

In a recent poll, Americans were asked whether they could name all seven ingredients in a “Big Mac” hamburger from McDonald’s and if they could list all of the ten commandments. Unfortunately, but perhaps not surprising, a significant amount of Americans had a much easier time listing the seven ingredients of the “Big Mac” than the Ten Commandments. 80% of people knew about the concept of the meat patties, but only 60% recognized “Do not kill” as one of commandments.

While it is definitely very unfortunate to live in a society that can’t list the ten commandments, if we analyze this week’s parsha we may be surprised to realize that knowing these ten commandments, the Aseres HaDibros, is not so simple after all. The Torah mentions the Aseres Hadibros in two places, here in parshas Yisro and again later in parshas V’eschanan. If we compare the two texts a number of differences emerge. For example, in our Parsha the reason for the mitzvah of Shabbos is attributed to the idea that Hashem rested when He created the world, whereas in parshas V’Eschanan it is attributed to the exodus from Egypt.

Another difference- whereas each of the Aseres Hadibros in Parshas V’Eschanan are connected to each other through the letter “vav” such as **לֹא תִרְצַח וְלֹא תִנָּאֵף** (you shall not kill AND you shall not commit adultery AND you shall not kidnap), the Aseres HaDibros in Parshas Yisro do not have any connecting letter. Each of the dibros remains by itself, disconnected from the others.

All together there are approximately 15 differences between the texts, which may explain why Americans find it easier to list the seven ingredients in the “Big Mac” than having to account for all the differences in the texts of the Aseres HaDibros!

But perhaps the most famous difference between the two recountings of the Aseres HaDibros is the way in which they introduce the mitzvah of Shabbos. In this week's parsha we read *זָכוֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוּ*, *REMEMBER the day of Shabbos to sanctify it*. We are told **Zachor**- to remember shabbos. However, in parshas V'Eschanan we read *שָׁמֹר* *אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוּ*, *You shall GUARD the day of Shabbos to sanctify it*. We are told **Shamor**- to Guard shabbos.

So which one was it? Was it Zachor or was it Shamor? The question is very simple- What word did Hashem say when He gave us the Torah? What is the difference between Zachor and Shamor? What is the message in this difference? I would like to share with you this morning three approaches in the mefarshim to answer these questions.

One school of thought, including the Ibn Ezra, is that really Hashem said what is written down in Parshas Yisro. Hashem said *זָכוֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוּ*. However, in Parshas V'Eschanan Moshe is simply paraphrasing what was actually said. There is no real difference between Zachor and Shamor. Essentially, they have similar meanings so Moshe did not care to be so exact when he repeated the Aseres Hadibros many years later. Just as you may tell over a story multiple times using different words, so did Moshe when retelling the aseres hadibros.

Another school of thought is that there are differences in the recounting of the aseres hadibros because they were each addressing two different generations. In parshas V'eshanan we are dealing with a generation that was about to enter Eretz Yisrael. For them, they needed to hear *שָׁמֹר* *אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוּ* because, as the Meshekh

Chokhmah suggests, the term "שְׁמֹר" is related to the negative commandments of Shabbos and the prohibition against work, which are emphasized in Devarim due to the nation's greater workload they would have in Israel than they had in the the desert. In the desert, all they needed to be told was *זְכוֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ*, which represents the positive elements of Shabbos such as Kidush and enjoying pleasures, because they were not involved in so much work at that time.

However there is a third school of thought that is extremely thought provoking and that is the approach of Chazal in the Mechilta. The Mechilta states "זְכוֹר" ו"שְׁמֹר" שְׁנֵיהֶם נֹאמְרוּ בְּדִיבּוּר אֶחָד. Both Zachor and Shamor were stated by Hashem at the same time. Therefore, as a compromise, in parshas Yisro it says Zachor but in V'eschanan it says Shamor so both words are written at least once.

According to this approach, the question arises: what did Bnei Yisrael *hear* at הר סיני? Granted, Hashem *said* both words, but how did that *sound* to Bnei Yisrael? The simple answer is that Bnei Yisrael were able to miraculously hear two distinct words at the same exact time. They had no trouble making out each word. It was a once-in-a-lifetime miracle that only Hashem could perform. However, I would like to suggest a different explanation to Chazal's words.

