

## פרשות כי תשא ופרה

If I would be learning Chumash from the beginning, without foreknowledge, and had just made a *Siyum* on Parshas Yisro, I would not know the term *Aseres HaDibros*, 'The Ten Commandments', nor have any specific idea about their identity.

It is true, that I would have read what we *subsequently* termed the *Aseres HaDibros*<sup>1</sup>, because that is the content of the second part of Parshas Yisro. But I would not have been able to use the term of *Aseres HaDibros* because it was never introduced to me in the Torah.

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<sup>1</sup> It is worthwhile to note that the Torah never uses the term *Aseres HaDibros* which is so much a part of our lexicon.

In fact, the Torah only speaks about עשרת הדברים. Three times the Torah uses that phrase of *Aseres HaD'vorim*:

Sh'mos Perek 34/Posuk 28:

וַיְהִי שָׁם עִם ה' אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם וְאַרְבָּעִים לַיְלָה לֶחֶם לֹא אָכַל וַיִּמֵּים לֹא שָׁתָה וַיִּכְתֹּב עַל הַלְחָת אֶת דְּבָרֵי הַבְּרִית עֶשְׂרֵת הַדְּבָרִים:

Moshe was there 40 days and 40 nights; bread he did not eat and water he did not drink and He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, 'The Ten Words'.

D'vorim Perek 4/Posuk 13:

וַיִּגַּד לָכֶם אֶת בְּרִיתוֹ אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֶתְכֶם לַעֲשׂוֹת עֶשְׂרֵת הַדְּבָרִים וַיִּכְתְּבֵם עַל שְׁנֵי לְחֹת אֲבָנִים:  
Hashem told you of His covenant that He commanded you to do, 'The Ten Words'; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.

D'vorim Perek 10/Posuk 4:

וַיִּכְתֹּב עַל הַלְחָת כַּמִּכְתָּב הָרִאשׁוֹן אֶת עֶשְׂרֵת הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' אֵלַיְכֶם בְּהַר מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ בַּיּוֹם הַהֵוא וַיִּתְּנֵם ה' אֵלַי:

And He wrote on the tablets like the first writing, 'The Ten Words' that Hashem spoke to you on the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the congregating and Hashem gave them to me.

We note that the first of the appearances of *Aseres HaD'vorim* is in our Parshas Ki Siso.

Chazal, on the other hand, use the term *Aseres HaDibros* consistently. We find its first use in Shas in Masseches Brachos 5a.

In Parshas Yisro when I read the relevant P'sukim I certainly would have been aware of the Mitzvos that comprise the Ten Commandments but I would not have not known that terminology nor would I have been aware that there were 'Ten' since some of the 'Ten' contain more than one Torah-Mitzvah each<sup>2</sup>.

I imagine that for most of us, long before we reached Parshas Yisro we knew the terms *Aseres HaDibros/Ten Commandments* and so when we learned Parshas Yisro the teacher and students spoke interchangeably of Moshe Rabbenu's ascent to receive the 'Torah' and Moshe Rabbenu's ascent to receive the *luchos/Ten Commandments*.

Presumably, and properly so, *Kabbolas HaTorah* was part of our awareness as little children<sup>3</sup> and thus that pre-knowledge was interwoven with our Torah learning without thought that, in fact, in Parshas Yisro we do know that Moshe went up upon Mt. Sinai, we do know that Moshe Rabbenu received the Torah there, but we do not know about the *Luchos* or Moshe's descent with the *Luchos*.

Interestingly enough, when the Torah provides us with a second segment of *Kabbalas HaTorah* in Parshas Mishpotim, the nature of the *Luchos* and the identity of the 'Ten Commandments' still remain veiled.

Only when we come to this week's Parshas Ki Siso does the Torah share with us the fact that there were *Luchos*.

We read (Sh'mos Perek 31/Posuk 18):

וַיִּתֵּן אֶל מֹשֶׁה כִּכְלֵתוֹ לְדַבֵּר אֵתוֹ בְּהַר סִינַי שְׁנֵי לַחַת הָעֵדוּת לַחַת אֶבֶן כְּתֻבִים בְּאֶצְבַּע  
אֶל...לִקְיָם:

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<sup>2</sup> For example, the second of the Commandments, dealing with the prohibition of idolatry contains a number of separate Mitzvos, all related to the prohibition of idolatry, but they are separate Mitzvos nonetheless.

<sup>3</sup> We learn in Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah Siman 245/s'if 5):

מאימתי מתחיל ללמד לבנו, משיתחיל לדבר מתחיל ללמדו: תורה צוה לנו וגו' (דברים לג/ד), ופסוק ראשון מפרשת שמע (דברים ו/ד), ואחר כך מלמדו מעט מעט, יא' עד שיהא כבן ששה או כבן שבעה, ואז מוליכו אצל מלמדי תינוקות.

From when does the father begin to teach his son? From when he begins to speak he begins to teach him 'Torah Tziva lanu etc. and the first verse of *Shema* and afterwards he teaches him a little at a time until he is 6 or 7 years old and then he takes him to a teacher.

Hashem gave Moshe, when He completed to speak with him on Mt. Sinai, two tablets of testimony, tablets of stone written with the finger of G-d.

In order to have a perspective on this verse and other verses that we will soon discuss, let us remember this Posuk's placement.

Parshas Ki Siso begins with a number of Mitzvos. Among them, and explained at great length, are the *כיור*, *שמן המשחה* and the *קטורת*.

The *Kiyor* was the special washbasin where all Kohanim were required to wash their hands and feet prior to beginning their service in the Mishkan/Beis HaMikdosh. Following their immersion in a Mikveh they then had the Mitzvah of washing their hands and feet.

*Shemen HaMishcho* is the special oil that was used to inaugurate the Kohanim and the various appurtenances of the Mishkan. It was a formula that was used then, originally, and continued to be used throughout the generations when new vessels were initiated into sacred use.

