

## The Broken Tablets

א) בָּעֵת הַהוּא אָמַר אֵלַי פֶּסֶל-לָךְ שְׁנֵי-לוּחוֹת אֲבָנִים כְּפְרָאשָׁנַיִם וְעַלֶּה אֵלַי הַהָרָה וְעָשִׂיתָ לָּךְ אֲרוֹן עֹץ:  
ב) וְאָכַתְבָּ עַל-הַלּוּחוֹת אֶת-הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ עַל-הַלּוּחוֹת הַקְּדָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר שִׁבַּרְתָּ וְשָׂמְתָם בְּאֲרוֹן:

<sup>1</sup>Thereupon Adonai said to me,  
“Carve out two tablets of stone like the first, and come up to Me on the mountain;  
and make an ark of wood.

<sup>2</sup>I will inscribe on the tablets the commandments that were on the first tablets  
that you smashed,  
and you shall deposit them in the ark.”

*Deut. 10:1-2*

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(דברים י') אשר שברת ושמתם בארון - תני רב יוסף: מלמד, שהלוחות ושברי לוחות מונחין בארון.

Rabbi Yosef taught:

This teaches that both the whole tablets and the broken tablets were placed inside the ark.

*Talmud: Menahot 99a*

**Question (*She'elah*):** After the liberation, a young woman from a respected family asked me the following question. Since the accursed Germans had branded her with a number in accord with their system of assigning numbers to every prisoner in the concentration camp, she wanted to have plastic surgery performed to remove the mark which constantly reminded her of the horror of those years. According to halakhah, it is permissible to remove the number?

**Response (*Teshuvah*):** The accursed Germans branded these numbers on the arms of Jews as a sign of shame, as though to say that the bearers of these branded numbers are not human beings, but cattle to be brutally beaten, tortured, and slaughtered at will.

Not only should these numbers not denigrate us but, on the contrary, such a number should be viewed as a sign of honor and glory, as a monument to the unforgivable bestiality of those vile murderers. As part of the plot to exterminate the holy seed of *Ya'akov*...the branded numbers guaranteed that if a Jew ever escaped from a camp, the imprint on his arm would reveal to everyone who found him that he was a Jew and fair game to be put to death. This horrifying number is a sign whereby the German heinousness is remembered. God forbid that we ever forget what those evil people did to us.

The obligation to recall the entire scope of German wickedness, not taking our minds off it for a moment, is today a redoubled obligation. See how the accursed Germans spare no effort to mislead the world into forgetting the evils that they perpetrated...

I feel that this woman should under no circumstances remove the branded number from her arm, for by doing so she is fulfilling the wishes of the accursed German evildoers and abetting their effort to have the Shoah forgotten, as if we Jews had created a fiction against them. Let her wear the sign with pride. *Rabbi Ephraim Oshry*