

טעמו וראו

A taste of the
Rebbe's teachings

Parshat Ki Tisa

>>

Broken Tablets: An Achievement?

When the Torah eulogizes Moses, it mentions the breaking of the Tablets as one of his greatest virtues.

Doesn't that seem ludicrous?

In loving memory of
Rabbi **Gershon Mendel Garelik**,
and in honor of - תבלחט"א -
Mrs. **Bassie Garelik**,
the Rebbe's Shluchim to Italy

Dedicated by their grandchildren,
Rabbi **Shmuel & Chaya Mushka Greenberg**,
Wichita, Kansas

Preface:

This lesson is based on the Rebbe's sicha of Simchas Torah 5747-1986 in which he explains that the greatest virtue of Moses was the fact that he broke the two Tablets. The Rebbe based his talk on a Rashi in this week's Torah portion which explains that Moses' motive in breaking the Tablets was to protect the People of Israel. Rashi compares it to a king's friend who tears up the king's marriage contract with his bride to protect her from his retribution after her reputation was tarnished.

The Rebbe was very emotional when delivering this talk. He emphasized the self-sacrifice that Moses displayed. Torah was his entire life; of all people, Moses surely appreciated the value of the Tablets. Nevertheless, he was willing to break them for the sake of the Jewish people. That is the greatest virtue in a leader: He is willing to sacrifice his life and his very identity for the sake of his people.

The Rebbe emphasized that the shattering of the Tablets was done publicly to pass on the message: A Jew must always be willing to sacrifice himself for his people.

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In this week's Torah portion, we read how Moses breaks the Tablets when he sees the nation celebrating around the Golden Calf (source 1). We find a surprising reference to this incident at the very end of the Torah, which concludes with the words "before the eyes of all Israel." Rashi explains that it is a reference to the breaking of the Tablets (source 2).

The Rebbe cites the final Rashi of the Torah and poses a simple question: Is that really the intention of Torah's final words? Can the breaking of the Tablets really be considered a virtue?

B. Defending the People.....10

After the incident of the Golden Calf, G-d commands Moses to fashion a second set of Tablets. Rashi cites an interesting Midrash which compares the story to a king whose bride ended up with unsavory friends. The "bridesman," in an attempt to protect her from being scrutinized on the level of a member of the king's family, tore up her marriage agreement (source 3).

What is the meaning behind this parable, the Rebbe asks? Didn't he appreciate the value and the beauty and Torah? How could he shatter them for the sake of a group of sinners? The answer is that he did so for good reason. It was to defend the people of Israel. Moses surely appreciated the Tablets and everything they represented, but he also understood that his most important task is his connection to the Jewish people.

He understood that ultimately, the whole purpose of Torah is for the Jewish people (source 4).

C. The Ultimate Virtue.....15

This explains, says the Rebbe, why the Torah ends off with this statement. Indeed, the greatest virtue of Moses was that he was willing to forego the Torah, his very identity, for the sake of his people. This virtue is also notable because it wasn't a talent he received from G-d. And he did so in public to teach us an everlasting lesson: a true leader is someone who is willing to forego everything for the sake of his people.

In source 5, we read that Moses recognized that his powers came from G-d. This emphasizes the uniqueness of his decision to break the Tablets: it was a personal decision, not something he received from G-d.

Opening

One of the most beloved holidays in Chabad is Simchat Torah. Celebrating Simchat Torah with the Rebbe was everyone's greatest wish. Participating in the Hakafot, the prayers and the farbrengens was a profound experience which provided inspiration for all year round.

In the nineteen fifties, the Rebbe instituted a new custom: On the eve of Simchat Torah, the entire community would go on "Tahalucha," lit. "parade." In the afternoon hours, they would march out of the Chabad community in Crown Heights and walk to other Jewish neighborhoods to participate in the dancing and Hakafot in other synagogues. The goal was to strengthen Jewish unity and to help other communities experience the true joy of the holiday. This custom continues until this day.

Some synagogues were just an hour's walk away, while others were much further. But by one o'clock in the morning, everyone would return to the Rebbe's synagogue at 770.

Throughout the hours of Tahalucha, beginning at nine p.m., the Rebbe would hold a farbrengen at 770, which would continue until the last "walkers" returned. Only afterwards, at one o'clock, he would begin his own Hakafot.

