

This Week's Parshah - Parshas Va'eschanan

Kindly take a moment to study MISHNAS CHAYIM in the merit of

Michal *bas* Soroh *a"h*

a fellow Jew who passed away with no relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of her *neshamah*

What Was Written in the Ten Commandments

Kiddush on Friday night is unique in that it seems to circumvent the standard guidelines governing most *mitzvos*. The general rule regarding the mitzvah obligation of women is laid out in the Mishnah in Kiddushin (1:7), which states:

כל מצות עשה שהזמן גרמא, אנושים חייבין ונשים פטורות. וכל מצות עשה שלא הזמן גרמא, אחר אנושים ואחר נשים חייבין. וכל מצות לא תעשה בין שהזמן גרמא בין שלא הזמן גרמא, אחר אנושים ואחר נשים חייבין.

“(In regard to) time-dependent positive *mitzvos* (e.g., *lulav*, *tefillin*): men are obligated, while women are exempt. Positive *mitzvos* that are not time-dependent (e.g., loving one’s fellow): both men and women are obligated. Negative commandments — whether time-dependent (e.g., refraining from eating *chametz* on Pesach) or non-time-dependent (e.g., refraining from pork): both men and women are obligated.”

Recital of *kiddush* on Shabbos is a time-related mitzvah; as per the Mishnah’s formula, women should be exempt. However, according to R’ Ada bar Ahava (*Shevuos 20b*), women are Biblically obligated to fulfill the mitzvah of *kiddush*. How could this be?

The *Shamor-Zachor* Connection

The Gemara (*ibid.*) proceeds to explain this dispensation based on a key word in this week’s *parshah* and a novel concept that emerges from it. Parshas Va’eschanan contains the second rendition of the transmission of the *Aseres Hadibros* (Ten Commandments) at Har Sinai; the first is recorded in parshas Yisro. One apparent discrepancy involves the commandment of Shabbos. In the first rendition, the verse states: *zachor* — **remember** the day of Shabbos (referring to the mitzvah of sanctifying the day through the recital of *kiddush* at the commencement of Shabbos) (*Shemos 20:8*). In our *parshah*, the Shabbos commandment begins with the term *shamor* — **observe** the day of Shabbos (referring to the imperative to refrain from forbidden labor) (*Devarim 5:12*). The Gemara understands that there is a relationship between these two ideas: “Whosoever is included in the *shamor* directive is likewise included in the mitzvah of *zachor*.” The *shamor* term would include women, as they must refrain from Shabbos desecration, which is a negative commandment. And so they would automatically be subsumed in the positive mitzvah of *zachor* (*kiddush*), despite the fact that it is inherently time-dependent.

It still needs to be explained what gave us the “right” to connect these two terms; how do we in fact know that these disparate directives — contained in the two separate Biblical recountings of the Ten Commandments — are so intertwined, to the extent that we may posit that whoever is included in one is automatically included in the other? To this, the Gemara responds with the classic notion (known to many from its immortalization in the familiar *Lecha Dodi* hymn): זָכוֹר וּשְׁמֹר בְּדִבּוּר אֶחָד נֶאֱמָרוּ (‘*zachor*’ and ‘*shamor*’ were said in one utterance).

In other words, at first glance there seems to be a bit of a discrepancy regarding the wording of portions of the Ten Commandments. Focusing on the Shabbos commandment, we have two versions, one rendering the commandment as beginning with the term “*zachor*” and the other as beginning with “*shamor*.” The obvious

question becomes — which one was it? When the Commandments were iterated at Har Sinai, which version was used: *zachor* or *shamor*? And so the Gemara clarifies that, indeed, both are true: both terms were uttered simultaneously, a feat “that the (human) mouth cannot speak, and the (human) ear cannot decipher” (*Shevuos, ibid.*). In any event, the interconnection between these two terms is apparent, as both directives were issued as one.

Putting it down on “Paper”

One point that remains somewhat puzzling is — how did the *Luchos* (Tablets) read? We have established, based on the Gemara, that in the recitation of the Commandments, the differing terms were pronounced together. This accomplishment, however, satisfies only the delivery; what was the precise text of the Ten Commandments? Was the word “*zachor*” inscribed there or the word “*shamor*”?

One may suppose that the issue relates to the different “editions” of the Tablets that were produced. It bears mentioning that there were two sets of *Luchos*. The first were smashed by Moshe upon encountering the golden calf erected by the people; a second set was later fashioned, and Hashem re-inscribed the Commandments on them. Perhaps “*zachor*” was inscribed in the first set, while the second set contained the “*shamor*” version? The Ibn Ezra (*Shemos 20:1*) actually quotes such an opinion, but he firmly rejects it. And so — we are left with this conundrum: if both sets had identical texts, *what in fact was written upon the luchos: zachor or shamor?*

R’ Ya’akov Kaminetsky (*Emes L’Ya’akov*) submits an interesting resolution. There is a *masoretic* device we encounter in the Scriptural texts known colloquially as “*kri u’k’siv* (read and written).” That is, there are instances in Tanach when our transmitted tradition dictates that a given word is to be read and pronounced differently than it is written. Not that any corrections are to be made to the written text; the wording and spelling is to be preserved as is, but the oral presentation will differ from the recorded form. One example of many comes from the section of the rebuke in parshas Ki Savo. The verse (*Devarim 28:27*) warns that a plague of boils will strike the people if they abandon the Torah. The term used to describe the affliction — as it appears in the text (the “*k’siv*”) — is וּבְעַפְלִים. But the way the *ba’al korei* who reads publicly from the Sefer Torah pronounces the word bears little resemblance to this word; in its place, he reads וּבְטָהָרִים (which is the “*kri*”).

R’ Ya’akov suggests that this may have been the arrangement with the *Luchos*, as well. That is, of the terms *zachor* and *shamor*, one of them served as the *k’siv*, while the other was the *kri*.

The only question that would remain, then, is which is which? Was *zachor* written in the text, but read as *shamor*, or vice-versa?

In fact, R’ Ya’akov seems to lean to the possibility that the word *shamor* was inscribed, and *zachor* served as the *kri*. He brings support for this notion from the wording of the Shabbos-morning prayers. In the “*Yismach Moshe*” blessing of the Shemoneh Esreh, it states:

וַיִּשְׁנֵי לוֹחֹת אֲבָנִים הוֹרִיד בְּיָדוֹ, וְכָתוּב בָּהֶם שְׁמִירַת שַׁבָּת (“and two Tablets of stone he brought down in his hand, in which was written [the directive of] *shemiras* Shabbos.”) Note that when remarking as to what was “written” in the Tablets, the prayer states that it was the aspect of *shemirah* (observance), as opposed to *zechirah* (remembrance, mentioning). This would seem to indicate that *shamor* was the *k’siv*, while *zachor* was the *kri*.