

Different Versions

by: Rabbi Jeremy Rosen

Why are there different versions of the Ten Principles? Or different versions of what happened on mount Sinai. Who spoke to whom and who heard what is not at all clear. Or repeated stories?

Take Shabbat, at one stage we are commanded to “remember.” On another to “keep.” In The song we sing on Friday night, *Lecha Dodi*, we say the two words were given, spoken simultaneously. Human cannot hear two conversations, two words simultaneously. The sounds get jumbled. Here are two words that mean very different things. To keep is to observe, to do something. To remember is cerebral, to think. The Shabbat requires both. But you cannot convey this in one go. You need further clarification. language is limited. And therefore, to convey a complex idea or a multifaceted even or encounter we may need various and different words to paint a fuller picture, to add new dimensions, at different times.

One often hears it said that these variations are indications of different traditions, different scribes combining them together into one text. It is speculative even if it appeals to modern methodology. One should add the possibility that there was intent to repeat and to add rather than as we do in modern societies and cultures, try to be consistent, look for only one solution.

I think that adding layers enables us to have a fuller picture not a lesser one.