**Ki Tissa** 5th Aliyah Ex 34: 1-9 at MCJC 2-27-16 A. Luna

**The arc of the story**: Brief history, story of Moses tribe’s progression through Bersheit/ Genesis, Shemot/ Exodus, and, coming soon, Vayikra/ Leviticus.

*Genesis (Beresheit/ Beginning):* after ancient history of “the beginning”, the story of “the patriarchs and matriarchs”, ending with Jacob naming his sons (and daughter), his death, and a promise to take Joseph’s bones with them when the Hebrews leave Mitzrayim.

*Exodus* (*Shemot/ Words*): opens with the change in Egypt, a new Pharoah, increasing oppression of the Jews, and introduces Amram and Yocheved of the tribe of Levi and, eventually, their children: Miriam, Moses and Aaron. The story of Moses life and his emergence as a prophet and leader (and to a lesser degree, his siblings Miriam and Aaron) chosen by Hashem, in the eventual exodus of the Jews from Egypt, their migration to the desert and the theophany at Sinai when, twice, he received the Torah. After the incident of Golden Calf and the smashing of the first set of tablets, Moses commands the Levites, his armed tribal enforcers, to slaughter 6,000 of the participants, exhibiting his religious hegemony as leader of the Jewish people.

*Leviticus (Vayikra/ And He (God) Called, also called Toras Kohanim, Torah of the Priests):* coming soon; Biblical text critics usually hold this book to have been the last book written, around 500-400 BCE by the priestly descendants of Moses’ Levite brethren, the priests who run and control the Temple, is mostly the laws of the temple service and other laws relating to the priests’ responsibilities.

(For our exploration today, we will accept the view/ belief that the whole Torah was given to Moses at Sinai.)

Following *Vayikra* will be *Numbers*/ *Bamidbar/ Wilderness*, and *Deuteronomy/ Devarim/ Words*.

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**Ki Tissa: our Aliyah #5 today**:

Exodus 34:1-9 The *Lord said to Moses, “Carve for yourself two tablets of stone like the first ones, and I will inscribe on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you shattered. 2Be ready in the morning, and ascend in the morning to Mount Sinai and stand by me yourself there, on the top of the mountain. 3No man shall come up with you, and do not let anyone be seen throughout the entire mountain; and do not let flocks or herds graze in front of that mountain.” 4So Moses carved out two tablets of stone like the first ones; and he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tablets of stone.*

*Hashem descended in a cloud and stood with him there, and called out the name, “Hashem”, “ Hashem passed before him, and proclaimed, “Hashem, Hashem, God, Compassionate and Gracious, Slow to Anger, and Abounding in Kindness and Truth; Preserver of Kindness for the thousandth generation, Forgiver of Iniquity, Wilfull Sin, and Error, Who Cleanses, ...but who does not cleanse completely, visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.” 8*

*And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped. 9He said, “If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go among us. Although this is a stiff-necked people, pardon our iniquity and our errors, and take us for your inheritance.”* The two most important “watershed” events in the memory, religion and identity of the Jewish people, I think, arethe Exodus from Egypt and the events at Sinai (the story of the giving and receiving of the Torah from God to Moses, the shattering of the first set after the incident of the golden Calf, and the carving and receiving of the second set).

The arc of the Sinai story repeats a motif of human failing: by sinning, losing the grace of the Garden and the Tree of Life, cast out into a life of struggle and toil, the place of the Tree of Good and Evil. Now, the people lose the consciousness of spiritual elevation reached after being freed from slavery, reverting to a lower form of worship and thus forfeiting the perfected Torah, with it’s potential to inaugurate a new era in human development. Ki Tisa, this week’s parsha, recounts what one commentator calls: “one of the most catastrophic sins in Jewish history” (Ohr Hadash, <http://the> krugmans.com/3455/ the-golden-calf-and purim/). The Torah of the Tree of Life, is shattered and through Moses pleading with God, we end up with the second Torah, the Torah of the Tree of Good and Evil.

In my teaching for Shavuot last may 2015, I traced the accounts of the two sets of Luchot , the shattering of the first, and the difference between them, in Torah, Talmud, Midrash, and some contemporary commentators. Today I’ll briefly touch on the differences between the two sets, and look at the significance of the shattering to us today.