Perhaps you remember a few years ago the "Yanny-Laurel" audio recording that went viral. The recording was so popular because it stirred a lot of debate. What was unique about the recording was that there were two different words that people heard. Some people heard the word "Yanny" and some heard the word "laurel." (Btw, it's clearly Laurel!) It was amazing to see how different people heard radically

different words from the same recording. Scientists explain that the reason for the disparity is that different people focus their attention on different frequencies. If you focus on higher frequencies then you hear “Yanny” but if you focus on lower frequencies you heard “Laurel.”

I think the Yanny-Laurel debate is the same debate that took place thousands of years ago when Hashem gave us the Torah. Both Zachor and Shamor were said, but depending on what “frequency” you were attuned to determined which word you heard.

As we mentioned, Chazal tell us that Zachor represents the more positive elements of Shabbos. It represents the mitzvah of Kiddush and Oneg shabbos. However, Shamor represents the negative aspects of shabbos such as the prohibitions of the 39 melachos.

Just as there are two elements of Shabbos, there are two types of Jews; the Zachor Jew and the Shamor Jew. The Zachor Jew tends to view the world through a more rosy and romantic lense. They tend to view things in a more positive and joyful way. The Shamor Jew tends to see things in a more practical light. He or she may focus on the details and the prohibitions a bit more than the fun and games. I’m sure each of us in this room can think about which side of the spectrum they fall out on. One’s category determines how they view the world. Both were said at Har Sinai, but the Zachor Jew only heard the word Zachor and the Shamor Jew only heard the word Shamor- because each person hears only what they want to hear.

Let us be clear- there is no right and wrong perspective here. While the Zachor Jew may have more positive and spiritual thoughts, he may also not pay attention to crucial details and thus make poor

decisions. The Shamor Jew, on the other hand, may get caught up in the details of life but they will be conscientious enough to avoid making crucial mistakes.

The Torah's message is that both zachor and shamor were said simultaneously. They are both of equal importance in Judaism. The problem becomes when we fail to recognize that there are different, equally valid, perspectives in life. For those who hear "Yanny," they think the "Laurel" hearers are crazy, and vice versa. When the Zachor Jew or the Shamor Jew fails to acknowledge another valid and integral viewpoint, it leads to division. The Torah is trying to tell us that while it is ok to hear one word, just realize that there is another equally valid word and viewpoint out there.

Unfortunately, we see this perspective all too often this time of year when the political debates and rhetoric are amplified. How often do we hear an opinion, or an endorsement of a political candidate, and our first reaction is to think that the person with that view is absolutely crazy? And if someone disagrees with our views, we think that something must be fundamentally wrong with that person. When we hear Zachor someone else tells you they hear shamor, we tend to believe that they must be hearing incorrectly. It is true that there are some opinions out there that are not valid, but we must have the humility to realize that we don't always know which opinions fall into this category.

A few years ago, a 24 year old boy seeing out from the train's window shouted... "Dad, look the trees are going behind us!" As his Dad smiled, a young couple sitting nearby, looked at the 24 year old's childish behavior with pity, when suddenly he again exclaimed... "Dad,

look the clouds are running with us!” The couple couldn’t resist and said to the father... “Why don’t you take your son to see a good doctor? There are specialists out there who can teach your son to control himself and behave like everyone else...” The father smiled and said... “We actually did see a very good specialist. We are just coming from the hospital, my son was blind from birth and he just got his eyesight today.”

Sometimes in life we are quick to judge others for what we deem to be inappropriate behavior or incorrect opinions. We think they must be blind to think the way they do. But more often than not, having such an attitude reflects the fact that we are in truth blind to other perspectives and opinions.

Let us, during these days full of political debate and rhetoric, remind ourselves to not disqualify others just because they have different opinions than us. Let us remember that some people hear Yanny and some people hear Laurel. Some of us may be attuned to Zachor while others may be attuned to Shamor. But always keep in mind, שניהם, בדיבור אחד נאמרו, they were both said by Hashem and both must be respected.