

"Speak to the entire assembly of Bnei Yisrael and say unto them, you shall be holy, for holy am I." (19:2)

Chazal teach us that this *Torah* transmission was unlike the usual procedure for *Torah* transmission. The standard procedure was that Moshe would teach the *mitzvos* first to Aharon, then Nadav and Avihu, followed by the *zekeinim*, elders, and finally, the entire nation. In this instance, Moshe taught the *mitzvos* to the entire *Klal Yisrael* simultaneously. The reason for this change is that these *mitzvos* include the essential laws of the *Torah*. The extreme nature of these *mitzvos* required that everyone be present together. The various commentators focus upon the need for the entire assembly of *Klal Yisrael* to convene in order to hear these *mitzvos*. They all suggest that the nature of the *mitzvos* required the presence of the entire *Klal*.

Horav Shlomo Yosef Zevin, zl, feels that the demand for holiness is an imperative to go beyond simply performing *mitzvos*. One is obligated to elevate himself via *mitzvos* to a higher level of *kedushah*. This obligation mandates that all of *Klal Yisrael* gather together as one unit to hear Hashem's word. *Horav Zevin* explains that *kedushas Yisrael*, the sanctity of our people, originates in Hashem, the source of all *kedushah*. Regardless of his individual level of spiritual achievement, every Jew has a certain amount of *kedushah*. Thus, sanctity is relative to the individual's personal level of spiritual development. It is clear, however, that everyone is holy.

At *Har Sinai*, every Jew heard the voice of Hashem and was inspired by its sublime message. Hashem spoke to each individual Jew according to his personal level of understanding and commensurate with his personal character traits. Consequently, each Jew interpreted the *mitzvos* and their inherent demands differently.

When Hashem said, "*Do not kill*," the *poshut'e*, simple, Jew understood this to mean, "Do not cause your friend to die." We observe that *Bais Din* must ask for penance for not accompanying a stranger when he was leaving the city. If he was murdered, the onus of guilt was theoretically placed upon the members of the *Bais Din*, as a result of their insensitivity to his needs. The more devout Jew interprets "*Do not kill*" as implying that one who embarrasses another Jew is viewed as a murderer. Every Jew "heard" the *mitzvos* according to his own level. All the Jews were, therefore, assembled together to signify that the imperative to be holy applies to all Jews - each according to his own individual level.