

**"I grasped the two Luchos.... and I smashed them before your eyes... at that time Hashem said to me, 'Carve out for yourself two Luchos like the first ones.' The Bnei Yisrael travelled.... there did Aharon die." (8:17)**

Moshe's recounting of his days in Heaven are interrupted so that we should recognize and mourn the loss of a *tzaddik* to the same extent that we mourn the breaking of the *Luchos*. The loss of a righteous person should generate within us a sense of loss and despair which is commensurate to the tragedy of losing the *Luchos*. *Chazal* offer a number of interpretations for this parallel. The *Kesav Sofer* explains that despite the loss of the *Luchos*, albeit intense, they still had the new *Luchos*. These second *Luchos*, however, although sublime, paled in comparison to its predecessors. Likewise, when a *tzaddik* passes away, there may indeed be another great leader waiting to succeed him, but he is not as great as the *tzaddik* whom he follows. In both cases, the loss for the individual Jew is immense. Each *tzaddik* has his own unique attributes which are an intrinsic part of his personality and character. With his demise, these virtues become extinct. The *tzaddik's* demise is an irreparable loss for the entire Jewish community.