

"And Moshe was angered, and he cast out from his hands the tablets and he broke them." (32:19)

At first glance the narrative which deals with Moshe's breaking the first set of tablets is very puzzling. When *Bnei Yisrael* made a Golden-Calf, did Moshe have the right to decide that they would forever forfeit their claim to the *Torah*? Would it not have been more appropriate for Moshe to delay teaching them the *Torah* until they had repented and mended their ways? Instead, he broke the tablets and subsequently asked Hashem for a second set of tablets.

This question may be answered by explaining a deeper understanding of the unique characteristics of the first set of tablets. The *Talmud (Eruvin 54a)* states that had the first tablets not been broken, *Torah* would have forever remained etched in the minds of every Jew. It would only be necessary to study the *Torah* once, since it would never be forgotten. Moshe perceived a serious pitfall in this trait. What if an immoral person were to study the *Torah*? It would be forever engraved upon his mind, opening up before him complete new vistas of wisdom and knowledge! Moshe could not tolerate the eventuality of a person of such distinctly paradoxical characteristics to exist. He was able to develop an a priori argument from the *Korban Pesach*. It is stated that a Jew who has strayed from the *Torah* is not privileged to share in this sacrifice. This symbol of Jewish freedom served as Moshe's paradigm for deciding the future of *Torah* for *Am Yisrael*. Consequently, Moshe broke the original tablets, destroying forever the possibility of an individual steeped in *Torah* knowledge and wisdom, who acts in complete defiance to Hashem's *Torah*.

The second set of tablets were inherently different from the first. They were not a "creation of Hashem", but rather the creation of a human being - namely Moshe. Hashem gave these tablets under new conditions, commanding individual Jews "*engrave for yourself the tablets.*" They were to be engraved in "your," consistent with each individual's fear of and devotion to Hashem. The second set of tablets manifested the specific criteria of establishment upon the Jewish personality. This change ultimately satisfied Moshe and allayed his fears of the *Torah* falling into the wrong hands.