



# Likkutei Sichos

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## A Significant Offering

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## 1.

### SPECIFICALLY GENERALIZED

In the Torah portion about the offerings of the *Nesiim*<sup>1</sup> {to inaugurate the altar in the *Mishkan*'}, regarding the offering of the second *Nasi* {on the second day},<sup>2</sup> Rashi cites “the treatise of Rabbi Moshe HaDarshan”<sup>3</sup> that the specifics of the *Nasi*'s offerings allude to various matters:

The numerical value of “קַעֲרַת כֶּסֶף” {a silver bowl} “is 930, corresponding to the years of Adam’s life”; “מִזְרֶק אֶחָד כֶּסֶף” {one silver sprinkling basin} — “alludes to Noach...”;<sup>4</sup> “כַּף אַחַת” {one spoon} — corresponds to the Torah”; “פֶּר אֶחָד... אֵיל אֶחָד” {one bull, one ram, one lamb} correspond to the Patriarchs; “שְׂעִיר עִזִּים” {one young goat} — to atone for the sale of Yosef”; “וְלִזְבַּח הַשְּׁלָמִים בָּקָר שְׁנַיִם” {for the peace-offering, two oxen} — correspond to Moshe and Aharon”; “אֵילִם עֲתוּדִים” {rams, goats, lambs} “correspond to Kohanim, Levites, and Israelites....”

Why does Rashi include all these allusions made by the *Nesiim*'s offerings, which are based on hints and homilies (even though Rashi's commentary is based on *pshat*)?<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, even if there is a justification for including these explanations, it raises the question of why Rashi provides this particular explanation in his commentary on the second *Nasi*'s offering rather than addressing it immediately in his commentary on the first one's offerings?

We have previously<sup>6</sup> discussed at length the rationale behind this homiletic explanation. It stems from Rashi's perplexity over the Torah's repetition of the detailed specifications for each *Nasi*'s offering, which are identical for all **twelve** of them.

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<sup>1</sup> {Tribal *Nesiim*; pl. of “*Nasi*.”}

<sup>2</sup> *Bamidbar* 7:19 ff.

<sup>3</sup> {Lit., “the preacher.”}

<sup>4</sup> {Rashi's full remark: “The numerical value of these three words is 520, alluding to Noach, who began raising a family at the age of 500, and to the 20 years before his children were born during which the decree of the Great Flood was issued.”}

<sup>5</sup> {The plain meaning of Scripture. Rashi says in his commentary to *Bereishis* 3:8: “I have come only to explain the plain meaning of the Scripture.” Though there are many levels and depths of interpretation on the Torah, Rashi adopts a straightforward approach.}

<sup>6</sup> *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 8, p. 43.

From the second *Nasi* onwards, the Torah could have just said that their offerings were the same as the first. No need to repeat all the details for each one separately.

Rashi, therefore, concludes that when bringing their offerings, each *Nasi* had his own **individual** motives and distinctive allusions. Their differences reflected the nature and character of each tribe. Thus, the offering of each *Nasi* (based on the intent of his offerings) was **different** from the offerings of the other *Nesim*. Therefore, the Torah repeats the offerings of each individual *Nasi* with their specifics.

[For each form of offerings, Rashi only provides a **single** allusion, with the expectation that it explains the repetition for **all** the tribes, twelve times. In contrast, the Midrash<sup>7</sup> provides a **different** allusion for the same form of offerings of each *Nasi*. Rashi does so because each allusion he cites is a **general** concept which can be subdivided into several specifics. So each *Nasi* had a different specific intent (within the general allusion, that was a reflection of his tribe), as explained there<sup>8</sup> at length.]

## 2.

### OUT OF ORDER

We still need to clarify: Understandably, the allusion of all the specifics of each *Nasi's* offering is not just a compilation of various things. Rather, they are the specific aspects of one overarching point. Indeed, we find this in the Midrash.<sup>5</sup> Before detailing the specific allusions of each *Nasi's* offerings, it prefaces with the general point of the allusions of the specific *Nasi* (Nachshon — “{the tribe of Yehuda comes first because of} the order or monarchy”; Nesanel — “named for the Torah”;<sup>9</sup> and so forth.

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<sup>7</sup> *Bamidbar Rabbah*, ch. 13, sec. 14 ff.