Needless to say, walking for hours to other synagogues at the expense of attending the Rebbe's farbrengen was a significant sacrifice for many. But, dedicated to the Rebbe's work, they did so joyfully (the return trip, however, was done in a hurry, to catch the Rebbe's farbrengen).

On Simchat Torah 1986, towards the end of the gathering, the Rebbe delivered this powerful talk about Moses, and expounded at length, with great emotion, about the power of devotion to others.

A. The Breaking of the Tablets

Source 1 Exodus 31:18, 32:15-16, 19

In this week's Torah portion, Moses was given two Tablets with the Ten Commandments after his stay on Mount Sinai. As he comes down the mountain, he sees the People of Israel worshipping the Golden Calf. He threw down the Tablets and shattered them.

When G-d finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, He gave him two tablets of the Testimony. They were stone Tablets, written with G-d's finger.

Moses turned around and began going down the mountain with the two Tablets of Testimony in his hand. They were Tablets written on both sides, with the writing visible from either side. The Tablets were made by G-d and written with G-d's script engraved on the Tablets.

As he approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, he was angered, and he threw down the Tablets that were in his hand, shattering them at the foot of the mountain.

וַיִּתֵּן אֱלֹהֵי-מֹשֶׁה כְּכֹל-תּוֹרַת הַדְּבָר
אֲתוֹ בָּהֶרְ סִינִי שְׁנֵי לַחַת
הָעֵדוּת לַחַת אֶבֶן כְּתָבִים
בְּאֶצְבַּע אֱלֹהִים:

וַיִּפֹּן וַיֵּרֵד מֹשֶׁה מִזֵּה-הָהָר
וּשְׁנֵי לַחַת הָעֵדוּת בְּיָדוֹ
לַחַת כְּתָבִים מִשְׁנֵי עֲבָרֵיהֶם
מִזֶּה וּמִזֶּה הֵם כְּתָבִים:
וְהַלַּחַת מַעֲשֵׂה אֱלֹהִים הִמָּה
וְהַמְּכֻתָב מִכְּתַב אֱלֹהִים הוּא
תְּרוֹת עַל-הַלַּחַת:

וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר קָרַב אֶל-הַמַּחֲנֶה
וַיִּרְא אֶת-הָעֵגֹל וּמַחֲלַת
וַיַּחַר-אַף מֹשֶׁה וַיִּשְׁלַךְ מִיָּדוֹ
אֶת-הַלַּחַת וַיִּשָּׁבֵר אֹתָם
תַּחַת הָהָר:

Source 2 Deuteronomy 34:10-12

The Torah concludes with a “eulogy” of Moses, describing his achievements and his virtues.

No other Prophet like Moses has arisen in Israel, who knew G-d face to face. No one else could reproduce the signs and miracles that G-d let him display in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and all his land, or any of the mighty acts or great sights that Moses displayed before the eyes of all Israel.

וְלֹא־קָם נָבִיא עוֹד
בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּמֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר יָדָעוּ
יְהוָה פָּנִים אֶל־פָּנִים: לְכֹל־
הָאֲתוֹת וְהַמִּוֹפְתִים אֲשֶׁר
שָׁלַח יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ
מִצְרַיִם לְפָרְעֹה וּלְכֹל־
עַבְדָּיו וּלְכֹל־אֶרְצוֹ: וּלְכֹל
הַיָּד הַחֲזָקָה וּלְכֹל הַמְּוִרָא
הַגָּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה מֹשֶׁה
לְעֵינֵי כָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Rashi:

Who knew G-d face to face: Moses felt familiar with G-d, speaking with him whenever he wished.

Any of the mighty acts: This refers to receiving the Tablets in his hands.

The great sights: This refers to the miracles and wonders in the wilderness.

Before the eyes of all Israel: This refers to the incident where he was stirred to smash the Tablets before their eyes, as it is said, “I shattered them before your eyes.” G-d approved; the verse states, “The first Tablets which you shattered.” [As the Talmud explains it, G-d said to Moses:] “Well done for shattering them!”