With their respected teachings completed, the Torah has now provided us with all the information that is required for building the Mishkan and the Torah is ready to continue with new aspects of *Mattan Torah* and its aftermath. Thus we are taken back in time to Mt. Sinai and Moshe is descending the mountain to present the Torah to Israel – or so he thinks.

At this moment, immediately prior to the sin of the Eigel, we have a description of the *Luchos*. We know that there are 'two', since the word 'luchos' is in the plural. We know that they are made of stone.

We know that the luchos are Divinely engraved, as the Torah tells us, 'with the finger of G-d'.

We do not know any more than that- but perhaps there is nothing more to know. We know what tablets are and we have seen stone engravings so it is not difficult at all for us to visualise tablets with the words of what we read in Parshas Yisro carved into them.

However, before we proceed to understand more of what this verse teaches, let us learn a little more in our Parsha.

The continuation of our Parsha is the great national, eternal<sup>4</sup> and almost fatal tragedy of Israel – the worship of the *Eigel HaZahav*.

The following 14 P'sukim (Perek 32/P'sukim 1-14) deal with the making of the Eigel, Hashem's informing Moshe regarding the Eigel and His statement that He will destroy them immediately. Moshe Rabbenu's response to these words of G-d were what saved Israel from destruction.

The following Posuk then tells us of Moshe's descent from Mt. Sinai. We expect to be told of the events that we know so well: Moshe descends, he breaks the *Luchos*, he burns the *Eigel* and forces Israel to consume its ashes and then there are many deaths among those who worshiped the idol.

Perhaps that is what we would remember to tell but, when we look at the P'sukim that follow immediately we discover that we have omitted vital information. Let us see the first two of the following verses:

We read (ibid. P'sukim 15-16):

וַיִּפֹּן וַיֵּרֵד מִשֵּׁי הַהָר וּשְׁנֵי לַחֹת הַיְעֻדֹת בְּיָדוֹ לַחֹת כְּתָבִים מִשְׁנֵי עֲבָרֵיהֶם מִזֶּה וּמִזֶּה  
הֵם כְּתָבִים: וְהַלַּחֹת מֵעֵשָׂה אֶל...לְקִים הַמָּה וְהַמְּכָתֵב מְכָתֵב אֶל...לְקִים הוּא חֲרוּת עַל  
הַלַּחֹת:

Moshe turned and descended from the mountain and the two tablets of testimony were in his hand; tablets written from their two sides, read from

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<sup>4</sup> We read the words of Hashem to Moshe Rabbenu in the aftermath of the sin of the *eigel* (Sh'mos Perek 32/Posuk 34):

וַעֲתָה לֶךְ נַחֵם אֶת הָעָם אֵל אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתִּי לָךְ הִנֵּה מֵלֹאכִי יֵלֶךְ לְפָנֶיךָ וּבְיוֹם פְּקֻדֵי וּפְקֻדֹתַי עֲלֵהֶם  
חֲטָאתָם:

Now, go and lead the people to where I spoke to you; behold My angel will go before you and on the day when I remember you, I will remember upon them their sins.

Rashi writes:

וביום פקדי וגו' - ותמיד תמיד כשאפקוד עליהם עונותיהם ופקדתי עליהם מעט מן העון הזה עם שאר העונות, ואין פורענות באה על ישראל שאין בה קצת מפרעון עון העגל:

*On the day that I Hashem will remember* – always, always when I will visit upon them punishment for their sins, I will visit upon them a little of the punishment for this sin of the Eigel with their other sins. There is no punishment that comes upon Israel that does not have in it a little of the punishment for the sin of the Eigel.

this side and that side they were written. The tablets were the act of G-d, the writing was the writing of G-d, engraved on the tablets.

The Torah continues describing Moshe's descent and the events that ensued, as above.

It seems very difficult to understand why here, after describing the making of the Eigel and Hashem's response to its making that we find an additional description of the *Luchos*. We have three verses in close proximity of each other, but not integrated. One Posuk is embedded within one context and two are associated within another context. Why were these P'sukim not written together?

What can we learn from the way that the Torah has presented them?

Before we will be capable to attempt to analyze the Torah's reasoning for its specific placement of these verses, we need to investigate these P'sukim in a significant manner.

Let us see the first verse again:

וַיִּתֵּן אֶל מֹשֶׁה כָּכֹלְתוֹ לְדַבֵּר אֵתוֹ בְּהַר סִינַי שְׁנֵי לַחַת הָעֵדוּת לַחַת אֶבֶן כְּתוּבִים בְּאֶצְבַּע  
אֱלֹהִים...

Hashem gave to Moshe when He completed to speak with him on Mt. Sinai two tablets of testimony, tablets of stone written with the finger of G-d.

It is clearly evident from many of the commentators that this Posuk cannot be understood without reference to the others that follow in the section that deals with the sin of the *Eigel*.

For example, we see the commentary of the *Ksav VKabbalah* on our verse:

ועל דרך הפשט יאמרו המפרשים בכוונת אצבע א...ל'קים, ליחס מכתב הלוחות אל השם יתברך לבדו, שלא נעשה לא על ידי מלאכה ולא על ידי פועל טבעי כי אם ברצון השם וחפצו לבד, וכמו שאמרו רבותינו כי מכתב הלוחות הוא מן הדברים שנעשו ערב שבת בין השמשות, ונכון הוא,

The *p'shat* of this verse, the commentators say, is that the intent of the words 'the finger of G-d' is to relate the writing of the *Luchos* to Hashem alone – that it was not done by labor or by a natural work, rather only by G-d's Will and His desire alone.

This is like what our Rabbis said that the writing on the *Luchos* was one of the things that were done in the week of Creation at the twilight entry of Shabbos. This is the correct interpretation.

