## Appendix A The Introductory Verse to the Aseres Hadibros\*

וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֵת כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה לֵאמֹר And God spoke all the following words, to respond (Ex. 20:1)

## I. וַיִּדְבֶּר אֱלֹהִים - And God spoke.

Rashi, based on the Mechilta, comments on the words וְיָדְבֵּר אֱלֹהִים sollows: דיין. לפּי שיש פּרשיות בתורה שאם עשאן אדם מקבל שכר ואם לאו אינו מקבל עליהם פורענות יכול אף עשרת הדברות דיין. לפּי שיש פּרשיות בתורה שאם עשאן אדם מקבל שכר ואם לאו אינו מקבל עליהם פורענות יכול אף עשרת הדברות The word Elohim is the term for a judge. There are passages of the Torah that contain commandments for which one receives reward if he performs them, but if he does not, he does not receive punishment because of them. One might think that the Ten Commandments are also like this. To teach us otherwise, the Torah says, And God spoke, using the name Elohim, which indicates that He is a judge to inflict punishment (dayan lehipara) [for failure to keep the Ten Commandments].

Chazal have often discussed the distinction between the Shem Havayah and that of Elohim. Nachmanides on Leviticus 1:9 explains: שם מלא על עולם מלא, A complete Name for a complete world. The first chapter of Genesis contains the name Elohim exclusively, while the second chapter, which begins after the creation of man, contains the name Havayah Elohim. Nachmanides explains that as long as man was absent from the world, God acted through the attribute of Elohim. However, when creation was completed upon the emergence of man, God began to reveal himself, not only as Elohim, but as Havayah Elohim. When creation was complete, so was the Divine Name.

God's relationship to creation is a dual one: as *Elohim* and as *Havayah*. Nature, both inorganic and organic, is ruled by the attribute of *Elohim*. Man, who is endowed with logos and speech, is confronted not only by *Elohim*, but by *Havayah* as well.

El or Elohim have the connotation of either great might or of socio-political power—a judge, or a ruler. Rashi on Genesis 2:5 noted that both these aspects are represented by the name Elohim: בְּיוֹם עֲשׁוֹת יְהֹוֶה אֱלֹהִים אֶּרֶץ וְשְׁמִים-הויה הוא שמו, אלהים שהוא שליט ושופט על כל, On the day that Havayah Elohim made earth and heaven (Gen. 2:5): Havayah is the actual name. Elohim has the connotation of both a ruler [shalit] and judge [shofeit] over all. The name Elohim symbolizes two orders: the cosmic order (Elohim shalit) and the socio-political order (Elohim shofeit).

Elohim represents causality, the general principle governing the cosmic drama, in which God is the creator and ruler of the cosmos. In cosmic space, in the cosmic dynamics, in the boundless reservoir of physical energy, in the natural drama, in the might and grandeur of the universe, one discovers the fingerprints of Elohim. In this context, Elohim is the legislator of the natural law or of the mathematical equations which rule all cosmic phenomena and all cosmic events. Elohim reveals Himself through the totality of the causal nexus as

<sup>\*</sup> Based on a shiur by the Rav presented in June 1972, transcribed by B. David Schreiber in *Noraos Harav*, Volume 5, pp. 1-46.

well as through individual events. What is the natural law about which physics speaks, or chemistry, or biology, if not the expression of God's primordial will which has been embedded in organic and inorganic matter? What is the fall of the stone, the roar of the sea, the flight of the bird, the circular motion of the insect around an electric bulb on a warm summer night, the movement of a finger, or one's urge for food, if not the manifestation of God's penetration into the depths of nature?

One can violate not only the moral law or the religious law, but the natural law as well. Violation of the natural law always results in catastrophe. Rebellion against the rule of *Elohim*, expressing itself with a causal link to the dynamics of organic and inorganic matter, ends necessarily in disaster. For example, defiance of the law of gravitation, by leaping from the tenth floor to the sidewalk, will inevitably destroy human life. A diabetic who neglects to observe a sugar-free diet will shorten his life. An alcoholic will ultimately develop a disease such as cirrhosis of the liver which will end his life tragically. God does not tolerate violators and transgressors of the natural law which He has established for the cosmos and man alike.

Cultural decadence is characteristic of a tired, frustrated society which is over-ambitious and overzealous in its attempts to reach the impossible, standing on the brink of disaster as it tries to violate the natural law. Such decadence expresses itself in a tendency, a quest, a compulsive drive to defy the natural order—and to defy the authority of the One who has decreed that natural order. People try to defy both the moral law and the cosmic law. Who pollutes the air? Who pollutes the water? Modern, technologically minded man, striving for power, for absolute control over his environment. Man who defies natural law.

From a theological viewpoint, this decadence originates with man's defiance of God's authority. It is a rebellion against the *Ribbono shel Olam*. Such a rebellion which tries to change the natural law, the natural cause of events and things, must end in disaster. If one tries to interfere with the authority of *Elohim* as expressed throughout the cosmic fabric of events and phenomena, *dayan lehipara*—a very strict judge will exact punishment.

The natural law is an existential law. Man cannot reject it without destroying himself. He either accepts the natural law, or causes the termination of his own existence. This is *Elohim shalit*.

Rashi adds, however, that *Elohim* is not only a *shalit*, but *Elohim* is also a *shofeit*, a judge, a ruler of the cosmic order. What law does God legislate? As *shalit*, God legislates the natural law, the mathematical equations, the link between phenomena and the cosmos. As *shofeit*, judge, He legislates the moral law. This law is not related to the behavior of matter, but to the behavior of man.

