

**"Your clothes did not wax old upon you, neither did your foot swell these forty years... So I turned and came down from the mountain ... and two luchos (were) on my two hands... and I looked and behold you had sinned against Hashem your G-d... and I took hold of the two luchos and cast them out of my two hands... At that time, Hashem said unto me, 'hew for you two luchos of stone... and make for you an ark of wood'... and (I) went up the mountain having the two luchos in my hands."
(8:4, 9:15-17, 10:1,3)**

It is human nature to speak about things we can and should do. On the other hand, sometimes we must also be aware of those things we think we can not accomplish, but we must try to do. In the beginning of this *parsha*, Moshe relates *Klal Yisrael's* forty year sojourn in the desert until the moment when they stand ready to enter *Eretz Yisrael*.

Indeed, as noted in the *pesukim*, the desert experience was more like paradise. *Bnei Yisrael* received water from stones and food from Heaven. Their clothes were always wearable, and their feet were never swollen. Their needs were always provided for them; all they were required to do was to take whatever their heart desired. *Moshe Rabbeinu* tells them that even the two *luchos* were hsh h,a kgw on my hands. They were not "in my hands." Everything was readily accessible. Even religion, education and service of Hashem were laid out on top of his hands. They had only to take it, without suffering any hardship.

Horav Moshe Swift z.l. notes the *Torah's* emphasis on the proximity of the *luchos* to Moshe's hands. He homiletically explains the text in the following manner. *Klal Yisrael* were becoming accustomed to receiving their material and spiritual sustenance without any hardship. This phenomenon did not last. *Klal Yisrael* turned away from Hashem, compelling Moshe to cast off the *luchos* from his hands, breaking them. Everything had come easily to them, and now they regrettably lost it easily. A religion which seems hard and difficult, demanding and exacting, is a religion that can stand the test of time.

This was the distinguishing aspect of the second *luchos*. Hashem told Moshe, "Hew out for you two luchos and make for you an ark." Expend your own effort and your own labor. When men advocate easy religion without sacrifice, when demands for observance of faith and tradition are scorned, it becomes essential to work and toil for religion, spend money for it, and guard it as if it were life itself. The stronger the resistance, the greater should be one's effort and the more lasting would be its influence.

Moshe acceded to Hashem's command. He hewed the *luchos* out of stone with his own hands. When he comes down from the mountain the second time, the *luchos* are no longer "on his hands." Whoever wants to share in these *luchos* must break down the resistance, must swim against the current to capture and grasp them. Such *luchos* will be handed down from generation to generation. There must be will-power and determination, however, to receive and accept them.