*HaKsav vKabbalah* in his final words here refers us to the Mishnah in the fifth Perek of Masseches Ovos which writes (Mishnah 6):

עשרה דברים נבראו בערב שבת בין השמשות ואלו... והכתב והמכתב והלוחות...

Ten things were created on Erev Shabbos *B'reishis* at twilight and they are...the *k'sav* and the *michtov*<sup>5</sup> and the *Luchos*.'

*Ksav VHaKabbalah* brings this Mishnah to emphasize the unique Divinity of the *Luchos* and their writing. We note, for our purposes, that he obviously joins the three P'sukim together as if they were written together, since he refers to the Mishnah that mentions *k'sav* and *michtov* which appear in the second group— even though they weren't.

We may derive the same inference from the words of the Nhat etziv here:

כתובים באצבע א...ל"קים. הכתב והמכתב מעשה שמים, ושהם מתחילת הבריאה  
כדאיתא בפסחים דף נד, והיינו לשון א...ל"קים דמשמעו כ"פ השם שנברא בו שמים  
וארץ:

*Written with the finger of G-d – the k'sav and michtov are heavenly works and they are from the beginning of Creation as we learn in Masseches*

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<sup>5</sup> The word *michtov* appears in the second group of P'sukim that we are studying. The word *k'sav* does not appear at all.

If those words were written separately, it is likely we would have interpreted them as being one and the same. Obviously their combined appearance in this Mishnah disallows that possibility.

The commentators discuss the meaning of each of those two terms at great length.

Pesachim 54<sup>6</sup>. And that is why the Name *E...lokim* is used as usual<sup>7</sup> as the Name with which Heaven and earth were created.

Whatever the precise meaning of אצבע א...ל"קים, the finger of G-d, undoubtedly the message is one of pure Divinity.

Or *HaChaim HaKodosh* writes:

כתובים באצבע א...ל"קים. הכונה בזה על דרך אומרם ז"ל (תנחומא פרשת עקב) כי הלוחות נחצבו מתחת כסא כבודו יתברך, ואולי כי זה הוא שרמז באומרו מעשה א...ל"קים פירוש מעשה א...ל"קים הוא הכסא והבן, וכבר נתפרש כי יש בחינות רבות אורות הקדושה בסוד (קהלת ה/ז<sup>8</sup>) כי גבוה מעל גבוה וגו' וגבוהים...פירוש שהיה מניח אצבעו ברוך הוא על הלוחות בדמיון צורת האות ובזה נחרתו האותיות של עשרת הדברים:

*Written with the Finger of G-d* – The intent with this is along the lines that the Rabbis said in Midrash Tanchuma to Parshas Eikev: The *Luchos* were quarried from underneath Hashem's Glorious Throne. Perhaps that is already hinted at in the words *Ma'aseh E...lokim* - an act of G-d, meaning that the actions of G-d are from the *Kisei HaKavod* – understand this.

It has already been explained that there are many aspects of Holy Lights that appear as *sod* – a hidden part of the Torah. This is as it says in Sefer Koheles, 'He is higher than all is higher...and higher. The explanation is that Hashem

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<sup>6</sup> The Gemara there (54 a) brings a Braisa that is similar to the Mishna in Masseches Ovos, with some differences.

<sup>7</sup> Exceptionally, I did not open up the abbreviation that is found in the original text. As we see, Netziv wrote כ"פ. It is possible that it means פעמים, that is 'often' or 'as usual' or that it means כל פעם – every time.

Because of my inability to determine the meaning of the abbreviation, I left it as in the original.

<sup>8</sup> The entire verse reads:

אם עָשָׂק רָשׁ וְגָזַל מִשְׁפָּט וְצָדֵק תִּרְאֶה בְּמִדְיָנָה אֵל תִּתְמָה עַל הַחֹפֵץ כִּי גְבוּהַ מַעַל גְּבוּהַ שְׁמֵר וְגְבוּהַיִם  
עֲלֵיהֶם:

If there is cheating of the poor and stealing of justice that you see in the country, do not question the matter because the Watchman is high upon high and there are heights above.

placed His Finger upon the *Luchos* in the thought of the form of the letter and with that the letters were engraved for the *Aseres HaDibros*.

Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch gives special attention to the 'Writing Finger' of Hashem. He writes:

כתבים באצבע א...ל"קים. הלוחות הם מעשה יד ה' כשם שהשמים הם "מעשה אצבעתיך" (תהלים ח/ד<sup>9</sup>), והם מעידים על התגלות ה' כשם שמופתי מצרים היו "אצבע א...ל"קים" (שמות ח/טו<sup>10</sup>).

*Written the Finger of G-d* – the tablets were the work of the Hand of Hashem. Just like the heavens are 'the work of Your Fingers, that they give testimony regarding G-d's revelation just like the miracles of Egypt were 'the Finger of G-d'.

And thus, from this brief selection of commentators we can understand the following:

The 'Finger of G-d' represents the spirituality of Ten Commandments as well as being an expression of the Revelation within which the Ten Commandments were given.

Based on that summary, we can now proceed to learn the next verses that the Torah chose to place within the unfolding event of the *Eigel HaZahav*. Those verses read:

וַיִּפֹּן וַיֵּרֶד מִשָּׁה מִן הָהָר וּשְׁנֵי לַחַת הָעֵדוּת בְּיָדוֹ לַחַת כְּתָבִים מִשְׁנֵי עַבְרֵיהֶם מִזֶּה וּמִזֶּה הֵם כְּתָבִים: וְהַלַּחַת מַעֲשֵׂה אֱלֹהִים...ל"קים הִמָּה וְהַמְּכַתֵּב מְכַתֵּב אֱלֹהִים...ל"קים הוּא חֲרוּת עַל הַלַּחַת:

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<sup>9</sup> The entire verse reads:

כִּי אֶרְאֶה שְׁמַיִךְ מַעֲשֵׂי אֶצְבְּעֹתֶיךָ יָרַח וְכוכְבִּים אֲשֶׁר כּוֹנְנִתָּה:  
Because I will see Your heavens, the works of Your Fingers, the moon and stars that You prepared.

