

Hashem said to Moshe, “Carve for yourself two stone tablets like the first ones.” (34:1)

After forty days of prayer for Divine forgiveness, Moshe received a command to carve out two new stones to be used as the *Luchos*. Moshe ascended the mountain on *Rosh Chodesh Elul* to remain there for forty days. On the tenth of *Tishrei*, *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, he descended with the new *Luchos* and a complete pardon for *Klal Yisrael's* participation in the *Chet Ha'eigal*, sin of the Golden Calf. *Teshuvah*, repentance, is a process which effects Divine mercy. Forgiveness is the result of man's efforts, his fasts and prayers. Every individual is eligible to become the beneficiary of Divine forgiveness. He has only to pave the way through prayer and repentance.

It is interesting to note that the second *Luchos* were given to *Klal Yisrael* immediately after their pardon -- when Moshe descended the mountain. What about rehabilitation? Should not a period of time have gone by during which the people demonstrated the sincerity of their *teshuvah* and the genuineness of their conviction? **Horav S. R. Hirsch, zl**, questions the apparent rapid return to “business as usual.” In any other society, an infraction such as the Golden Calf would have resulted in a different consequence. Obviously, the people reacted to circumstances which they could not handle. Perhaps changes should be made. Every government pays close attention to the reactions of its constituents. After an outbreak, the government will look into the problems or situations that might have led up to the rebellion. The people's sentiments are not ignored. In many instances, laws will be changed or enacted to address the changing mood of the people. Public opinion is considered in assuring no further outbreaks.

Jewish law is different. It does not change because of people's weaknesses. Error, rebellion, transgression, can in no way alter the basic form or spirit of Jewish law. To paraphrase *Rav Hirsch*, “Hashem does not modify His plans to suit our weaknesses.” Thus, immediately after the people were forgiven, Hashem gave the new *Luchos* -- themselves as before. Nothing was changed. He offered dispensation for weakness. He demanded that the people just pick themselves up, dust themselves off, and continue. Regardless of what we do, we must face our destiny and do what is demanded of us - a task which never changes.