

## ParShaT *PeQuDaY* One Pager Series

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[Background: We have been bringing controversies between Rashi and either academic scholars or other Jewish commentaries. Today we examine a Rashi-Ibn Ezra controversy with some surprises.]

**Rashi #1a Biblical Text: Ex38-21c** The following are the audits of the Temple, The Temple of Testimony

**Rashi Text:** Testimony: The Temple bears testimony, to the Jewish people, that God forgave them for the golden-calf sin since God's presence resumed to dwell in the Temple [At the sin of the Golden calf, God withdrew His Presence]

**Ibn Ezra Text:** The Temple houses the Ark which contains the Two Tablets of Testimony (Ex32-15) (the 10 commandments).

**First Impressions:** One common academic viewpoint is that Ibn Ezra championed the *simple-meaning-of-text* approach while Rashi, while also advocating simple meaning, also mentioned the *derashoth*, morally uplifting but sometimes fanciful exegesis, of the Midrash. So, quite simply, the first impression, is that Ibn Ezra, saw the *simple meaning* of testimony as referring to the 2 tablets which the Bible itself (Ex32-15) calls testimony. Contrastively, Rashi gives a more fanciful (*derash*) explanation that the Temple proves (that is, provides testimony) that God forgave the Jews for the Golden Calf.

**Second Impressions:** But this first impression is not correct. Rashi *does* cite the Shemoth Rabbah, that the Temple proves (gives testimony, is a witness) that God forgave the Jewish people. But Ibn Ezra also cites Midrash, namely the Yalkut Shimoni, who interprets *Temple of Testimony* to mean the Temple that houses the Ark which contains the 10 commandments which the Bible calls the Tablets of Testimony (Ex32-15). Thus both Rashi and Ibn Ezra follow the Midrash.

**Plurality:** Another common academic viewpoint, quite popular today, is *plurality* the belief that it is intrinsically good to have multiple interpretations and regard them all as *words of the living God*. While it is certainly important to *respect* all opinions, and it is meritorious to regards the research producing these opinions as *religious* work serving God, it is wrong to consider them all true. For example, if one child thought *shamarti* means *I watched* while another thought it means *you watched* would it be correct to respect both of them as true?

**A Deeper Explanation:** Ibn Ezra frequently gives only the basic (correct) explanation while Rashi *accepting* Ibn Ezra's opinion may show ramifications and consequences. Thus there is no controversy between them but rather complementarity. We can illustrate the two approaches on this Rashi by creating an imaginary dialogue between Rashi (R) and Ibn Ezra (I)

I: The Bible itself calls the 10 commandments the *tablets of testimony or the tablets of witness* (Ex32-15). Thus the *Temple of Testimony* or the *Testimony of Witness* simply refers to the fact that the Temple houses the Ark which holds these tablets. Hence the name.

R: Good point. But *how* do the tablets provide *testimony*? *What* do they *witness*?

I: I didn't think of that. I don't know

R: The 10 commandments given at Sinai after the Exodus from slavery in Egypt, is a *witness* and *testimony* that no matter how low the Jews descend, such as their lack of holiness in Egypt, they can repent and attain prophetic heights such as they did at Sinai.

I: Makes sense.

R: Another example of this *sin-low-repent-high* cycle is the Golden calf. The Jews sinned. God, in punishment, removed His Presence from them (Ex33-01:06). Moses prayed for God's restoration of His Presence. (Ex33-12:16). At the Consecration of the Temple (Lv10) God re-established His Presence.

I: So your commentary is simply a good example of the basic *peshat* that the Tablets are Testimony; but we both agree on the basic *simple meaning*!