**How We Saw Him at Sinai**

The experience of *am yisrael* at *Har Sinai* is fundamental to the belief system of a Jew. In the opinion of many *rishonim*, our tradition that we received the Torah at *Har Sinai* is the foundation of our belief in the existence of God and how we know Judaism is the *das ha’elokis ha’amitis*, the Godly and truthful religion.[[1]](#footnote-2)

With that in mind, we must try to understand exactly what *am yisrael* experienced at *Har Sinai*. There are many *p’sukim* in the *Torah* which refer to the “Sinai experience.” However, they don’t seem to give a clear picture of exactly what happened. We shall begin by inspecting some of these *p’sukim* and looking at their potential implications.

**Implications in the *P’sukim***

First, in *parshas yisro[[2]](#footnote-3)*.

וַיֹּ֨אמֶר יְקֹוָ֜ק אֶל־מֹשֶׁ֗ה הִנֵּ֨ה אָנֹכִ֜י בָּ֣א אֵלֶיךָ֘ בְּעַ֣ב הֶֽעָנָן֒ בַּעֲב֞וּר יִשְׁמַ֤ע הָעָם֙ בְּדַבְּרִ֣י עִמָּ֔ךְ וְגַם־בְּךָ֖ יַאֲמִ֣ינוּ לְעוֹלָ֑ם וַיַּגֵּ֥ד מֹשֶׁ֛ה אֶת־דִּבְרֵ֥י הָעָ֖ם אֶל־יְקֹוָֽק:

And Hashem said to Moshe “Behold, I am coming to you in the thick of the cloud in order that the nation hear when I am speaking to you, and that they shall believe in you eternally.” And Moshe told the words of nation unto Hashem.

This *passuk* implies that Hashem spoke to Moshe and let the Jews hear, but Hashem did not speak to the rest of the nation directly.

After the *aseres hadibros*, the Torah then says:[[3]](#footnote-4)

וַיֹּֽאמְרוּ֙ אֶל־מֹשֶׁ֔ה דַּבֵּר־אַתָּ֥ה עִמָּ֖נוּ וְנִשְׁמָ֑עָה וְאַל־יְדַבֵּ֥ר עִמָּ֛נוּ אֱלֹהִ֖ים פֶּן־נָמֽוּת:

And they said to Moshe “You should speak with us, and God should not speak with us in case we die.”

This would seem to imply that Hashem spoke directly to the entire nation and the nation is now complaining that they aren’t able to sustain listening to God directly.

Second, in *parshas va’eschanan:[[4]](#footnote-5)*

וַיְדַבֵּ֧ר יְקֹוָ֛ק אֲלֵיכֶ֖ם מִתּ֣וֹךְ הָאֵ֑שׁ ק֤וֹל דְּבָרִים֙ אַתֶּ֣ם שֹׁמְעִ֔ים וּתְמוּנָ֛ה אֵינְכֶ֥ם רֹאִ֖ים זוּלָתִ֥י קֽוֹל:

And Hashem spoke to you from within the fire. You were hearing a voice of words and you did not see a picture, just a voice.

The phrase “a voice of words” (as opposed to just “words”) seems to imply that the Jews heard a sound from God which they could tell was words, but they couldn’t make out the actual words being said.

Immediately before the *aseres hadibros* in *parshas va’eschanan*, Moshe says[[5]](#footnote-6)

פָּנִ֣ים׀ בְּפָנִ֗ים דִּבֶּ֨ר יְקֹוָ֧ק עִמָּכֶ֛ם בָּהָ֖ר מִתּ֥וֹךְ הָאֵֽשׁ:

Face to face God spoke with you (plural) at the mountain from within the fire.

The phrase “face to face” is used elsewhere to describe the prophecy of Moshe.[[6]](#footnote-7) This would imply that the whole nation had a full prophetic experience, just like Moshe..[[7]](#footnote-8)

There are many other *p’sukim* with interesting implications but having seen the small sample above, we are left with a sufficiently fuzzy picture as to what the average Jew experienced at *Har Sinai*.

**Sources in Chazal**

The “Sinai Experience” seems to be dealt with directly in *maseches makkos[[8]](#footnote-9)*.

