

Moshe Kline

# The Exoteric Decalogue

*An exoteric book contains then two teachings: a popular teaching of an edifying character, which is in the foreground; and a philosophic teaching concerning the most important subject, which is indicated only between the lines.*

*In Plato's Banquet, Alcibiades--that outspoken son of outspoken Athens--compares Socrates and his speeches to certain sculptures which are very ugly from the outside, but within have most beautiful images of things divine. The works of the great writers of the past are very beautiful even from without. And yet their visible beauty is sheer ugliness, compared with the beauty of those hidden treasures which disclose themselves only after very long, never easy, but always pleasant work. This always difficult but always pleasant work is, I believe, what philosophers had in mind when they recommended education.*

Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*

## **Introduction**

Leo Strauss argued that there are ancient texts which consist of two strata: one, exoteric, created for the broad public, and one, esoteric, for the initiated. In this article we will see that Strauss' description can be applied to two of the most popular ancient Hebrew texts, the Decalogue in Ex. 20, and the tractate *Avot* (Fathers) from the third century CE *Mishnah*. In the course of the analysis we will demonstrate that *Avot* was conceived and constructed as a two-faced text, exoteric and esoteric. We will focus on a section of *Avot* which demonstrates the existence of a heretofore unknown reading of the Decalogue. Once the esoteric reading of *Avot* is linked to an esoteric reading of the Decalogue, the *Avot* text can be read as a commentary on the Decalogue. In other

words, the ancient Rabbis had an understanding of the nature of the Decalogue which, apparently, has been preserved only in the structure of the Mishnah.

We will see that there is a formal parallel between the literary structure of the Decalogue in Ex. 20 and the structure of part of the first chapter of the Mishnah tractate *Avot*, or “Fathers”. The keys to seeing this parallel are new readings of these two texts. Both the Decalogue and *Avot* seem to be agglomerations of material incorporated into a text lacking literary coherence. The major part of this article will demonstrate that, despite appearances, both texts have been constructed according to a highly sophisticated literary paradigm. Understanding the paradigm makes it possible to read them as formal compositions rather than loosely formed collections.

I will argue that the author of the Mishnah created the parallel in *Avot* in order to corroborate the authenticity of the tradition which guided him in formatting all of the Mishnah. Although the purview of this article is limited in scope, it is based on an extensive research project which included analysis of the literary structures of all the chapters of the Mishnah, as well as a full literary-structural analysis of the Torah. Previously, I have demonstrated that chapters of the Mishnah were constructed according to a non-linear pattern that can be viewed as a table (*Alei Sefer* 14 (1987)) and that the literary units of Leviticus can be viewed as tables (*The Biblical Historian*, 2/1 (2005) (*JHS* volume 8 article 17 (2008))). In this article I will begin the process of establishing that the author of the Mishnah used the formal structure of the Torah as a model when constructing the Mishnah. In so doing, I will show that an understanding of the literary format of the Mishnah can shed light on the Torah.

The article has three sections, 1) The Decalogue in Pairs, 2) The Pairs of Fathers, 3) Comparing the Decalogue with the Fathers' text. The following is a brief summary of the arguments developed in each section.

### **The Decalogue in Pairs**

The first section focuses on the Decalogue of Exodus 20. The Torah says that this text contains ten Words (דברים) but does not indicate how to divide the text into ten components. Different traditions have developed regarding this division. None of them base themselves on persuasive literary evidence. I will show that the division in the Masoretic Text (MT), which appears in the Torah scrolls read in synagogues, should be preferred because it leads to a reading that integrates all ten Words in a coherent document. The document itself consists of five consecutive pairs of Words organized hierarchically, from the first pair, which focuses on God, to the last pair, which is limited to subjective human experience, "Do not covet." Once this internal structure is recognized, it leads to seeing a new arrangement of the Words on the two stone tablets. They should be seen as written in pairs across the two tablets, the first Word on one and the second Word on the other, the third on the first, etc. Thus one tablet contains the "odd" Words and the other the "evens." This arrangement may be the literal meaning of the otherwise difficult verse in Exodus 32:15, "לחת כתבים משני עבריהם, מזה ומזה הם כתבים", "(the writing was) written across both tablets; (alternately), on one and (then) the other, were they written."

