

**"And Moshe assembled all the congregation of Bnei Yisrael and he said unto them, 'These (are) the words (things) that Hashem has commanded that you should do them. Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day (there) shall be to you a holy (day).'" (35:1,2)**

Moshe gathered all of *Klal Yisrael* together and commenced his speech, declaring, "*These are the words (things) that Hashem has commanded that you should do them.*" Moshe, however, followed his announcement of what the people should do with the exhortation concerning the laws of *Shabbos*, which are clearly things they should **not** do. How do we reconcile this seeming inconsistency in the text?

In response to this question, *Horav Simcha Z. Broide, Shlita*, cites the *Yalkut Shimoni* that attributes a different meaning to these *pesukim*. The *Yalkut* states: Hashem said to Moshe, "Make for yourself great congregations and study before them, in public, the laws of *Shabbos* so that future generations will learn from you to gather congregations to study each and every *Shabbos*." The *Midrash* suggests that the purpose of this assembly was to impart to *Bnei Yisrael* the importance of *Torah* study on *Shabbos*. The focus was not on *Shabbos* desecration, but rather on *Shabbos* enhancement, via the vehicle of *Torah* study. Moreover, the purpose of this great assembly was to call for increased public *Torah* study, especially on *Shabbos* when one has more discretionary time.

This *Midrash* is striking! *Rashi* contends that the "assembly" took place the day after Moshe returned from *Har Sinai* the second time, with the second set of *luchos* on *Yom Kippur*. The first command that Moshe related to *Bnei Yisrael* on this day was to study *Torah*. Only through continued *Torah* study could they ensure that the tragedy of the Golden Calf would not recur.

*Horav Broide* differentiates between *Torah* study and *mitzvah* observance in regard to their therapeutic effect on *Bnei Yisrael*. The *Torah* is *Torah ohr*, a brilliant light which illuminates the spiritual path one should take in life. Its light shines even in the far off distance. Conversely, *mitzvah* observance is viewed as a *ner*, candle, which illuminates the immediate path, protecting the individual from any obstacles which he might confront. *Mitzvah* observance is certainly therapeutic. In the long term, however, one who does not study *Torah* may stumble into a spiritual obstruction just as *Bnei Yisrael* did with the Golden Calf.