

Part 1: The Decalogue

And the Lord spoke to you from the midst of the fire. The sound of words you did hear but no image did you see except the sound. And He told you His covenant that He charged you to do, the Ten Words, and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.

Deuteronomy 4:12-13

The Ten Commandments are probably the most famous bit of legislation in the world. Modern scholars are not sure, however, where exactly the Ten Commandments are, nor what they really mean.¹

God as an Author to be Imitated

This book is about the Torah as a composition, with special focus on its structure. It presents the discovery that all five books are made up of well-defined literary units that share certain characteristics. Specifically, each unit was built as a table or weave, a two-dimensional, non-linear construct. This discovery made it possible to identify all the individual literary units of the Torah. They produce a very clear picture of the formal structure of each of the five books. Since the same formatting technique was used throughout the Torah, both on the level of individual literary units and on the level of whole books, it was apparently constructed by a single hand or school, which I refer to as the “author”. The discovery of the literary format of the Torah and its parts makes it possible to read the Torah in a new way, as a multi-leveled, highly sophisticated composition. The new reading is guided by the structure as well as certain

¹ James L. Kugel, *How To read The Bible* (New York: Free Press, 2007), p. 250

elements of the narrative which can be understood as reading instructions. The Torah can thus be read in two distinctly different ways, one traditional and the other new. The traditional way does not take into account the structure, while new way does. Through the course of this book I demonstrate that the author intended that the Torah be read in both ways. The foundation text for the double reading is the Decalogue, which can also be read in two ways.

The Torah presents the Decalogue as God's only handwritten literary work. It thereby indicates that the Decalogue should be seen as the most exalted possible work of literature, a literally divine text. There are further signs of its importance. We are told that the Decalogue, as opposed to the rest of the Torah, was written by the hand of God on stone tablets which were placed in the Ark of Testimony. This put them at the focus of the Israelite camp. The tribes were arrayed around the Tabernacle. The tablets containing the Decalogue written by God's hand were in the Ark within the Holy of Holies, at the focus of the camp. The tablets within the Ark also enabled God to communicate with Moses from between the cherubim decorating the Ark. It is hard to image how an author could note the importance of a text more emphatically. I want to suggest that this unique status also provides the careful reader with information concerning how the Torah was composed. Since the Decalogue is the exemplar of the highest possible form of writing, it follows that it is the one most worthy of imitation. Consequently, one could expect that the rest of the Torah is influenced by the Decalogue as a work of literature. There is evidence that the composition of the Torah parallels the Decalogue in two ways: in the literary format of the text and in the audience it addresses. We will first look at the audience, and then at the content.

God inscribed two sets of stone tablets for two different recipients. One set, the first, was intended for the whole nation to see. The second set was intended for Moses' eyes alone. Moses brings the first tablets into the camp and shatters them "before your eyes (Deut. 9:17)." This shows that they were created by the hand of God to be presented to the whole people. It is shocking that God shows no concern when Moses destroys the work of His hands. This lack of response seems to indicate that Moses' act was appropriate. The tablets created for the whole nation to see, should, or could, only be seen in pieces. The second set was very different. God told Moses to prepare a container for them, before He engraved them with exactly the same words that were on the first tablets. After they were engraved, Moses was to place them directly in the container. None but Moses was to see them. By connecting the two separate narratives we learn that God inscribed exactly the same text twice, each time for a different audience. The public text, the first tablets, was shattered. The private text, the second tablets, remained coherent, whole.

If the Torah is in fact modeled according to the pattern of the Decalogue, we now have some information about it should be read. It can be read in a public way as a shattered text, or in a private way which views the text as a whole. There is still more information to be derived from the precise language used to describe the formation of the two sets of tablets. Regarding the first tablets we are told: הלחת מעשה אלהים "the tablets were of God's making (Exod 32:16)." God tells Moses to make the second tablets in these words פסל לך שני לחת אבנים "carve you two stone tablets like the first ones (Exod 34:1)." The words used in the narrative to describe the making of both sets also appear in the laws of the Decalogue itself. God's action, "making", is identical to that mentioned regarding the creation of the world in the

Sabbath commandment “For six days did the Lord *make* the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in it (Exod 20:11).” The similarity between the acts of creating of the world and the creating the first tablets led the author of the Mishnah to include the tablets amongst the ten things created on the sixth day just before the Sabbath.² The tablets are one of God’s manifold creations. The full significance of this point is clarified by the language God employs in commanding Moses to make new tablets.

The root of the verb used in God’s command to Moses, לֹא עֹפֵן, has two related meanings. As a verb it points to hewing. But as a noun it means an “idol.” The link is clear; the type of idol is a hewn three dimensional representation. This is how it appears in the Decalogue: “You shall make no *carved likeness* (לִפְסֵן) and no image of what is in the heavens above or what is on the earth below or what is in the waters (Exod 20:4).” The parallels between God’s creation as noted in the Decalogue and the creation of idols are extraordinary. Both refer to the heavens, earth and seas. An idol is a representation of something created by God. The tablets made by Moses are meant to represent the first tablets made by God: “like the first ones.” God commands Moses to make tablets that appear to fulfill the condition of proscribed images, and does so with the very same orthography as “image.” The text which will survive as a whole on the second tablets is, literally, carved on an image of a divine creation created by a person. The proximity of this act to the idolatry of the golden calf in Exodus may hint that the act itself is inherently dangerous.

² Misnah Avot, 5:1

All of these details concerning the two sets of tablets can be understood as a set of guidelines for reading the Torah. The tablets created by God for the whole nation to see were broken into pieces. The collective cannot grasp a text as a whole. At the most, it can accept it bit by bit, verse by verse as it were, but the glue that links the parts is lacking. Still, it is the whole community, not the individual, which is entitled to receive the original work of God's hands. The individual is empowered to recreate the divine creation. This is a special "dispensation" for a dangerous act which verges on idolatry. It would appear that the author is associating two different aspects of reading with the two sets of tablets, analysis and synthesis.

