

**“Hashem relented regarding the evil that He declared He would do to His people. Moshe turned and descended from the mountain, with the two Tablets of Testimony in his hand, Tablets inscribed on both their sides; they were inscribed on one side and the other.” (32:14-15)**

Prior to the *chet ha'egel*, sin of the Golden Calf, when the Torah mentions that Hashem gave Moshe the *Luchos*, the Torah describes that they were made of stone written with the *Etzba Elokim*, finger of G-d. Now, after the sin, and after mentioning that Hashem relented from the punishment He was prepared to mete out, the Torah records an added detail about the *Luchos* – “inscribed on both their sides; inscribed on one side and the other.” Why not mention the complete description right away? Is there some reason that the Torah waited until after the tragic rebellion with the Golden Calf before adding this detail about the *Luchos*’ inscription?

In his *sefer Areshes Sefaseinu*, *Horav Schlesinger, Shlita*, cites the *Kedushas Yom Tov* who gives the following explanation: In the *Talmud Kiddushin* 30b, *Chazal* teach us that the Torah which was given to us through Moshe has a unique characteristic. If a person studies it correctly, he merits its therapeutic qualities. If he does not, it will be for him a poison, destroying him. How can it be that the Torah which is referred to as *Toras Chaim*, the Living Torah, the Torah of life, should have a deadly effect upon he who does not merit? How could it suddenly transform life to death? *Chazal* explain that Hashem says to *Klal Yisrael*, “My son, I created the *yetzer hara*, evil inclination, and I also created the Torah as its antidote. If you study the Torah, you will be protected from the *yetzer hara*’s wiles. You will not fall into its hands.” The Torah is truly a medicine, an antidote against evil. It does not destroy. If one does not study, if he does not avail himself of its therapeutic powers, however, he will fall prey to the evil that is out there.

Basically, the answer is simple. It all depends upon one’s attitude and approach to Torah study. If one studies *lishmah*, for “its” sake, to fulfill Hashem’s command, to give Hashem *nachas ruach*, satisfaction, then Torah protects him. He will merit *Siyata d’Shmaya*, Divine Assistance, and the Torah is for him a *sam ha’chayim*, life-sustaining elixir. However, if he studies Torah for the wrong reasons, if he continues along his merry way disregarding the *mitzvos* that are inscribed in the Torah, at times even intentionally – then the Torah will turn into a *sam ha’ma’ves*, poison, that will destroy him.

This is the meaning of the *Luchos* that were inscribed on both sides. A person should not think that there is only one side to the *Torah* and that one who studies it will surely overcome the blandishments of the *yetzer hara*. This is not true. The Torah/*Luchos* were “inscribed on one side and on the other.” Only if one studies *Torah lishmah*, for the right reasons, will he succeed in benefiting from its therapeutic effect.

With this in mind, *Horav P. Friedman, Shlita*, explains why the Torah detailed the *Luchos'* inscription following its placement of the incident of the Golden Calf. The Torah is responding to a compelling question. Why did Moshe break the *Luchos*? Why did he not descend with them and give them to the Jewish revelers? If its healing powers are so extraordinary, why could it not bring back the sinners? Give them the Torah, and they would change! This is a powerful question. We reach out to everyone, but what about the sinners of the Golden Calf?

The answer is written in the Torah. The *Luchos* are inscribed on both sides – two sides to the coin of Torah. Not everyone is prepared to receive the Torah. For one who is not appropriately prepared, it can be poison. The sinners of the Golden Calf were at that moment idol worshippers. They were not spiritually fit to receive the Torah. It would have an adverse effect on them. This is why Moshe decided to shatter the *Luchos* and not give them to *Klal Yisrael*.