

## **Eikev: First and Second Luchot**

- Nisson Shulman.

A shiur describing why some sages held that the second Luchot were more important than the first. (Based on a shiur from the Rav)

Eikev: First and Second Luchot . Based on a shiur by Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik, ZT"L

Story of Egel in Parshat Eikev. Moshe's intercession. 40 days, pleading, won God's forgiveness.

Instructed by Hashem to prepare a new set of tablets to replace the first one...

BAET HAHI AMAR HASHEM ELAY, PESAL LECHA SHNEY LUCHOT AVANIM  
KARISHONIM, VAALE AILAY HAARA, VEASISA LECHA TEVAT ETZ.

These differ from first.

Moshe had to prepare, the first prepared by God.

A wooden ark, first had no wooden ark.

What is the significance of the changes?

IBN EZRA cites opinion of the Gaon states that the second set of tablets more venerable and respected than the first. The Ibn Ezra writes:

AMAR HAGAON KI HASHNIYIM NICHBADIM MIN HARISHON, KI HASHNIYIM  
NASNU BEYOM KODESH UBEYOM HAKIPPURIM, VELO KEN HARISHONIM, KI HEM  
YARDU BEYOM 17 BETAMUZ OBEYOM HOL. VEYESH IM HASHNIYIM ZECHER  
SHALOSH BERITOT, UBISHNIYIM KETIV LEMAAN YITAV LACH, VEHARISHONIM  
NISHTABRU. (Holy day = Shabbat,) Yom Kippur, Three covenants, "Good for you". Proof in  
fact that the first were destroyed. Second were not.

Ibn Ezra in biting style replies, VEELE KEDIVRE HALOM, LO MAALIN VELO MORIDIM  
KI MIGHTAV ELOKIM HAYU SHNEYHEM, VEOD SHEHARISHONIM MAASE ELOKIM  
VEHASHNIYIM MAASE MOSHE.

At first glance the argument of Ibn Ezra is quite convincing. After all, the first were created by God, the second hewn by Moses himself. In fact the issue hinges upon a problem posed by all the classic commentaries. How did Moses dare to break the tablets which were made and given by God Himself?

Answer: When he observed the sin of the Golden calf, he realized that the Jews did not appreciate the great privilege of having been selected to receive God's Torah. They felt like outsiders to the whole great event of Matan Torah. They therefore were able to create the Golden

calf. They felt it was God's Torah, not theirs!

We can appreciate this from our own experiences in life. That which we receive by toil and trouble is more esteemed and precious. Classic example, gambler, squandering profit. The holocaust victims and how important is a piece of bread. The YEGIYOT of Adam Harishon...

Free lunch? Easy come, easy go.

So Moshe realized that the Jewish people had to be given a new set of tablets in which they would have their own investment.

Therefore God instructs Moshe, now, after achieving atonement for the people, that he as their representative had to become personally involved in making the luchot. They, the people had to donate the material of the tablets, and Moshe had to hew them out. Once they had been called upon to make an investment, they would not be prone to squander it.

But this is not the only investment. He was also required to make for the second set of tablets an Ark. What is the purpose of the Ark? To give the Jewish people another investment. They now had to have their own ark, their own protective cover around the Torah. They now were, so to speak, partners with God Himself, and they would therefore no longer be prone to squander it.

This is what the Gaon meant, saying that the second set of luchot were more important than the first. Objectively, perhaps the Ibn Ezra is right, that the first tablets, of God's exclusive hands, had more holiness, but because the second set involves Moshe and the Jewish people in its construction and formation, the second set were given more esteem by the people because they now had a personal involvement. Therefore, as the Gaon points out, the second set of luchot lasted for eternity, surviving all the crises and challenges facing our people. Because we earned the second luchot.

Also mentioned that the second luchot were given on Yom Kippur, the day when the Jewish people themselves have to achieve the highest level of kedusha, the day of human involvement, for atonement is only granted through our own endeavors.... In fact, atonement is a partnership, teshuva and forgiveness, SHUVA AYLAY, VAASHUVA ALEYCHEM.

This partnership affects the Jewish people's overall relationship to the Torah.

The NETZIV HAAMEK DAVAR in KI TISA, cites a remarkable Midrash to the passage in SHIR HASHIRIM, TOV LI KI ANITI LEMAAN ALAMED HUKETCHA. It is good for me that I have suffered affliction for the sake of teaching your Torah. The Midrash writes, BETORATO SHEL MOSHE NITANE 120 YOM, AMAR HAKADOSH BARUCH HU, NITZTAARTA, HAYECHA SHEEYN ATA MAFSID, BELUCHOT HARISHONOT LO HAYU ELA ASERET HADIBROT, VEACHSHAV SHENITZTAARTA ANI NOTEN LECHA MEDRASH, HALACHOT VEAGADOT. You did not lose anything because of your affliction, because now that you have suffered affliction....

i.e. Major substantive change between what we received in the first set of luchot and the second.

For in the first luchot, true we received the Oral tradition too, but it was confined to the actual laws and interpretation of the written text. If a new issue would arise, Moshe had to conform it to the laws he already taught. In the second tablets Moshe was given the power to extrapolate from the written text according to the powers given to him by God in the logical laws of deduction of the 13 principles of derivation.

This power was then transferred from Moshe to his students, and thereafter from generation to generation. This new feature was a direct result of Moses' participation in the hewing out of the second tablets.

In connection with EGEL, UBEYOM PAKDI UPAKADETI ALEHEM HATATAM... Tells us that in all future sins will be a bit of the EGEL for which we never received total forgiveness. Secret formula for survival has been our commitment to the oral tradition. The commitment and the achievement is dependent on this KOACH HAHIDUSH given to Moses. The secret formula, for survival, consolation, hope. But there was one great price for it, the price of YISURIN, affliction. Moses earned this with 120 days of fasting. Almost gave up, MEHENI NA MISIFRECHA.... When all over, the 120 days reaches climax, God tells Moses, HAYECHA SHEEYN ATA MAFSID, for you shall have the portion of the Torah to be mehadesh,... ARON ETZ, learning Torah beginning in humble beginning, nothing fancy, the simple ark ultimately replaced with the ark in the mishkan, golden crown,... zer zahav.

NETZIV finds a parallel between the two sets of luchot and the two talmuds, TALMUD YERUSHALMI AND THE TALMUD BABLY. The Talmud Yerushalmi originated from Israel, and the Babli appeared after the appearance of the first set of the Talmud in Israel.

In a sense the Yerushalmi may be compared with the first set of luchot. Its scholars were superior to those that lived in Babel. This is confirmed by the Gemara in Shabbat, which cites Rava, a prominent scholar of the Babylonian school, who said: VEANA BEHADE TARGEMA DESABI LAMA LI. How can I match my learning with that of the wise sages of Israel who comprise the Talmud Yerushalmi and composed it? Yet we know that in terms of its overall impact and contribution throughout the exile, the Babylonian Talmud has had a far more profound effect... and role....

This is because the Talmud Babli, which was composed under the hardships of exile, brought out the special gifts of the scholars as stated by Raba,... the power to discover and originate new laws in extrapolation from the written text. They paid a greater price and therefore had a greater impact.