

VAESCHANAN (DEUTERONOMY 3:23-7:11)

Double Talk

2002 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Sepowitz

Did you ever wonder why we place two *Challahs* (breads) on our Sabbath table? Or why we light two candles on Friday night? One of the reasons is based on a discrepancy in verses in the Torah.

The Book of Deuteronomy is, to a great extent, a review of the Torah. Moses, in the closing weeks of his life, addressed his beloved nation, pointing out to them the high and low points of their relationship with G-d over the years. One of the items in his review was the Revelation at Mt. Sinai.

Moses repeated the Ten Commandments that G-d had given to the nation. Before I quote to you what Moses said, I have (you should pardon the expression,) a "Trivia" question for you: Fill in the blank: "_____ *the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*"

If you said, "**Honor** the Sabbath..." you correctly quoted Exodus, 20:8. However, that is not what Moses told them.

In this week's Torah Portion, we read a rendition of the Ten Commandments that differs considerably from what it says in Exodus: "**GUARD** the Sabbath day, to keep it holy..." (Deuteronomy, 5:12)

Why did Moses misquote the Ten Commandments? A simple reading of Exodus shows us that G-d said "*Remember.*" Why did Moses say "*Guard?*" Could he possibly have forgotten what had happened a mere 40 years ago on the holiest day in history?! Could he have been confused and not realized what was a) written on Torah scrolls that were in his possession, and b) engraved on the (second) Tablets that he had brought down from Mt. Sinai?

Or, perhaps we should look at it the other way. Could it be that Deuteronomy is correct and Exodus is wrong?! What did G-d actually tell us at Mt. Sinai? Did He tell us to **REMEMBER** the Sabbath, or did he tell us to **GUARD** the Sabbath?

According to the Talmud (Mechilta, on Exodus, 20:8), He told us both. As we say in our Friday night prayers, "*Shamor v'Zachor, b'dibur echad – 'Guard' and 'Remember' were said in one word.*" Among the many miracles that took place at Mt. Sinai was the fact that G-d said two words at the same time. He told us "*Zachor – Remember **the Sabbath day,***" and "*Shamor – Guard the Sab**bath day.*" These two concepts, *Shamor* and *Zachor – Guard* and *Rememb**er*, are the source of the custom of two candles and two *Challahs* on the table.

What does this "double talk" mean? How do we remember Shabbos and how do we guard Shabbos?

There are two components to Sabbath observance. How do we remember the Sabbath? The Talmud (Pesachim, 106a) says that the Mitzvah of "*Zachor – Rememb**er*" is to "Remember it over wine;" i.e., recite the Kiddush, the prayer said while holding a glass of wine. "*Kiddush – Sanctification*" is, in a sense, our way of proclaiming a "toast to the Sabbath." In other words, the Torah is telling us to verbally proclaim the Sabbath as a holy day. Some authorities maintain that by the simple greeting, "have a good Shabbos," one fulfills the Biblical Commandment of remembering the Sabbath.

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