<sup>10</sup> The entire verse reads:

וַיֹּאמְרוּ הַחֲרָטָמִם אֶל פְּרַעֲה אֶצְבַּע אֱלֹהִים...ל"ים הוּא וַיִּחְזַק לֵב פְּרַעֲה וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֲלֵהֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה':  
The sorcerers said to *Par'o*, 'It is the Finger of G-d'; *Par'o*'s heart hardened and he did not attend to them, like Hashem had said.

This verse will be discussed later.



Moshe turned and descended from the mountain and the two tablets of testimony were in his hand; tablets written from their two sides, from this side and that side they were written. The tablets were the act of G-d, the writing was the writing of G-d, engraved on the tablets.

It is absolutely apparent that the three verses belong together. They all discuss how the Luchos appeared and what caused their appearance.

But before we will explore why the division among the P'sukim occurred, let us see some explanations regarding them.

The meaning of

כְּתָבִים מִשְׁנֵי עֲבָרֵיהֶם מִזֶּה וּמִזֶּה הֵם כְּתָבִים:

Tablets written from their two sides, from this side and that side they were written

is a matter of no minor controversy.

Rashi writes:

משני עבריהם - היו האותיות נקראות, ומעשה נסים היה:

*From their two sides* – The letters were written and it was an act that was miraculous.

Rashi does not mean to say that the ability to read the Luchos from both sides was miraculous. It wasn't miraculous whatsoever. The letters were fully legible.

The miracle was, says Rashi, that the letters were written in such a way that they were legible on both sides so that the reading was uncomplicated.

What does Rashi mean when he writes that the Luchos were legible from both sides? Does he mean to say that no matter from what side that I saw the letters they and their entire words were legible and that the order of their writing was made the opposite on their other side? Or does Rashi mean that each letter was easily readable on the other side, but, nevertheless, the P'sukim could only be read correctly on one side, but not on both?

Gur Aryeh<sup>11</sup> here decides:

משני עבריהם האותיות נקראות ומעשה ניסים היה. בפרק הבונה (שבת קד.) פירש רש"י שהיו נקראות בפנים כסדר ומבחוץ בהפך. ולפי זה הא דקאמר כאן 'ומעשה ניסים היה' על מ"ם סתומה וסמ"ך, דהיו עומדים בנס (רש"י שם), דכיון דמשני עבריה ניראת חקוק, אי אפשר להיות מ"ם סתומה וסמ"ך להיות עומדים, ולא יהיו נופלים, ועל זה אמרו 'מעשה ניסים היה':

*From their two sides the letters were read and it was a miraculous act* – In the twelfth Perek of Masseches Shabbos, Rashi explains that from their inside – i.e. facing them – they were read in their proper order. From their outside, they were read backwards.

Based on this, when Rashi writes here that it was a 'miraculous act', he was referring to the letters *mem sofis* and *samech* [which are completely cut out] but nevertheless were 'standing' in the *Luchos* and did not fall out even though they were fully detached from the stone. Since they were seen as carved out from both sides it would seem impossible for them to be standing and not falling. Since they were standing, that is about which Chazal wrote, 'it was a miraculous act'.

Rabbenu Bachye disagrees and writes:

לחת כתובים משני עבריהם מזה ומזה הם כתובים. זה היה פלא גדול שהכתב היה נקרא כסדורו משני העברים. מה שאין כן בכתב שלנו כי מלפנים הוא כסדורו ומאחוריו מהופך, ואמר "מזה ומזה" משני הצדדים והם פנים ואחור.

*Tablets written from their two sides, from this one and that one they are written* – this was a great miracle that the writing was written in its proper order from the two sides. Such is not the case when we write. When we write facing the writing it is in its proper order and when we look from its back it is reversed. Thus it says, 'from this side and that side', from its two sides, inside and outside.

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<sup>11</sup> The commentary of Rav Eliyahu Mizrachi wrote similarly but we chose to bring *Gur Aryeh* because here the latter is more concise.

Whatever the specific miracle was – it was miraculous and thus both segments of the P'sukim, the first with only one verse and the second with two P'sukim emphasize the Divine nature of the three verses.

And we find that the question that we raised was thought about centuries earlier and it was Ramban here who gave expression to our query. He writes:

והלחות מעשה א...ל'קים המה - היה ראוי שיזכיר הכתוב כל מעשה הלוחות בפסוק ויתן אל משה (שמות לא/יח), כאשר אמר כתובים באצבע א...ל'קים. אבל הזכירו בכאן לספר במעלתן, לומר כי לא נמנע משה בכל זה מלשבר אותם, כי חרה לו בראותו המעשה הרע ההוא, ולא יכול להתאפק. או כענין שהזכירו רבותינו (בשמות רבה ט יא) שפרח הכתב עתה בבואו בגבול העגל במקום הטומאה והחטא:

*The Luchos were an act of G-d* – It would have been proper for the Torah to note all the unique properties of the Luchos in the earlier verse that said that the word on the Luchos were written with the 'finger of G-d'.

But, He chose to mention these verses here to tell here [in this context] their importance and superiority. And that, in spite of that importance and sincerity Moshe did not hold back from breaking them because when he saw the people's evil actions, Moshe could not hold himself back.

Another explanation regarding their breaking is that now, when Moshe came within the boundaries of the Eigel, a place of sin and impurity, the letters flew up from the Luchos.

There are two reasons that Ramban offers for the splitting of the verses. The first reason is that the Torah wished to emphasize that despite their importance, or perhaps because of it, Moshe did not hesitate to break the *Luchos* based on his own judgment. The second suggestion is that the letters flew away from the *Luchos*, as we will discuss immediately.

