

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

The “strong hand” refers to Moshe’s receiving the *Luchos*, Two Tablets, which were of extraordinary weight. “Before the eyes of all *Yisrael*” alludes to our quintessential leader’s decision to shatter the *Luchos* before the eyes of the nation – an action which Hashem ratified. Moshe demonstrated his exceptional leadership ability when he shattered the *Luchos*. Since it is certainly difficult to destroy everything that one works for, it takes a strong leader to make such a consequential decision that will impact the entire nation for all time. For now, the issue is not why/what motivated him to shatter the *Luchos*, but rather, the fact that he took it upon himself to act decisively and break the *Luchos*. Hashem thanked him. That is about as great a confirmation as one can get. The fact that the Torah closes with this sentence underscores its lesson: *Ha’kol holeich achar ha’chisum*; “Everything goes according to the signature/ending.” *Sheviras haLuchos*, the shattering of the *Luchos*, was clearly not a happy thing – nothing to be proud of. If anything, it is a condemnation of the nation that just had witnessed the greatest, unprecedented Revelation, yet broke their trust, because, in their minds, Moshe was late in returning from *Har Sinai*. The fact that the Torah closes with this incident proves its impact, presenting a lesson on how to regard the Torah.

The Ethicists explain that Moshe’s breaking of the *Luchos* taught us that the Torah is not in Heaven. Moshe *Rabbeinu* made a decision based on his *daas Torah*, wisdom gleaned from and honed by the Torah, that the *Luchos* should be shattered. A nation that was dancing with an idol has no right to the Torah. He made a *kal v’chomer*. (This literally means, “lenient and strict,” whereby one law is derived from another through a “lenient and strict” logic. If a case that is generally strict has a leniency, a case that is generally lenient should certainly have that leniency.) If concerning *Korban Pesach*, which is one of the 613 *mitzvos*, the Torah states that a *ben neihar*, alienated person (apostate who desecrates *Shabbos* or denies the validity of any of the Torah’s *mitzvos*), is not permitted to partake of it – surely the Jews, who (by worshiping the Golden Calf) eschewed the entire Torah, were unfit for the Torah.

Moshe’s decision to shatter the *Luchos* demonstrated the power of the *chachamim*, Torah sages, of every generation. By closing the Torah with Moshe’s actions, we learn that *Torah She’Baal Peh*, Oral Law, is the direct continuation and accessory to *Torah She’B’Ksav*, Written Law. The Torah is teaching us that, in reality, the Torah does not end. It continues with the *chachmei HaTalmud*, sages of the *Mishnah* and *Talmud*, and all the ensuing commentary on the Written Law. We never complete the Torah; we just move further and deeper, plumbing its depths.