רשי על הפסוקים:

אשר ידעו ה' פנים אל פנים. שְׁהָיָה לְבוֹ גִס בּוֹ וּמְדַבֵּר אֵלָיו בְּכֹל עֵת שְׂרוּצָה:

ולכל היד החזקה. שְׁקִבֵל אֵת הַתּוֹרָה בְּלִוְחֹת בְּיָדָיו:

ולכל המורא הגדול. נְסִים וּגְבוּרוֹת שֶׁבְּמִדְבַּר הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא:

לעיני כל ישראל. שֶׁנֶּשְׂאוֹ לְבוֹ לְשֹׁבֵר הַלּוֹחֹת לְעֵינֵיהֶם שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "וְאֲשַׁבְּרֵם לְעֵינֵיכֶם" הַסְּכִימָה דַעַת הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְדַעְתּוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "אֲשֶׁר שִׁבַּרְתָּ" - יִישַׁר כַּחֲךְ שֶׁשִׁבַּרְתָּ:

Rashi interprets the last few words of the Torah as a reference to the breaking of the tablets. In other words, the fact that Moses broke the tablets can be counted among his feats and virtues.

>> The Rebbe

Can breaking the Tablets be greater than receiving them?

The last three verses of the Torah are a eulogy for Moses where his most important feats are mentioned: He was close to God, he gave the Ten Commandments to humanity, he did the plagues in Egypt and the miracles in the desert, and so on. The final mention, the greatest one of all, is the breaking of the Tablets. Why is that considered his greatest feat?

The Torah concludes with the words, “before the eyes of all Israel.” Rashi explains: “This refers to the incident where he was stirred to smash the Tablets before their eyes, as it is said, ‘I shattered them before your eyes.’ G-d approved; the verse states, ‘the first Tablets which you shattered.’ [As the Talmud explains it, G-d said to Moses:] ‘Well done for shattering them!’”

This is very bizarre.

In this section, the Torah sings Moses’ praises: “No other Prophet like Moses has arisen in Israel, who knew G-d face to face. No one else could reproduce the signs and miracles that G-d let him display in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and all his land, or any of the mighty acts or great sights that Moses displayed before the eyes of all Israel.”

The notion that the words “before the eyes of all Israel” is a reference to the breaking of the Tablets (“he was stirred to smash the tablets before their eyes”) seems to be the very opposite of the literal understanding of the text, which speaks of Moses’ virtues.

על התיבות "לעיני כל ישראל" שבסיום פ' ברכה, סיום התורה כולה - מפרש רש"י: "שנשאו לבו לשבור את הלוחות לעיניהם, שנאמר¹ ואשברם לעיניכם, והסכימה דעת הקב"ה לדעתו, שנאמר² אשר שברת, יישר כחך ששברת".

ולכאורה, תמוה ביותר:

תוכן הכתובים הוא - גודל מעלת משה רבינו: "ולא קם נביא עוד בישראל כמשה אשר ידעו ה' פנים אל פנים", "לכל האותות והמופתים אשר שלחו ה' לעשות בארץ מצרים לפרעה ולכל עבדיו ולכל ארצו", "ולכל היד החזקה ולכל המורא הגדול אשר עשה משה לעיני כל ישראל".

ולכאורה, הפירוש ש"לעיני כל ישראל" קאי על שבירת הלוחות ("שנשאו לבו לשבור את הלוחות לעיניהם כו'") הוא היפך פשוטות הכתובים שתוכנם גודל הפלאת מעלת משה:

It is true that G-d approved of his decision to break the Tablets, and he does deserve credit for sensing G-d's will. But we still do not view the actual breaking of the Tablets as a positive occurrence!

Why does Rashi understand the verse as a reference to the breaking of the Tablets? From the perspective of Torah's literal meaning, other commentators seem more on track. As they explain it, "before the eyes of all Israel" has no independent meaning. It is merely a continuation of the preceding description of the "mighty acts or great sights that Moses did—before the eyes of all Israel"!

These final words come after a long litany of Moses' feats:

"He knew G-d face to face," he was able to converse with G-d whenever he desired. He performed amazing miracles in Egypt. He did "mighty acts," a reference to receiving the Tablets. He showed "great sights," a reference to the miracles he did in the desert.

His greatest feat, the one listed at the very end, cannot possibly be his choice to break the Tablets. That would indicate that not only was it a positive thing, but moreover, it was far greater than any of the miracles he did during their forty years in the desert.

