

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

This last *pasuk* in the *Torah* is also Moshe *Rabbeinu's* epitaph. It is a tribute to *Klal Yisrael's* quintessential leader and *Rebbe*. *Rashi* explains that "*yad chazakah*," strong hand, refers to the *luchos* which Moshe received on *Har Sinai* in his hands. He shattered these *luchos* "before the eyes of all *Yisrael*." He took it upon himself to perform this courageous deed, an act which was affirmed by Hashem. Why does this act serve as such a great testimonial to Moshe's character of leadership? Is it more critical than his role in the exodus from Egypt and the ensuing forty year tenure as leader, mentor and source of inspiration to *Klal Yisrael*? Is the fact that the *Torah* is endearingly referred to as *Toras Moshe* less of a tribute to him?

Horav Mordechai Ilan z.l. offers a profound insight .Moshe's act of shattering the *luchos* created the line of demarcation which distinguishes *Klal Yisrael* from the gentile world. The exodus from Egypt was not a goal in its own right; it was a vehicle which enabled *Klal Yisrael* to reach *Har Sinai*. It purified them from the degenerate lifestyle and spiritual stench that comprised their environment in Egypt. It paved the way for the receiving of the *Torah*. Receiving the *Torah* was the culmination of the entire bondage experience and the ensuing exodus. This was still not sufficient, however, to insure that we would understand our distinctiveness from the rest of the world. It was only when Moshe broke the *luchos*, demonstrating that the Golden Calf and *Torah* are not compatible, that this concept became apparent.

This is the "*strong hand*" that seals the *Torah* and ensures its eternal inviolability. The breaking of the *luchos* shields against the notion of developing any alteration of the *Torah*, as well as any foolish addition to it. It is by demonstrating his ability to break the *luchos* if they are in danger of being transformed that Moshe showed the true character of his leadership.