

# DIMENSIONS IN CHUMASH

## Parshas Vaeschanan

### Revisiting the Aseres Hadibros

One of the prominent features in our Parsha is Moshe's recap of the events of the giving of the Torah at Har Sinai, including a reiteration of the Aseres Hadibros. When we survey the Aseres Hadibros as they appear in our parsha, we note that there are a number of differences from the way they are written in Parshas Yisro. One of the prominent difference relates to the fifth dibbur, honoring parents. In Parshas Yisro the reward for this mitzvah is stated as, "לְמַעַן יֵאָרְכוּן יְמֵיךָ" – in order that your days be lengthened,<sup>1</sup> while in our parsha, it adds, "וְלְמַעַן יִיטֵב לְךָ" – and in order that it will be good for you.<sup>2</sup> The Gemara in Masseches Bava Kama<sup>3</sup> discusses the meaning behind this difference:

שאל רבי חנינא בן עגיל את רבי חייא בר אבא מפני מה בדברות הראשונות לא נאמר בהם טוב ובדברות האחרונות נאמר בהם טוב אמר לו עד שאתה שואלני למה נאמר בהם טוב שאלני אם נאמר בהן טוב אם לאו שאיני יודע אם נאמר בהן טוב אם לאו כלך אצל ר' תנחום בר חנילאי שהיה רגיל אצל ר' יהושע בן לוי שהיה בקי באגדה אול לגביה א"ל ממנו לא שמעתי אלא כך אמר לי שמואל בר נחום אחי אמו של רב אחא ברבי חנינא ואמרי לה אבי אמו של רב אחי ברבי חנינא הואיל וסופן להשתבר וכי סופן להשתבר מאי הוי אמר רב אשי חס ושלום פסקה טובה מישראל

*R' Chanina ben Agil asked R' Chiya bar Abba: "Why in the first version of the dibros 'good' is not mentioned, while in the second version of the dibros 'good' is mentioned?"*

*He [R' Chiya] said to him: "before you ask me why 'good' is mentioned in them [the second version], you should [first] ask me if 'good' is mentioned in them or not, for I do not know whether 'good' is mentioned in them or not. [Rather,] take yourself to R' Tanchum bar Chanilai who used to frequent R' Yehoshua ben Levi who [in turn] was fluent in matters of Aggadah."*

*He [R' Chanina] went to him [R' Tanchum], who said to him: "I did not hear anything about this from him; however the following was told to me by Shmuel bar Nachum... [that the reason is] since, in the end, they were to be broken."*

*[The Gemara asks]: And if they were to be broken in the end, what of it?*

*Rav Ashi said: "[Had 'good' been written on them'], Heaven forbid, goodness would have ceased from among Israel."*

1 Shemos 20:12.

2 Devarim 5:16.

3 54b-55a.

## SOME QUESTIONS

Needless to say, there is much to ponder regarding the above explanation.

- ▷ Firstly, it is most interesting to consider that, according to the Gemara, the first luchos were given in a “breaker-friendly” format, with the notion that they would – or could – be broken already in mind. That itself is a fascinating idea.
- ▷ Additionally, there is room to ponder why, of all things that might cease from the Jewish people upon the luchos being broken, only ‘good’ was omitted. What about everything else that *was* written on them?

However, in the present discussion, we would like focus, not on the explanation that the Gemara eventually gives, but on R’ Chiya’s initial reaction to the question, where he says: “Before you ask me *why* ‘good’ is mentioned in [the second version], you should [first] ask me *if* ‘good’ is mentioned in them or not, for I do not know whether ‘good’ is mentioned in them or not.” This response is simply astounding, for a number of reasons:

1. How are we to understand that R’ Chiya did not know something that any child who has learned Chumash knows, namely, that the word “good” appears on the second version and not in the first?<sup>4</sup>
2. Even if, for some reason, R’ Chiya did not know this, it is hardly something that is difficult to ascertain; let him open up a Chumash and see!
3. Why did R’ Chiya send the question to R’ Tanchum, who had frequented the company of a master in Aggadah, the non-halachic oral tradition? This would seem to be a question that pertains to the area of Mikra (scripture). If so, let the question be referred to a master in the appropriate area of Torah!

## TWO SETS OF TWO

These questions are discussed by one of the great Torah scholars of the last century, R’ Reuven Margolios.<sup>5</sup> He explains that the key to understanding this entire exchange lies in asking a deceptively simple question. We know that there are two presentations of the *Aseres Hadibros* in the Chumash. We also know that there were two sets of luchos. The question is: Are those two sets of two related?

