

ParShaT *YiThRo* One Pager Series

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[Background: We continue to bring controversies between Rashi and either academic scholars or other Jewish commentaries. Today we discuss the famous "differences" in the Torah's 10 commandments as recorded in Ex20 which differs in 20 minor items from the Torah's 10 commandments in Dt05]

Rashi #1,2: **Biblical Text: Ex08-01a** Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy; **,Dt05-12a** Watch the Sabbath to keep it holy (4th of 10 commandments)

Rashi Text: The two versions (*remember, watch*) were uttered and heard simultaneously. As the Psalmist says (Ps62-12) God spoke one; but I heard two.

The Issue: We first explain the Rashi and then mention the criticisms of Rashi by others. The issue is that the 10 commandments refers to a very specific revelation event in history. Therefore there should be only one version of it. Why then do Exodus and Deuteronomy both of which repeat the 10 commandments differ slightly? Which is the original version spoken at Sinai?

Background on Prophecy: To answer this we first give background on prophecy. We tend to think of prophecy in star-track type drama: Beings of light appear suspended in the sky and talk to people. The Bible makes clear that all revelation takes place through the medium of dreams (Nu12:06). Prophecy differs from ordinary dreams in several ways one of which is that it predicts or describes the future. The conclusion, is that the 600,000+ Jews were all sleeping early morning on the day the 10 commandments were revealed and had a shared prophetic dream; each and every Jew heard the 10 commandments.

Background on Jews who witnessed the 10 Commandments: Recall that God gave the Sabbath law to the Jews when he gave them the Manna prior to the 10 commandments (Ex16). At that time, some Jews did observe the Sabbath laws related to the Manna, (not to go out seeking more manna on the Sabbath) while some people did not observe these laws. Thus among those who heard the 10

commandments some had observed the Sabbath and some had not.

Rashi explained: When the Jewish people who had collectively heard the 10 commandments woke up they shared their prophetic visions with each other. They all had been told the 1st commandments, "I am the Lord your God who took you out of Egypt" But they heard the 4th commandment differently. Some heard "*Watch* the Sabbath" while others heard "*Remember* the Sabbath"

It is now easy to explain this. The Jews who already observed the Sabbath when the manna was given were told "*Remember* the Sabbath." But the Jews who violated the Sabbath and searched for Manna when the Manna was given double on Friday heard "*Watch* the Sabbath." In other words, each Jew heard that aspect of the 10 commandments relevant to that particular person.

Why Two Versions of the 10 Commandments? This explains why there are two versions of the 10 commandments. The two versions record the 20 minor differences in the prophetic dreams that the entire Jewish nation heard. It was indeed one prophetic event at Sinai, but that prophetic event was individualized to each Jew. As the Psalmist says, "God spoke one but we heard two."

Why the emphasis on a miracle? It is also straightforward why the Talmud summarizes this in miraculous terms "God spoke one but the listeners heard two something that humans can't do but God can do." Indeed, it was part of the miracle of the revelation that God spoke to each individual Jew.

Academic Scholarship: Academic scholarship loves to point to multiple biblical paragraphs dealing with a topic and their differences. They use these different paragraphs to prove that the bible reflects a conglomeration of different records over different periods and is essentially not a prophetic book but a historical anthology. But as we just saw with the 10 commandments, the multiple versions reflect the 600,000 shared dreams of the decalogue.

Ibn Ezra: Ibn Ezra struggles in his commentary with the 2 versions: 1) most differences are inconsequential; 2) *remembering* the Sabbath *each day* has as its purpose to *watch the Sabbath* on Saturday and hence the two versions coalesce.