

And by all the strong hand and awesome power that Moshe performed before the eyes of all Yisrael. (34:12)

Rashi explains that this refers to Moshe's initiative to shatter the *Luchos* right before *Klal Yisrael's* eyes. Moshe saw that the people were not ready to accept the *Luchos* at this point. They had compromised their faith. The *Luchos* cannot be given on compromise. One must make his whole-hearted commitment to Hashem and trust that He will be present for him at all times. We do not reject Hashem and look for new gods just because, in our minds, Moshe is a little bit late. Thus, Moshe shattered the *Luchos* for all to see. **Horav Chaim Mordechai Katz, zl**, was wont to say, "Just as one must know when to start an endeavor or undertake to build an institution, so, too, must he know when to end it." Moshe felt these people were not deserving of the *Luchos* and he immediately acted in accordance with what was right--not necessarily that which would have been acceptable to all people.

Horav Nissan Alpert, zl, cites the *Imrei Avraham*, who says that the words *kf hbgk van* "ktrah are a mnemonic for the word "ohkf" which means vessels/tools. He offers an explanation based upon this mnemonic. *Horav* Alpert takes his own approach towards explaining the meaning of this play on words. The *Torah* is the greatest teacher. Not only is it a vast storehouse of knowledge, but it also shows us how -- and gives us the tools -- to teach its lessons. One has only to study the *Torah* in order to see the correct methods for transmitting *Torah* to others. It is the function of our *Chazal* to glean these tools of learning from the *Torah* so that they can educate and imbue a generation of students with *Toras* Hashem. This is the meaning of the mnemonic. Not only did Hashem give us His *Torah*, He also gave us the tools for teaching it.

We now understand why Moshe decided to shatter the *Luchos*. Moshe saw what happened to the generation that had originally accepted the *Torah* on *Har Sinai*. Their behavior had so quickly degenerated, that, suddenly, they were no longer on the same spiritual plane as they had previously been. In their present condition and state of mind, the *Luchos* were not the correct vehicle for teaching *Torah*. The *Luchos* were not the right teaching tools for imbuing *Torah* to a people who had created a Golden Calf and flagrantly danced before it in the most degenerative manner.

The Egyptian era -- during which everything was handed to them on a "silver platter" -- was over. All of the miracles that were necessary to transform *Klal Yisrael* from a nation of slaves to a "kingdom of Kohanim and a holy nation" had occurred. The Jews now had independence to the extent that they were to effect Hashem's favor based upon their own earned merit. They had no wicked masters to fear. They were no longer running. They were in the period of *Kabbolas Ha'Torah*, when the Jews were to accept and transmit *Torah* to the coming generations.

In order to effect this transformation, it was necessary that *Klal Yisrael* toil in *Torah*. Only then would it be their own acquisition, so that they would appreciate it and transmit it unembellished to

the next generation. This is why Moshe broke the *Luchos*. The first tablets were the Almighty's creation. They reflected a G-d-given gift, something which was appropriate for them--before they sinned with the Golden Calf. The second set of *Luchos* was the work of man. Moshe made them with his own two hands. They reflected study and toil in *Torah*. These were the new tools with which *Klal Yisrael* could achieve erudition in *Torah*.