<sup>8</sup> *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 8, p. 44 ff.

<sup>9</sup> {The word “Nesanel” literally means, “given by Hashem,” a reference to the Torah.}

But the allusions that Rashi provides do not seem to be specifics of one overarching point.

The Midrash<sup>10</sup> cites an opinion that the offerings of the *Nesiim* all “corresponded to the generations from Adam until the *Mishkan*, and corresponded to the mitzvos given to the leaders of those generations.” (The Midrash then explains that the “silver bowl” alludes to Adam; and the “sprinkling basin” to Noach, etc.)

Perhaps, we can say that this is also the overarching point encapsulated in the allusions **Rashi** offers, as he goes on then to identify the generations (Adam and his descendants; Noach and his descendants; the Seventy Nations; the Patriarchs; Yosef, Moshe, and Aharon) and the “mitzvos they were commanded”<sup>11</sup> (Torah; the Ten Commandments; the 613 mitzvos; Torah, Prophets and Writings; etc.).

But difficulties remain: (a) the *Maharal's*<sup>12</sup> question — What connection is there between “the years of Adam and Noach” and the subject at hand (dedicating the Altar and the *Mishkan*)? (b) According to this interpretation, the offerings and their allusions should have been listed in **chronological order**. If so, why does Rashi’s remark, “*one spoon...*,” corresponding to the **Torah**, alluding to the generation of Moshe and Aharon, intervene between (the offerings that correspond to) Noach and Avraham?

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<sup>10</sup> *Bamidbar Rabbah*, ch. 14, sec. 12.

<sup>11</sup> The “mitzvos they were commanded” mentioned in the midrash, (also) refers to the mitzvos that Adam and Noach were commanded, whereas the “mitzvos they were commanded” mentioned in **Rashi** refers to the mitzvos that the Jewish people were given.

<sup>12</sup> *Gur Aryeh*, ad loc. {Rabbi Yehuda Loew of Prague, 1512-1609. Among his many works was the “*Gur Aryeh al HaTorah*,” a supercommentary on Rashi’s commentary.}

### 3.

THREE OR SIX?

We also need to clarify:

a) On the verse, “One spoon weighing ten gold shekels,”<sup>13</sup> Rashi comments: “*One spoon* — corresponding to the Torah, which was given by the hand of Hashem {יָד also means “hand”}; *ten gold shekels* — corresponding to the Ten Commandments.” Then, regarding “rams, goats, lambs,”<sup>14</sup> Rashi says: “corresponding to Torah,<sup>15</sup> Prophets and Writings. The three fives {in this verse} correspond to: 1) the five Chumashim; 2) the five commandments inscribed on the first Tablet; 3) and the five commandments inscribed on the second Tablet.” Why was it necessary to have **two** offerings to allude to the Torah; and also two, to allude to the Ten Commandments?

b) The wording of Rashi’s commentary on the phrase “rams, goats, lambs”: “corresponding to Kohanim, Levites, and Israelites, **and** corresponding to Torah, Prophets and Writings” (he doesn’t add {a qualifier} “another version, corresponding to Torah...”<sup>16</sup> or “some say...” — proves that these are not **two different interpretations** of what the “three species” allude to. Rather, they comprise **a single** interpretation: The allusion of “three species” includes “Kohanim, Levites, and Israelites,” **along with** “Torah, Prophets and Writings.” This is baffling: How can the **three different** species of animals correspond to **six** things?

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<sup>13</sup> *Bamidbar* 7:20.

<sup>14</sup> *Bamidbar* 7:23.

<sup>15</sup> {In this context, “Torah” refers to the *Pentateuch*, also known as the Five Books of Moses. In Hebrew, they are also referred to as “the five Chumashim,” “Chumash” in the singular.}

<sup>16</sup> As it is written in *Bamidbar Rabbah*, ch. 14, sec. 10.

## 4.

### THREE FIVES

After Rashi explains what the “three species” (rams, goats and lambs) allude to, he clarifies why there were (specifically) five of each species: “The three *fives* correspond to the *five* Chumashim, to the *five* commandments inscribed on the first Tablet, and the *five* commandments inscribed on the second one.”

We need to clarify:

a) The allusion of “three **fives**” does not relate to **all** the previous “three species”; only to one of them — “Torah” — is subdivided into “five” (five Chumashim).