The divine creation is given to all to perceive, whether the heaven and the earth or the first set of tablets. In order to understand the nature of reality and authorial intent, it must be analyzed, broken into intelligible bits of language. This provides for universal discourse. The Hebrew word generally mistranslated "commandment", דבר, has two fundamental meanings as a noun, "thing" and "speech." A translation often used today in the context of the Decalogue is "Word." These ten Words are fundamental parts of divine speech. The first act of reading is to understand the individual Words. As we will see shortly, it is not at all clear how to divide the text into ten Words. This act of analysis, shattering the divine tablets, is the inescapable first step towards understanding the divine text. The second step involves recreating the tablets, like Moses. One must decide how they should be arranged. This is a dangerous step which demands individual creativity. The application of individual creativity makes the second tablets, the reconstruction or synthesis "*like the first*", creations. One can also become so enamored by one's own creation, the second tablets, that it becomes idol-like. Nevertheless, if one is to understand the coherence of divine creation, it must be reassembled by the individual. The

Words must be rewritten on one's personal tablets. If the reconstruction is successful, one will hear the voice of the author come through the tablets, as Moses heard from the Ark of Testimony. This is the message embedded in the narrative of the tablets, as well as the Torah as a whole, which is demonstrated in this book.

The author seems to imply that there will always be a personal, or subjective, aspect to a coherent reading, one that sees the Decalogue as a composition rather than a collection. This is the point where literary analysis can clarify the author's intentions. The reading presented in this section views the Decalogue as having been composed as five consecutive pairs of Words. As soon as the concept "pair" is introduced, we are dealing with the individual reader's creativity. The reader is required to invent a concept which points to what the two members of the pair have in common. This concept is not necessarily found in the literal text. It is a function of the reader's private tablets; the way the reader perceives associations between parts of the literal, objective, text, the ten individual Words. The reader, like Moses, is forced to create a new set of tablets. The private tablets contain exactly the same Words, but they are read personally.

We can summarize the author's reading instructions as follows. The Decalogue was constructed to be read in two different ways. One way is suitable for public readings and discussion. It is a "shattered" reading which reads each Word as part of a collection of ten fundamental, but not necessarily related Words. This reading is necessary, as the laws are part of a national legal system which demands objectivity. The second reading is, apparently, a function of the reader's associative ability. It reflects the way an individual reader perceives the

Decalogue as a composition, a work of literature composed on two stone tablets. It is this second reading that will occupy our attention. Even though I have emphasized the subjective aspect of this reading, it too is based on authorial intent, as evidenced by the creation of the second tablets by Moses at God's command. In other words, the author has created a document, which in order to be viewed as a composition, demands that the reader partner with the author. The text thus empowers the reader.

Up to now we have considered a case in which the narrative can be read as reading instructions embedded in the text. We will turn now to a similar yet significantly different phenomenon. While the tablet narratives prepare the reader before reading the Decalogue as a composition, another narrative element verifies that the reader has grasped the way the author intended that the Decalogue be read as a composition. We will see that literary analysis leads to reading the ten Words as five consecutive pairs. There is a verse that confirms this reading. Without reference to the five-consecutive-pairs reading, the meaning of the verse is obscure. Exodus 32:15 reads in Hebrew, לחת כתבים משני עבריהם, מזה ומזה הם כתבים. A literal translation would read something like "tablets written from both their sides, from this and from that they were written." There are two difficulties in the Hebrew which are reflected in the awkward English. What is meant by "from both their sides" and "from this and from that?" It would appear that the second phrase is meant to clarify the first and tell something about the elusive "twofoldness" encapsulated by the two stone tablets.

The explanation of the verse, that I offer, is an example of what I referred to as the partnership between the author and the reader. Rather than instructing the reader how to read

the Decalogue, it serves as verification that the reader is on the right track. In order for the verse to make sense, the reader must first have decided that the Words can be read as five consecutive pairs. Furthermore, it must be understood that the Words were written alternately on one tablet and the other. Each pair has one member of the pair on one tablet, and one on the other.

| | |
|---|----|
| 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 |
| 9 | 10 |

Once the reader has created this visualization, the verse makes perfect sense. The Hebrew עבר translated “side”, must be understood in the sense of “two sides of the street”, not “two sides of a coin.” By using the second sense of the word, which is not common in biblical usage, the *midrash* understands that the letters were carved straight through the stone to the other side. Miraculously, letters which were cut completely around were suspended in air. The five-pair visualization that I propose needs no such miracle. The verse means: “(the writing was) written across both tablets; (alternately,) on one and (then) the other, were they written.” The tablets were written laid out next to each other; one Word was written on one and then its mate was written on the other. This leads to the arrangement outlined above. While this explanation does not exist in any of the commentaries which I have seen, it gives strong support to the five-consecutive-pairs thesis. This is why I view it as an instance of the author verifying a correct reading. In the course of this book, I present the case that the whole Torah is like the text of the Decalogue. The same word-for-word text is intended for two different

audiences. The Decalogue provides a paradigm for identifying text constructed in this manner. The authorial hints we have noted so far, are just the precursors for a complex system of clues and verification embedded in the Torah.

The Divisions

As we turn now to the text of the Decalogue, the first two steps of our investigation are dictated by our introductory observations. First, we must decide how to divide the text into ten Words. Second, we have to decide if there are indications as to how they should be arranged on the two “tablets.” If so, we must then determine why one specific arrangement should be preferred. Only at that point will we be able to read the Ten Words as a composition. While the presentation follows these steps, they are actually intertwined. The division to ten is satisfying because it leads an arrangement on the tablets which can be read as a composition. The ultimate test of the arrangement is a combination of the mathematical meaning of “elegance” coupled with heuristic value. The elegance of the demonstration is determined by its ability to tie together the laws of the Decalogue in a neat package. The heuristic value will be displayed in later sections of the book when we see that this solution of the Decalogue helps decipher other textual complexities in the Torah. The following translation is Robert Alter’s.

