

# Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Kedoshim 5784

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The Torah continues instruction on how Bnei Yisroel can attain holiness.

**דַבֵּר אֶל-כָּל-עֵדַת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם קְדוֹשִׁים תִּהְיוּ כִּי קָדוֹשׁ אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:**

“Speak to the entire congregation of Bnei Yisroel and say to them, ‘You shall be holy, because I, Hashem, your Lord, is holy.’” (Vayikra 19:2).

What is “kodesh” holy? What is its purpose (setting aside the lofty goals of tikun neshama)? Why do these statutes have the suffix of “I am Hashem, your Lord?” Is there a difference between the “I am Hashem” and “I am Hashem your Lord?” Also, why does the Torah use the word “adas - congregation” here?

Hashem had to teach Bnei Yisroel—who were leaving bondage and becoming a new people unto Him—how to be His people. Hashem could have just set laws and statutes in front of them and said, “obey.” However, human beings are imperfect, prone to self-motivation, and they need incentive. The Torah, too, was written for all time and, therefore, it was written with a set of incentives and motivations.

When Hashem introduced the first mitzvah to Bnei Yisroel while still in Eretz Mitzrayim—keeping the lunar calendar—the Torah does not tell Moshe and Aharon to repeat it to Bnei Yisroel. Instead, the Torah tells them to convey only that on the tenth of the month everyone shall take a lamb or kid. (Shmos 12:3). While they had to know how to calculate the month in order to know what day was the tenth, for the purposes of still being in the House of Labors, Bnei Yisroel did not need to be taught details on calendaring. They were told what was necessary for freedom. This evolved to when Hashem teaches them, generally, to keep His laws. “If you listen to the voice of Hashem, your Lord, and do what is straight in His eyes....no ailment that I put upon Egypt will come upon you, I am Hashem, your Healer.” (Ibid 15:26). The first motivation was Hashem is the Healer.

When introducing the ten utterances, Hashem said, “I am Hashem, your Lord, that took you out from the Country of Egypt from the House of Labors.” (Ibid 20:2). The motivation for the entire set of laws was the gratitude that seven weeks earlier Hashem took them out of their forced servitude.

A year later, with the Mishkan standing and service initiated, Bnei Yisroel could understand further motivations. They then could understand that like their holy Ohel Moed, they can achieve a higher level of existence. They can be holy. Now the motivation is, **וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת-חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת-מִשְׁפָּטַי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אִתְּם הָאֱלֹהִים וְתִי בְּהֵם אֲנִי ה':** “And guard My statutes and my ordinances, that by them man shall do and live, I am Hashem.” (Vayikra 18:5). This pasuk equates the Torah as a source for life. If a person follows the Torah, then Hashem will grant him life. Life is a powerful motivator. The people were ready for more, though.

Hashem elaborated on the rules of Shabbos to Moshe, during his first sojourn on Har Sinai. "You shall speak to Bnei Yisroel saying, 'Additionally, they shall guard My Shabbos, because it is a sign between Me and between them, for generations, so they shall always know I am Hashem, their sanctifier.'" (Shmos 31:13). Shabbos was given under the auspices of "I am Hashem...who took you out of Egypt." (Ibid 20:2). It is then given as a "sign" between Hashem and the people that Hashem sanctifies the people. Hashem is the source of something more elevated than a regular plane of existence.

Shabbos is also referenced twice in this parsha (segment). "A man shall fear his mother and his father, and My Shabbos you shall guard, I am Hashem, Your Lord." (Vayikra 19:3). Then the Torah says, "You shall guard my Shabbosos, and you shall venerate My sanctuary, I am Hashem." (Ibid 19:30). Why is Shabbos repeated and why is it paired with two different other laws (fearing parents and fearing the sanctuary) and why does one say "I am Hashem" while the other one says "I am Hashem, your Lord?"

There are many motivations made in the Torah. One is to keep the Torah lest Hashem spew Bnei Yisroel out of the Land. (Ibid 20:22). Others is to prevent civil or criminal punishments (e.g., ibid 20:27) or to prevent their souls being cut off (Shmos 12:15). Then there are a whole set of statues and laws that revolve around holiness. וְהִיָּתֶם לִי: "And you shall be to Me holy, because I, Hashem, am holy, and I separate you from the other nations of the world to be Mine." (Vayikra 20:26). It is a strong motivation to want to be Hashem's bechor or chosen nation; to be to the most powerful power – the king of kings – a holy people.

The Torah gives the proper motivation whenever it states its laws. The civil and criminal laws are self-explanatory. Many of the positive and other negative commandments are tied to a gratitude to Hashem for taking Bnei Yisroel out of Egypt and making them His nation. These laws are tied to Shabbos and the chagim (holidays). Then there are a whole bunch of laws that are discussed here, in connection to the Mishkan and holiness, where the sole motivation is to be holy. The Torah even gives a reason to be holy, because Hashem is holy. Hashem is holy and He wants to separate Bnei Yisroel from all other peoples.

These laws, that are tied to holiness, have the motivation of "I am Hashem" or "I am Hashem, your Lord" attached to them. This is because when they are between man and Hashem, alone, it says "I am Hashem." When it is between man's relationships with others, there is the addition of "your Lord." It is the same "your Lord" that took Bnei Yisroel out of Egypt, away from suffering under the thumb of man. כְּמַעֲשֵׂה אֲרָץ-מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר: "Like the conduct of Egyptians, among whom you dwelt, you shall not do." (Ibid 18:3). When dealing with others, Bnei Yisroel has to be better.

Holy, means to separate. It is to separate from the mundane and being creatures stuck in the mud they were made. There is a higher plane that man can reach. When dealing with Hashem and also with others, one can attain this lofty status. The first Shabbos here is connected to fearing one's parents. "I am Hashem, your Lord." Shabbos becomes a day to spend with family. The second one is connected to the sanctuary and "I am Hashem." It is a day to spend with Hashem. "Adas – congregation" in the Torah refers to Bnei Yisroel as a religious people. Thus, appealing to their holiness.