Meaning, bringing offerings (from the “three species”) in multiples of “five” alludes to **another** new concept, which relates to the number “five.” This is unclear: Why is there a need for a separate allusion of the details of “five Chumashim” besides the allusion to “**Torah**” in general (in the “three species”)?

b) The order that Rashi explains the “three *fives*” — **first**, the “*five* Chumashim” and **then** “the *five* commandments...” — implies that “the *five* commandments...” does not refer to the Ten Commandments engraved in the **stone Tablets**

— Since the Tablets were given {to the Jews} before the “five Chumashim” were given, {if he was referring to the Ten Commandments on the Tablets} Rashi should have listed them **before** the “five Chumashim” —

Rather, it refers to the Ten Commandments as they are recorded in the Chumash, as part of the “five Chumashim,” the **Written Torah**.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> This also answers the question in Section 3: Why was it necessary to have two offerings to allude to the Ten Commandments? For the Ten Commandments alluded to in the verse, “One spoon weighing ten gold shekels” are those written on the **Tablets**, as stated below in Section 8; whereas here the intent is for those in the Written Torah.

[This does not contradict what Rashi says: “the five commandments **inscribed on the first Tablet**, and the five commandments **inscribed on the second one.**” Since the division of the Ten Commandments onto two Tablets was (not just a physical fact — that they were inscribed on two separate Tablets — rather it is) a result of each Tablet possessing different **subject matter**:

The first five commandments are principally **positive mitzvos**. (Even the commandments, “You shall not have... in **My presence**”<sup>18</sup> and “You shall not take the name of **Hashem, your L-rd...**”<sup>19</sup> are specifics of “I am Hashem, your L-rd.”<sup>20</sup>) The second five commandments are **all negative commandments**.<sup>21</sup> Alternatively: The first {five commandments} are primarily about a Jew’s relationship with Hashem (even honoring one’s parents is connected to our relationship with Hashem, since there are three **partners** {in creating a person, his father, his mother, and Hashem}<sup>22</sup> — based on the teaching of our Sages,<sup>23</sup> “The Torah compares honoring one’s parents to honoring Hashem”). And the second {five commandments} are about our relationship with others.]<sup>24</sup>

We must therefore clarify: Since there already is an allusion (not just for “Torah” in general, as one of the “three species,” but also) for the “five Chumashim” — why do we need a separate allusion to the Ten Commandments, which are written in the “five Chumashim”?

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<sup>18</sup> {*Shemos* 20:3.}

<sup>19</sup> {*Shemos* 20:7.}

<sup>20</sup> {*Shemos* 2:2.}

<sup>21</sup> *Or HaTorah*, “Sisa,” p. 1974, (p. 1979, 1983; et al).

<sup>22</sup> *Kiddushin* 30b; *Nidah* 31b.

<sup>23</sup> *Kiddushin* 30b.

<sup>24</sup> *Abarbanel*, on *Shemos*, ch. 20, mentions this in the name of the Sages.

## 5.

### INAUGURATING THE ALTAR WITH UTENSILS?

We will understand this by prefacing with a general question on the subject of the *Nesiim*'s offerings:

These offerings of the *Nesiim* were not a general contribution towards the *Mishkan* as were the wagons,<sup>25</sup> etc. Rather, they were to be used to **inaugurate** the **Altar**. The Altar was inaugurated by the offerings brought on the **Altar**: “fine flour mixed with olive oil for a *minchah*,”<sup>26</sup> “incense,” and *olah*,<sup>27</sup> *chatas*,<sup>28</sup> and *shelamim*<sup>29</sup> sacrifices.

As such, it is unclear why Scripture first lists (not the above categories {of sacrifices}, which were offered on the Altar, but) “one silver **bowl...** one **sprinkling basin...**,” detailing the weight and value of each utensil (and likewise later, when “one spoon” is listed) — as if the utensils were actually the primary focus of the Altar's inauguration!

## 6.

### TRANSFORMATION

The explanation for all the above:

Obviously, the allusions of the offerings for the **inauguration of the Altar in the *Mishkan*** are related to the Altar. That is, the unique function of the Altar and the sacrifices is evinced by the offerings for inauguration of the Altar in the *Mishkan*. Meaning, when the *Nesiim* brought their offerings to inaugurate the Altar, they did so in a particular order, and brought specific

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<sup>25</sup> Described in *Bamidbar* 7:3 ff.