| | | C | J |
|---|--|---|---|
| 1 | I the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slaves. | 1 | 1 |
| 2 | You shall have no other gods beside Me. | | 2 |
| 3 | You shall make you no carved likeness and no image of what is in the heavens above or what is on the earth below or what is in the waters beneath the earth. | | |
| 4 | You shall not bow down to them and | | |
| 5 | you shall not worship them, for I am the Lord your God, a jealous god, reckoning the crime of fathers with sons, with the third generation and with | | |

| | | | |
|----|--|----|----|
| | the fourth, for My foes, and doing kindness to the thousandth generation for my friends and for those who keep My commandments. | | |
| 6 | You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not acquit whosoever takes His name in vain. | 2 | 3 |
| 7 | Remember the Sabbath day to hallow it. Six days you shall work and you shall do your tasks, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. You shall do no task, you and your son and your daughter, your male slave or slavegirl and your beast and your sojourner who is within your gates. For six days did the Lord make the heavens and earth, the sea and all that is in it, and He rested on the seventh day. Therefore did the Lord bless the Sabbath day and hallow it. | 3 | 4 |
| 8 | Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long on the soil that the Lord your God has given you. | 4 | 5 |
| 9 | You shall not murder. | 5 | 6 |
| 10 | You shall not commit adultery. | 6 | 7 |
| 11 | You shall not steal. | 7 | 8 |
| 12 | You shall not bear false witness against your fellow man. | 8 | 9 |
| 13 | You shall not covet your fellow man's house. | 9 | 10 |
| 14 | You shall not covet your fellow man's wife, or his male slave, or his slavegirl, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that your fellow man has. | 10 | |

The table above shows the text of the Decalogue divided into fourteen possible parts. The author has created a puzzle by stating that this text contains ten divine Words. Over the millennia, a few different solutions have been proposed. They can be divided into two ancient "schools" on the basis of whether the two laws that prohibit coveting, (13 and 14 above), should be considered one or two Words. One school is Jewish and the other is Catholic. The Catholic division derives from St. Augustine and reads them as two Words, while Jewish sources combine them into one Word. To offset the combination of 13 and 14, Jewish sources divide the first word according to the Catholic division into two Words. The results are marked in columns C(atholic) and J(ewish) in the table. There are some differences of opinion as to whether statement 1, "I the Lord" is part of the Decalogue. St Augustine and Philo leave it out, while the Talmud takes as the first Word. But everyone who combines 13 and 14 in the table

above has to identify two Words before 6, "You shall not take the name." What is clear from this is that the author of the Torah created ambiguity by stating that there are ten parts. The text does not number the Words, nor can it be parsed easily. The curious reader is forced into action and must search for clues that will lead to the author's ten-part division.

There is one more surprising source of division into ten, and it may be the oldest. The following illustrates how the Decalogue is divided in Torah scrolls used in synagogues.

אנכי יהוה אלהיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים מבית עבדים לא יהיה לך אלהים
אחרים על פני לא תעשה לך פסל וכל תמונה אשר בשמים ממעל ואשר בארץ
מתחת ואשר במים מתחת לארץ לא תשתחוה להם ולא תעבדם כי אנכי יהוה אלהיך
אל קנא פקד עון אבת על בנים על שלשים ועל רבעים לשנאי ועשה חסד לאלפים
לאהבי ולשמרי מצותי 1 לא תשא את שם יהוה אלהיך לשוא כי לא ינקה יהוה
את אשר ישא את שמו לשוא 2
זכור את יום השבת לקדשו ששת ימים תעבד ועשית כל מלאכתך ויום השביעי שבת
ליהוה אלהיך לא תעשה כל מלאכה אתה ובנך ובתך עבדך ואמתך ובהמתך וגרך
אשר בשערך כי ששת ימים עשה יהוה את השמים ואת הארץ את הים ואת כל אשר
בם וינח ביום השביעי על כן ברך יהוה את יום השבת ויקדשהו 3 כבד את אביך
ואת אמך למען יארכון ימיך על האדמה אשר יהוה אלהיך נתן לך 4 לא תרצח
5 לא תנאף 6 לא תגנב 7 לא תענה ברעך עד שקר 8 לא תחמד בית
רעך 9 לא תחמד אשת רעך ועבדו ושורו וחמרו וכל אשר לרעך 10

The text of the Torah is divided into paragraph-like divisions throughout the scroll. There are two kinds of divisions, major and minor. The illustration shows exactly how the Decalogue looks in the scrolls except for the addition of numerals I have placed after each Word. The division is like the Catholic division, with an additional flourish; there is a major break before the third Word, "Remember the Sabbath." There is a great irony connected with the scroll division. In many synagogues, the ark in which the Torah is placed is covered by a curtain embellished with a representation of the tablets of the Decalogue. Invariably, the division

depicted on the curtain, as below, is the “Jewish” division in the table above. That means that the curtain shows a different division than the one contained in the Torah scroll behind the veil.



So we have one division accepted by Jewish commentators at least since the time of Philo, and another, in the Torah scroll, totally ignored. In order to understand just how strange this phenomenon is, it is necessary to know how sacrosanct the written form of the Torah scroll is. If just one letter or one division is incorrect, the scroll cannot be used for public reading. “Paragraph” spacing is ancient, appearing in Dead Sea scrolls, and is discussed in rabbinic literature. It could well be that St. Augustine based his division on the scroll division. Why then has Jewish tradition totally ignored the evidence of the Torah scroll? This is a mystery. I propose a solution to this mystery in Part 5. The following is the arrangement of the Words in consecutive pairs according to the scroll divisions.

