

Ki Sisa 2013

Why do we care exactly where the Luchos were broken?

“It happened as he (Moshe) drew near the camp and saw the calf and the dances, Moshe’s anger flared up. He threw the Tablets from his hands, and shattered them at the foot of the mountain.” (32, 19)

"ויהי כאשר קרב אל המחנה וירא את העגל ומחלת ויחר אף משה וישלך מידו מידיו את הלחת וישבר אתם תחת ההר."

Nachalas Tzvi page 236: Rashi explains that when the pasuk says “at the foot of the mountain”, it means they were broken by, or near, the mountain. **Why does the Torah feel the need to inform us the exact location where the Luchos were broken?**

The pasuk states “Moshe brought the people forth from the camp toward God; they stood at the bottom of the mountain.” (19, 17) "ויוצא משה את העם לקראת האלהים מן המחנה ויטיצבו בתחתית ההר." (19, 17) The Gemara in Shabbos (88a) deduces from this pasuk that Hashem covered the mountain over the Jews and said ‘If you accept the Torah, good. If not, this will be your burial place!’ (ויתיצבו) אמר רב אבדימי בר חמא בר חסא מלמד שכפה הקדוש ברוך הוא עליהם את ההר כגיגית ואמר להם אם בתחתית ההר" אמר רב אבדימי בר חמא בר חסא מלמד שכפה הקדוש ברוך הוא עליהם את ההר כגיגית ואמר להם אם (אתם מקבלים התורה מוטב, ואם לאו שם תהא קבורתכם. (As a side point, Tosefos (ibid) asks why Hashem needed to force the Jews to accept the Torah since they already said “נעשה ונשמע” “we will do and we will obey!” (24, 7)? One answer is that, maybe, in the future, we would go off the derech (proper path) and no longer want to follow the Torah so Hashem also needed to force it upon us. Another answer is as follows; the Medrash Tanchuma (parshas Noach gimal) says the Jews accepted Torah shebichtav (written Torah) willingly but needed to be forced to accept Torah shebeal peh (oral). A third answer is that when we accepted the Torah, it was out of ahava (love), so Hashem did this in order to have us accept the Torah out of yirah (fear) as well. The Bartenura (first perek of Avos) says, that someone who lovingly serves Hashem will be careful with all the positive commandments, and someone who fearfully serves Hashem will be careful with all the negative commandments; therefore, the Jews needed to be forced to accept the Torah as well, to have the fear which is necessary to perform the passive mitzvos.)

Now we can understand the significance of the location where Moshe broke the Luchos. Moshe always defended the Jewish people, even when they worshipped avodah zara (idolatry). How did he defend their actions? **By breaking the Luchos at the bottom of the mountain Moshe alluded to the fact that the Jews were forced to accept the Torah and they shouldn’t be liable for the cheit haegel (sin of the golden calf)!**

2.

Shinning facial expressions

“When (Moshe) descended from the mountain - Moshe did not know that the skin of his face had become radiant while He had spoken to him.” (34, 29)

"ויהי ברדת משה מהר סיני ושני לחת העדת ביד משה ברדתו מן ההר ומשה לא ידע כי קרן עור פניו בדברו אתו."

(This is where some goyim (gentiles) get the idea and misconception that Jews have horns, because the word keren meant horns.) Rashi explains that the light was shining and projected like a horn. Onkelos translates keren to mean radiance as well.

The Ohr Hachaim HaKadosh quotes the Shemos Raba (47, 6) which quotes Rebbi Yehuda bar Nachmani who says that **after Moshe wrote the Torah, there was a little bit of ink that remained in the writing utensil. That leftover ink was subsequently placed on Moshe's head. Consequently, his head radiantly shined.**

There are a couple of questions on this medrash:

- 1) **Why was there any leftover ink? Hashem knew how much ink would be needed.**
- 2) **Why did Hashem specifically choose that a writing utensil and ink would cause Moshe's face to shine?**