דרש רבי שמלאי: שש מאות ושלש עשרה מצות נאמרו לו למשה, שלש מאות וששים וחמש לאוין כמנין ימות החמה, ומאתים וארבעים ושמונה עשה כנגד איבריו של אדם. אמר רב המנונא: מאי קרא? תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה, תורה בגימטריא שית מאה וחד סרי הוי, אנכי ולא יהיה לך מפי הגבורה שמענום.

Rabi Simlai expounded: 613 *mitzvos* were said to Moshe, 365 negative commandments equal to the number of days in a solar year and 248 positive commandments equal to the number of limbs in the human body. Rav Hamnuna said: What is the biblical source for this? Moshe commanded us *Torah* as an inheritance (D’varim 33,4). The numerical value of the letters of the word *Torah* is 611. We heard “I am the Lord your God” and “You shall not have any other gods” from the mouth of the Almighty.

It seems clear from this *gemara* that *am yisrael* experienced fully fledged prophecy for two of the *aseres hadibros*.

However, *chazal* also say that prophecy can only rest on he who is a *gibor*, *ashir*, *chacham* and *anav,* a person who is mighty, rich, wise and humble.[[9]](#footnote-10)This seems to imply that one cannot receive prophecy without the requisite preparation.[[10]](#footnote-11)

We now turn to the *rishonim* to see how they understood all of the above.

**Revelation for All**

The first approach is that of Rashba, Ran*,* RavYosefAlbo and Rav Ovadiah S’fornoamongst others. They understand that every single Jew received prophecy for the first and second *dibros* on the same level as MosheRabbeinu. There are multiple approaches as to why it was necessary for all of *am yisrael* to receive prophecy.

1. Rashba writes that Jews were taught by their parents to be cynical.[[11]](#footnote-12) He uses this idea to explain why Moshe was worried that *am yisrael* would not believe him when he was tasked toinform them of their upcoming redemption from Egypt. *Am yisrael* didn’t have a full belief in *nevu’as Moshe* until *kri’as yam suf* where the *passuk* says that they believe in Moshe. Onkelusthere translates that the belief in Moshe refers to belief in his prophecy. Even post *kri’as yam suf*, they thought that it was possible that Moshe knew how to do these miraculous things because he was the wisest of all people. The only way to remove all doubt in Moshe was for them to experience prophecy themselves.[[12]](#footnote-13)
2. Ran understands the *mitzva* of *anochi Hashem elokecha* to be a commandment to believe in the divinity of the *Torah*. One would naturally think that Hashem is so great that it would be insulting to claim that He bothered to give commandments to humans. The idea that we must serve him is tantamount to saying that Hashem is affected by our actions. Ran asks us to imagine being approached by someone very close to the king. This person tells us that the king wants us to do a certain action which seems to us to be denigratory to the king. We would not do it. We would only do something which seems to dishonour the king if he himself was to command us. Similarly, Hashem had to reveal himself directly in order to command us to do *mitzvos*.[[13]](#footnote-14)
3. Rav Yosef Albo says that *am yisrael* did not believe in prophecy. They had to experience it themselves in order to believe that it was possible for humans to achieve prophecy.[[14]](#footnote-15) This would enable them to trust future *n’vi’im*. Ibn Ezra also says that *am yisrael* did not believe in prophecy.[[15]](#footnote-16)
4. Rav Ovad’yah S’forno explains that *am yisrael* believed in prophecy; they knew that Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov, as well as Moshe, had prophesied. However, they did not believe that it was possible to receive prophecy whilst remaining in full control of one’s faculties. Hashem had to show *am yisrael* the possibility of prophecy when awake so that they would realise that Moshe’s prophecy is on this level and that this is what sets Moshe aside from all other prophets in history. Once they realised this, no one could contradict *n’vuas* *Moshe* as it was known to be on a different level to any other prophecy.[[16]](#footnote-17)

Ramban also says that they needed to see that Moshe had reached the highest level of prophecy. This knowledge gives us the necessary conviction to instantly contradict and punish any self-acclaimed prophet who contradicts anything in the Torah.[[17]](#footnote-18)

We pointed out above that one of the difficulties with this approach is the *gemara* in N’darim that seems to necessitate being worthy of prophecy before one can receive it. How might the aforementioned *rishonim* explain this *gemara*?