We read in *Parashas Noach* about the seven universal laws or principles of morality which were addressed to Noah and his children (the Seven Noahide Laws, *Gen.* 9:1-7). Prior to this chapter, the Torah employed the *Shem Havayah* when addressing Noah. However, as the Torah introduced the Seven Noahide Laws, the *Shem Havayah* changed to *Elohim*. The Torah writes: יוֹבְרָדְּ שֵּלְּדִים שָּׁתְּרְ בָּנִיו וַיֹּאמֶר לְּהָם פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וֹמְלְאוֹ שָּׁת הָאָרִין...אַדְּ בְּשֶׂר בְּנִי וַשְּׁבֵּדְ דַּם הְאָּדְם בְּאַרָם דְּמוֹ יִשְּׁבֵּךְ בְּעִרְם בְּאַרָם דְּמוֹ יִשְּבֵּךְ בִּחֹ יִשְׁבֵּךְ בַּחְ הַאָּרָם בְּאַרָם בְאַרָם בְּאַרָם בְּאַרָם בְּאַרָם בְּאַרָם בְּאַרָם בְּאַרָם בְּאָרַם בְּאַרָם בְּאָרָם בְּאַרָם בָּאַרָם בְּאַרָם בְּאַרָם בְּאַרָם בְּאַרָם בָּאַרָם בְּאַרָם בְּאָרָם בְּאָרָם בְּאָרָם בְּאָרָם בְּאַרָם בְּאָרָם בּאָרָם בּאָבָם בּיְּבְּעָּבְּם בְּאָבָם בְּאָרָם בְּאָרָם בְּאָרָם בְּאָבָם בְּאָרָם בְּאָרָם בְּאָבָם בְּאָבָּם בְּאָבָם בְּבָּבְם בְּבָּבְּם בְּבָּבְּבָּם בְּבָּבְּבָּם בְּבָּבְּבָּם בְּבָּבְּבָּם בְּבָּבְם בְּבָּבְּבָּם בְּבָּבָּם בְּבָּבָּם בְּבָּבְּבָּבָּם בְּבָּבָם בְּבָּבָּבְּבָּם בְּבָּבָּבְּבָּבְּבָּבְּבָּבְּבָּבָּם בְּבָּבָם

The Shem Havayah is not mentioned. The moral social laws, which are the foundation

of any civilized society, were placed at the same level as the physical cosmic law. *Elohim* is the legislator of both the law governing the gravitational pull, the electromagnetic field which allows the world to function, as well as the laws prohibiting murder and stealing, which protect the viability of society.

Rebellion against *Elohim* as legislator of the social moral law will end in catastrophe—in the same manner as disobedience of the natural physical law. Retribution for the transgression of the moral law will be swift and severe.

A society which arrogantly rejects the law of *You shall not murder* falls apart. An individual who is overambitious, overzealous, opportunistic, unconscionable as to the means he employs to promote and further his objectives, will ultimately be caught in a web of difficulty and contradiction. One who rejects parental authority will meet similar treatment on the part of his children. Promiscuity leads to disintegration of the family fabric.

*Elohim* addresses Himself both to nature and to man and establishes laws for both. He legislates both the behavior of matter and the conduct of man. Violation of those laws precipitates catastrophe and swift retribution.

This idea is precisely what the Mechilta meant by: אַמְּכֶּר בּיִין הַאָּלָה לַאַמֹּר. And God spoke all these things—as a judge who inflicts punishment. In the earlier passages of Parashas Yisro, the Shem Havayah is employed and not Elohim. Suddenly, just as the Torah is about to introduce the Ten Commandments, the name Elohim is used. Apparently, these ten principles constitute the foundation for civilized existence and are placed on the same level as the laws governing nature. Retribution comes swiftly for the violation of either law. The penalty in both cases is inherent in the act of violation. It is not an extraneous penalty.

On the other hand, when the legislator is *Havayah*, the commandment is addressed not to natural man but to metaphysical man, to man who was chosen by God. *Mitzvos* such as *tefillin*, *sukhah*, *shofar*, as well as the negative precepts such as eating unslaughtered meat or the fat or blood of an animal, were destined not to save a natural society from disintegration, but to raise the natural society to a committed covenantal community. Those *mitzvos* hallow and redeem the human spiritual personality. Non-compliance affects not natural man, but metaphysical man. It prevents man from achieving spiritual transcendental worth and distinction. The natural moral law, if violated, destroys human dignity; if the metaphysical laws are violated, human sanctity and holiness are destroyed.

Hence, punishment for violating these precepts is not immediate, nor swift in coming; punishment is delayed until that day that man is confronted by his Maker and will have to account for his deeds. If the damage is metaphysical, the punishment is also metaphysical—in the world to come.

## II. אֶת כַּל הַדְּבַרִים הַאֶּלֶה - all the following words.

The Mechilta, cited by Rashi, now states: וַיְבַבּר אֲלֹחִים אֲת כְּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאָלָה לַאמר - ללמד שאמר הדברות בדיבור אחד מה שאי אפשר לאדם לומר כן the following words, to respond: Hakadosh Baruch Hu pronounced all of the Ten Commandments in one utterance, something which is impossible for man to speak in like manner. How did the Mechilta derive the idea that all Ten Commandments were formulated and defined in one utterance,