

"I am Hashem your g-d." (20:2)

The *Aseres Hadibros*, the Ten Commandments, have been described as the fountainhead of Jewish law. Indeed, it is the most sublime synopsis of human duties; it will never be antiquated. The *Aseres Hadibros* comprised the first compendium of laws which Hashem gave to *Am Yisrael*.

Contemporary man distinguishes between his visible actions (i.e., the things we do and don't do) and the actions that are in the back of his mind (i.e., the things that we think of and do not do). We tend to discern between the things we do and the motive behind these actions. This unfortunate situation plays a pivotal role in shaping society. There is a significant storehouse of literature dedicated to the observance of practical duties, but there is very little written concerning the duties of the heart and soul which are not overtly expressed. The conduct that goes on in a man's mind and heart is no less important than his actions.

Moreshes Moshe observes a noteworthy insight from the specific order of the *Aseres Hadibros*. The first and last of these commandments do not seem to be connected with any particular code of practical conduct. In contrast, the second through the ninth commandments include duties which focus on the fulfillment of specific acts. They must be stimulated into operation, to be actively regarded or disregarded.

Let us momentarily reflect upon the first and last commandments. The first consists of a single sentence, which states simply that Hashem took us out of Egypt. It is a confirmation of faith. It is a commandment to believe in the existence of Hashem, to be heard in our hearts and souls. The last of the commandments is again a simple statement, "*Do not covet.*" Neither imperative can be translated into practice. Its focus is the heart and mind, the impulses and the desires. These two commandments deal with an inner state of mind. If one believes in Hashem, the first commandment, then the rest follows naturally. The last commandment represents faith in oneself, mastery over desires, control over impulses, and discipline of the mind. If this step is attained, the other *mitzvos* will follow automatically.

These two commandments comprise the framework of the entire Decalogue. The condition of one's faith shapes his mind and character. It is the determining factor in successful fulfillment of the *Torah*. Although they may seem superficially impressive, pious talk and meritorious deeds do not always disclose the truth. A smile does not necessarily indicate friendship, nor does a good deed always reflect devotion. The motive, the sincerity of mind and heart, mirrors the truth. Holy instincts and pure character, combined with righteous conduct, are the hallmarks of a *Torah* Jew.