1. An answer to this question can be found in the Rosh and Shitah M’kubetzes in their commentaries to the *gemara* in N’darim. They both interpret this line to mean that Hashem will only give regular and consistent prophecy to one with all of these characteristics. However, for a one-off prophetic experience, one does not necessarily need to perfect oneself.
2. Rav Yosef Albo has a slightly more reserved approach. In general, Hashem will not gift prophecy to someone who is undeserving. However, Hashem will give prophecy to people who are near a prophet, even if they have not brought themselves to the level normally required to prophecy.[[18]](#footnote-19)

In summary of this first approach, Hashem, for whatever reason, gifted temporary prophecy even to those among *am yisrael* that did not deserve it.

There is another, similar, approach. *Am yisrael* heard all ten *dibros* directly from Hashem. This is the opinion of the *chachamim* in Shir Hashirim Rabbah.[[19]](#footnote-20) This approach seems to be endorsed by Rabi Yehuda Halevi in his Kuzari.[[20]](#footnote-21)

**Only Those who were Fitting**

Rambam and Rav Ya’akov Sk’ili disagree.[[21]](#footnote-22) [[22]](#footnote-23) They hold that it is totally impossible for someone undeserving of prophecy to experience it, even fleetingly.[[23]](#footnote-24) Hence, the standard *yisrael* at *Har Sinai* did not receive prophecy. The only things they saw were physical .[[24]](#footnote-25) Rambam has a radically different interpretation of the *gemara* in Makkos that we quoted above. The ideas behind the *mitzvos* of *anochi* and *lo yihyeh l’cha* are possible to prove with intellect alone. Abarbanel quotes those who explain the phrase “*mipi hag’vura shamanum”* from the *gemara* in Makkos as *“mipi tigbores hamofes v’iyunam”*, from the strengthening of their philosophical proof and deep thought. Therefore, the level of appreciation of the obligation to believe in Hashem and no other gods of a standard *yisrael* is equal to that of Moshe. Our knowledge of this *mitzva* is as direct as the knowledge of Moshe. This is in contrast to other *mitzvos* of which Moshe had direct knowledge, whilst we have the indirect knowledge of having heard these *mitzvos* from Moshe.

The question that arises at this point is that it would seem that, according to this approach, the entire *Har Sinai* experience is unnecessary. If we can appreciate these *mitzvos* without being told them by anyone and all other *mitzvos* were told to us by Moshe anyway, what was accomplished at *Har Sinai*?

Rambam actually stresses the necessity for the incredible sounds and sights of Har Sinai. He describes the voice of Hashem telling Moshe the first two *dibros*. Moshe was able to make out the separation of each word and thereby able to write down the text that we have for the first two *dibros*. However, *am yisrael* heard an incredibly powerful voice without being able to discern what was being said. Even so, it is unclear why this is all needed if we can understand *anochi* and *lo yihyeh l’cha* by ourselves. This issue is dealt with by some of the *m’farshim* of Moreh N’vuchim.

Efodi explains that even though they were totally intellectually convinced of the truth of the existence of Hashem basic on philosophical proof, they still suffered from confusion and fallacious imagination (*dimyon* *neged* *hamuskal*).[[25]](#footnote-26) This incredible voice of the first two *dibros* carved the belief in Hashem into their hearts and removed the possibility of any future confusion.[[26]](#footnote-27)

**Proof from Unkelus**

Rambam brings support for his view from the translation of Unkelus at the end of *parshas yisro*.[[27]](#footnote-28) Unkelus’ translation of *“v’al y’dabeir imanu elokim”* (Hashem should not speak to us)is *“v’lo yismaleil imana.”* Unkelus uses a reflexive word (*yismaleil*) for Hashem’s speech, as opposed to translating that Hashem spoke to *am yisrael*. When Hashem speaks to Moshe, Unkelus translates this as direct speech.

Ramban takes issue with this proof.[[28]](#footnote-29) First, this is the only place in which Unkelus translates Hashem speaking to *am yisrael* reflexively. There are multiple other places where he chooses not to do this.[[29]](#footnote-30) Second, sometimes Unkelus translates Hashem’s speaking with Moshe in a similar fashion.[[30]](#footnote-31) Ramban explains that Unkelus only translates Hashem’s speaking with *am yisrael* reflexively when there is no separation between Hashem and *am yisrael* mentioned in the *passuk*. Often, the *passuk* says that Hashem spoke from within fire or from heaven and then Unkelus feels no need to translate reflexively as the distance between humans and God is already clear in the *passuk*.