<sup>26</sup> {Commonly translated as “a meal offering,” its primary ingredient was grain.}

<sup>27</sup> {Commonly translated as “an elevation offering,” it was consumed completely on the altar.}

<sup>28</sup> {Often translated as “a sin offering,” it was brought for the violation of specific sins.}

<sup>29</sup> {Commonly translated as “a peace offering,” portions were eaten by the kohanim and by the owners.}



amounts, etc., through which the **novelty** of the Altar's function was alluded to, in contrast to the prior status {of sacrificial offerings}.

The distinction of the **sacrifices** offered on the Altar in the *Mishkan*, in contrast to sacrifices that were offered prior to the Giving of the Torah, is:

The unique function of the *Mishkan*, in general, is stated explicitly in the Torah:<sup>30</sup> “They shall make Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst.” Jews create a place where **Hashem's presence is apparent**, to the extent that the *Mishkan* itself becomes a “sanctuary” — a sanctified entity.

This was also the function of the Altar in the *Mishkan*. Every Jew could transform an ordinary animal, etc., a non-holy object, into an offering for Hashem. Our physical eyes witnessed the animal becoming holy by being offered on the Altar and the “fire... from Heaven”<sup>31</sup> consumes the offering.

In order to highlight this unique function, the *Nesiim* brought two categories of offerings:

The **first** category of offerings are alluded to by the utensils, meal offerings, and incense, which allude to the offerings that were brought **previously**, before there was an altar in *Mishkan*. Offerings were brought then too, but the process did not include — not even at its conclusion — a fire emanating **from Hashem** and consuming {the offering}, which would connote Hashem's presence.<sup>32</sup> In terms of the allusion, there were no apparent changes made to the utensils themselves or to the offerings they contained, including the meal offerings and incense..

On the other hand, the second category of offerings (the *olah*, *chatas*, etc.), were themselves (either entirely or their choicest parts — the fats and blood)<sup>33</sup> offered visibly and changed by being placed and sprinkled on the altar, with a fire emanating from Hashem and consuming them, as mentioned.

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<sup>30</sup> *Shemos* 25:8.

<sup>31</sup> **Rashi** on *Vayikra* 1:7 and *Bamidbar* 4:13.

<sup>32</sup> Rashi on *Vayikra* 9:24.

<sup>33</sup> *Yechezkel* 44:15.

This is also alluded to in the varying species in the two categories of offerings: The offerings in the utensils, meal offerings and incense, do not come from the category of “*chai*” {animals} (or,<sup>34</sup> at any rate, their life-force is not discernible). The offerings of the second category, however, were from animals {*chai*, living creatures}. This alludes to the fact that the *Mishkan* and the Altar, introduced the novelty of **(the revelation of) Hashem’s presence**. Through this, inanimate and mundane objects were transformed into something alive {*chai*} and holy.

## 7.

### BEING ALIVE

The unique function of the *Mishkan* (and the Altar), after the Giving of the Torah, is expressed clearly by Scripture. It says that the Giving of the Torah was connected with the Jewish people becoming “a kingdom of priests and a **holy** nation.”<sup>35</sup> Consequently, they were also commanded to observe mitzvos that instill holiness in mitzvah-objects themselves. Even a novice student of Torah<sup>36</sup> understands (and “sees”) how these objects become holy.

This was primarily achieved at the Giving of the Torah, when the Jews became a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation,” and therefore commanded to observe all 613 mitzvos. Nonetheless, a semblance of this existed already for the first Jew, our patriarch Avraham. Accordingly, he was commanded to fulfill the mitzvah of circumcision — “My covenant shall be in your flesh,”<sup>37</sup> which categorizes it (as **Rashi** cites)<sup>38</sup> as a “**mitzvah-object**.”

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<sup>34</sup> According to the opinion that “*mor*” in the *ketores* was from the animal species — see Ramban’s commentary on *Shemos* 30:23; et al.

<sup>35</sup> *Shemos* 19:6.