Of course we should not think that Moshe Rabbenu Olov HaShalom had a fit of anger, lost control and shattered the Luchos in a way that a low-level person loses control and breaks things.

Chas V'Shalom to entertain such a thought.

Breaking the Luchos was a historical event because it was his level-headed and considered judgment that led Moshe Rabbenu to his behavior.

Chazal make it clear that there was no other possibility to explain Moshe's action than a clear *p'sak Halachah* that he issued.

We read in Masseches Shabbos (87 a):

שבר את הלוחות. מאי דריש? אמר: ומה פסח שהוא אחד מתרי"ג מצות, אמרה תורה (שמות יב/מג<sup>12</sup>) וכל בן נכר לא יאכל בו, התורה כולה כאן וישראל משומדים - על אחת כמה וכמה!

*He broke the Luchos* – What did Moshe derive from the Torah to allow him to break them? Moshe said, If regarding the *Korban Pesach* which is only one of the 613 Mitzvos the Torah commands, 'Anyone who has made him foreign to the Torah cannot eat from it', here where so many of Israel are apostates all the more so [that they cannot receive the Luchos]'.<sup>13</sup>

We have learned:

אדם דן קל וחומר מעצמו

A person is allowed to reach a Halachic conclusion through a *Kal Vachomer*, even without a precedent or a source.<sup>13</sup>

And that is precisely what Moshe did – and he did so correctly as the Gemara there continues:

ומנלן דהסכים הקדוש ברוך הוא על ידו - שנאמר (שמות לד/א<sup>14</sup>) אשר שברת ואמר ריש לקיש: יישר כחך ששיברת.

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<sup>12</sup> The entire verse reads:

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן זֶאת חֻקַּת הַפֶּסַח כֹּל בֶּן נֹכֵר לֹא יֹאכַל בוֹ:  
Hashem said to Moshe and Aharon, 'this is the statute of the Korban Pesach: anyone who has made himself foreign may not eat from it.

Rashi writes:

כל בן נכר - שנתנכרו מעשיו לאביו שבשמים. ואחד נכרי ואחד ישראל משומד במשמע:  
*Anyone who made himself foreign* – His actions have become foreign to his Father in Heaven. The Posuk is referring to both Jews and non-Jews who have apostatized.

<sup>13</sup> See Masseches Makkos 2 b for the usage of this principle.

<sup>14</sup> The entire verse reads:

From where do we know that Hashem agreed to his action, after it was performed? We learn it from the verse 'asher shibarto-'that you broke' and Reish Lokish interpreted it as 'yiyasher shibarto' – it was straight [yoshor] that you broke it.

the second explanation in Ramban tells us that Moshe had a clear indication that the Luchos should be broken:

או כענין שהזכירו רבותינו (שמות רבה ט יא) שפרח הכתב עתה בבואו בגבול העגל במקום הטומאה והחטא:

Another explanation regarding their breaking is that now, when Moshe came within the boundaries of the Eigel, a place of sin and impurity, the letters flew up from the Luchos.

This second explanation of Ramban was mentioned by many of the *meforshim* on the earlier solitary verse as well as here. This is what Rabbenu Bachye writes here:

... יש לתמוה על משה עבד ה' נאמן ביתו, איך ערב לבו לשבר הלוחות שהיו מכתב אל'קים, ואם ישראל חטאו ולא היו ראויים אל התורה היה לו להחזיר התורה לאכסניא שלה ולבקש מאת הקדוש ברוך הוא מה יעשה בה. אילו מלך בשר ודם שולח כתבו חתום ביד עבדו נאמן ביתו לשרי המלכות והם אינם רוצים לקבלו, ראוי העבד הנאמן להחזירו אל המלך, לא שינהוג בו בזיון ויקרענו, אבל שבירת הלוחות למשה רבינו היה מפני שראה שפרח הכתוב מן הלוחות כשנתקרב בגבול העגל במקום הטומאה והחטא, וכל מה שהעם נוהגים כבוד בכתבו של מלך אינו אלא מפני החותם, וכיון שפרח הכתוב בכאן נסתלק חותמו של מלך.

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וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה פְּסַל לְךָ שְׁנֵי לַחֹת אֲבָנִים כְּרֵאשֵׁינִים וְכַתְּבֵנִי עַל הַלַּחֹת אֵת הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ עַל הַלַּחֹת הָרֵאשֵׁינִים אֲשֶׁר שִׁבַּרְתָּ:

Hashem said to Moshe, 'Engrave for yourself two tablets of stone like the first ones and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first ones that you broke.

Presumably there was no need to write 'that you broke' at all; the episode was well-known. And if there was a need, why wasn't it written earlier in the verse when the 'first' luchos were mentioned.

Rather, Reish Lokish teaches that the word אשר isn't to be interpreted as 'that'. Rather it is a word of assurance or verification. Such is its use in Hebrew today. אישור means 'certification'.

וידוע כי היה הכתב בלוחות דוגמת הנפש בגוף, ובהסתלק הכתב נשארו הלוחות גוף בלא נפש, וגוף בלא נפש ראוי לקברו תחת הקרקע, ועל כן הסכימה דעתו לשבר אותם תחת ההר.

There is a point to express incredulity regarding Moshe Rabbenu, the servant of G-d<sup>15</sup>, the one who was eminently loyal Hashem's 'house'<sup>16</sup> – how did he let it come into his head to break the tablets that were Divinely written? Just because Israel sinned, and were not worthy of receiving the Torah - he should have returned the Torah to its proper place and have asked G-d what he was to do. If a human king would send a signed and sealed letter via his loyal servant to the officers of the kingdom and they refused to receive it – the loyal servant is obligated to return it to the king. He is not expected to treat the signed and sealed letter with disrespect and tear it!

But, the answer is that Moshe Rabbenu broke the *Luchos* because he saw that the writing of the Luchos flew away from the stone as he approached the area of the *Eigel*, a place of impurity and sin. [And thus, all that remained was the stone, but not the letters themselves] and the reason that the people respected the king's letter was because it was signed and sealed by King. And here, since the letters flew away, the King's signature and seal departed as well.