## **The Pairs Structure in Avot 1**

The second section of this article deals with the “pairs” structure in the first chapter of Mishnah Avot. It is composed of five pairs of aphorisms attributed to five successive pairs of sages. While immensely popular, this text has remained essentially inscrutable due to an inexplicable gap between its subject-framework and the content of the aphorisms that are quoted in it. The stated framework of Avot 1 is the dissemination of esoteric knowledge that Moses received at Sinai. However, the content of the aphorisms quoted in the names of those who are introduced as possessing that esoteric knowledge is mostly trivial (e.g. “avoid bad neighbors”). The disparity is so great that one might conclude that the author intended to create cognitive dissonance in the reader. We will resolve this dissonance by means of a close reading of the aphorisms of the five pairs, based on the pioneering work of the Maharal of Prague (1525-1609). This reading will reveal the pairs unit as a highly crafted literary construct based on a religious-academic hierarchy. Each successive pair addresses members of a higher level group. I will propose that this complex literary structure is meant to capture some aspect of the esoteric knowledge hinted at throughout the section in terms of the dissemination of esoteric teachings. In other words, Avot is an exoteric text.

## **The Mishnah Imitates the Torah**

The closing section of this study is devoted to a comparison of the two earlier sections. The comparison is doubly justified, both by the contexts in which the structures appear and by the similarity of their formats. Both the Decalogue and the first chapter of Avot are rooted in Mt. Sinai, since the opening words of Avot are “Moses received torah from Sinai.” Additionally, both literary structures contain five

hierarchically ordered pairs. They differ in that the Decalogue is ordered from the “top” down, while the Avot pairs are ordered from the “bottom” up. However, when the Avot pairs are inverted, so that they can be read from the top down, rather than from the bottom up, a rich set of linguistic parallels appears between the Avot pairs and the respective Decalogue pairs. The parallels are so many and so close, that it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the author of the Mishnah developed the structure in Avot in order to reflect his understanding of the arrangement of the Words on the stone tablets. I will propose the hypothesis that the author of the Mishnah constructed this section to demonstrate that he possessed the esoteric knowledge reportedly passed from Moses to Joshua, and employed it in constructing the Mishnah.

## Section 1: The Decalogue

<sup>2:7</sup> וידבר יהוה אליכם מתוך האש קול דברים אתם שמעו ותמונה אינכם ראו זולתי קול <sup>7:7</sup>  
ויגד לכם את בריתו אשר צוה אתכם לעשות עשרת הדברים ויכתבם על שני לחות אבנים

*12 And the Lord spoke to you from the midst of the fire. The sound of words you did hear but perceived no image did you see except the sound.*

*13 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

### Introduction

Unless otherwise noted, all references to the “Decalogue” in this article are to Ex. 20:1-13. As already noted, I will refer to the ten parts of the Decalogue as “Words.” This section will deal with reading the ten Words as a composition rather than a collection lacking internal integrity. The Torah has simplified the process of analyzing the structure of the Decalogue, while emphasizing its importance, by informing us that the text should be divided into ten parts. However, it does not inform us where to make the divisions. There are two major traditions regarding the division of the text into ten parts, the rabbinical, as evidenced in the [Mekhilta](#) (which for our purposes is similar to the Protestant reading), and the [Augustinian](#), or Catholic. They differ in two places, one a function of the other. The Torah begins the last two injunctions of the Decalogue with the phrase “You shall not covet.” The first has a simple object “You shall not covet your fellow man’s house.” The second has multiple objects, “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.” The Rabbis count these two injunctions as one Word while St. Augustine counted each as a separate Word. In order to reach a count of ten, the Mekhilta has “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain” as the third

Word, preceding it with: “I the Lord...” and “You shall have no other...” St. Augustine combines these two into one Word. There are no differences in the division of the other six Words.