Ritva says that the answer to all of the Ramban’s questions lies in that which he misquoted Rambam. However, Ritva doesn’t explain to us how Ramban misquoted Rambam.[[31]](#footnote-32)

Another of the Rambam’s proofs for his opinion is that which the *aseres hadibros* are all in the singular. He claims that this proves that Hashem spoke to Moshe alone. Ramban understands that the singular language of the *aseres hadibros* is to tell *am yisrael* that every single one of them will be punished for the sins that they do. We should not think a person can act in an evil way yet avoid punishment because the majority of people are good.

**Hearing ‘Moshe, Moshe’**

There is a Rambam in Mishneh Torah which seems to contradict that which we have understood from Rambam up to this point. Rambam says that our belief in Moshe is not based on the miracles that were performed via him. It is due to us having heard Hashem at *har sinai* say “Moshe, Moshe, go and say to them ‘such and such.’”[[32]](#footnote-33) This is Rambam’s explanation of the *passuk* quoted above, “*panim b’fanim diber Hashem imachem.”* This statement of the Rambam is problematic for a couple of reasons. The first is that which this seems to contradict his opinion that the average Jew did not hear any understandable words from Hashem.[[33]](#footnote-34) The second is that which this phrase has no earlier source. This is not a quote of a *passuk*. If so, where did the Rambam get it from?[[34]](#footnote-35)

Perhaps the two questions answer each other. Rambam does not mean that we literally heard these words explicitly. In this context, the Hebrew word “*shom’im”* means that we understood. We understood from that which was going on in front of us at *Har Sinai* that Hashem was clearly speaking to Moshe. We may have had no idea what was being said, but we were sure that they were communicating.[[35]](#footnote-36)

**Is *Anochi* a *Mitzvah*?**

Rav Meir Simcha of Dvinsk uses this Rambam to answer a question of the Ramban on the Rambam in the first *mitzvas asei* in *sefer hamitzvos*.[[36]](#footnote-37) As mentioned above, the *gemara* in Makkos says that *anochi* and *lo yihyeh l’cha* are the two *mitzvos* heard from God that complete the count of 613 *mitzvos.* Rambam quotes this as a proof that *anochi* is a *mitzvah*. Ramban points out that there are multiple *mitzvos* that the Rambam counts that appear in the *dibbur* of *lo yihyeh”* If the Rambam is correct in his use of this *gemara*, it should say that we heard **five** *mitzvos* from God Himself.[[37]](#footnote-38) Rav Meir Simcha expresses shock at that which Ramban forgets or ignores Rambam’s explanation of the *gemara* in Makkos. According to Rambam, the average Jew did not hear the **text** of the first two *dibros*. They independently understood the ideas expressed therewithin. Hence, there is no difficulty in that which there are more than two *mitzvos* in the **text** of the first two *dibros.*

**Another Explanation of Rambam**

That which has been said until now in the name of the Rambam is the way what he writes in Moreh N’vuchim is interpreted according to the majority of other *rishonim*. However, Abarbanel, in his commentary to Moreh N’vuchim, interprets the Rambam somewhat differently. He thinks that Rambam ignores the *gemara* in Makkos in his interpretation of that which happened at *Har Sinai*. Abravanel explains that Rambam is open to there being different approaches within *aggada* and that which he says does not have to fit with the statement in the *gemara*. He explains that Rambam mentions the *gemara* in passing as disagreeing with his opinion and whilst doing so, he deals with the difficulty that *gemara* raises for him. The difficulty is as follows: In the opinion of the Rambam, one cannot prophecy unless sufficiently well prepared. The *gemara* in Makkos seems to quite clearly state that the average Jew experienced prophecy. How can this be explained? Rambam says that it must be that the clear philosophical proof of the concepts contained within the first two *dibros* was sufficient to prepare *am yisrael* to receive full prophecy. As opposed to our original understanding of the Rambam, philosophical proof is no replacement for divine revelation. It merely serves as sufficient preparation for divine revelation. However, this is not Rambam’s preferred approach to understanding what happened at *Har Sinai* and once Rambam has concluded this side point, he returns to the explanation of his own opinion.[[38]](#footnote-39) Rambam’s own opinion is that no Jew experienced prophecy. The average Jew at *Har Sinai* had a very awe inspiring, but solely physical experience.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, we have seen a difference of opinion amongst the *rishonim* as to how understand what happened at *Har Sinai*. As Rambam himself writes, the story of the goings-on at *Har Sinai* is intentionally unclear as it is a secret of the Torah and something that occurred once and will not be repeated.