גם לאחרי ש"הסכימה דעת הקב"ה לדעתו . . יישר כחך ששברת", הרי, שבחו של משה הוא - ש"הסכימה דעת הקב"ה לדעתו . . יישר כחך", ולא בעצם הענין דשבירת הלוחות!

ואם כן, מדוע מפרש רש"י ב"פשוטו של מקרא" ש"לעיני כל ישראל" קאי על שבירת הלוחות - מצד פשוטו של מקרא מסתבר יותר לפרש כשאר פשוטני המקרא³, ש"לעיני כל ישראל" אינו ענין בפני עצמו, אלא, קאי על "היד החזקה" ו"המורא הגדול" ש"הכין אותם ובעבורו נעשו לעיני כל ישראל"!?!

ובפרט שענין זה ("לעיני כל ישראל") נאמר לאחרי כמה וכמה מעלות גדולות ונפלאות דמשה רבינו,

- "אשר ידעו ה' פנים אל פנים", "שהי' לבו גס בו ומדבר אליו בכל עת שירצה"⁴; "לכל האותות והמופתים . . בארץ מצרים"; "ולכל היד החזקה", "שקיבל את התורה בלוחות בידיו"⁵; "ולכל המורא הגדול", "נסים וגבורות שבמדבר הגדול והנורא"⁴ -

הרי, לא יתכן, לכאורה, שהמעלה הגדולה ביותר (שלכן נימנית בסיום הענין) היא - "שנשאו לבו לשבור את הלוחות", כלומר, לא זו בלבד שבשבירת הלוחות יש מעלה כו', אלא עוד זאת, שמעלה זו גדולה יותר מ"המורא הגדול", נסים וגבורות שנעשו במשך מ' שנה שהיו ישראל במדבר,

(5) פרש"י שם - נתבאר בשיחת ש"פ בראשית סי' ב"ג.

(3) רמב"ן עה"פ. ועוד.
(4) פרש"י עה"פ.

It would be even greater than the fact that he received those very Tablets. Could breaking the Tablets be greater than receiving them? That is unthinkable!

ויתירה מזה - מעלה גדולה יותר מ"היד
החזקה", "שקיבל את התורה בלוחות
בידיו", היינו, שמעלת שבירת הלוחות
גדולה יותר ממעלת קבלת הלוחות - דבר
הכי תמוה ומופרך!?

B. Defending the People

Source 3 Exodus 34:1

In this week's Torah portion, after G-d agrees to forgive the people for the sin of the Golden Calf, He commands Moses to fashion a new set of Tablets upon which He would inscribe the Ten Commandments once again.

G-d said to Moses: Carve out two tablets for yourself, just like the first ones. I will write on those tablets the same words that were on the first tablets that you broke.

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה פָּסֶל-לָךְ
שְׁנַיִלְחַת אֲבָנִים כְּרֵאשֵׁינִים
וְכַתְּבֵתִי עַל-הֶלְחַת אֶת-
הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ עַל-הֶלְחַת
הַרְאשֵׁינִים אֲשֶׁר שִׁבַּרְתָּ:

Why did he command Moses to fashion them if he made the first ones himself? Rashi answers with a parable.

Rashi:

Carve for Yourself: You broke the first Tablets, you carve out others for yourself.

This is comparable to a king who went off to a faraway land and left his bride with the maidservants. The immoral behavior of the maidservants tarnished the betrothed's reputation. Her bridesman arose and tore up her marriage contract, saying, "If the king decides to kill her, I will tell him, 'she is not yet your wife.'"

The king's investigation found that only the maidservants had behaved immorally. He was reconciled with his bride. The bridesman said to the king, "Write her

רש"י על הפסוק

פסל לך. אתה שִׁבַּרְתָּ
הַרְאשֵׁינִים, אֶתְּךָ פָּסַל לְךָ
אֲחֵרוֹת.

