



RABBI SHALOM

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Postscript to the Aseret HaDibrot

At the end of Parshat Yitro we encounter three imperatives: (Shemot 20-20, 22, 23), each loosely translated below:

לֹא תַעֲשֶׂוּן אֱתֵי אֱלֹהֵי כֶסֶף וְאֱלֹהֵי זָהָב לֹא תַעֲשֶׂוּן לָכֶם:

Not to make images of celestial beings, nor any graven images of silver and gold.

וְאִם-מִזְבֵּחַ אֲבָנִים תַעֲשֶׂה-לִּי לֹא-תִבְנֶה אֶתְהָן גִּזְיֹת כִּי חֲרָבָה הַנִּפְתָּ עָלֶיהָ וְתַחֲלָלָהּ

Not to use a sword while fashioning the stones for the Mizbeiach.

וְלֹא-תַעֲלֶה בְמַעֲלֹת עַל-מִזְבְּחִי אֶשֶׁר לֹא-תִגְלָה עֲרוֹתְךָ עָלָיו

Not to have steps leading up to the Mizbeiach, but instead to have a ramp.

Following the revelation at Har Sinai and the experience of Matan Torah, the Torah lists the three mitzvot cited above. One would expect a depiction of more glamorous mitzvot. Perhaps the mitzva of לרער ואהבת לרער? In what way do the three prohibitions

listed above serve as a fitting postscript to the epic event of the Ten Commandments?

The three prohibitions listed above are actually included in the Aseret HaDibrot! The first relates to idolatry, the second to murder and the third to adultery. In fact, these are known as the “Big Three” upon which it is incumbent to sacrifice one’s life to avoid transgressing one of these cardinal sins. They are also all included in the שבע מצוות בני נח - three of the seven Noachide mitzvot. What is the purpose of their repetition at the end of the Parsha?

BROAD APPLICATION OF MITZVOT

Rabbi Immanuel Bernstein in his sefer *Dimensions in Chumash*, offers the following insight. These three mitzvot appear at the end of Parshat Yitro, following Ma’amad Har Sinai to underscore that not only are the actual acts themselves forbidden, **but they cannot even exist in trace form.**

- Not only is worshipping idols prohibited, even creating images of other celestial beings is not permitted.
- Not only is murder prohibited but anything connected to bloodshed is not to be associated with the Mikdash and so even the Mizbeiach cannot be constructed with a knife, which is a tool that can be deadly.
- Not only are certain physical relations prohibited, even engaging in a religious ceremony like ascending stairs to offer a sacrifice, can be perceived as immodest behavior if one’s body may become revealed while doing so. To avoid it, a ramp must be used.

Dedicated L'iluy Nishmat

ר' דוד מאיר בן ר' נתן ז"ל
Meyer Rich z"l

whose 13th Yahrtzeit is on **שבת כ"ד שבט**

Essentially, we are to understand that although many nations may abide by the Noachide principles, the Torah expands the breadth and depth of these edicts.

This applies to other laws as well. Stealing is not just taking something that does not belong to someone. The Torah extends it to forcing another to hand over an object against their will or depriving someone of sleep (גול שינה). We are held to a higher moral standard.

ETHICS FROM SINAI

Pirkei Avot opens with a statement משה רבינו "משה רבינו" to teach us that even the moral and ethical behavior discussed in Pirkei Avot was not "man-made", concocted by a group of Rabbis. Our moral compass is dictated by the Torah. As seen above, even what appears in the Torah may be more broadly applied. During the war in Gaza, we seek to distinguish between civilians and terrorists, risking the lives of our own soldiers, because we have a higher moral standard, set by a Higher Authority. When ethics are interpreted by man, they can become flawed. When dictated by God, they remain pure and authentic with wide reaching applications.

The repetition of the three mitzvot at the end of the parsha highlights the broader application of mitzvot. Each command should be viewed in a wider context. Rav Hai Gaon derived all 613 mitzvot from the 10 commandments. We should appreciate the unique nature of the Torah, see beyond its literal interpretation and fulfill the extensive application of all mitzvot. ■

Condolences to Akiva Andrews and family on the passing of his

FATHER ז"ל

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