It is interesting that the Masoretic Text (hereafter the “MT”), the one that appears in the Torah scroll read in synagogues, is divided according to the Augustinian, Catholic, division, even though references to the Decalogue in rabbinic literature divide the text differently than the MT. It is possible then, that the rabbis ignored an ancient Jewish tradition, as found in the MT, regarding the division of the Decalogue. I will discuss this possibility in the final section of this article.

The fact that the text contains two injunctions that begin “Do not covet,” would seem to be enough to decide in favor of the MT division. Why would the text have separated “Your fellow man’s house” from the list beginning with “your fellow man’s wife” if not to create two separate Words? As strong as this argument is, there is another even stronger reason to accept the MT division. The reason is based on literary structure underlying the ten parts of the MT. Analysis of the ten MT Words reveals that they form five consecutive pairs of Words with each pair sharing a common subject. The following table arranges the ten Words in five consecutive pairs according to the MT division. The translation is Alter’s.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses*, (New York, N. Y.: W. W. Norton, 2004)

### Five Pairs of Words According to the MT

<p><b>1A</b></p> <p>כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים      לֹא יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל פְּנֵי כֹּהֵן לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה לְךָ פֶסֶל וְכֹל      תְּמוּנָה אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל וְאֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת וְאֲשֶׁר בַּמַּיִם      מִתַּחַת לָאָרֶץ כֹּהֵן לֹא תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לָהֶם וְלֹא תַעֲבֹדֵם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה      אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵל קָדָשׁ עֹנֵן אֲבַת עַל בָּנִים עַל שְׁלֹשִׁים וְעַל רִבְעִים      לִשְׁנָאִי כֹהֵן וְעָשָׂה חֶסֶד לְאֵלִפַּיִם לְאֹהֲבָיו וּלְשֹׁמְרֵי מִצְוֹתַי {ס}</p>	<p><b>1B</b></p> <p>כִּי לֹא תִשָּׂא אֶת שֵׁם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׁוּא כִּי לֹא יִנְקֶה יְהוָה אֶת      אֲשֶׁר יִשָּׂא אֶת שְׁמוֹ לְשׁוּא {פ}</p>
<p><b>2A</b></p> <p>כִּי זָכֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ כֹהֵן שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ כֹּל      מְלֹאכְתְּךָ כֹהֵן וְיוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבָּת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה כֹּל      מְלֹאכָה אַתָּה וּבִנְךָ וּבִתְּךָ עֹבֵדְךָ וְאֹמֵתְךָ וּבְהֵמֶתְךָ וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר      בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ כֹהֵן כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ אֶת      הַיָּם וְאֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּם וַיִּנַּח בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי עַל כֵּן בֵּרַךְ יְהוָה אֶת      יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת וַיְקַדְּשֵׁהוּ {ס}</p>	<p><b>2B</b></p> <p>כִּי יִכָּבֵד אֶת אֲבִיךָ וְאֶת אִמְךָ לְמַעַן יֵאָרְכּוּן יְמֵיךָ עַל הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר      יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ {ס}</p>
<p><b>3A</b></p> <p>כִּי לֹא תִרְצַח {ס}</p>	<p><b>3B</b></p> <p>לֹא תִנְאַף {ס}</p>
<p><b>4A</b></p> <p>לֹא תִגְנוֹב {ס}</p>	<p><b>4B</b></p> <p>לֹא תַעֲנֶה בְרַעַךְ עַד שִׁקְרָה {ס}</p>
<p><b>5A</b></p> <p>כִּי לֹא תַחְמַד בֵּית רַעַךְ {ס}</p>	<p><b>5B</b></p> <p>לֹא תַחְמַד אֶת רַעַךְ וְעַבְדוֹ וְאֹמְתוֹ וְשׁוֹרׁוֹ וְחֹמְרוֹ וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר לְרַעַךְ      {פ}</p>



<b>1A</b>	<b>1B</b>
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.	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.
<b>2A</b>	<b>2B</b>
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.	Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long on the soil that the Lord your God has given you.
<b>3A</b>	<b>3B</b>
You shall not murder.	You shall not commit adultery.
<b>4A</b>	<b>4B</b>
You shall not steal.	You shall not bear false witness against your fellow man.
<b>5A</b>	<b>5B</b>
You shall not covet your fellow man's house.	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.

