

Appendix A The Introductory Verse to the Aseres Hadibros*

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

I. וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים - And God spoke.

Rashi, based on the *Mechilta*, comments on the words וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים as follows: אין אלהים אלא דיין. לפי שיש פרשיות בתורה שאם עשאן אדם מקבל שכר ואם לאו אינו מקבל עליהם פורענות יכול אף עשרת הדברות דיין לפרע. כן תלמוד לומר וידבר אלהים דיין לפרע. *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*: ביום עשות יהוה אלהים ארץ ושמים-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

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

