

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

This is a nice ending to the Torah that Hashem gave to Klal Yisrael through Moshe Rabbeinu. In fact, this pasuk, which in part describes Moshe's shattering of the Luchos, serves as the quintessential leader's epitaph, his greatest moment and most significant achievement. What about the Jewish People? It is not very comforting to know that the Torah ends with their iniquity. Is it really that important to conclude the Torah with a recap of one of the most serious errors in Jewish history? Horav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zl, suggests that, in effect, this conclusion to the Torah is far from a critique of the Jewish People. It is, perhaps, their greatest praise. The Torah ends with the message: Moshe shattered the Luchos when he saw that in his absence, the Jewish People had embraced the Golden Calf. The response was shattering the Luchos. If Klal Yisrael is not suitable for the Torah, then there is no place for the Torah! This is similar to the idea of the Korban Pesach, when all of those counted for a group become tamei, ritually contaminated. The Korban becomes pasul, invalid. No people, no Torah. That is a fairly distinctive praise.

Rav Shlomo Zalman adds that this is why the Shivrei Luchos, fragmented Luchos, were placed in the Aron HaKodesh together with the second set of Luchos. We have a rule that Ein kateigor naaseh saneigor, "A prosecuting attorney cannot become a defense attorney." The Luchos within the Aron HaKodesh symbolized atonement. It was placed inside the Kodshei Kodoshim, Holy of Holies, for that reason. Should the symbol of sinful behavior, characterized by the broken Luchos, be stored there, also? With the above idea in mind, it all makes sense. The Shivrei Luchos symbolize our enduring bond with Hashem. Without the Jewish People, there is no Torah. They will never be exchanged for another nation. What greater saneigor is there than this?