### Defining the Five Pairs

I have arranged the Words in pairs (1-5) above. The first Word in each pair is marked A, and the second B. This arrangement leads to the identification of five subject categories for the five pairs. 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, in the other place where the MT differs from the Mekhilta, 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 setoff according to the Masoretic paragraphing. The only major division (*parashah p'tuchah*) in the Decalogue occurs after the 2nd Word, which 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.)<sup>2</sup> 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.

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Rabbi David Stein; private communication

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

3A. You shall not murder.

3B. You shall not commit adultery.

4A. You shall not steal.

4B. 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 (3A and 3B), 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, 4, 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:

- 1) God
- 2) God and time
- 3) The extent of human life
- 4) Possessions (property and reputation)
- 5) Coveting

In the course of the analysis we will 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 God gave to Moses, then one tablet (A) contains the first Word of each pair and the other tablet (B) 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. For example, Philo places the first five Words according to the rabbinic division 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.

## **Visualizing the Decalogue without Miracles**

This is how the Torah describes the writing on the tablets: "*The tablets were written across from each other: (alternately) on one and on the other were they written.*" (Exodus 32.15) This description is the only evidence we have concerning the writing on the tablets. The Hebrew phrase which I have paraphrased, "across from each other", literally means "from both sides." The traditional rabbinic commentators had great difficulty with this phrase. They could not find a simple meaning for the words, and so gave them a miraculous meaning. They said that this verse describes the inscription on the tablets as piercing the stone from "one side to the other." This interpretation required a double miracle. According to it, the letters appeared the same on both sides of each tablet, even though one side should have appeared reversed. The

second miracle involved Hebrew letters with closed shapes, like an O. Although the letters were completely cut around, they miraculously stood in midair. I do not want to be accused of abrogating miracles, but my reading of the text does not require one at this point.

There is no other biblical example of עברים (sides) meaning front and back, as in the rabbinic interpretation. In Sam I 14:4 this term is used together with זה וזה (one and the other), as in Ex 32, to describe a narrow pass: “rocky crag on the one side (מהעבר ההה), and a rocky crag on the other side (מהעבר הזה).” It is clear from this verse in Samuel that the terms should be understood as “side by side” rather than front and back. This supports our reading that the Words were written in parallel across both tablets: Word one on the first, Word two on the second, Word three returning to the first tablet, and so on. This is precisely the format of our five-pair table. It would appear then that the literal sense of Exodus 32:15 is that the Words were arranged as five pairs and that each tablet is non-linear, one containing the “odd” Words, and the other containing the “even” Words.

### **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. 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.

### **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 1 to coveting, an expression of human subjectivity, in pair 5. 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 2 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 1, however, the subject of pair 2 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 3, which focuses on human life. There may be an implied link to the time theme of pair 2, because pair 3 encompasses the human lifespan from propagation to death. Pair 2 deals with time on a divine scale, from the creation to some uncharted future in the Promised Land. In any case, the disappearance of God in pair 3 places it after pair 2 in the hierarchy. Pair 4, dealing only with property and reputation,

is lower in the hierarchy than 3 which deals with life itself. Finally, pair 5 has no real identifiable content that transcends pure subjectivity. The hierarchical organization of the pairs may be, in itself, sufficient reason to accept the MT division and reject the rabbinic division.