מֹשֶׁה לְמַלְךְ שֶׁהֵלַךְ לְמַדִּינַת
הַיָּם וְהַנִּיחַ אֲרוֹסָתוֹ עִם
הַשְּׂפָחוֹת, מִתּוֹךְ קְלָקוּל
הַשְּׂפָחוֹת יָצָא עָלֶיהָ שֵׁם רָע,
עָמַד שׁוֹשְׁבֵינָה וְקָרַע כְּתוּבָתָהּ,
אָמַר אִם יֹאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַרְגָהּ,
אֶמַר לוֹ עַדִּיזוֹ אֵינָה אֲשֶׁרְךָ;

בְּדַק הַמֶּלֶךְ וּמִצָּא שְׁלֵא הָיָה
הַקְלָקוּל אֲלָא מִן הַשְּׂפָחוֹת,
נִתְרַצָּה לָהּ. אָמַר לוֹ שׁוֹשְׁבֵינָה
כְּתוּב לָהּ כְּתוּבָה אֲחֵרָת,

another marriage contract for the first one was torn up.” The king replied to him, “You are the one who tore it up. You buy another paper for yourself and I will write it for her in my handwriting.”

The king is G-d, the maidservants are the mixed multitudes, the bridesman is Moses, and G-d's betrothed is Israel. Therefore, it says, “Carve for yourself.”

שְׁנִקְרָעָה הָרֵאשׁוֹנָה, אָמַר
לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶתָּה קָרַעְתָּ
אוֹתָהּ אֶתָּה קִיְנָה לָּהּ נָזַר
אֶחָד וְאָנִי אֶכְתֹּב לָּהּ
בְּכֹתֵב יָדִי.

כִּן הַמֶּלֶךְ זֶה הַקֶּבֶ"ה,
הַשְּׁפָחוֹת אֵלּוּ עָרַב רַב,
וְהַשּׁוֹשְׁבִין זֶה מֹשֶׁה,
אֲרוֹסָתוֹ שֶׁל הַקֶּבֶ"ה
יִשְׂרָאֵל, לְכֹן נֶאֱמַר פָּסַל
לָךְ:

>> The Rebbe

Moses recognized the true purpose of Torah

The first set of Tablets were the handiwork of God himself. Moses understood their value; in fact, Torah was his entire identity. Nonetheless, he relinquished what would be his most important possession in order to defend the Jewish people who had sinned. How did he bring himself to do it? He realized that the Torah's entire purpose is for the people of Israel.

The answer lies in Rashi's earlier comments, where he explains the reason for the breaking of the Tablets.

When G-d commands Moses to fashion two new Tablets, Rashi states: “This is comparable to a king who went off to a faraway land and left his bride with the maidservants. The immoral behavior of the maidservants tarnished the betrothed's reputation. Her bridesman arose and tore up her marriage contract, saying, “If the king decides to kill her, I will tell him, ‘she is not yet your wife’”... the king is G-d, the maidservants are the mixed multitudes, the bridesman is Moses, and G-d's betrothed is Israel.”

ויובן על פי פירוש רש"י לפני זה
בביאור הטעם דשבירת הלוחות...

על הפסוק 'פסל לך' - מפרש
רש"י: "משל למלך שהלך למדינת
הים והניח ארוסתו עם השפחות,
מתוך קלקול השפחות יצא עלי' שם
רע, עמד שושבינה וקרע כתובתה,
אמר, אם יאמר המלך להורגה,
אומר לו, עדיין אינה אשתך . .
המלך זה הקב"ה, השפחות אלו ערב
רב, והשושבין זה משה, ארוסתו של
הקב"ה אלו ישראל..."

This explanation could help us understand how Moses could be praised for taking the initiative to break the Tablets.

To preface: Rashi's parable doesn't seem to explain why Moses took the liberty to break the Tablets.

These tablets are a microcosm of the entire Torah. They were G-d's personal handiwork (as opposed to the second tablets which were fashioned by Moses before being engraved by G-d). These Tablets were fashioned by G-d Himself.

Now, Moses' entire identity was the Torah. He, no doubt, had a perfect understanding of Torah. So he was surely able to appreciate the sublime nature of the Torah—especially those first Tablets fashioned by G-d Himself.

So the question must be asked: true, it is important to defend the Jewish people. But nonetheless, how could Moses destroy the Tablets that were fashioned and given to him by G-d Himself?!

על פי זה יש לבאר את שבחו של משה בשבירת הלוחות - "שנשאו לבו לשבור את הלוחות . . אשר שברת, יישר כחך ששברת". ובהקדמה:

לכאורה, גם לאחרי הסבר המשל הנ"ל - עדיין אינו מובן כיצד הי' משה רבינו יכול לשבור את הלוחות:

בלוחות - ישנם כל עניני התורה כולה⁷, ובתכלית השלימות, .. ובזה גופא - לוחות ראשונות שהיו "מעשה אלקים"⁸ (דלא כלוחות אחרונות שנאמר בהם "פסל לך גו"), על ידי משה רבינו, ורק הכתב הי' של הקב"ה, "מכתב אלקים", לוחות שנעשו על ידי עצמותו ומהותו ית' בכבודו ובעצמו..