- ▷ On the one hand, there would appear to be very strong reason to say that these two things are related, i.e. the *Aseres Hadibros* in Parshas Yisro represent what was written on the first of luchos, while this in our parsha are what were written on the second set. What makes this such a likely prospect is that fact that there are numerous differences between the two presentations, so that they are unlikely to both have been written on the same set of luchos. Indeed, it is fair to say that this is the commonly accepted notion.
- ▷ However, there is another possibility, namely, that the text of the *Aseres Hadibros* on both sets of luchos was identical, i.e., as they are written in Parshas Yisro. Should we then ask, what about the fact that the version in our parsha differs in several places from the first version? How can we account for those differences if the text on both sets of luchos was the same? The answer to this could be as follows. One of Moshe’s goals in Chumash Devarim, as stated in the beginning of the sefer, was to add words of explanation to the mitzvos. We will note that most of the places where the *Aseres Hadibros* in our parsha differ from Parshas Yisro is in the form of additional phrases of explanation and elucidation. As such, it could be that these, too, were Moshe’s words of explanation to the *Aseres Hadibros*, but they do not represent a separate text that was written on the second luchos; rather, both sets of luchos contained the text as it appears in Yisro.

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4 See Tosafos Bava Basra 113a s.v. tarvayhu.

5 *Hamikra ve’Hamesora* chap. 1.

Indeed, this second possibility would seem to be supported by the context in which the *Aseres Hadibros* appear in our parsha – within Moshe’s description of the day the Jewish people stood at Har Sinai to receive the Torah. The *dibros* that they heard on that occasion were then written on the first set of luchos, as the second set were not written until months later when Moshe ascended the mountain after the sin of the Golden Calf!

### **BACK TO THE RABBIS**

We now have before us two possibilities regarding this very basic question of whether the differences between the two versions in the Chumash reflect different texts on the two sets of luchos.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, says R’ Margoliyos, this is not a new question; it actually dates back to the times of the Gemara, for it was in fact this very point about which R’ Chanina was uncertain when approached by R’ Chiya. R’ Chiya’s question as to why the word “טוב” appears in the second set of *dibros* but not the first implies a presumption that there were two different texts of *dibros*, apportioned to the two sets of luchos respectively. To this, R’ Chanina responded that he was not sure whether this presumption is correct, for perhaps the text on both luchos was identical, as per the above. Moreover, to the extent that R’ Chanina was unsure about this matter, it was not something that could be resolved by opening a Chumash to check, for as we have seen, the verses themselves could be understood both ways.

For this reason, R’ Chanina felt it appropriate to refer the question to someone else. Additionally, the resolution to this question could not be derived from knowledge of the verses alone, but rather, from a tradition regarding whether the *dibros* in our parsha represent the text on the second set of luchos. Such a tradition, if there was one, would lie in the realm of Aggadah, and hence R’ Chanina sent R’ Chiya to someone who had achieved expertise in that realm. And indeed, R’ Tanchum not only endorsed the notion that our parsha reflects the second set of luchos, but also provided the reason behind the specific omission of the word “טוב” from the first set and its inclusion in the second set!

### **From the Siddur**

It is fascinating to note in conclusion that support for the above position is adduced by numerous commentators from the text of the prayers on Shabbos morning. In the *Amidah* for *Shacharis*, we say:

ושני לוחות אבנים הוריד בידו וכתוב בהם שמירת שבת

*And he [Moshe] brought down two tablets of stone, and written on them was the observance of Shabbos.*

We note that it states that written on the luchos that Moshe brought down was “שמירת שבת – the observance of Shabbos.” As we know, the *Aseres Hadibros* as they appear in Parshas Yisro mention “*Zachor* – remembering Shabbos”, while our parsha has “*Shamor* – observing Shabbos.” The luchos which the Siddur is discussing are the second ones that Moshe delivered to the people. As such, it states that they had “*shemiras* Shabbos” written on them, as per the second version of the *Aseres Hadibros*.

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<sup>6</sup> See regarding this question Ibn Ezra to Shemos 20:1 and 34:1, Ramban ibid. 20:8, Maharal, Tiferes Yisrael Ch. 43-44, Haamek Davar to Devarim 5:19 and R’ Yaakov Kamenetzky, Emes le’Yaakov ibid 5:12.