our understanding of our passuk and how it relates to the first two mitzvos the change in tense follows the plain reading. *Elokim spoke all of These Words saying: (1) I am HaShem who took you out of Mitzrayim from the house of bondage. (2) There shall be no other gods to you besides Me.* This is the introduction. Without these two there is no Torah. One cannot keep the entire Torah without knowing it is from HaShem, the Creator and Redeemer; one cannot believe HaShem is the Creator and Redeemer and know there are no other gods, without then knowing the rest of the Torah is valid. That is why these two are in first

person while the rest are then written as every other mitzvah in the Torah is written, in third person¹ as they are mitzvos like every other that depend on these first two dibros.

Two more points. First, our passuk says “*all* the words.” Not just these words, but *all these words*. HaShem spoke to Bnei Yisroel himself, and the nation heard. It is not just these words that HaShem spoke but the entire Torah, all of it. Second, the word **כֹּל** usually precedes proper nouns. Here it precedes and qualifies “all These Words.” This is not just a few utterances. This is a proper noun that refers to chapters in HaShem’s Torah. All of it is to be heard and followed as all of it is from HaShem/Elokim.

¹ There are many examples of the Torah giving mitzvos and then saying “I am HaShem” mimicking these dibros. (see Devorim 18:5-6). Additionally, deriving fact from gematria is more homiletical than actual.

BONUS SHTIKEL

When did Yisro visit Moshe and the Bnei Yisroel encampment?

The passuk tells us, Yisro “heard all that HaShem had done for Moshe and for Israel, His people that HaShem had taken Israel out of Egypt.” (Shemos 18:1). Moshe then recounted to Yisro “all that HaShem had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians on account of Israel, and about all the hardships that had befallen them on the way, and HaShem saved them.” (Ibid 18:8). These two verses strongly connect the time that Yisro came as being close to the exodus from Mitzrayim. Moshe does not mention the Torah or Har Sinai, so it appears he came prior.

In strict chronological order, he came before the Revelation at Har Sinai. The Torah does not seem to have any motivation to go out of order at this point. Further, Yisro came with Moshe’s wife. (Ibid 18:2). This is important because Moshe later decrees that not only should there be a purity period prior to the Mount Sinai revelation (Ibid 19:10), but Moshe added that the men should separate from their wives. (Ibid 19:15). HaShem did not instruct this. Moshe would only add this if he, too, was going to separate. He could not separate if his wife was not already in the camp.

Others learn Yisro came after the Revelation. Their proof is that it tells us that Yisro’s advice was for Moshe to share the burden of adjudicating among the Bnei Yisroel. You “shall admonish them concerning the statutes and the teachings, and you shall make known to them the way they shall go and the deeds they shall do.” (Ibid 18:20). How can there be statutes and teachings prior to Har Sinai (other than Rosh Chodesh, Shabbos, and laws of Pesach)?

However, a closer look not only reveals when Yisro came but also the importance of *derech erez kodma l’Torah* (good deeds and the way of the world come prior to learning Torah).

The “next day” Yisro watched Moshe sit in adjudication. (Ibid 18:13). The word used is “תִּמְחַדָּה.” This word is used to indicate the very next day. Its importance here is the word’s use elsewhere. “And count for yourselves, the next day of Shabbos, from the day on which you bring the sheaf of elevation offering; you shall count off seven weeks. They must be complete.” (Vayikra 23:15). The same word is used to denote the days of sefira’s haOmer which occur between Pesach and Shavuos. This time period is prior to matan Torah.

Yisro was concerned that Moshe ‘judged’ the People all day, by himself. (Shemos 18:14). The Torah tells us what Moshe was adjudicating: “For the people come to me to seek the Lord.” (Ibid 18:15). Besides teaching of HaShem, “If any of them has a case, he comes to me, and I judge between a man and his neighbor, and I make known the statutes of HaShem and His teachings.” (Ibid 18:16). We see from here the ‘statutes’ and ‘teachings’ are the *way of HaShem*. It is not the specific laws and statutes to be taught later. Instead, it is all about interpersonal relationships. Moshe did not judge niddah laws or about korbonos or weights and measures; did not teach prohibitions like nazir, niddarim, or damages. He taught the Bnei Yisroel how to get along with each other and mimic the ways of HaShem.

In fact, the judges who Moshe chose to delegate to corroborate this. “You shall choose out of the entire nation men of substance, Lord fearers, men of truth, who hate monetary gain.” (Ibid 18:21). These criteria are not only for good judges, but for excellent judges when trying to teach the nation middos and the way of HaShem. Yisro did not suggest smart, wise, or clever men, nor men who can retain the entire Torah in their mind and apply it. He directed Moshe to choose men who themselves had good middos.

Moshe sat all day adjudicating and judging the middos of his fellows. It was interpersonal disputes. This way they can come to “know HaShem.” These must come prior to receiving the Torah.