Five Pairs of Words According to the Scroll

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>אA I the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slaves. You shall have no other gods beside Me. You shall make you no carved likeness and no image of what is in the heavens above or what is on the earth below or what is in the waters beneath the earth. You shall not bow down to them and you shall not worship them, for I am the Lord your God, a jealous god, reckoning the crime of fathers with sons, with the third generation and with the fourth, for My foes, and doing kindness to the thousandth generation for my friends and for those who keep My commandments.</p> | <p>בA You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not acquit whosoever takes His name in vain.</p> |
| <p>אB Remember the Sabbath day to hallow it. Six days you shall work and you shall do your tasks, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. You shall do no task, you and your son and your daughter, your male slave or slavegirl and your beast and your sojourner who is within your gates. For six days did the Lord make the heavens and earth, the sea and all that is in it, and He rested on the seventh day. Therefore did the Lord bless the Sabbath day and hallow it.</p> | <p>בB Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long on the soil that the Lord your God has given you.</p> |
| <p>אC You shall not murder.</p> | <p>בC You shall not commit adultery.</p> |
| <p>אD You shall not steal.</p> | <p>בD You shall not bear false witness against your fellow man.</p> |
| <p>אE You shall not covet your fellow man's house.</p> | <p>בE You shall not covet your fellow man's wife, or his male slave, or his slavegirl, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that your fellow man has.</p> |

Defining the Five Pairs

I have arranged the Words in consecutive pairs (A-E) above. The first Word in each pair is marked א, and the second ב. This arrangement leads to the identification of five subject

categories for the five pairs. This is the first step of the process of reading the whole tablets.

The appearance of five subjects for the five pairs is an indication that we are beginning to hear a voice which has waited silently here in the Torah for some time. The more certain that we can be about the significance of the five subjects, the more clearly we are hearing the voice of the author. Most of the remainder of this section will be devoted to demonstrating how carefully the five pairs have been constructed, as well as some of the new avenues of interpretation that a reading according to the structure opens. I am also delaying the presentation of my five subjects so that you can go back and try for yourself. See whether you think that the five pairs represent five, possibly related, ideas. You can then use my reading to improve your own, or vice-versa. This is a crucial point for following my method in this book. I present a tool found within the Torah which enables readers to develop creative readings. My interpretations are not to be given any special weight. They are presented as an example of how one person tries to use a structural reading in order to probe the inner unity of the text. Now I will explain how I identify these five pairs of Words.

The last two Words are clearly a pair, beginning with the same words: "You shall not covet." The self-defined common theme is coveting. Also at the beginning of the list we can see a clear pair of Words. Both "I the Lord" and "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain" refer directly to the Lord. This pair of Words is set off according to the scroll paragraphing, as we saw above, by a major division. This is the only major division in the Decalogue and immediately signals an intended arrangement as pairs. (In contrast, according to the alternative ways of

dividing up the Decalogue, this line break comes after the 3rd Word, where it is not particularly meaningful.)³ The third and fourth Words are a structural pair and are similar in several ways:

- They differ from all the other Words in that they are imperatives, "Remember" and "Honor", while the other eight Words are injunctions.
- Both imperatives include a temporal component "six days", "that your days may be long."
- They both state reasons for observing the Words and refer to the Lord in these reasons: "For six days did the Lord make the heavens and earth", "that your days may be long on the soil that the Lord your God has given you." The two reasons have an interesting relationship to each other. The first is historical referring to the creation of the world. The second reason is also within the framework of time, but opposite in direction from the first, pointing to the future rather than the past: enjoying a long life in the future.

There are enough similarities between the third and fourth Words to warrant considering them a pair. Yet, lest there be the slightest doubt as to whether these two Words are a pair, the Torah has Moses drive the point home with the retelling of the ten Words in Deuteronomy 5. There he adds the identical addition to both Words: "as the Lord your God commanded you" (vs. 15-16). This common addition to the third and fourth Words removes any doubt that we are to read these two as a pair. It also points to the common thread, God's involvement with

Rabbi David Stein; private communication

human life. Having now identified the first four and last two Words as three pairs, we are left with four simple injunctions:

אC. You shall not murder.

בC. You shall not commit adultery.

אD. You shall not steal.

בD. You shall not bear false witness against your fellow man.

All four Words refer to social offenses, connections between one person and another, or taking something from another. The first two, murder and adultery, (אC and בC), which are both capital crimes in the Torah, have a bodily component lacking in the next two. They also point to the beginning and end of the life cycle: propagation and death, thereby defining the common subject, human life. The remaining pair, D, includes two ways of depriving someone of what belongs to her or him, be it property or reputation. A brief look at the Words in pairs has yielded the following five provisional subjects:

- A. God
- B. God and time
- C. The extent of human life
- D. Possessions (property and reputation)
- E. Coveting

In the course of the following analysis we can expect to modify some of these definitions.

The Arrangement on the Stone Tablets

Before considering the conceptual pattern created by the five common subjects, I want to anchor the five-pair arrangement in the biblical narrative. This arrangement leads to a new visualization of what might have been the format of the writing on the two stone tablets. If we take the two columns of our table to represent the two stone tablets, then one tablet (א) contains the first Word of each pair and the other tablet (ב) contains the second Word of each pair. Admittedly, this arrangement goes up against all traditional visualizations, which apply a linear block of Words to each tablet, such as the arrangement on the ark cover pictured above with the first five Words on one tablet, and the last five on the other tablet. Despite the lack of references to our arrangement in classical commentaries, the Torah itself, in Exodus 32:15, may describe the proposed arrangement. This is the verse noted earlier as verification. Our tablets are written as two parallel columns. Each tablet is a column. The writing goes across both columns (tablets), from one to the other, alternately. This is clearly the gist of the verse which now justifies the division according to the scroll and the consequent arrangement in consecutive pairs.

What Difference Does It Make?

At this point, a critical reader might well ask “What difference does it make how we arrange the Words, since their content does not change?” There are two answers to this question. First, by arranging the Words correctly we recreate the structure that defines the context of each Word. Whatever knowledge can be derived from context requires an understanding of structure. Each stone tablet is a context for the five Words written on it. We are now in a position to read each tablet as a coherent set. Second, and to my mind more important and

more exciting, identifying the structure enables the reader to view the whole as a composition. This view leads to understanding the organizing principles that underlie the choice of these ten Words to create the Decalogue. If we are right about reading the Words in pairs, then we have a means of discovering new information that was not available before we grouped the Words in pairs. For example, each pair must have a common subject which defines it as a pair. That gives us five new ideas, the subjects of the pairs, which were inaccessible without first identifying the structure. We are beginning to read a text, the existence of which I suggested was hinted at by the narratives of the two sets of tablets. It is a text written between the lines, hidden right in front of our eyes. We can now begin reading the composition composed by means of the five pairs.