ופשיטא, שמשה רבינו, מקבל התורה, שכל מציאותו היא תורה .. שידיעתו והשגתו בתורה היתה בתכלית השלימות .. בוודאי ידע להעריך את גודל מעלת התורה, ועל אחת כמה וכמה לוחות ראשונות, בתכלית השלימות שאין למעלה מזה.

ואם כן, נשאלת השאלה: הן אמת שצריכים להגן על ישראל, אבל אף על פי כן, סוף כל סוף, כיצד יכול משה רבינו לשבור את הלוחות הראשונות שנעשו (וניתנו לו) על ידי עצמותו ומהותו ית' בכבודו ובעצמו!?

7) ראה ירושלמי שקלים פ"ו סה"א.
8) תשא לב, טז.

This next portion was delivered by the Rebbe with great emotion:

The answer is that the People of Israel always come first.

The entire purpose of the Torah, beginning with that first set of Tablets, was for the sake of the People of Israel. As we read throughout the Torah, "Command the people of Israel," "Speak to the people of Israel." It is all about the Jewish people. Therefore, the moment their reputation was tarnished and they were harm's way, G-d forbid, Moses didn't hesitate; he didn't consult with anyone, not even G-d, and he shattered the Tablets—Tablets that had been fashioned by G-d Himself.

The ultimate purpose of Torah is to uncover the essence of the Jewish people. So, in the event that the result might be the opposite, G-d forbid, and you are forced to choose between Torah and the Jewish people—there is no place for hesitation. Moses immediately proceeded to break the Tablets, the Torah, for the sake of the Jewish people.

Moreover: the breaking of the Tablets was worthwhile even to save just a small portion of the People of Israel, the most immoral among them, those who transgressed with the Golden Calf:

The idea that someone's good name could be tarnished is only relevant among human beings who make mistakes. G-d knew

והמענה לזה - על פי האמור לעיל -
ש"ישראל קדמו":

כל מעלתה וחשיבותה של התורה,
החל מלוחות הראשונות, היא - בשביל
ישראל, "צו את בני ישראל דבר אל בני
ישראל". ולכן, כשיצא שם רע כו'... ויש
מקום לחשש שמא יפגע הדבר בישראל
חס ושלוש... - לא מהסס משה רבינו
לרגע... ואינו מתייעץ עם אף אחד, גם
לא עם הקדוש-ברוך-הוא... כביכול,
ושובר את הלוחות... לוחות שנעשו
על ידי מהותו ועצמותו ית' בכבודו
ובעצמו...

דמכיון שכל מעלתה וחשיבותה של
התורה היא כדי לגלות את מעלתם
העצמית של ישראל, הרי, במקרה שיכול
לבוא מזה ההיפך חס ושלוש... ויש צורך
לבחור בתורה או בישראל - אין מקום
לספק בדבר, ולכן, עומד משה רבינו
ושובר את הלוחות (תורה)... כדי להציל
את ישראל!...

ולא עוד, אלא ששבירת הלוחות היא
אפילו כדי להציל חלק קטן מעם ישראל,
הנמצא במצב ירוד ביותר, שנכשל בחטא
העגל:

כל המושג ד"יצא עלי' שם רע" - שייך
רק במלך בשר ודם, שיכול לטעות וכו',
מה שאין כן אצל הקב"ה - הרי יודע

all along that the real “debauchery” was only among the “maidservants,” the mixed multitude, as He told Moses clearly when He instructed him to go down the mountain and deal with the issue. Moses, too, the true shepherd of Israel, knew that the People of Israel were incapable of fashioning a Golden Calf. The minority who did reach that state did so only under the influence of the “maidservants,” the mixed multitudes.

Thus, the incident posed no danger to the entire People of Israel, G-d forbid, but only to the small minority who sinned with the Golden Calf.

Nonetheless, to defend the small minority who sinned and to ensure that they will be welcomed back into the fold, Moses didn't hesitate to break the Tablets!

