

Shavuot: The Shnei Luchot HaBrit
Moshe Abelesz for The Lookstein Center, 2003
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Name: _____

Shavuot is *Zman Matan Torateinu*, the time when the Torah was given. On the original Shavuot, God gave the Ten Commandments to the Jewish People. Moshe eventually brought them down from Mount Sinai. They were inscribed on two tablets of stone.

In this lesson, we will examine the opinion that maintains that the Commandments were inscribed on two stones instead of one.

Your objectives for this lesson are to understand:

- a) The content of the Ten Commandments.
- b) The two sections of the Commandments.
- c) How adjacent commandments are related to each other.

1. How does the following text explain what was written on each of the *Tablets*?

“The Lord said to Moshe: ‘Write down these commandments, because according to these commandments I have made a covenant with you and Israel.’ He was there with God for forty days and forty nights. Bread he did not eat and water he did not drink. He wrote down on the covenant the terms of the covenant, the Ten Commandments. When Moshe came down Mount Sinai with the two tablets of testimony in his hand...”

Shemot 34:27-29

2. Read the following Midrash and answer the question below:

“How were the Ten Commandments written? (The first) five were inscribed on one one tablet and (the second) five on the other... These are the words of Rabbi Chanina ben Gamliel. However the Rabbis say that (all) ten were written on one tablet and (all) ten were written on the second.” *Mechilta Yitro* Ch.8

What do you think is the logic of the Rabbi's opinion? Explain your answer.

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These are two opinions about how the Commandments were written. We will be studying the opinion of Rabbi Chanina ben Gamliel.

3. Read *Shemot* Chapter 20:1-14 and inscribe the Ten Commandments into the following table, according to the opinion of Rabbi Chanina ben Gamliel:

Belief in God	

4. Suggest a reason why the Commandments were split up in this manner. Explain your answer.

5. The earlier part of the Midrash, explains the rationale behind Rabbi Chanina ben Gamliel's opinion. Read the Midrash:

“How were the Ten Commandments written? (The first) five were inscribed on one tablet and (the second) five on the other... ‘I am the Lord your God’ (was written on one) and adjacent to it was written: ‘Do not murder’. The Torah is teaching that anyone who spills another’s blood, is considered as if he has defiled God.

This can be compared to a human king who visits his people. They built a statue for him, a portrait and minted coins (with his image). After some time, they knocked over the statue, defaced his portrait and devalued his coinage. By insulting the image of the king, they actually insulted the king...”

“On one was written: ‘You shall have no other gods’ and adjacent to it was written: ‘Do not commit adultery’. The Torah teaches us that anyone who worships idols is considered to have committed adultery against God...”

“On one was written: ‘You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain’ and adjacent to it was written: ‘Do not steal’. It teaches us that anyone who steals will come to swearing in vain... (to deny the theft)”

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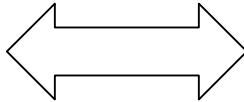
“On one was written: ‘Remember the Sabbath day to sanctify it’, and adjacent to it was written: ‘Do not give false testimony’. This teaches us that anyone who desecrates the Sabbath testifies that God did not create the world in six days and that He did not rest on the seventh. Whilst one who observes the Sabbath testifies that God did create the world in six days and that He did rest on the seventh...”

“On one was written: ‘Honor your father and mother’ and adjacent to it: ‘Do not covet’. This teaches us that anyone who covets will eventually beget children who will curse their father and mother and who will honor one who is is not his father...This is the reason why the Ten Commandments were written with five commandments on each tablet.” Mechilta Yitro Chapter 8

Explain the concept this Midrash has described.

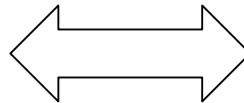
6. Suggest a thematic connection between each parallel commandment:

(i): Belief in God



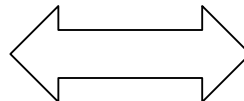
(vi): Murder

(ii) _____



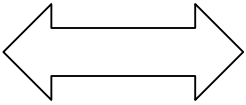
(vii) _____

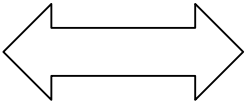
(iii): _____



(viii): _____

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(iv): _____  (ix) _____

(v): _____  (x): _____

7. According to this approach, summarize why the Ten Commandments were engraved onto two tablets.
