

"And he cast out of his hands the tablets and he broke them beneath the mountain." (32:19)

In the *Talmud Shabbos 87 Chazal* state that Hashem acquiesced with Moshe's decision to break the *luchos*. What is the rationale for breaking the *luchos*? Was there no other alternative than to destroy Hashem's handiwork? *Horav Mordechai Ilan z.l.*, explains the spirit behind the breaking of the *luchos* in the following manner. Man must clear a path in which he can fulfill the lifestyle he chooses to adopt. Differentiating between good and evil, he must select a definite way of life. When one vacillates back and forth in a quasi-darkness between good and evil, it is worse than complete abdication to the path of evil. One specific period in the day is called twilight. It is a time in which we are potentially less able to see clearly than during nighttime. At least at night when it is pitch-black one can make use of a candle to light his way. During twilight, however, light is not easily discernable.

Indeed, this was Eliyahu *Ha'Navi's* exhortation to *Klal Yisrael*, "How much longer will you hesitate between the two doorsteps? If Hashem is the true G-d then follow Him and if the *Baal* is, then follow him" (*I Melachim 18:21*).

Eliyahu's message was simple. Make up your minds, you can not combine two forms of worship. Either you serve Hashem unequivocally, or you serve the pagan god. The worship of *Baal*, the pagan god, is not nearly as destructive as combining it with the worship of Hashem. The light of *Torah* does not mitigate idol-worship. On the contrary, those who attempt to "incorporate" *Baal* worship with *Torah* observance create a most dangerous and menacing half-breed monster.

When Moshe came down from *Har Sinai* and saw the extent to which the pernicious spirit of idol worship had enveloped *Klal Yisrael*, he immediately thrust the *luchos* to the ground and shattered them. It was better to have no *luchos* than to have *luchos* that were tainted with the Golden Calf's contaminant. He worried that the scene unfolding before his eyes, the frivolity and wanton behavior that prevailed, could conceivably occur in the presence of the *luchos*. Moshe feared that there was a lack of clarity in perceiving the difference between the Golden Calf and the *luchos*. He consequently broke the *luchos* to demonstrate the definite distinction between "light" and "darkness."

How are we to reconcile ourselves with this duality of forces which we confront? Can not even a little bit of light dissipate a veil of total darkness? *Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz z.l.*, explains that the "darkness" which may exist within a human is not simply an absence of light. Rather, it is a powerful force which asserts itself within the recesses of a human being's personality. Such power can virtually coexist with the "light" that permeates a person. He cites the *Ramban* who describes the darkness that plagued Egypt during *makas choshech* as being total darkness, rather than an absence of sunlight. This entity was so powerful it literally overpowered and extinguished all light.

This evil darkness is a force with which one must reckon. It is an urge, a lust within oneself which must be uprooted in order for the light of *Torah* to function optimally. The forces of light and evil within a person can regrettably continue to coexist until the time that one overwhelms and destroys the other. Perhaps worse, they can continue to "work" in consonance with each other, creating an anomalous personality in which "light" fuels "darkness." The potential experience of this new dimension of evil precipitated Moshe's courageous act of breaking the *luchos*.