1. See Rambam Y’sodei Hatorah Chapter 8 and Sefer Ha’Ikrim 1:18 and 1:19. The phrase *das ha’elokis ha’amitis* is a quote from 1:18 in Sefer Ha’Ikrim. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Sh’mos 19:9 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Sh’mos 20:16 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. D’varim 4:12 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. D’varim 5:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Note that it is **not** exactly the same. In Sh’mos 33:11 and D’varim 34:10, the prophecy of Moshe is referred to as *panim el panim* (face to face) whilst the *passuk* quoted in the main text says *panim b’fanim*. However, the translation of Onkelus of the *passuk* quoted in the main text and that of Sh’mos 33:11 is the same. What is odd is that which Onkelus translates the same phrase differently in Sh’mos 33:11 and D’varim 34:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. In this article, the word prophecy is used to refer to direct communication from God to man. It does not refer to predictions of the future. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Over the page from 23b to 24a. In Shir HaShirim Rabbah 1:13, Rabi Yehoshua Ben Levi says that *yisrael* heard two *dibros* from Hashem. These were *anochi* and *lo yihyeh l’cha*. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. N’darim 38a [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Note that there are two possibilities in explaining *gibor* and *ashir*. The first would be to understand these words using the mishna in Avos (2:1). That mishna defines a *gibor* as someone who conquers his *yetzer hara* and an *ashir* as someone who is happy with that which they have. Abarbanel in his commentary to Moreh N’vuchim (2:32) seems to interpret the *gemara* in *N’darim* this way. However, Ran in *drush hash’lishi* of Drashos HaRan interprets these both literally. He is of the opinion that one must be mighty and rich in order to prophecy. Thanks to Daniel Samole for making me aware of this Ran. Either way, *chacham* and *anav* require significant amounts of religious preparation. It is also worth noting that neither Rashba nor Rambam had the word *anav* in their text. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. The direct quote is “*שלא יתפתו אחר הדברים שיכנס בהם שום ספק עד שיבחנוהו הרבה, שאין בו צד פקפוק אלא האמת”* [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Shu’t Rashba 4:234 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Drashos HaRan, *drush hat’shi’i*. Rabi Yehuda Halevi in Kuzari 1:87 says something along the same lines. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. Sefer Ha’ikrim 3:11 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Ibn Ezra Sh’mos 19:9. I am not sure whether Ibn Ezra understands that *am yisrael* experienced *n’vuah* themselves or they saw Moshe prophesy and that convinced them. Ibn Ezra explains the *passuk* at *yam suf* saying that the Jews believed in Hashem and Moshe to mean that only part of *am yisrael* believed. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. S’forno Sh’mos 19:9 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. Rambam Sh’mos 19:9 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Sefer Ha’Ikrim 3:11. Rav Albo says that this is the way Elisha received *n’vuah* when around Eliyahu and Y’hoshua and the seventy elders from Moshe. I do not understand why (HOW?) this works. He compares the one who is capable of prophecying WHAT? themselves to a mirror who can spread light to dark areas that do not directly receive light. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Shir Hashirim Rabbah 1:13 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. Kuzari 1:87. We do not deal with this approach at length. With respect to proofs from *p’sukim*, this approach will explain in the same way as the first approach. In terms of proofs from Unkelus and the *gemara*, a *Tanna* has no qualms in disagreeing with them. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. The Rambam is in Moreh N’vuchim 2:33. Rav Ya’akov S’kili was a student of the Rashba (which makes it all the more amazing (SLIGHTLY INFORMAL, DON’T KNOW IF YOU MIND) that he agrees with Rambam on this issue). This can be found in his *sefer* Toras Hamincha in *drasha* 16 which is on *parshas* *vayeishev*. This *sefer* is a compilation of his treatises given at *mincha* time on *Shabbos* and deals with many issues fundamental to our faith. I discovered this *sefer* through Rav Ahron Lopiansky’s *sefer* called *y’sodei haTorah* which I recommend (AGAIN, QUITE INFORMAL, YOUR CALL AS TO WHETHER THIS IS THE TONE YOU WANT TO GO FOR). It quotes *rishonim* discussing fundamental topics following the order of the Torah. In this context, although one would think he pales in comparison to the other *rishonim q*uoted, he has been brought as he helps to explain the Rambam’s opinion. