

To the Members of the Society for Torah in the Modern World:

We are writing in regards to your decision that the Aseret Hadibrot should be rephrased because they are not relevant to us today. Even though it doesn't seem so, the dibrot are very relevant to us today. These ten mitzvot actually show us what Judaism today is all about.

There are two different sets of mitzvot in the Aseret Hadibrot. According to one commentator, Nechama Lebowitz, the first set is about our relationship with Hashem and the second set is about our relationship with other people. She also says that the dibrot have three special parts- actions, speech, and thoughts. The first set shows that our relationship with Hashem starts with the thoughts- the mitzvot to believe in Hashem and not believe in other gods. Then, there is the mitzvah to not say Hashem's name for no reason- לא תשא. This mitzvah shows our relationship with Hashem through speech. The last two mitzvot in the first set show our relationship with god through actions. These mitzvot are to keep shabbos and honor our parents. According to Nechama Lebowitz, our relationship with Hashem starts with our thoughts, but our belief in Hashem also has to show in our speech and actions. The second set is about our relationship with other people. The first three mitzvot are about how we treat others with our actions. These mitzvot are not to kill, not to commit adultery, and not to steal. The next mitzvah is not to be a false witness- לא תענה. The last part of our relationship with others is about how we think. We can't want what others have- לא תחמוד.

She also says that our religious law is different than civil law. Civil law only talks about how we treat others with our actions, but the Torah says to really treat someone nicely, you have to speak and think nicely about them too. Another thing she says is that in our relationship with Hashem, belief is just the first step. Once we have the belief, we have to apply it to how we speak and act.

Rabbi David Fohrman talks more about the relationship between the עשרת הדיברות from our perspective with others. He says that because there are two different tablets, there are two different sides and layers. One side is the מצוות that describes our relationship with our creators and authority figures, and the other tablet is about the מצוות that describes our relationship with our peers. Each tablet had five מצוות on it and they line up with the five on the other tablet. One side expresses themselves in our relationship with our creators and one side expresses our relationship with our peers. For example, לא תחמוד, don't be jealous. On the עשרת הדיברות, it lines up with כבד את , honor your parents. When you look deeper and actually think about the principles behind each מצוות is, you find out that they each talk about respect. דיבר number 10 talks about respecting yourself and דיבר number 5 talks about respecting your parents. Even if not being jealous does not connect to our everyday lives, when we learn deeply, we find out how to connect it. We find out that the word that all of the דיברות have in common is respect. So if we think about it, the main idea of Judaism is to respect. The importance of Hashem putting each of us in this world, it is to make a Kiddush Hashem, and respect each other and ourselves. Another idea that Rabbi David Forman says is about Rabbi Akiva. The reason as for why the famous Rabbi Akiva told his students "ואהבת לרעך כמוך", which means to love and treat your peers like yourself. He was showing his kids to love everyone whether it is our friends, a random person, Hashem, and most of all, ourselves.

To sum it up, Rabbi Forman says that these five principles can relate to every מצווה in the whole תורה and this is why the עשרת הדיברות are famously known and so important. They are really just a shortened version of the entire תורה on how to connect with peers, creators, and ourselves. The עשרת הדיברות show us that Judaism is all about respect. Respecting is something that we can connect in our everyday lives. This is why these specific מצוות were chosen to be the "top ten", because they show us what our religion is all about.