It is known that the writing on the Luchos, vis a vis the stone of the Luchos themselves, symbolizes their soul and their body. When the writing departed from the tablets, they became a body without a soul. It is proper to bury the body from which the soul has departed. And thus Moshe decided to break them at the bottom of the mountain [when he descended].

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<sup>15</sup> We read at the Torah's conclusion in Parshas V'zo HaBrachah (D'vorim Perek 34/Posuk 5):

וַיָּמָת שָׁם מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד ה' בְּאֶרֶץ מוֹאָב עַל פִּי ה':

Moshe, the servant of G-d, died there in the land of Moav by the mouth of G-d.

<sup>16</sup> We read at the end of Parshas B'ha'alosecha (B'midbar Perek 12/Posuk 7):

לֹא כֵן עֲבָדִי מֹשֶׁה בְּכָל בֵּיתִי נֶאֱמָן הוּא:

It is not the same with My servant Moshe; in all of My house he is loyal and trustworthy.

In connection to the earlier sole verse, *Alshich HaKodosh* writes in a similar vein:

כתובים באצבע א...ל"קים, כי להיותם כתובים שהוא היות האותיות רוחניות כנודע כמו שאמרו ז"ל (תנחומא כי תשא כו) שפרחו האותיות באויר ונשארו הלחות כבדות, שהוא כי כאשר נשמת האדם מקיימת את הגוף ונותנת בו חיות להתנועע בקלות, כן היה הדבר הזה. כי הכתיבה שהיתה על ידו יתברך לא היתה ככתוב בחרט אנוש, רק מתייחסת אל רוחניותו יתברך, והיתה כנשמה אל הלוחות, והלוחות כייחס הגוף, כאמור ומבואר אצלינו בבראשית רבה פרשתא א. ועל כן בפרוח באותיות נשארו כבדות כאשר יכבד האדם בצאת נפשו. ועל כן באמרו שהיו לוחות אבן שהוא מצד הגשמות, ואמרו כתובים באצבע א...ל"קים שהוא צד הרוחניות, נתן טעם אל שייכות שנים אוחזים נגדיים כאחת בלוחות, הוא יתברך ומשה. באמרו לחות אבן נתן טעם אל תפיסת יד משה, ובאמרו כתובים וכו' נתן טעם אל תפיסתו יתברך במ, שהוא ברוחניות האותיות אשר בקרבם כאמור:

*Written with the Finger of G-d* – because they ‘written’ with the letters being spiritual in nature as is known from what Chazal taught that the letters flew into the air and the tablets themselves remained heavy<sup>17</sup>.

That is because a person’s *neshamah* gives existence to his body and gives it vitality to move easily – so it was here with the Luchos.

That is because the writing which was done by Hashem was not like writing that was humanly engraved. That Divine writing is related to His spirituality *Yisborach* and was like the soul of the *luchos* and the *luchos* were like its body as it is said and explained in Midrash B’reishis Rabba.

Therefore when the letters flew, the tablets remained heavy just like the body of a person because heavy when his soul leaves him and he dies<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> That is, the spirituality of the Luchos made their stone to be lightweight. This is similar to what we read in Masseches Shabbos (92 a):

הארון נושא את נושאי

The Aron HaKodesh carried those who appeared to be carrying it.

In the beginning of Parshas Teruma, Shem Mi'Shmuel proves that all of the holy objects ‘carried their carriers’.

<sup>18</sup> We learn in Masseches Shabbos (94 a):

החי נושא את עצמו.

That which is alive carries itself.

Thus when the Posuk mentions that the luchos were made from 'stone', that is referring to their corporeality and when it says that they were written with the 'Finger of G-d' – that is referring to their spirituality. And that explains the two opposing forces that were gripping the luchos together, Hashem and Moshe. When the verse says that the tablets were of stone, that is relating to Moshe. When it says that they were written with the 'Finger of G-d', that is referring to G-d holding the Luchos which is the spirituality of the letters as was said.

With all of this information we are now prepared to answer our question. Since it is obvious, not only to us –but from the commentators as well – that the three verses in question belong together – why did the Torah separate them and write one prior to the description of the event of *Cheit HaEigel* and the other two in the middle of the unfolding repercussions of that terrible sin.

The answer lies in one phrase that appears in the first verse and is absent from the second:

אצבע א...ל"קים

The Finger of G-d.

It is true that in the second appearance of these verses there is an allusion to the 'Finger of G-d' – but it is only an allusion because all that it says is

וְהַמְּכָתֵב מִכְּתֵב אֱלֹהִים הוּא חָרוּת עַל הַלְּחֹת:

The writing was the writing of G-d, engraved on the tablets.

That which made it 'the writing of G-d' is not mentioned.

The reason is clear. If the Divinity departed from the Luchos, so that which was implanted the Divinity, the 'Divine Finger' departed as well.

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That means that if one person carries another person, the one being carried is participating in lifting himself and the 'carrier' is not performing the act completely on his own.

We are all familiar with the phrase 'dead-weight' – and that is exactly the implication of:

החי נושא את עצמו.



And thus we can understand the division of the verses.

In the first instance, prior to the sin of the Eigel, the Luchos were fully empowered; Hashem engraved them. That Divine inspiration was absent after the sin and thus all that Moshe was holding were heavy stones.

However, we must ask regarding the usage of the phrase

אצבע א...ל"קים

The Finger of G-d

to indicate the Divinity implanted in the Luchos.

Why wasn't the phrase

מכתב א...ל"קים:

The writing of G-d

sufficient?

After all, we know that it wasn't G-d's 'finger' that did the writing. We know that He is incorporeal. When we talk about G-d as if He was corporeal, that is only לַסְבֵּר אֶת הָאוֹזֵן – to make things easier for ourselves.

