

"And these are the laws that you shall set before them." (21:1)

Rashi explains that whenever the term "vkt" (these) is stated, it excludes the preceding sections, but when the term "vktu" (and these) is stated, it adds to the preceding.

Just as the preceding laws were given at Mount Sinai, so too, were these given at Mount Sinai. *Rashi* reveals here the essential difference between *Torah* laws and the laws of the nations. The laws of the nations are founded upon the decision and approval of individuals who are readily influenced by the environment and age in which they live. Their various lifestyles and value systems will play a great role in the development and acceptance of these laws. The laws are a reflection of the personalities of the legislators who can change their minds as a result of pressure or coercion. Therefore, their laws are often inconsistent, and illogical. *Torah* law, however, is an act of Hashem. It is not based upon human agreement and acceptance. On the contrary, it is *Torah* which is the foundation of man. The *Zohar* says: "*Hashem gazed at the Torah and created mankind.*" Man was created, shaped, and perfected according to the *Torah* and its *mitzvos*.

To illustrate this thesis, let us look at the *mitzvah* of *otv ct sucf* (honoring one's parents). We commonly assume that this *mitzvah* was given to us because parents exist. It is wrong to assume that it is necessary to have parents in the order of creation, for Hashem as Creator, could ordain that the world exist in any way He desires!

According to the *Zohar* we must say that since there is a *mitzvah* of honoring one's parents in the *Torah*, it necessarily mandated that parents be a part of creation. It is the *mitzvah* that mandates this order rather than the *mitzvah* being applied to an existing situation. Our society is shaped according to *Torah* laws and precepts, while the laws of the nations are shaped according to the society wherein they exist.