

Shabbos Nachamu - Parshas Vaeschanan is a very beloved parsha. It has two separate עליות for which people bid a lot of money, עשרת הדברות, שמע ישראל, and עשרת הדברות. One of the most famous, if not the most famous, differences between Yisro and Vaeschanan is what we say every Friday night in Lecha Dodi: שמור וזכור. בְּדִבּוֹר אֶחָד. Only הקדוש ברוך הוא can say two things at the same time. Nobody else can. People can talk out of both sides of their mouth, להבדיל, but only הקדוש ברוך הוא can say two things at the same time.

That brings us to an interesting story, one of my favorite stories, brought down in Rabbi Peretz Steinberg's beautiful sefer on חומש called ספר פרי עץ חיים in the name of R' Yaakov Kamenetsky on the pasuk (5:12) וְשָׁמַר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ. Rav Steinberg says that he himself heard from R' Yaakov that one time, R' Yaakov went into a חדר in ירושלים where there were little kids, it doesn't say exactly how old they were, and he asked them "In Lecha Dodi is says בְּדִבּוֹר אֶחָד שמור וזכור. But what was written on the לוחות, did it say שמור or זכור?" All the little קינדערלעך raised their hands. He went through the whole room, and they all said "It said זכור on the לוחות" And he says, and that's what you see in every shul, on whatever they have as a depiction of the עשרת הדברות.

One little fellow in the back said, "It said שמור on the לוחות". R' Yaakov asked him "How do you know that? The boy replied "That's what it says in the סידור." "Where?" The boy answered "In Shabbos shachris: וְשָׁמַר מִשֶּׁהָ בְּמִתְנַת חֶלְקוֹ כִּי עֲבָד נֶאֱמָן קִרְאָהּ לוֹ כְּלִיל תַּפְאָרֶת בְּרֹאשׁוֹ נִתְּתָה בְּעֵמָדוֹ לְפָנֶיהָ עַל הָרִי שִׁנִּי וְשָׁנֵי לְחוֹת אֲבָנִים: שמירת שבת - That the לוחות had written on it שמירת שבת, not זכירת שבת. R' Yaakov said, "This boy is going to grow up to be a big חכם."

What are we saying when we say שמור and זכור? What is the message? What is the concept? What are we trying to learn from this? Anything that is precious to us has to be guarded. We constantly think about the things that are precious to us - not our possessions, not our גשמיות, but our רוחניות: our family, our טייערע, our spouses, our parents. These are the precious things. Our תורה and our מצות and Shabbos, one of our most prized possessions of all. We have to guard it. We have to keep it. We have to take care of it. We have to watch and look for better and newer ways to be more careful with Shabbos.

The more that we learn הלכות שבת, the more we learn what we should be doing. Just a tiny example: I used to love to put my scallions into my chicken soup on Friday night. And then Rabbi Oelbaum told me that I'm not allowed to do that, because scallions are easily cooked - it's called בישול - קלי בישול - and even though we normally say that there's no בישול in a כלי שלישי, by things that are קלי בישול, like scallions, we say there can be בישול even in a כלי שלישי. So I learned something, now I don't do it, and I'm being שומר שבת even more than I did before.

No matter what it is, every single little thing that we do adds up. The things we think are little down here are very big up there. And some of the things that the world thinks are big down here are nothing up there, as we well know. Let us all strive to do all of our מצות שמירת המצות better, and we will indeed be מקיים זכור ושמור בדיבור אחד.