Hierarchical Organization of the Pairs

The first evidence, that the five-pair arrangement might lead us to the literary/conceptual plan of the Decalogue, is the hierarchical organization of the five subjects we identified. There is a flow from pair to pair that leads from God and His name in pair A to coveting, an expression of human subjectivity, in pair E. The intermediate pairs demonstrate that there is a graduated passage from the most encompassing of all possible subjects, God, to the most limited, one that may be no more than a chimera, a private human emotion. Pair B is firmly linked to God because it contains references to Him in the reasons it presents for observing the Sabbath and honoring parents. Unlike pair A, however, the subject of pair B is not God or His name, but rather the manner in which He affects His creatures through the medium of time. God does not appear in pair C, which focuses on human life. There may be an implied link to the time theme of pair B, because pair C encompasses the human lifespan from propagation to death. Pair B

deals with time on a divine scale, from the creation of the world to some uncharted future in the Promised Land. In any case, the disappearance of God in pair C places it after pair B in the hierarchy. Pair D, dealing only with property and reputation, is lower in the hierarchy than C which deals with life itself. Finally, pair E has no real identifiable content that transcends pure subjectivity. The hierarchical organization of the pairs is strong evidence that we are beginning to hear the voice of the author.

The Symmetry of the Pairs

Now that we have determined that the five pairs are ordered hierarchically, we will turn to another formal literary device that can be identified in the order of the pairs: symmetry. Several different symmetries can be seen in the structure. The first symmetry can be discerned from the fact that the middle element, pair C, divides the five-pair structure of the Decalogue symmetrically: pairs A and B are connected to God; pairs D and E are connected with property and reputation. It is possible to interpret this symmetry in light of the hierarchical organization. For example, we might say that the structure indicates that human life (pair C) has both an “upper” divine aspect (pairs A, B) as well as a “lower” mundane aspect (pairs D, E). While this observation may be valuable in and of itself, the structure contains two more symmetries which will lead us to even more intriguing observations.

The extremities, pairs A and E, share a similarity, as do the adjacent pairs, B and D. The similarity between God, as He appears in A, and the aspect of people addressed in E is that both describe emotive beings. God describes Himself as “a jealous god” (A) while people are commanded to restrain their passions “you shall not covet (E).” The appearance of emotions in

the extreme pairs may indicate that the theme of pair E is more than “coveting.” It seems that the structure is directing us to compare God Himself (A) with individual human personality or subjectivity (E). The symmetry of pairs B and D will enable us to better understand the implied connection between A and E.

The similarity between pairs B and D is a function of the connection between each of them and the adjacent extreme pair (A and E). It is not difficult to see a connection between coveting (E) and dishonesty (D). The latter may well be the result of the former. In other words, pair D appears to stand in a relationship with pair E which is the opposite of the order of the pairs, if we see D as a result of E. In general terms, we can say that the actions mentioned in pair D are an expression of desire or will, the subject of E: the subjective individual of E expresses elements of that subjectivity by means of the actions in D. We can see the same relationship between pairs A and B. Pair B contains positive actions demanded by God, the subject of A. Observing the Sabbath and honoring parents are concrete expressions of divine will. We will now integrate the symmetries.

The extremities of the five-pair structure point to two unique spiritual entities: God (A) and the subjective individual, the “I” or self (E). Between them are three separate realms of experience: pairs B-D. One is closer to the divine, (B), and describes actions that are a function of divine will (A). The other is closer to the self, (D) and describes actions that are functions of human will (E). The middle pair (C) thus represents the meeting point of God and the self. This view reinforces our original observation that pair C indicates “human life” from conception to death. The physical existence of the person combines actions that are determined by the free-

will, with processes, such as birth and aging, which are beyond the individual's control. The following table summarizes the symmetries of the pairs.

| Pair | Subject of Pair |
|------|------------------------------|
| A | God |
| B | Actions based on divine will |
| C | Physical human life |
| D | Actions based on human will |
| E | Subjective human will |

It could be argued at this point that we are engaging in highly speculative homiletics rather than textual analysis. This appearance is unavoidable considering the type of interpretation that we are being led to by the text. Once we have concluded that the text is based on pairs of Words, we begin dealing with what is written "between the lines", the unwritten common themes of the pairs. Defining the common themes is a synthetic interpretive act, justified by the fact that the text was constructed in pairs. The interpretation should be judged on its ability to integrate the diverse parts of the structure, without forcing it. If possible, it is desirable to find further evidence to support the hypothetical reading. In the case of the symmetry of the pairs, we can find supporting evidence in the internal symmetries of two individual Words, $A\lambda$ and $B\lambda$. We will see that these two Words share important structural patterns with the five-pair structure, based on "conceptual symmetry". (This is a phenomenon that we shall encounter throughout the Torah.) We will begin by examining λB because it captures the exact pattern we have just seen in the five-pair structure, although the order is reversed, beginning with people and ending with God.

The Structure of the Third Word (XB)

| | |
|--|--|
| a. Human holiness | Remember the Sabbath day to hallow it |
| b. Human labor | Six days you shall work and you shall do your tasks but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. |
| | I You shall do no task, you |
| | II your son or daughter |
| c. The interface between the human and the divine: extended self | III your male slave or slavegirl |
| | IV your beast, |
| | V and your sojourner who is within your gates |
| d. Divine labor | For six days did the Lord make the heavens and earth, the sea and all that is in it, and He rested on the seventh day. |
| e. Divine holiness | Therefore did the Lord bless the Sabbath day and hallow it. |

The above chart demonstrates two levels of structure within XB, one that divides it into five elements (a-e) and one that divides element c into five parts (I-V). The central element (c) divides the Word symmetrically between divine and human actions, much like pair C in the larger structure. The Word opens with human sanctification of the Sabbath (a) and closes with the divine parallel (e). The relationship between these clauses is similar to the relationship that we found between pairs A and E, which we described as focused on the divine and the human subjectivity, although in reverse order. The relationship between clauses (b) and (d) is virtually identical to that which we found between pairs B and D: human labor is parallel to “actions that are a function of human will”, and divine labor is parallel to “actions that are a function of divine will.” Here too, the framework around the central element creates a conceptual pattern

that prepares the reader to see the middle as a meeting point between the human and the divine.