Source 4 See Sefer Hamaamarim 5700 pg. 61

The midrash asks: who came first? Torah or Israel? The answer is that the people of Israel came first. After all, the Torah is peppered with statements about the Jewish people themselves.

Two things preceded the creation of the world: Torah and the People of Israel. Who came first? The Torah contains references to the People of Israel: “Command the People of Israel, speak to the People of Israel.” Clearly, the People of Israel came first.

שני דברים קדמו לעולם,
תורה וישראל, ואיני יודע
איזה מהם קודם, כשהוא
אומר צו את בני ישראל
דבר אל בני ישראל,
אומר אני ישראל קדמו.

מלכתחילה “שלא הי' הקלקול אלא מן השפחות,” “ערב רב,” כאמרו למשה רבינו “לך רד כי שחת עמך”¹⁰, “ערב רב שקבלת כו”¹¹. וגם משה רבינו, בהיותו “רועה ישראל,” ידע והכיר במעלתן של ישראל, שאינם שייכים לחטא העגל. ואפילו אותם המעטים מישראל שנכשלו כו' - הרי זה אך ורק בגלל “קלקול השפחות,” ה“ערב רב”.

ונמצא, שאין כאן חשש סכנה לכלל ישראל ח"ו. כי אם, לחלק קטן מישראל שנכשלו בחטא העגל.

ואף על פי כן, גם כדי להגן על חלק קטן מישראל שנכשלו בחטא העגל (שלאחרי קבלת העונש ישובו למעלתם כו') - לא מהסס משה רבינו לשבור את הלוחות הראשונות!...

C. The Ultimate Virtue

>> The Rebbe

Breaking the Tablets was Moses' Greatest Act

The greatest virtue in a leader is that he is willing to lose his own identity and everything precious to him, in order to protect and defend his people. Therefore, when the Torah lists the virtues of Moses, this one is the most important one of all.

So, the breaking of the Tablets demonstrates a great virtue in Moses, and in fact, his greatest virtue of all:

After Torah lists the amazing feats of Moses [speaking to G-d face to face, performing the miracles in Egypt, receiving the Torah, and more miracles throughout their sojourn in the desert] the Torah concludes with the greatest virtue of all: For the sake of the Jewish people, he didn't hesitate to break the Tablets—a greater virtue than all the amazing feats he accomplished, including the fact that he received the very same Torah.

The greatest achievement of Moses, the faithful shepherd of Israel, was that he jeopardized his entire identity—the Torah—to defend a small portion of his flock, the People of Israel, who had fallen into sin. The Torah is Moses' essence. Yet he didn't hesitate to break

ונמצא, שבשבירת הלוחות מודגש שבחו של משה רבינו, ואדרבה - שבח הכי גדול:

לאחרי שהתורה מונה כמה וכמה מעלות גדולות ונפלאות דמשה רבינו [דיבורו של הקב"ה "פנים אל פנים", אותות ומופתים דיציאת מצרים, קבלת התורה, ונסים וגבורות שנעשו במשך ארבעים שנה שהיו במדבר...] - מוסיפה התורה ומסיימת במעלה הגדולה ביותר: "לעיני כל ישראל", "שנשאו לבו לשבור את הלוחות", מעלה גדולה יותר מכל המעלות שלפני זה (כולל - קבלת הלוחות, "היד החזקה"),

שכן, המעלה הכי גדולה של משה רבינו, רועה נאמן של ישראל, "רעיא מהימנא", היא - שכדי להגן על ישראל, צאן מרעיתו, אפילו על חלק קטן מהם שנכשלו בענין הכי חמור כו', מפקיר את כל מציאותו (לוחות, תורה)... שהרי התורה (לוחות) היא היא עצם מציאותו של משה, ולא עוד, אלא שאינו מהסס לרגע... לשבור את

the precious Tablets which were fashioned by G-d Himself, to defend those who had transgressed with the Golden Calf.

This is the true virtue of a Jewish leader. He recognizes the essential value in his people, which supersedes the Torah, and is therefore ready to break the Tablets for their sake.

The Rebbe emphasizes another point: all of the achievements described in the earlier verses were G-d given talents. But the love of his fellow that permeated his identity—that was his very own.