**The first set of stone Tablets: “**The tablets were written by the “Finger of God’ on two sapphire stones...existed before creation... graven upon the tablets, *in* them, pierced, so that the writing could be seen from each side” (*Zohar,* 84b) ( “The *Mem* and the *Samech* remained in place by a miracle” (*Megillah* 2b); “they were closed letters, and were unattached to the body of the Tablets” (*Shabbos* 104a1). The writing could be seen from both sides. In Talmud *Eruvin*  Rabbi Elazar said: Mah diktiv, charut al-haluchot? “”What is the meaning of that which is written: “was engraved on the tablets?” (Meaning the writing of God). This teaches that had the first set of tablets not been shattered, the Torah would never have been forgotten by Israel. Engraving is permanent and cannot be erased. By means of these permanently engraved tablets, the Torah would have been permanently “engraved’ on the mind of Israel and never ben forgotten by them. (Rashi). Rav Acha bar Yaakov said: Had the first of tablets not been shattered, no nation or tongue would ever had ascendency over Israel, as it says engraved (“horot”). Do not read this as it is written, “horot”, engraved, but as if it were written, “horut”, “freedom”. (*Eruvin* 54a2)

The Vilna Gaon (HaGaon Rabbenu Elijah ben Shlomo Zalman, aka the Gra): *The First Tablets represented the level which the people had attained at Sinai. “The Tablets were god’s handiwork, and the script was the script of God, engraved on the Tablets” (Ex 32:16). The stones were the body of the Tablets, the script was its soul. At Sinai the people were pure of body and soul and thus, were worthy of Tablets that had been fashioned by God Himself.*

*After the sin of the Golden Calf, Israel received the Second tablets, which were different from the First; the script was God’s, but the stones were carved by Moses. However the First tablets were not totally lost, for Moses was instructed to place their broken fragments into the Holy Ark along with the Second Tablets (Bavra Basra 14b).*

*At Sinai, the Jews had reached a level which allowed them to comprehend the very essence of each commandment, and thereby grasp all its details as well. With the giving of the Second Tablets, and opposite path of comprehension was needed. One would have to toil diligently over the details of the Oral Law, and through such toil, one could ultimately grasp the essence of each commandment. The*

**Second set of Tablets-** carried up by Moses and inscribed by Moses as directed by God, the Luchot Ha Brit:

Midrash Shemot Rabbah 46:1 “Moshe began to be pained over the breaking of the Luchot. HaShem said to him, “do not be pained over the first Luchot...the second Luchot I will give you will be accompanied by Halachot, Midrash, and Agadah.”

Shemot Rabbah 47:1 , *comments on Ex 34:27 ”write for yourself these words, because based on thee words I made a covenant with Yisrael.”*  When Hashem appeared to Moses on Sinai to give Israel the Torah, He taught Moses the Torah, Mishna, Talmud and Aggadah, as it says, ‘God spoke all of these statements”( Ex 20:1)...After he learned all of this from Hashem, Hashem instructed Moses to teach it to Israel. Moses answers, “Master of the world, I will write it down for them” Hashem responded, “I do not want to give it to them in writing, because it is revealed to me that idol worshippers will rule over them and take it from them, and they will be disgraced by the idolators. I will give them the written Torah, but the Mishna, Talmud, and Aggadah, will be given to them orally.”

(See R. Avi Chermon based on a Sicha by Harav Mordechai Greenberg on the difference between the two sets: “The Yerushalmi in Shekalim says the entire Torah was written in between the lines of the Luchot. When someone writes a Sefer Torah, every letter must be surrounded with parchment; no two letters may touch each other. There is great significance in the space between letters.

The second Luchot contained only the Ten Commandments; it is a new covenant. That is why ...the first Luchot are never referred to as the “ten commandments”, but the second Luchot are, “asseret devarim” (Ki Tissa Ex 34:28). In Dev 9:10 “Hashem gave me the two tablets of stone, written by Hashem, and on them was written all the words Hashem taught you.” The Yerushalmi in Pe’ah says this refers to the entire Torah, which was written in the first Luchot. However when discussing the second Luchot, the verse says, “He wrote on the tablets, as on the first ones, the ten commandments.”