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. I note that when I attempted to discuss this Rambam (at a bus stop) with a Rabbi who is familiar with Moreh N’vuchim, he told me that the Rambam really holds that every Jew experienced prophecy, but not all of them on Moshe’s level. I wanted to question him further, as the Rambam seems to explicitly write that ‘only those who were fitting reached the level of prophecy. Within those who reached prophecy, each did so on their own level’. However, the Rabbi’s bus then came and I was left befuddled. (NOW BEGINNING TO REALISE THAT YOU WANT THE FOOTNOTES TO BE INFORMAL! IF THIS IS THE CASE, IGNORE PREVIOUS SUGGESTIONS) [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. It is worth noting at this point that we have three approaches as to the possibility of prophecy for someone who is unprepared. Rambam believes that it is totally impossible. Rav Yosef Albo thinks that it is possible with a prophet nearby. Others are of the opinion that it is possible for God to briefly gift prophecy to anyone (perhaps only Jewish) but not on a regular basis. Rambam in Moreh N’vuchim 2:32 brings other approaches to prophecy which he does not believe are in line with Judaism. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. Rivash in his *teshuvos* (45) says that the Rambam was influenced by his philosophical tendencies (which Rivash does not condone) with respect to this issue. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. Rav Yitzchak ben Moshe HaLevi, also known as Profiat Duran, lived in the second half of the 14th century. He is named Efodi after one of his main works, Ma’aseh Efod. (Wikipedia) [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. It remains unclear to me as to whether or not there is any eternal effect of that which happened at *Har Sinai*. Seemingly, it just worked to scare those who were there into ignoring their biases against the objectively logical conclusion of the first two *mitzvos*, although the idea of this having no long-term importance leaves the author feeling uncomfortable. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. Sh’mos 20:16 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. Ad loc. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. The examples he brings are Sh’mos 20:22 *“min hashamayim dibarti imachem*”;D’varim 5:19 *“y’dabeir elokim es ha’adam”* and *“panim b’fanim dibeir Hashem imachem.”* [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. He brings B’midbar 7:89 *“hakol midaber elav”* and Sh’mos 33:9 *“v’diber im Moshe.”* [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. Sefer Hazikaron. This *sefer* is Ritva’s defences for Rambam from the attacks of Ramban in his *peirush* on the Torah. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. Hilchos Y’sodei Hatorah 8:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. I have assumed that the Rambam meant that everyone heard these words of Hashem. Rambam is saying that the basis for our belief in Moshe’s prophecy is that which “we saw and not a stranger, we heard and not another.” This seems to necessitate that every Jew heard. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. Notably, Rav Yosef Albo’s text of Rambam (quoted in Sefer Ha’Ikrim 1:18) had the *passuk* (D’varim 5:27) “*lech emor lahem, shuvu lachem l’oholechem.”* This doesn’t seem to make sense in the context of this Rambam. See the first piece in Rav Hutner’s Pachad Yitzchak on Shavuos for an explanation. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. This idea is based on a shiur of Rabbi Netanel Wiederblank, entitled “What exactly did we hear at Sinai?” available from YUTorah.org. He compared it to hearing people speak in a foreign language. You have no idea what they are communicating but it is clear that they are doing so. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. Ramban and Lev Sameiach Ad Loc. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. Ramban, in defence of the Ba’al Halachos G’dolos, explains that the two *mitzvos* mentioned in the *gemara* in Makkos actually refer to two parts of the second dibbur of *lo yihyeh* and there is no mitzvah in the first *dibbur* of *anochi.* [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. [Mussar – you can still respect, explain and answer for the approach of others even if you disagree.] [↑](#footnote-ref-39)