### **Reading Between the lines**

At this point, we have begun reading, to use Strauss' words, "between the lines" of the Decalogue; seeing meaning that does not appear in the linear exposition of the Words. The meanings we are beginning to deal with are derived from a contextual reading of five pairs of Words, from the overall structure. We are attempting to determine meanings that were embedded in the structure. We will continue to develop this structural reading as we proceed.

### **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 3, divides the five-pair structure of the Decalogue symmetrically: pairs 1 and 2 are connected to God; pairs 4 and 5 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 3) has both an "upper" divine aspect (pairs 1, 2) as well as a "lower" mundane aspect (pairs 4, 5). 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 next two symmetries we will examine can also be described as a chiasm in an “A, B, C, B, A” format. The extremities, pairs 1 and 5, share a similarity, as do the adjacent pairs, 2 and 4. The similarity between God, as He appears in 1, and the aspect of people addressed in 5 is that both describe sentient emotive beings. God describes Himself as “a jealous god” (1) while people are commanded to restrain their passions “you shall not covet (5).” The appearance of emotions in the extreme pairs may indicate that the theme of pair 5 is more than “coveting”. It seems that the structure is directing us to compare God Himself (1) with individual human personality or subjectivity (5). The symmetry of pairs 2 and 4 will enable us to better understand the implied connection between 1 and 5.

The similarity between pairs 2 and 4 is a function of the connection between each of them and the adjacent extreme pair (1 and 5). It is not difficult to see a connection between coveting (5) and dishonesty (4). The latter may well be the result of the former. In other words, pair 4 appears to stand in a relationship with pair 5 which is the opposite of the order of the pairs, if we see 4 as a result of 5. In general terms, we can say that the actions mentioned in pair 4 are an expression of desire or will, the subject of 5: the subjective individual of 5 expresses elements of that subjectivity by means of the actions in 4. We can see the same relationship between pairs 1 and 2. Pair 2 contains positive actions demanded by God, the subject of 1. 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 (1) and the subjective individual, the “I” or self (5). Between them are three separate realms of experience: pairs 2-4. One is closer to the divine, (2), and describes actions that are a function of divine will (1). The other is closer to the self, (4) and describes actions that are functions of human will (5). The middle pair (3) thus represents the meeting point of God and the self. This view reinforces our original observation that pair 3 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
1	God
2	Actions based on divine will
3	Physical human life
4	Actions based on human will
5	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, 1A and 2A. We will see that these two Words share important structural patterns with the five-pair structure, based on conceptual symmetry. We will begin by examining 2A because it captures the exact pattern we have just seen in the five-pair structure. After that, we will examine other structures in the Torah which share the five-part paradigm.

### The Structure of the Third Word (2A)

a. Human holiness		Remember the Sabbath day to hallow it
b. Human labor		Six days you shall work and you shall do your tasks
	I	but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. 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 made the heavens and earth, the sea and all that is in it,
e. Divine holiness		and He rested on the seventh day. Therefore did the Lord bless the Sabbath day and hallow it.

The above chart demonstrates two levels of structure within 2A, 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 3 in the larger structure. The Word opens with human observance 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 1 and 5, 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 2 and 4: 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 (Other?)

### **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 of the Word. 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 2A focuses on the way the relationship between God and the individual is projected on 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 2A, 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 (גר). In the broader framework of 2A, 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 2A 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 1A.

### **The Five Parts of the First Word**

a. I the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slaves.

- b. You shall have no other gods **beside Me**.
- c. 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**;
- d. you shall not bow down **to them**, and you shall not worship them;
- e. 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.

The first Word, according to the MT, has five distinct components, which I have marked a-e. These five parts are markedly symmetrical. The first and last elements, (a, e) provide a balanced framework, an *inclusio*, for the central substructure, (b-d).

- a. I the Lord am your God...
- b. You shall have no other...
- c. You shall not...
- d. you shall not...
- e. for I the Lord your God...