Order within the Central Element of the Third Word

| | | |
|-----|--|------------------------------|
| I | You shall do no task, you | Self |
| II | your son and your daughter, | Dependent offspring |
| III | your male slave or slavegirl | Dependent slaves |
| IV | And your beast, | Dependent livestock |
| V | and your sojourner who is within your gates. | Dependent, outside household |

The Meeting Point between God and the Individual

There are two distinct ways to explore the significance of the central element as a link between the human and the divine. In the manner of traditional homiletics, we could note that people take responsibility for other creatures in (c). They are referred to in element (d) as God's creatures, "the Lord made the heavens and earth, the sea and all that is in it." From this point of view, the connection between the human and the divine involves human responsibility for the divine creation. While this conclusion is certainly true, it does not take into account the full depth of the text. In order to do so, it is necessary to relate to the ordered elements of (c). The central element, III, refers to a master/servant relationship. This is the focal point. The separate realms of the divine (d, e) and the human (a, b) meet at the element focused on the master/servant relationship, (c). Word α B focuses on the way the relationship between God and the individual is projected onto the individual's relationship with dependents. The individual's relationship with God is ultimately tested by the way the individual treats those who are dependent on him/her for their well-being.

It is noteworthy that the five-part αB , as well as its five part third element within it (c), are both organized from the close to the distant. The details of c are especially relevant for the light they shine on the full Decalogue structure. The order of the five parts of c establishes a progression from (I) the self, through (II) offspring, (III) dependent slaves, (IV) dependent livestock, and finally (V) the dependent outside the household ($\gamma\lambda$). In the broader framework of αB , this progression takes the form of movement from self to God. By observing this principle of organization within one of the Words, we have justified our identification of this order in the full five-pair structure of the Decalogue. It would seem that Word αB is an inverted fractal of the five-pair structure, in terms of the “divine/human” organizing principle. We will now look at the five-part structure of Word αA which is directly parallel to the five-Word structure.

The Five Parts of the First Word

| | |
|--|---|
| a. God’s action in political history | I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slaves. |
| <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-weight: bold; margin-right: 10px;">Forbidden human actions</div> <div style="margin-right: 20px;">b. Other gods</div> </div> | You shall have no other gods beside Me. |
| <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-weight: bold; margin-right: 10px;">Forbidden human actions</div> <div style="margin-right: 20px;">c. Images</div> </div> | You shall make you no carved likeness and no image of what is in heavens above, or what is on the earth below, or what is in the waters beneath the earth; |
| <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-weight: bold; margin-right: 10px;">Forbidden human actions</div> <div style="margin-right: 20px;">d. Worship of other gods</div> </div> | you shall not bow down to them, and you shall not worship them; |
| e. God’s reaction to acts of individuals | for I am the Lord your God, a jealous god, reckoning the crime of fathers with sons, with the third generation and with the fourth, for My foes (those who hate Me), and doing kindness to the thousandth generation for my friends (those who love me) and for those who keep My commandments. |

We have now examined two five-part structures, the pairs of Words and Word κB and seen that have some common features. Since Word κA also has a five-part structure, we can examine its structure in light of the other two. We will see that all three share elements of structure as well as content. The points noted in the previous five-part structures which will be compared to κA are symmetry, hierarchical organization, and the relationship between humans and the divinity. The first symmetry in κA is that which is formed by the first (a) and last (e) elements to create a framework. They both relate divine acts and contain "I am YHWH your God." They differ in that they contain two different aspects of YHWH, national and personal. In "a" we see Him acting in history without mention of any cause. In "e" He speaks of rewards and punishments for individuals. He refers both to His emotion, "jealous", as well as human emotions, "hate" and "love." This pairing immediately reminds us of pairs A and E of the macro structure which we identified with divine will (A), like κAa , and human will (E), like κAe . The symmetry of κAa and κAe is emphasized by them being first person statements, as opposed to the central elements, $\kappa Ab-d$, which are second person prohibitions.

The integration of the five parts of κA , like the pairs of Words and κB , is accomplished by linking together the first two parts, "a" and "b", and the last two "d" and "e". A clear distinction between the first two and the last two is that "a" and "b" have no mention of human influence on God or gods, while "d" and "e" do. In "d" are references to worship, attempts to influence the gods. In "e", God tells how He is affected by human emotions of love and hate; people influence God. The last observation raises the possibility that the process described by the five parts of κA involves a transition from God's influence on people on the national level in "a" to individuals' influences on God in "e". If so, what then is the place of "gods" and images?

The three central elements, unlike the framework, are all injunctions. If the five-part structure of κA follows the “rules” we have noted in the five pairs as well as in κB , we can make some predictions. First, elements b and d will have a connection that solidifies the symmetry around c. Second, element c will be the fulcrum or meeting point between one concept which combines a and b and another which combines d and e. Third, a hierarchy or flow will link all five elements. We will begin with the symmetry of b and d. There is a textual problem regarding these elements which has been the source of disagreement between exegetes. The problem is based on the question of whether element c is actually connected to b and d or not. Some read c as “a comprehensive prohibition of image-making” (Alter 429) and thus not linked to the surrounding prohibitions, while others read it as specifically referring to cultic icons and therefor linked. Close grammatical analysis supports that “d” refers back to “b”: “You shall have no other gods (b)... and you shall not bow down to them (d).” This reading is supported by the structures of the pairs as well as κB , in which the central element is the focus of the other four symmetrically arranged elements. We can test this hypothesis regarding κA by determining whether “c” is a fulcrum and whether the five parts create a hierarchy or flow.

The author has constructed “c” so that it contains a visual hierarchy within it which also links it to κB : heaven above, the earth, water below, “For six days did the Lord make the heavens and earth, the sea.” The link to Word κB leads back to the days of creation. We will see in Part 2 that the visual hierarchy is found in the days of creation when they are divided into two cycles of three days each. Days one and four are “above”, two and five are “in the middle”, and three and six “below.” This three-tiered image will play a significant role in the analysis of other structures in the Torah, including the book of Leviticus in Part 4. The visual hierarchy in

⌘A provides an aid to understanding the link between the three injunctions and places them within the framework.