The Ohr Hachaim says that humility is very important. Regarding Moshe the Torah states (Bamidbar 11, 3) "Now the man Moshe was exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth." "והאיש משה ענו עניו מאד מכל האדם אשר על פני האדמה." **Hashem instructed Moshe to write this pasuk. However, since Moshe was so humble he didn't want to. Moshe therefore wrote the word "עניו"/"humble" without the letter "י" in it (עניו). Consequently, a little bit ink remained. As a reward for being so humble, Hashem took that ink and placed it on Moshe's head. This is why Moshe's face shined!**

Another simple answer as to why Moshe's face shined is offered by the Rosh. The Rosh says that some are of the opinion that when Moshe wrote the Torah, he would wipe the writing utensil on his hair which resulted with this shine.

Rabbi Nissan Alpert explains another reason why this 'extra ink' was needed. Moshe is the quintessential role model Rebbi. **It's not solely about the Torah writings and words that a Rebbi has to transmit to his talmidim; it's also his facial expressions and motions that play an integral part in his teaching techniques.** This is an important method of how to truly 'inject' the Torah into their blood. **Therefore, Moshe needed this shine.**

Similarly, the Gemara in Chagiga (3a) relates a story of two people who were mute and would sit in front of Rebbi Yehudah Hanasi whenever he would give a shiur. These two men would nod their heads and move their lips. Rebbi davened on their behalf and they were healed. Once they were able to talk, everyone realized how much Torah knowledge they had. The question arises, why did they specifically sit in front of Rebbi? The Gemara in Eruvin (13b) relates that Rebbi Yehudah Hanasi said he was so sharp in learning was because he saw Rebbi Meir's back. He said, 'if I would see the front of Rebbi Meir, I would be even sharper in my learning.' (אמר רבי) האי דמחדדנא מחבראי דחזיתיה לרבי מאיר מאחוריה, ואילו חזיתיה מקמיה הוה מחדדנא טפי דכתיב "והיו עיניך ראות" The Maharsha explains that **he was able to learn a lot from the Rebbi Meir's gestures and mannerisms. Those who sit in front are able to see more mannerisms and kavana (intent) of the maggid shiur than those who sit in the back. It is for this reason that these two talmidim sat in front of Rebbi (Chidushei Hageonim).**

There are benefits of listening to a shiur that exist which are unattainable by merely learning from a sefer. Furthermore, there are benefits of seeing the maggid shiur verses merely hearing him. The Kuzari writes (mamer two os 72) the purpose of language is to allow that which is within the soul of the speaker to enter into the soul of the listener. This purpose cannot be properly accomplished unless the two are face to face. This is the advantage that the spoken word has over the written word, as the saying goes 'from the mouths of the scribes and not from the mouths of the books.' /'מפי סופרים ולא מפי ספרים.' (See Gittin 71a) One can better understand oral communication because the speaker pauses at the conventional stops, speaks continuously when the sentences should be connected, and uses harsh or soft intonation. The speaker can also use body language – eye movement, expressions of the mouth, and so on – to indicate when he is amazed, inquisitive, engaged in providing ordinary information, hopeful, fearful, or submissive. These body signals convey the message much more efficiently than a message that lacks them. The speaker can be aided by the movements of his eyes and eyebrows, his head, and his hands, in communicating anger, desire, submissiveness, or arrogance to the desired degree. The Chasam Sofer says that the spoken word has certain advantages and the written word also has certain advantages. The spoken word allows one to explain better. The written word doesn't have that same power of clarity. Also testimonies must verbal because they must be given over with clarity.

The Cheskuni asks; why did Moshe specifically get this shine after receiving the second Luchos and not the first? By the first Luchos, there was a huge scene with thunder, lightning, fire, etc. Conversely, by the giving of second Luchos it was much quieter. Therefore, if it wasn't for the fact that Moshe's face shined, the goyim may not have believed that the second Luchos were actually given. Since Moshe's face shined there was no debating and denying that the Jews received the Torah. Another answer is that, since the Jews thought of appointing another leader, Hashem sent them a message that they shouldn't do that. Moshe was still their leader and the proof was his shining face.

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