<sup>36</sup> {In the Hebrew original, meaning, “*ben chamesh lemikra*”; lit., “a five-year-old {beginning} to study Scripture.” This is a term borrowed from *Pirkei Avos*, which teaches that the appropriate age for a child to begin studying Chumash is at the age of five. Rashi wrote his commentary on Chumash to solve problems that a 5-year-old student would encounter in understanding the simple meaning of a verse.}

<sup>37</sup> *Bereishis* 17:13.

<sup>38</sup> In his remarks on *Bereishis* 24:2.

This clarifies Rashi's order in interpreting the allusions in the *Nesim's* offerings (based on the homiletics of Rabbi Moshe **HaDarshan**<sup>39</sup> — but still close to *pshat*, explaining the simple meaning of the verses). Rashi breaks the offerings into two categories: He interprets inanimate objects as allusions to Adam (and his descendants), Noach and his descendants, and the Seventy Nations — in whom vitality (i.e., Hashem's presence) was not visibly discernible. Finally, Rashi interprets those things that were *chai* as allusions to the Jewish people — starting with Avraham, etc., until Moshe and Aharon, Kohanim, Levites, and Israelites.

## 8.

### PERMANENT TRANSFORMATION

The following, however, remains unclear: According to what was discussed above, there is certainly no reason to interpret “one spoon weighing ten gold shekels filled with incense” — an **inanimate** object (and vegetation) — as alluding to Torah, the Ten Commandments, and the 613 mitzvos.

The explanation: Rashi here emphasizes that “one spoon” corresponds “to the Torah, **which was given by the hand of Hashem**,” referring (not to Torah, in general, but) to the Tablets, where we specifically see<sup>40</sup> that they were given “by the hand of Hashem.”

Similarly, “*ten gold shekels* — corresponding to the Ten Commandments; *filled with incense* — the numerical value {corresponding to} the 613 mitzvos.” This remark isn't referring to the Ten Commandments and the 613 mitzvos by themselves. Rather, like the spoon, the Tablets were filled with 613 {mitzvos}, the 613 as they are contained in the Tablets<sup>41</sup> (which were given “by the hand of Hashem”). Meaning, the Tablets contained “Ten Commandments” (ten gold

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<sup>39</sup> {Implying a homiletic (“*drush*”) approach rather than a straightforward interpretation of the text.}

<sup>40</sup> *Shemos* 31:18.

<sup>41</sup> See *Bamidbar Rabbah*, ch. 14, sec. 16: “*One spoon* — corresponding to the Tablets that were written by the hand of Hashem... *ten gold shekels* — this refers to the Ten Commandments that were written on the Tablets... *filled with incense* — for the 613 mitzvos are intermixed in them {the Ten Commandments}.

shekels), and these “Ten Commandments” were “**filled with** (incense, equalling...) 613 mitzvos. As Rashi remarked earlier (in *parshas Mishpatim*):<sup>42</sup> “All 613 mitzvos were included in the Ten Commandments.”

Since “one spoon...” alludes to the Torah as it was “given by the hand of Hashem,” it is included in the category of inanimate objects, since the function of Torah and mitzvos in transforming things into “mitzvah-objects” is {only} doable when a **Jew accepts** Torah and mitzvos and **actually** fulfills a mitzvah.

Torah and mitzvos as they are **intrinsically** — “Hashem’s delight”<sup>43</sup> — and (even) as Hashem **gives** them (“given by the hand of Hashem”) — do not embed enduring holiness into the world:

As the novice student of Torah has already learned, the descent of Hashem’s presence onto Mount Sinai did not embed lasting holiness in the mountain. Therefore, after {the Giving of the Torah}, “when the ram’s horn sounds a long {blast}”<sup>44</sup> — after Hashem’s presence departed — “they were permitted to ascend”<sup>45</sup> the mountain.

[Nevertheless, because during the Giving of the Torah, holiness was drawn onto the mountain — for which reason it says, “whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death”<sup>46</sup> — the “spoon” was made of **gold**. The spoon was a precious utensil, resembling the previously mentioned silver utensils (and even more {precious}), since this alludes to a higher level of the preparation to reach the category of “*chai*.” Namely, by learning Torah and doing mitzvos, inanimate objects are elevated to the category of *chai*, as mentioned above.]

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<sup>42</sup> *Shemos* 24:12.