So, since Moses, and then the people, received the written Torah in the second Luchot. It is impossible for the written Torah to exist without the Oral Torah, without it we would not be able to understand almost every mitzva. It is hard work to understand and articulate the Oral Torah, as teachers, rabbis, and students have been doing for a few thousand years, and are still doing.

*R. Eleazar said: Every man is born for toil, as it is written, yet man is born for toil.*[*4*](http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_99.html#99b_4)*Now, I do not know whether for toil by mouth or by hand, but when it is said, for his mouth craveth it of him, I may deduce that toil by mouth is meant.*[*5*](http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_99.html#99b_5)*Yet I still do not know whether for toil in the Torah or in [secular] conversation, but when it is said, This book of the Torah shall not depart out of thy mouth,*[*6*](http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_99.html#99b_6)*I conclude that one was created to labour in the Torah. And this coincides with Raba's dictum, viz., All human bodies are carriers; happy are they who are worthy of being receptacles of the Torah. (Sanhedrin 99b)*

There is a view, held by many, that implicit in the Sinai revelation was the whole corpus of law and lore that would over time emerge.

**The Shattering –** What continues for me, to cry out “Darsheini”!! is the act, the sound, the psycho –spiritual event of the SHATTERING!!

Let’s return to that event before I end this d’rash.

Imagine, for a moment, the scene:

After pleading with God not to destroy the people because of their sin, Moses headed down the mountain, became enraged when he actually saw the people carousing around the Golden Calf, and the Luchot Ha-Edut, Tablets of Testimony, carved by God, the Midrash (Tanchuma 26) tells us that the letters flew away, and the Tablets became so heavy, that Moses dropped them. Other sources say that Moses, threw them down, and they shattered. (Ex 32:19).

As one would expect, the Rabbis discuss Moses’ breaking of the tablets, since they were inscribed by God, and question if he had other choices, but God concurs with this act, and two others of Moses.

Shabbos 87a: “As it was taught in a Baraisa: Moses did three things based on his own understanding, and the Holy One, blessed be he, agreed with him in each instance: he added one day of abstinence...he permanently separated from his wife, and he broke the two Tablets of the Law.....The Gemara analyzes the third instance in which Moses acted independently...(note 15, Shabbos 87a) “he broke the tablets because he deemed the people to be unworthy of them”. God is not angry because he knows they would eventually repent.’

*(*See Shabbos 88a for discussion if there was an element of coercion in the people’s acceptance of the Torah at Sinai, and its necessity in insuring that Torah was accepted. Also, that ... Torah was re-accepted in the time of Achashverosh, at Purim.)

**The Shattering,** the sound of the shattering, is an event that screams out to me, each time I study this piece of Talmud/Torah, to be pondered, and to be interpreted: ***“Darsheini***!” Imagine the scene: the revelry halts, Moses, enraged on the mountain above, hurls the tablets to the ground, they shatter; the mood crashes, and soon afterward, he orders that the golden calf be ground up and the people forced to drink it. Moses then orders his Levites to slaughter 3,000 of the miscreant idolators, their friends and family. Following the slaughter, he retreats in to the Tent of Meeting for 40 days and nights. The people assemble each day at the tent, lost, confused, before he ascends again to receive the second Luchot

This was the “tragedy of the desert generation” (Dev 9:16-17).

The tension between the totality and perfection, the elegance, of the First Luchot, the spiritual state the people had reached , the shattering, and the reality of the second set ,the flawed state of the people fell into, this takes us to the heart of the archetype of the human journey.

The shattering, the sound of the shattering, is, I believe, as I have said before, in other teachings***, the shattering of the Luchot is one of quintessential motifs of our world***. It repeats the shattering of the bliss of the Garden when Eve and Adam chose the Tree of Good and Evil and forfeited the Paradise of the Tree of Life. It echoes of the repeated cycles of birth, transformation and death, change, that pattern not only our physical development, but also our spiritual development. It reverberates of “*bitul”* , nullification, that the mystics speak of.

“The theme of the shattering...is ancient. In Beresheit Rabba, an early compendium of rabbinical stories, we find the fable of Abraham breaking his father’s idols. ...Both ...writings may be taken as framings of Judaism’s coming to terms with a wholly transcendent, immanently absent God .” (The Shattered tablets of the Law, Ed Codish.) Codish suggests that, it is not the Law, but the shattering of the Law, which forms the connection between God and humanity.