Both of the extreme elements open with "I the Lord your God" speaking in the first person about Himself (a, e). In the middle (b-d) are three injunctions. We can then speak of two substructures: one, the framework containing the Lord's first-person revelation, and the other, the middle, b-d, containing the three prohibitions against idolatry. Taking the three injunctions as a block, the Word is temporally ordered. The Lord first refers to the past: "who brought you out of the land of Egypt"(a). The fifth element relates to the future: "doing kindness to the thousandth generation"(e). The imperatives of the middle block are placed in the present. Both elements of the outer framework have the Lord's actions in common, as opposed to the middle section that

refers only to human activity, albeit, vis-à-vis God. We should also note that in the last element (e) the Lord's actions are determined by human actions, “for my friends and for those who keep My commandments”, which is not true of the redemption from Egypt (a). The realm of human action is thus encompassed by the divine, while influencing divine actions in the future. The central structure (b-d), the realm of human actions, spans the gap between history (a) and eschatology (e), and thus points to a fundamental characteristic of the text: it is ordered. Although the observation that the first Word is ordered chronologically may seem at first to be of marginal significance, it takes on added importance when we note that there are two more ordered triads within the first Word.

The central structure, (b-d) is organized according to a triad of persons, ordered from the first to the third: (b) beside Me, (c) make you, (d) to them. Element (c) is composed of three spatially ordered components: “that is in the heavens above, or what is on the earth below, or that is in the waters beneath the earth.” So, the three triads point to three “dimensions” arranged like nested dolls: time (a-e), person (b-d), space, (c). I will illustrate this in the following table.

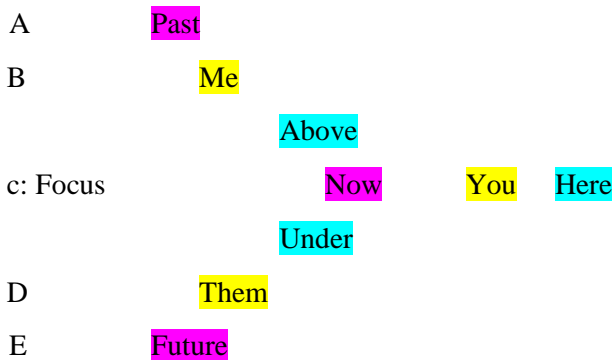
**The First Word: Five Parts and Three Triads**

I		a	b	c			d	e
II	Time	Past	Present					Future
III	Person		Me	You			Them	
IV	Place			Above	Earth	Below		

The above table is a graphic representation of the symmetrically layered structure of the first Word. Line I of the table indicates that the Word is divided into five parts, a-e. Line II shows that the five elements of the Word group themselves into three

subgroups, based on time and ordered from past to future. In line III we see that the central element of the second line divides into three ordered grammatical persons: first, second and third. Directly under the central element of line III, "you", we see the spatial triad within c: above the earth, earth, below the earth. This triple symmetry of the first Word, according to the MT division, is completely lost in all other renderings of the Decalogue. (It is interesting to note that these three dimensions (time, person, space) are mentioned in *Sefer Yetzirah*, perhaps the oldest extant book of Jewish esoterica, using the terms *shanah*, time; *nefesh*, person; and *olam*, world.) The overall effect of the symmetry is to focus on the center point that is defined by the middle element of each of the three dimensions:

### The Focus of the First Word



The above illustration is a slight variation on the previous one. In it, I have emphasized the center point of the Word, which is the intersection of the central elements of the three dimensions of the Word: present tense, second person and the earth. The overall effect is to focus on (a relationship between) an I and a thou, in the here and now! The first Word of the Decalogue announces through the middle element of its five-part structure, albeit indirectly, that its focus is the individual's relationship

with God in the here and now. This is precisely the point at which we found the interface between the individual and God in the five-pair arrangement of the Decalogue, as well as in the five-part structure of Word 2A.