Why was it necessary to note that it was

אצבע א...ל"קים

The Finger of G-d?

We can safely assume that we all remember an earlier instance in which this same phrase was used.

We learned in Parshas Voera regarding the third of the ten plagues (Sh'mos Perek 8/Posuk 15):

וַיֹּאמְרוּ הַחֹרְטָמִים אֶל פְּרֹעֹה אֶצְבַּע אֱלֹהִים...ל"קים הוּא וַיַּחֲזֵק לֵב פְּרֹעֹה וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֲלֵהֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה':

The wizards said to Par'o, 'It is the Finger of G-d'; Par'o's heart became hard and he did not listen to them, like Hashem said.

It seems that the meaning of this verse in which the Torah saw fit to quote the Egyptian wizards is that Hashem's punishment is far lighter than which He could have done. He Yisborach could have used His 'hand' or both of His hands.

He could have destroyed all of Egypt if He so willed. And thus *etzba'* –finger implies far less than the Divine 'ability'.

In fact, when Hashem decimates the Egyptians, He uses more than His 'finger'. Thus we read in Parshas B'shalach (Sh'mos Perek 14/Posuk 31):

וַיֵּרָא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַיָּד הַגְּדֹלָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה ה' בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיִּירָאוּ הָעָם אֶת ה' וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְּה' וּבְמֹשֶׁה עֲבָדָיו:

Israel saw the great hand that Hashem did against Egypt and the People feared Hashem and they believe in Hashem and in Moshe His servant.

Thus, it is very possible that the usage of the 'Finger of G-d' in our context comes to tell us of the Divinity that was put into the stones – but in a limited manner. That is, if Hashem's Hand would have smitten the Egyptians at the plague of *Kinim* – lice with the full brunt of His Hand, the Egyptians would have completely decimated.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> We read in Masseches Sanhedrin (95 b):

אמר רב יהודה אמר רב: בא עליהם סנחריב הרשע בארבעים וחמשה אלף איש בני מלכים יושבים בקרונות של זהב, ועמהן שגלונות וזונות. ובשמנים אלף גבורים לבושי שריון קליפה, ובששים אלף אחוזי חרב רצים לפניו, והשאר פרשים...  
במה הכם? רבי אליעזר אומר: ביד הכם, שנאמר (שמות יד/ל) וירא ישראל את היד הגדלה - היד שעתידיה ליפרע מסנחריב. רבי יהושע אומר: באצבע הכם, שנאמר ויאמרו החרטמים אל פרעה אצבע א...לקים היא - היא אצבע שעתידיה ליפרע מסנחריב.

Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav: When Sancheriv the Wicked came to attack Yehuda he came with 45,000 princes who were sitting in wagons of gold and with them were queens and prostitutes. There were 80,000 warriors wearing scaled armor and 60,000 soldiers holding swords who ran before them and the rest were horsemen...

With what did Hashem smite them? Rabi Eliezer says, 'with His Hand He smote them as it says, "Israel saw the great Hand" – the hand that in the future will punish Sancheriv.' Rabi Yehoshua says, 'With His Finger He smote them as it says, "The wizards said to Par'o it is the finger of G-d", the Finger that in the future will punish Sancheriv.'

It is certainly plausible to think that our discussion here parallels the discussion there.

If the 'Hand of Hashem' would have engraved the letters on the Luchos – perhaps they would not have been able to depart from the stone.

Thus, the stone luchos were invested with Divinity – but a Divinity that could flee from impurity and sin.

Thus, at the time when Moshe received the Luchos, the imprint of the Divine 'Finger' brought sanctity to the tablets. When the sin of the *Eigel* occurred, that sanctity fled this world and again ascended and returned to the heavens.

That is why the word *Etzba'* is found in the first verse and that is why the second verses are separated from the first with the striking absence of אֲצַבֵּעַ אֶל־קַיִם.

In the first instance, the Luchos were endowed with אֲצַבֵּעַ אֶל־קַיִם, not in the second.

This week we find another example of one finger having unique importance. And as we think about it, the significance of that one 'finger' is in many ways more impressive than the 'one Finger' that inscribed the Luchos. It is the finger of man, not endowed with Divinity, but one that which is able to make its own impression nevertheless.

This Shabbos is the third week of the אַרְבַּע פִּרְשִׁיּוֹת that are read in the period of Adar/Nissan. With the exception of Parshas Zachor which is read in preparation for Purim, the other three Parshos are related to the month of Nissan and to Pesach.

This week's Parshas Poroh is specifically related to the Korban Pesach that requires anyone who brings a Korban Pesach to be *tahor*. Regarding almost all other Korbonos<sup>20</sup>, there is no obligation for their owners to be *tahor*. They can send their offering and while they are *tomei* and the Kohanim in the Beis HaMikdosh will fulfill the mission completely.

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<sup>20</sup> There are certain instances when a person who was *tomei* becomes *tahor* but cannot yet enter the Beis HaMikdosh or partake of Korbonos or Teruma or Maaser Sheini. In those cases, they first need to bring a Korban and until they do they are termed מחוסרי כפרה – lacking atonement. Of course, in this case of מחוסרי כפרה the owner who would offer the Korban would need to be *tahor*.

However, the Korban Pesach is different. Since its purpose is to be eaten by its owners and since a Korbon can be eaten only by those who are *tahor*, a Korban Pesach's owners must be *tahor*.

Parshas Poroh teaches how one purifies himself from *טומאת מת*, the impurity that is contracted when one touches a corpse or is in a roofed area with a corpse. Since the process of becoming *tahor* takes at least a week, the warning and information about that process has to be given in significant time before Pesach. For that reason, Parshas Poroh is indelibly connected to Parshas HaChodesh. The former is always read on the Shabbos before the latter.