“You shall not bow down to them” in “d” refers to downward motion and so connects with the “below” aspect of the visual key. That would imply that “You shall have no other gods beside Me” (b) is connected to the “above” aspect. As the “gods” referred to in “b” are not idols, it is likely that they are the heavenly “hosts”, sun, moon, planets, stars, constellations; all the heavenly powers thought to have influence on the earth. As such, they are “above.” According to this reading, “c” integrates “above” from “b”, and “below” from “d” with the middle, the earth, which is unique to “c”. In this manner the three middle injunctions (b-d) create a transition from an aspect of God which the author places above, the mover of nations, and an aspect which is below, a personal God who responds to the actions of individuals. We were able to see this flow because of two similar five-part structures: Word ⌘B and the five-consecutive-pair arrangement of the ten Words.

The Distinction between the Tablets: Divine Dyads

Now we will turn to another bit of information offered by the Torah that may broaden our understanding of the Decalogue: the Words were written on two stone tablets. What is the significance of the two stone tablets? Those who divided the Words like Philo and the rabbis found that their division offered a conceptually satisfying distinction between the first five Words and the next. They considered that this division reflected God’s reason for dividing the Words between two tablets. The first five Words, according to their division, all mention God, while the last five do not. Consequently, they placed the first five on one tablet and the next

five on the second. One tablet was considered to contain laws between people and God, while the other contained laws between people and people. Apparently, this division was so satisfying that they were willing to ignore the way it corrupted the literary coherence of the first Word according to the scroll, as well as the text's insistence that there be two separate injunctions against coveting. Even though we have found strong evidence that the scroll division arranged in pairs reflects a coherent literary plan, we must still explain why the Words were written on two separate tablets. What additional meaning could this impart?

The arrangement of the Words in five pairs, leads to seeing them arranged on the tablets in such a way that the first of each pair is on one tablet and the second is on the other. This is the way we explained Ex. 32:15, the Words were written "across" from each other. So we now have two separate groups of Words on the two tablets, \aleph (1, 3, 5, 7, 9) and \beth (2, 4, 6, 8, 10). The fact that they are divided between the tablets would seem to indicate that we should find a meaningful distinction between groups \aleph and \beth . Furthermore, the distinction should be fundamental enough to justify the divine act of creating two tablets. In other words, we are searching for a "divine dyad", one of such fundamental importance that it was embodied in the two stone tablets which God created to give to Moses.

In order to clarify the concept of "divine dyad", as well to gather evidence that might shed light on the stone tablets, we will examine several other "divine dyads", pairs connected with divine creation. One of them is obviously a pair, the two special trees in the Garden of Eden. Another pair is the two Adams of Genesis 1 and 2. A different dyad connected with the creation is less obvious. It is based on dividing the six days of creation into two three-day cycles. Finally,

we will consider one more pair associated with the Decalogue, the two different sets of stone tablets. We will see that all these “divine dyads” share a common characteristic vis-à-vis their “twofoldness”. After examining these additional dyads, we will see that their common characteristic applies to the tablets of the Decalogue as well.

One and Many in the Creation

It is well known that the six days of creation form three pairs: days one and four speak of light, days two and five the sky and water and what lives in them, days three and six the earth and what lives on it. What is less well known is that there is a fixed relationship between the first three days and their parallels in days four to six. On the first three days God creates and names individual entities, light, sky and earth. Each of the three is defined by separation. God separates light from darkness; the sky separates above from below; and the earth is revealed by the separation of the water into oceans. On the next three days God creates classes of objects and does not name them: heavenly lights on day four, birds and fish on day five, terrestrial animals and people on day six. In contrast to the “separated” creations of days 1-3, the creations of days 4-6 are all “connected”. On days 5 and 6 the creations are told to be fruitful and multiply. On day 4 the lights “rule” and serve as “signs”. So the six days can be read as two cycles, 1-3 and 4-6, distinguished by principles of “one and many” and “separated and connected”. The fact that God created the world in a manner that incorporates or exemplifies these dyads implies that they are to be considered principles of divine metaphysics. Perhaps even more significantly, it testifies that philosophical and metaphysical principles are embedded in the structure of the biblical narrative. This is the type of knowledge that would justify the creation of two stone tablets. We will return to the creation narrative in Part 2.

The Guarding Cherubim

Another dyad rooted in the creation story will shed further light on this investigation, the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad. The Torah connects the two stone tablets with the two named trees in the Garden of Eden. The connection is made by means of the appearance of Cherubim in association with both the tablets and the trees. The function of the Cherubim in both cases is similar. Regarding the tablets, the Cherubim were attached to the cover of the Ark containing the tablets. They are described with their wings spread out as סוככים (covering) the Ark. While the Hebrew is usually understood as “cover”, it can also have the sense of “protect.” The Cherubim were placed outside of the Garden of Eden in order לשמור (to protect). In addition, God is present in the Holy of Holies where He speaks with Moses. Similarly, God is present in the Garden of Eden where Adam hears His voice “מתהלך” (walking about). So the parallel presence of the Cherubim, combined with the similarity of their functions and the presence of God’s voice, suggests that we look for a parallel between the two tablets of stone, and the two trees.