### **Five Editions of the Decalogue in the Torah**

We have seen that the five-part pattern we identified in the five-pair structure of the Decalogue also defines the organization of two individual Words, as well as a microstructure within one of the Words. We will now see that the same pattern can be identified in a five-part macrostructure based on the Decalogue. The Torah refers to five significantly different editions of the Decalogue. According to Moses' retelling in Deuteronomy, the Ten Words were delivered by God twice, once orally, "He declared to you the covenant which he commanded you to observe, the Ten Words", and once in writing, "and He inscribed them on two tablets of stone." In fact they were written twice by God, once on the first tablets which He made, and then on the second tablets which Moses made. That makes three transmissions, once in God's unmediated speech, once on divine tablets and once on human tablets. Besides these three divine editions, the text of the Decalogue appears in the Torah twice with variations. First, in Exodus, according to the God's words, and again, retold by Moses, in Deuteronomy in slightly different words. So there are in fact five different "editions" of the Ten Words mentioned in the Torah. Each of the five editions reflects a different degree of divine revelation:

1. God's spoken words
2. God's writing on God's tablets



3. God's writing on Moses' tablets
4. Moses' writing of God's words
5. Moses' writing of Moses' words.

I placed the oral revelation at Sinai at the top of the list because God revealed Himself there without the intermediary of a written text. All four of the following editions share the limitation of the written word. The edition in Deuteronomy is last on the list because it is presented as a retelling nearly forty years after the event. The three intermediate stages, 2-4, are ranked in order of the degree of divine involvement in the preparation of the text. Both sets of tablets were written by God. However, the first set was produced entirely by God, whereas Moses had to prepare the medium of the third edition, the second tablets. The first three editions have in common miraculous forms of divine communication, as opposed to the last two editions which were written by Moses. The list also divides symmetrically. The first two editions required no human agency while the last two involved no miraculous divine act. The central element combines these two characteristics to create a symmetrical pattern. While the second tablets, like the last two editions, were produced by Moses, their content, like the first two, was communicated by God without human agency.

The hierarchical organization of the five editions of the Decalogue is very similar to the pattern we have identified in the five pairs of Words as well as in the third Word (2A). In the following table, the hierarchy of 2A has been inverted in order to emphasize its relationship to the other two five-part structures.

### Three Five-Part Structures

Subjects of Five Pairs	Microstructure: The Sabbath (2A) (inverted order)	Macrostructure The Five Editions
1 God	God sanctifies	God's spoken words
2 Actions based on divine will	God labors	God's writing on God's tablets
3 Physical Human Life	Interface between divine and human	God's writing on Moses' tablets
4 Actions based on human will	People labor	Moses' writing of God's words
5 Subjective human will	People Sanctify	Moses' writing of Moses' words.

We have now seen three examples of the five-part hierarchical paradigm which has God and man at the extremes of the structures. They are found in three different levels of organization within the Torah: within a single Word of the Decalogue, across the five pairs of the Decalogue, and as a principle of organization spanning whole books of the Torah with regard to the Decalogue. The same five-part paradigm may also be found in the arrangement of the Torah in five books. The three central books, Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, are all based on God's interaction with Moses. The first book, Genesis, contains much narrative about God, but Moses does not appear in it. Deuteronomy is written in a different voice than the first four books. It is entirely in Moses' voice. So we have a first element, Genesis, focused on God, a fifth element focused on a person, Moses, and three intermediate books that relate the interactions between Moses and God. I will leave it to the curious reader to determine how the five-part paradigm can be applied in greater detail to the five books of the Torah. We can conclude our examination of the five-part paradigm with the observation that it has been used as an organizing principle for different levels of biblical structure.

We can now summarize our investigation of the symmetrical pattern created by reading the ten Words as five consecutive pairs. The five-part structure is based on an organizational paradigm that appears on multiple levels of biblical structure. It appears in the largest macro structure, the five books of the Torah; in the micro structure of a single element within one of the Words (2Ac); and in intermediate structures between the two extremes. The appearance of the paradigm across the two stone tablets may thus indicate that it plays a foundational role in divine metaphysics. We will return to the five-part paradigm after examining the distinction between the two stone tablets.