“The breaking of the tablets is not the destruction of the Law, it is, on the contrary, the gift of the Law in the form of its breaking.” (R. Marc-Alain Ouaknin, The Burnt Book)

The harshest sound of the shofar we blow on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is the middle one, the shevarim, three broken sounds:

***teki’ah***–one long blast

***shevarim***–three broken sounds

***teru’ah***‑-nine staccato notes.

**The Tekiah Sound**

Rosh Hashana is the day of appreciating who God is. We then internalize that understanding so that it becomes a living, practical part of our everyday reality. God is all-powerful. God is the Creator. God is the Sustainer. God is the Supervisor. In short, God is King of the Universe. *Tekiah* ― the long, straight shofar blast ― is the sound of the King's coronation. In the Garden of Eden, Adam's first act was to proclaim God as King.. We set our values straight and return to the reality of God as the One Who runs the world... guiding history, moving mountains, and caring for each and every human being individually and personally.

**The Shevarim, the Broken Sound**- When we think about the year gone by, we know deep down that we've failed to live up to our full potential. In the coming year, we yearn not to waste that opportunity ever again. *The Kabbalists say that Shevarim ― three medium, wailing blasts ― is the sobbing cry of a Jewish heart* ― yearning to connect, to grow, to achieve. At the moment the shofar is blown, we cry out to God from the depths of our soul.

Codish again: The tablets we did receive...are impossible to put into prepositional language, or into anything paraphrasable. The metaphor is of six hundred thousand men, plus a corresponding number of children, each with a different angle of vision, a different hearing. God may be in the breaking, a breaking we carry out every time we crack open a volume of Torah.

David Bohm, quantum physicist and mystic, in his book Wholeness and the Implicate Order, of the inevitable braking apart of what we may perceive as a fixed reality as the next realty emerges, the new paradigm. There exist, I believe, concealed possibilities , the Oral Torah of our lives, unseen, to be uncovered, revealed, manifested, articulated.

**The Shards in the Aron/ Ark**

(Moses returns to the mountain with the two tablets of stone he carved) while down below, the people sincerely seek repentance. In Moses’ absence, they fast from sunrise to sunset. And they gather together all the shattered fragments of the broken tablets. Upon Moses’ return, the intact second set of the tablets is placed into the Aron, the ark, along with all the broken pieces of the original set of tablets. The Israelites were then to carry with them the two sets of tablets—the broken and the whole—in the Ark of the Covenant, during their forty years in the wilderness. They brought both sets together with them into the Promised Land and they remained together in the ark in the Temple in Jerusalem.

“The whole and the broken, side by side, in the Ark of the Covenant. That Aron ha-brit, that Ark of the Covenant, was also known as the Aron ha-edut, as the Ark of Witness. And thus a witness, a lesson for us—that the whole and the broken side by side in all of us and we carry both with us on our own journeys.” (The Broken And The Whole ,Rabbi Marc E. Berkson – Yom Kippur Morning — 5767 Emanu-El B’ne Jeshrun)

**The Secret of the Aron-** Which brings me to the “Sod”, the mystery, the innermost teaching: ”*If Hashem placed wisdom in your heart, you will understand the secret of the Aron...the one who knows the secret of his soul and the structure of his body can know the workings of the supernal world, for the person is made like the image of a small world...” (Ibn Ezra on Shemot 25:40)*

*“The level of he Aron in the soul of man corresponds to the level of the innermost soul: the yechida.” (The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Likutei Sichot*, *vol. 26, 253.* The kabbalists describe the yechida as actualized in a few fully realized humans who experience total spiritual development, rapture of the heart, communion with the divine.

I will leave you with this question: What do you carry within your innermost Aron, the Ark of your soul? What ancient bones of your ancestors? what shards of sapphire tablets of the perfected Torah? what scroll of your Law that you struggle to understand and live by? What soul sense, what experience , what potentialities, what rapture of the shattered heart awaits you there, what communion with the divine do you hear in the sound of the shattering of our world, in our shattering, in the new world , the new self, on the verge of emergence?

Shabbat Shalom.