Within the procedure of Parshas Poroh, the Torah teaches (B'midbar Perek 19/Posuk 4) what happens after the Red Heifer is slaughtered:

וְלָקַח אֶלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן מִדָּמָהּ בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ וְהִזָּה אֶל נֶחַח פְּנֵי אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד מִדָּמָהּ שֶׁבַע פְּעָמִים:

Elazar the Kohen will take from its blood with his finger and he shall cast towards the front of the Ohel Moed from its blood seven times.

Now there are Korbonos in which the Kohen takes from the blood with his finger and casts or places blood on the Mizbeach-altar. However, when that takes place, the Kohen is standing in immediate proximity to the altar.

In the case of the Poroh Aduma, the Kohen is on Har HaZeisim – the Mount of Olives – a great distance from the Beis HaMikdosh and the Torah commands him to cast the blood towards the Beis HaMikdosh.<sup>21</sup> It certainly will not reach there by any means or stretch of the imagination.

Our specific interest is to understand why the finger of the Kohen was chosen to cast the blood towards the Beis HaMikdosh? Why not the hand? Why not the *ei'zov*-hyssop bundle that is used later in the service of Poroh Aduma to sprinkle upon man and vessel that are to be purified<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> See the third Perek of Masseches Poroh.

<sup>22</sup> We read in Parshas Poroh (B'midbar Perek 19/Posuk18):

וְלָקַח אֶזְוִב וְטָבַל בְּמַיִם אִישׁ טְהוֹר וְהִזָּה עַל הָאֹהֶל וְעַל כָּל הַכֵּלִים וְעַל הַנְּפֹשׁוֹת אֲשֶׁר הִיוּ שָׁם וְעַל הַנֶּגַע בְּעַצָּם אוֹ בְּחֵלֶל אוֹ בַּמֵּת אוֹ בַּקֶּבֶר:

The *tahor* Kohen shall take a hyssop and immerse it in water and he shall sprinkle it on the *Ohel*-tent or house and on all of its vessels and all of the

The extraordinary *Torah Shleima* quotes a medieval collection of Midrashim called פתרון תורה and this is what we read there:

באצבעו – מה נשתנה אצבעו של כהן מכל איברין שמזין? אלא אמר ה' תבוא אצבעו של כהן ותכפר על אצבעו של אדם שהיא מתחלת בעבירה תחילה שנאמר (משלי ו/יג) קורץ בעיניו מולל ברגליו מורה באצבעותיו. לפיכך מכפר עליהם כהן:

*With his finger* – What is the uniqueness of the finger of the Kohen that sprinkles more than any other limb? But Hashem said, 'Let the finger of the Kohen come and atone for the finger of man that begins the sin at its very start as it says, 'He winks with his eyes, he motions with his feet and he indicates with his fingers.

Rashi writes regarding this verse in Sefer Mishlei:

מדבר על הרשעים המסיתין את הבריות לעבודת גילולים:

It is speaking about the wicked who incite people towards idolatry.

The finger beckons and invites as it subtly encourages its victim to be ensnared in the trap of idolatry or other cardinal sins.

The finger is used as a means of seduction towards sin and thus it bears the burden of the many transgressions it has caused, directly or indirectly.

The finger of the Kohen directing a sprinkle towards the Beis HaMikdosh can atone and make amends as this finger is used for holy purposes.

But we must ask, why was the finger chosen in the context of the Poroh Aduma? What is unique about the Red Heifer that makes it a fitting setting to atone for causing others to sin?

The answer seems to be that when causing a person to sin we are introducing them to a slow death. That slow death does not have the finality of actual demise; the body still lives. However, the Neshama which was bestowed upon man in purity is now sullied; its purity is compromised and decay may begin.

By using the finger as part of the purification process and by pointing with it towards the Beis HaMikdosh and the *Kodesh Kodoshim* and casting the purifying

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people who were there and upon anyone who touches a bone of the corpse or the murdered individual or the dead body or the grave.

waters, there can be a step-backward from sin, עזיבת החטא, which is the first step towards *Teshuva*.

When we think about the relative power and strength of a finger vis a vis the power and the strength of a hand, we undoubtedly are aware that the impact of the hand is more than five-fold greater than the finger because the hand is not only a compilation of five fingers it as its palm and the back of hand as well.

What impression can one finger make? The answer is that it would seem that its impact would be slight. At the same time, we understand that the impact of the Divine is beyond our ability to measure or to even estimate.

On the other hand, man's finger, and his hand, are all measurable. There surely are formulas to compute what the finger can do – and no matter what, the results will not be impressive.

And yet, the Posuk in Mishlei teaches of the power of the finger to cause the greatest of transgressions and the Posuk of Poroh Aduma teaches that a finger can turn away the highest level of impurity, אבי אבות הטומאה, and close some of the gap that exists between us and HaKodosh Boruch Hu.

But even as we discuss the immeasurable power of G-d's finger and compare it to the feebleness of man's finger, we learn that man can overcome G-d, as it were.

Our sins at the Eigel removed the Divinity from the Luchos and the stones that were once embedded with holiness lost their *kedusha*.

Parshas Ki Siso can make for a very depressing reading as we ponder how our ancestors could so rapidly sink from the high *madreiga* that they reached at Sinai to the abysmal depth they sank with the Eigel.

At the same time we read Parshas Poroh and are reminded to the great heights of purity one can seek despite being weighed down with *tum'a* that distances us from HaKodosh Boruch Hu.

This Shabbos we are presented with two models. It is easy to sit back and choose the model of inspiration over that of decimation.

That is not a challenge at all.

The challenge is when we are faced with basic decisions in real-time – what will we choose?

Will we dismiss the beckoning finger as being of no consequence or will we wish to emulate the Kohen who, despite an impassable distance, looks to the Beis HaMikdosh, faces the Holy of Holies and brings himself and all of Israel closer to Hashem as we seek the purity that will envelop us in His Presence.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Pollock