This virtue is greater than all the others. All the other feats were accomplished with talents that were given to him by G-d. As the Alter Rebbe explained, Moses humbly felt that if G-d would have given those talents to someone else, he would have executed the task more ably. But the decision to break the Tablets didn't come from a G-d-given power. It was his own idea, "and G-d approved of it."

Moses broke the Tablets in public to teach us a lesson:

Breaking the Tablets to defend the People of Israel is the greatest expression of Moses' love for his fellow Jew. "Moses was a lover of Israel," the Talmud says. He didn't hesitate, and immediately shattered the Tablets to protect his people.

הלוחות שנעשו על ידי מהותו ועצמותו ית' בכבודו ובעצמו... כדי להגן, כאמור, אפילו על אלו שנכשלו בחטא העגל!

וזוהי מעלתו האמיתית של רועה ישראל - שמכיר ומרגיש את מעלתן העצמית של ישראל שלמעלה מהתורה ("ישראל קדמו"), שלכן, שובר את הלוחות כדי להגן על ישראל.

ומעלה זו גדולה יותר מכל שאר המעלות - שכן, כל שאר המעלות קשורים עם עניינים שניתנו לו מלמעלה, אשר, ביחס אליהן מרגיש משה רבינו שאילו ניתנו למישהו אחר, יתכן שהי' עושה יותר טוב ממנו, כדברי רבינו הזקן¹² בביאור הכתוב¹³ "והאיש משה עניו מאד מכל האדם אשר על פני האדמה", מה שאין כן מעלתו בשבירת הלוחות - אין זה ענין שניתן לו מלמעלה, כי אם, חידוש שלו, "הסכימה דעת הקב"ה לדעתו", מצד מעלתם של ישראל שלמעלה מהתורה.

בשבירת הלוחות כדי להגן על ישראל, מתבטאת גודל מעלתו של משה רבינו באהבת ישראל - "משה רבינו אוהב ישראל הי"י"¹⁴ - שלא היסס לרגע, ושובר את הלוחות הראשונות, כדי להגן על ישראל.

Moses did this act “before the eyes of all Israel”—they all witnessed how he broke it—to teach us the importance of loving our fellow. He endeavored to implant within us, Jews of all generations, a true sense of *Ahavat Yisrael*.

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...ופעולה זו עשאה משה רבינו “לעיני כל ישראל”, “שנאמר ואשברם לעיניכם” - כדי להראות לכל ישראל עד כמה צריך להיות הענין דאהבת ישראל... ועל ידי זה, לנטוע בלבם של כל ישראל עד סוף כל הדורות רגש של אהבת ישראל בתכלית השלימות!

Source 5 Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch, Sefer Hamaamarim 5710 pg. 236.

The Torah describes Moses as the most humble person who ever lived. This raises the question: Was he not aware of his unique abilities? Chassidism explains that Moses recognized that his abilities came directly from G-d. In his opinion, had G-d granted those abilities to someone else, he would have done a better job.

The Torah says, “Moses was more humble than any other person on the face of the earth.” Despite the fact that he was aware of his lofty stature, he was still more humble than anyone else, because he knew that all of his talents and powers were given to him by G-d.

The Torah tells us that when Moses was born, his mother saw “that he was good.” The Midrash explains that the entire home was filled with light upon his birth. That is a blessing from G-d, not a natural achievement.

וזהו דכתיב “והאיש משה ענו מאד מכל האדם אשר על פני האדמה”. ועם היות שידע את הטוב שלו ואשר הוא גבוה במעלה מכל אדם, ומכל מקום היה עניו מכל אדם. והוא מפני שידע, אשר כל עניני מעלותיו אשר בהם הוא גבוה במעלה ומדריגה מכל אדם, הוא מה שניתן לו מלמעלה,

וכמו שכתוב “ותרא אותו כי טוב הוא”. ואיתא במדרש רבה, טוב שמו, טוביה שמו, בשעה שנולד משה נתמלאה כל הבית אורה. דכל זה הוא מה שניתן לו מלמעלה.

Moses assumed that had someone else been granted those same powers, he would have achieved the same status, and he may have even developed those powers further, reaching even greater heights. Therefore, he was still humble.

וחשב דאילו היו אלו הכוחות
אצל אחר הי' גם כן במדריגה
ומעלה זו, ואפשר דאחר אם
הי' לו כחות אלו הי' מגלה את
הכוחות יותר, ומשום זה הי'
עניו מכל.