The Trees

The function of the Tree of Life is, apparently, to maintain the life of the person who eats from it. The effect is limited to the eater and is essentially invisible to an observer. The effects of eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad can be observed from the change that took place in Adam and Eve. The Torah tells us that before eating from the Tree they were naked, but they were not ashamed. After eating they were ashamed and covered themselves with fig leaves. Shame, as opposed to life - from the Tree of Life, requires the presence of another person. The text is very specific to use a plural reflexive form of the verb translated

“were not ashamed”, indicating that it is a social emotion, one requiring a common set of values. These common values were received by eating the forbidden fruit. Therefore, one of the differences between the two trees is that the Tree of Life has a purely personal, existential, effect, while the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad has a social, or relational, effect. Moreover, the name of the Tree of Knowledge is formulated in a manner that implies the use of language. “Good and Bad” are linguistic attributes. Therefore the Tree of Knowledge presupposes the use of language, which is not true of the Tree of Life. Speech, being an act of social intercourse requires an “other”. So we have yet another indication that the Tree of Knowledge is in some way “social” while the Tree of Life is personal. There is a similarity between this distinction between the trees and the distinction we saw between the two three-day cycles in the creation. The first cycle, days 1-3, like the Tree of Life, concerns individual entities, while the second cycle, days 4-6, like the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad concerns connected group entities. We will see that the conceptual similarity between dyadic elements of God’s creation in the early chapters of Genesis extends to His creation in Exodus, the stone tablets: the primal dyads of “one and many” “separate and connected” are embodied by the two tablets. Tablet א focuses on the individual, and tablet ב focuses on social interactions.

Two Adams: Humankind and “the Man”

The name “Adam” is used in both creation narratives. However, in the second narrative in Gen 2, it appears invariably with the definite article “ה” (the), consequently I shall refer to him as “the Man.” He is created as a singular individual from the dust of the earth and the divine life force in Genesis 2:7: “Then the LORD God formed the Man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the Man became a living soul.” Adam of the

first chapter appears without the definite article in Genesis 1:26 “And God said: ‘Let us make Adam in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion....” I will refer to Adam of the first chapter as “Humankind”. Humankind were created male and female and together given the collective name “Adam.” So the two creation narratives introduce us to another divine dyad based on the distinction between one and many, singular and connected. The Man of ch. 2 is singular and so unconnected that God Himself observes that “It is not good that the Man should be alone; I will make him a sustainer beside him (Genesis 2:18).” Humankind in ch. 1 are created in the image and likeness of an aspect of the divinity which itself is expressed in a plural form, “in our image, after our likeness.” From here, it would appear that the dyad of “one and many” is so fundamental that it in some way touches the very identity of God. The last dyad is the two sets of stone tablets. We have already seen that the dyad “one and many” applies to them; the first tablets for the many and the second for Moses. We have now examined four examples of the divine dyad “one and many”; one regarding the two sets of tablets, and three from creation narratives: the two cycles of days, the Edenic trees and the two Adams. We will now see that this dyad is also associated with the two sets of Words we have identified with two tablets, א and ב.

Identifying the Trees with the Tablets

The names given to the two trees in the Garden are closely associated with the central pair of Words, אC and בC. Word אC prohibits killing and is thus an obvious link to the Tree of Life. In order to see the connection between בC, “Do not commit adultery”, and the Tree of Knowledge, it is only necessary to note that the Hebrew word for “knowledge” is identical to the word for carnal knowledge, as in “Adam *knew* Eve.” So the central pair of words virtually

labels the tablets for us with their parallel Edenic trees. We have already seen that these trees reflect the divine dyad “one and many”, so the association of each tree with the central Word of one of the tablets may indicate that the distinction between one and many is the divine dyad we are searching for. If so, tablet א, linked to the tree of life, would embody the principle “one” or “separate” and tablet ב the principle of “many” or “connected”.

The Objects of Pair E

Pair E provides us with another piece of evidence to apply to our comparison of the tablets. Both Words prohibit the same action, coveting. This enabled us to easily point to the common subject of the pair. Since the verbs are identical, the distinction between the Words must be found in the objects of the verb. Word אE contains a single object, a house. Word בE, on the other hand, contains multiple objects, “your fellow man’s wife, or his male or female slave, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your fellow man’s.” The distinction between a single object and multiple objects is maintained in the version of the Decalogue in Deuteronomy. There, although the two Words in Deuteronomy have different verbs and different objects than in Ex., the Word parallel to אE has a single object while the Word parallel to בE has multiple objects. It would appear then, that the distinction between אE and בE, one and many, is consistent with the hint we gathered from the connection with the Edenic trees, and that the divine dyad underlying the creation of two tablets is indeed related to the dyad of the six days of creation, “one and many”, with tablet א expressing “one” and tablet ב “many”.

The Dyad of "Separate and Connected"

Our third observation is that there is a plethora of interpersonal relationships mentioned on tablet ב which are lacking on tablet א. Words בB, בC, and בE all refer, whether directly or indirectly, to marriage, while no Word on א does. Although בD does not refer to marriage, it does refer to an act that requires two people, witnessing: "One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth; at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall a matter be established" (Deut 19:15). Similarly, בA refers to taking an oath, an act carried out in a court. None of the laws on tablet א deal with these types of relationships. To clarify this point, we can take the example of pair D. "You shall not steal" (אD) has a thief and a victim, but no implied connection between them other than the crime itself. "You shall not bear false witness against your fellow man" (בD), as we have noted, implies collusion between two or more lying witnesses who testify against their "fellow man." So there are additional social components in the laws of tablet ב. This last point indicates a link with the dyad of the two three-day cycles of creation that is more than simply "one and many". We also saw that the first three-day cycle is characterized by separation while the second cycle is characterized by connections, such as "be fruitful and multiply." So the dyad "separate – connected", as in "the Man - Humankind" is also embodied in the tablets. This completes our investigation of divine dyads and their application to the two stone tablets.

The Decalogue is a True Table

We have now found two different types of organization in the two tablets of the Decalogue. They can be described as "horizontal and vertical." By "horizontal", I mean the division into the five hierarchically ordered pairs. The vertical organization was highlighted by God arranging the

Words on two tablets according to the divine dyad. The cumulative effect of the two different organizing principles is to identify the two tablet format as a true table. Each individual law is a function of two organizing principles, the subject of its pair (row) and the subject of its tablet (column). The tablets can be considered a type of Cartesian coordinate system representing “conceptual space”. Each point (Word) in the plane has a conceptual value defined by the intersection of two concepts, the horizontal and the vertical. In conclusion, it would appear that the Decalogue was conceived and constructed as a two dimensional text, a table or weave. In the Decalogue, the pairs can be viewed as weft threads and the tablets as warp threads. All of the Torah is composed of woven text. The stone tablets, engraved by God, are the paradigm. We will see in the next section that the creation is also a weave.

