

And He declared unto you His covenant... And He wrote them upon two tablets of stone. (4:13)

The *Aseres Hadibros*, Ten Commandments, are supreme among the *Torah's* precepts. This is the result of two factors. Primary is their fundamental and overwhelming importance. Second is the awe-inspiring, majestic manner in which Hashem revealed them to the entire nation of *Klal Yisrael*. The Revelation was undeniably the most incredible event in the history of the world. It gave birth to *Klal Yisrael* as a nation - a *Torah* nation, whose license to nationhood consists of its acceptance of, and adherence to, the *Torah*. The *Torah* is a Divine synopsis of our duties toward Hashem and our fellowman. The two work cooperatively. One cannot be a good Jew without maintaining his *Torah*-dictated relationship with Hashem and his fellowman. The Ten Commandments are all-encompassing. They are unequalled in their simplicity, comprehensiveness and solemnity. They were Divinely engraved on two tablets of stone, which seems anti-climactic. One would think that such an unparalleled charge to *Klal Yisrael* be transmitted on a more impressive medium.

Horav Moshe Swift, zl, cites a beautiful *Midrash* that reveals the origin of these stones. They were stones of special origin, not chosen arbitrarily for their task. One tablet was the stone upon which Yaakov *Avinu* lay down his head. Yaakov gathered stones upon which to lay his head. When they vied with each other to serve as his pillow, Hashem miraculously melded them all into one. It was on that unified stone that Yaakov lay his head, and it was upon that stone, representing harmony, that half of the Ten Commandments was written. The other stone was the one upon which Moshe *Rabbeinu* sat with his hands held high as *Klal Yisrael* defended itself against its archenemy, Amalek. This stone, too, represents unity, a harmony of all *Klal Yisrael* focusing their hearts and minds towards their Father in Heaven. By doing this, they were able to triumph over their enemy.

These two stones symbolize the two types of conflicts which we confront: as individuals and as a nation. The first stone, the stone of Yaakov, originally consisted of twelve stones, reflecting the diversity in *Klal Yisrael*. Twelve tribes, twelve unique approaches to the Divine - but all focused towards one goal - to serve the Almighty. Only such stones - such conflict - such diversity, can be transformed into one stone, can serve as the parchment upon which the commandments can be inscribed. Unity in diversity - not unity in adversity. They must share a common goal, a common mission, a common objective.

The other stone represents our external conflict, our never-ending challenge from the nations of the world, who have one intention - to do away with us. While some have openly declared their animus, seeking to destroy us, to forever be rid of the Jew, others are more subtle; they only desire to thwart the growth of our religion, to put an end to the Jew's message to the world. In any event, these challenges demand a response. We must not yield; we must go forward and fight our battles, but the *Torah* must be inscribed upon the stone. Hashem's' word must guide and inspire our every move. Both stones, both conflicts, the one from within and the one from without, must have at their beginning the words and profound message, "*Anochi Hashem Elokecha*", "*I am*

Hashem your G-d."