<sup>43</sup> Rashi on *Shemos* 32:16.

<sup>44</sup> *Shemos* 19:13.

<sup>45</sup> Rashi on *Shemos* 19:13.

<sup>46</sup> *Shemos* 19:12.

## 9.

### THE JEW'S MISSION OF PEACE

Based on the above — that Torah (and mitzvos) on their own are not alluded to by the category of *chai* — we can clarify Rashi's comments on “rams, goats, lambs”:

When Rashi interprets these “three species” to mean “(corresponding to Kohanim, Levites, and Israelites, and) corresponding to Torah, Prophets and Writings,” he doesn't mean to add a (second) allusion of — “Torah, Prophets and Writings” (and since both allusions are cited under one caption, there must therefore be **six** species) — because, as mentioned, Torah on its own is **not** alluded to by *chai*.

Rather, these three species correspond (primarily) to (the three items that Rashi listed earlier {Kohanim, Levites, and Israelites}) — **Jews**, but specifically the way Jews are **united** with (the three divisions of) Torah. Thus, there are really only three items.

This comes as a continuation of Rashi's previous commentary, “*for the shelamim, two oxen* — corresponding to Moshe and Aharon, who established peace between Israel and their Father in Heaven.” Meaning, the “peace” and connection between Jews and Hashem was brought about by Moshe and Aharon at the Giving of the Torah — through Torah (and mitzvos).

And since the three species, “rams, goats, lambs,” were also *shelamim*,<sup>47</sup> this proves that they “correspond to Kohanim, Levites, and Israelites” (not just by virtue of the general standing of Kohanim, Levites, and Israelites as Jews, but) as a reflection of their connection with Torah (corresponding to Torah, Prophets and Writings). In turn, this brings about the peace and connection between them and “their Father in Heaven.”

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<sup>47</sup> As stated in Rashi's commentary. see Rashi on *Vayikra* 3:1.

## 10.

### DIVISION OR NO DIVISION?

On this basis, we can also understand the flow of Rashi's remarks. Immediately after his interpretation, "corresponding to Torah, Prophets and Writings," Rashi continues (under the **same** caption), "the three fives correspond to the five Chumashim...":

Since this point follows immediately after "corresponding to Torah..." clearly, the phrase, "three fives," does not mean to allude to something new. Rather, the phrase is a continuation and **explanation** of "corresponding to Torah...":

In order to emphasize that here, Scripture speaks of the Torah as it was received by the Jewish people and became unified with them — unlike the verse "one spoon..." which refers to the Torah as it was "given by the Hand of Hashem" — the *Nesiim* brought these "three species" in multiples of "five," highlighting the divisions that exist in Torah and mitzvos:

Torah, the way it was "given by the Hand of Hashem," is **one** entity, to the extent that Hashem said all Ten Commandments "in **one** utterance."<sup>48</sup>

[This also explains why Rashi also quotes {in his caption} the word "**one** (spoon)" — although apparently, he only interprets the word "spoon." Rashi quotes the word "one" to emphasize that this refers to the Torah as it is "one": As given from Hashem, the Torah is **one** entity, "one spoon" (despite the Torah containing the **Ten** Commandments and being "filled with incense" — **613** mitzvos).]

Only when (and because) Jews "receive" Torah and mitzvos are the **divisions** within Torah apparent — that there are "five Chumashim," each Chumash containing different content and subjects — and divisions within mitzvos, that within the Ten Commandments ("all 613 mitzvos are included in

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<sup>48</sup> **Rashi** on *Shemos* 20:1.

the Ten Commandments”) there are two categories: “**five** commandments inscribed on the first Tablet” — positive mitzvos; and “the five commandments inscribed on the second one” — negative mitzvos}.<sup>49</sup>

In contrast, the Ten Commandments (and the 613 mitzvos), as they were given from Hashem, are alluded to in the verse, “one spoon weighing **ten** gold shekels” — not two times “five.” Because from Hashem’s perspective, there is no apparent division. Rather, all the Ten Commandments make up a single entity — “one spoon.”

— From a talk delivered after Shabbos *parshas Naso*, 5738 (1978)

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<sup>49</sup> See Rashi on Shemos 20:1: “They replied ‘yes’ to a positive mitzvah and ‘no’ to a negative mitzvah.”