

# CLASS 42 - KI SISA

by Rabbi Heshy Grossman

*"Rebbe Shmuel bar Nachman in the name of Rebbe Yonasan: The Luchos were six Tefachim long and three Tefachim wide. Moshe held onto two Tefachim and G-d held onto two Tefachim with two left open in between. When Klal Yisrael made the Egel, Hashem wanted to grab them from Moshe's hands, yet the hands of Moshe overcame, and he grabbed them from G-d. This is how the verse ultimately praises him: 'U'Lchol HaYad HaChazakah - and for all the strong hand' (Devarim 34:12)" (Talmud Yerushalmi, Ta'anis 4:5)*

At the very moment that the Luchos are being transferred to the possession of the Jewish people, they dance before the Golden Calf, a sin whose impact is felt to this very day.

The timing is not coincidental. Apparently, it is the very act of Kabbalas HaTorah that is the impetus for the Egel HaZahav.

In our shiur this week, we will explain this connection, and describe the ever present danger for those who refuse to accept the message of Har Sinai.

1

The Maharal defines the three dimensions of the Luchos.

The Torah is divided into three types of commands: Chukim, Eidos, and Mishpatim.

Chukim are those Mitzvos that man cannot easily relate to, precepts that are difficult to grasp. These laws are in G-d's Hand, beyond the reach of mortal man.

Mishpatim are basic rules of conduct, regulations of commerce and business. This is an area of Torah relatively easy for man to make his own, and these two Tefachim are already in Moshe's hand.

Eidos are somewhere in between.

These are Mitzvos that testify to G-d and history; holiday observances and the many spiritual reminders of daily life. This part of the Luchos is held jointly by both Moshe and G-d. Man can understand these commands, but only after they are transmitted by G-d - no one would invent Tefillin on their own.

Like 'Shnayim Ochazin B'Tallis', the outcome of this struggle defies easy resolution, but it is here that the receipt of Torah is finalized.

At this precise instant, the Torah is being transmitted.

Kabbalas HaTorah has begun, but the process is not yet complete.

If the nation seizes this opportunity to prance before the Egel HaZahav, we learn that Kabbalas HaTorah is the spark that ignites this sin, prompting the weak of heart to stray in a different direction.

Let us now analyze the nature of this national tragedy.

2

*"And Hashem said to Moshe: Go, descend, for your nation that you brought up from Egypt has corrupted their ways." (Shemos 32:7)*

"It does not say 'the nation has become corrupted', but, rather, 'your nation' - the Erev Rav that you accepted on your own, and converted, without consulting Me...." (Rashi, ad. loc.)

As Chazal explain, while the B'nai Yisrael did not prevent its occurrence, it was only the mixed multitude that actually worshipped the Egel.

What was their motive?

"We see, that you, Israel, you have everything dear and precious in the world, while we are pushed aside. With you - 'V'Hashem Holech Lifneihem' - we also want 'Elohim Asher Yelchu L'Faneinu' - just as G-d walks before you." (Zohar)

To all appearances, Moshe Rabbeinu is gone. The man who brings the nation and its followers under the canopy of G-d, taking them across a bare and barren desert and teaching the D'var Hashem will no longer lead us to the promised land. What are we to do?

The Chet HaEgel is this: when Moshe Rabbeinu, the agent of G-d, is no longer here to guide us, we will create a substitute of our own.

They fail to realize that only one man can bring G-d down to earth, there are no surrogates for Moshe Rabbeinu. It is the Torah that he brings down to earth that directs our life, and in its absence, nothing else will do.

Though the B'nai Yisrael merely watch with amusement the raucous laughter of the Erev Rav, something undetected rubs off, and the Jewish people are tainted forever with a foreign idea. After the death of Moshe Rabbeinu, when his voice can no longer be heard, the descendants of the Dor HaMidbar are destined to wander in strange pastures. Adopting varied guises, the impure sound of the Egel echoes still: we can find our way to G-d without Moshe Rabbeinu.

3

"The clouds of glory that traveled in the Midbar surrounded only the B'nai Yisrael, and the Erev Rav traveled outside the camp....and they said: 'either we will all be one nation, and we will join together

with you, or, we should also have someone to walk before before us, as G-d who walks before you."

"Said Aharon: G-d forbid that these people should join together with the Am Kadosh. Rather, it's best to separate them from the Am Kadosh until Moshe returns. And Aharon meant well..." (Zohar)

The Erev Rav is not truly Klal Yisrael. Though they are taken out of Egypt, escaping the wrath of G-d, they are unable to accept the Luchos, the tablets that bind G-d and His people.

Moshe descends from the mountain, and as Aharon surmised, the sin of the Egel destroys this connection between man and his creator. Unfortunately, Klal Yisrael themselves fall prey to the insidious rebellion, and Moshe must ascend once again to bring down Luchos of a different sort.

After breaking the tablets, Moshe was pained by his actions:

"...Hashem said to him: Do not feel bad over the first tablets, which contained only Aseres HaDibros, the second tablets which I will give you have Halachos, Midrash, and Aggados..." (Shemos Rabbah 46:1)

Why were the Luchos destroyed if the same commandments were destined to be replaced in any case? Is there a difference between the first and second tablets?

The Midrash is saying this: In the first tablets, all the Torah existed as one; both the written and oral components of G-d's word were perceived as one self-contained whole.

In the second tablets, the Torah SheBa'al Peh exists as an independent entity, one that needs to be accepted in its own way, on its own terms.

The written Torah is presented by G-d as a fait accompli - a pure, uncorrupted vision of the world as it is meant to be.

When Klal Yisrael is shown to be undeserving of this gift, Moshe breaks the Luchos, for they cannot be erased, and returns with a Torah of a different sort, accessible only to those who strive to be worthy of its demands.

Unlike the Torah SheB'Ksav, the Oral Law is acquired only through toil and strife, hours upon hours of unceasing struggle.

The sin of the Egel separates the men from the boys, those who look for a free ride to utopia, from those who recognize that Torah is not acquired automatically.

The Erev Rav has left their mark on Klal Yisrael. In one family, from the same parents, one son may choose the path of Moshe Rabbeinu, while his sibling chooses to dance with the Egel.

The Egel is a rejection of Kabbalas HaTorah, the inability to commit one's life to one all-encompassing task, and the unwillingness to focus his efforts and energy and decipher the hidden will of Hashem.

This golden calf brings suffering and despair to each generation, but, ironically, it provides a silver lining - casting off those who don't belong.

The Torah is ours for the taking - but, only for those willing to stay the course.

"Lech Rade, Ki Shecheis Amcha Asher He'elisa MeiEretz Mitzraim"

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