### **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 Mekhiltah 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 MT, as well as the text's insistence that there be two separate injunctions against coveting. Even though we have found strong evidence that the MT 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, A (1, 3, 5, 7, 9) and B (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 A and B. 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, one to three and four to six, 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. 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 Guarding Cherubim**

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. In regard to 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 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. So 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 another. 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 A focuses on the individual, and tablet B 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 that we will examine returns us to the stone tablets.

### **The Two Sets of Tablets**

It seems that the two sets of stone tablets have distinctly different functions, as seen from the way Moses brought them down from Mt. Sinai. The first time Moses brings down a set of tablets they are in his hands. When he gets close enough to the camp to see what is happening, he throws down the tablets and they shatter. From these events we can deduce: if the Israelites had not worshiped the golden calf, Moses would have presented them with the tablets. At the very least, we can say that the people would have been able to see them. This was not true of the second tablets. God told Moses to make a box for the second tablets before ascending the mountain again



for God to inscribe them. Moses placed them in the box as soon as he received them. Afterwards, they were placed in the Ark in the Holy of Holies. They were never seen by anyone except Moses. The first tablets were given as a popular text, one intended for the general populace. The second tablets were, by divine intention, an esoteric text, to be seen by Moses' eyes alone. So here too, we can see God distinguishing between the one, Moses, and the many, the people. Interestingly, the set intended for one remained unified while the set intended for the many was broken into many parts. This may be a hint that the esoteric reading of the Decalogue sees the Words as a single unified composition while the exoteric reading sees only disconnected Words.

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, A and B.

### **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, 3A and 3B. Word 3A prohibits killing and is thus an obvious link to the Tree of Life. In order to see the connection between 3B, "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 A, linked to the tree of life, would embody the principle “one” or “separate” and tablet B the principle of “many” or “connected”.

### **The Objects of Pair 5**

Pair 5 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 5A contains a single object, a house. Word 5B, 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 5A has a single object while the Word parallel to 5B has multiple objects. It would appear then, that the distinction between 5A and 5B, 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 A expressing “one” and tablet B “many”.

### **The Dyad of “Separate and Connected”**

Our third observation is that there is a plethora of interpersonal relationships mentioned on tablet B which are lacking on tablet A. Words 2B, 3B, and 5B all refer,

whether directly or indirectly, to marriage, while no Word on A does. Although 4B 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). None of the laws on tablet A deal with these types of relationships. To clarify this point, we can take the example of pair 4. “You shall not steal” (4A) 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” (4B), as we have noted, implies collusion between two or more lying witnesses who testify against the “fellow man”. So there are additional social components in the laws of tablet B. 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 “vertical”, I mean the division into the five hierarchically ordered pairs. The horizontal 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. The importance of this discovery cannot be overstated. It has led to the solution of many complex problems of exegesis, such as Lev 19.

### **Back to Strauss**

The discovery of the tabular structure of the Decalogue has provided the key for reading the Decalogue as an exoteric text according to Strauss’ description. The linear compilation of laws provides “a popular teaching of an edifying character, which is in the foreground.” The nonlinear tabular structure provides the vehicle for the second stratum which contains “A philosophic teaching concerning the most important subject, which is indicated only between the lines.” We have arrived at the point where we can begin to read between the lines. We know that the philosophic teaching has two “dimensions”. One dimension is expressed through a five-part paradigm which links each individual with God by means of three intermediary links. The other dimension is expressed through a divine dyad such as “one and many” and “separate-connect”. However, we have not discussed the teaching itself, only its parts.

In the next section we will look at another tabular document, one composed in the third century CE, as part of the Mishnah tractate Avot, (Fathers). We will read that

document as a guide which describes how to decipher the encryption of an ancient Sraussian-exoteric text. By reading the text very carefully, we will be able to understand an esoteric message embedded in its literary structure. It is composed of five hierarchically organized pairs and a “one and many” dyad. We will see that the esoteric function of the tabular text is to engage the reader’s creativity in the development of tradition. In the third section we will discuss the relationship between the exoteric Decalogue and the exoteric Fathers.