

## A Wooden Box

*In retelling the story of the Golden Calf, Moses adds two details that was left out of the Exodus narrative. The first detail is that he personally was commanded to carve the the two tablets. The second detail that he is commanded to make a wooden Ark. What is the lesson that Moses is teaching the new generation with the inclusion of these two details?*

### 1. Devarim (Shmot)

#### **Deuteronomy 10:1-5**

(1) Thereupon the LORD 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. (2) 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.” (3) I made an ark of acacia wood and carved out two tablets of stone like the first; I took the two tablets with me and went up the mountain. (4) The LORD inscribed on the tablets the same text as on the first, the Ten Commandments that He addressed to you on the mountain out of the fire on the day of the Assembly; and the LORD gave them to me. (5) Then I left and went down from the mountain, and I deposited the tablets in the ark that I had made, where they still are, as the LORD had commanded me.

#### **דברים י"א-ה'**

(א) בַּעֲתָהּ הָיָא אָמַר יְהוָה אֵלַי פְּסֹלֶיךָ שְׁנֵי־לוחֹת אֲבָנִים כְּרֵאשֹׁנִים וְעֵלָה אֵלַי הִקְרָה וְעָשִׂיתָ לָּהּ אָרוֹן עֵץ: (ב) וְאָכַתָּב עַל־הַלְּחֹת אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ עַל־הַלְּחֹת הַרְאשֹׁנִים אֲשֶׁר שִׁבַּרְתָּ וּשְׁמַתָּם בְּאָרוֹן: (ג) וְאָעַשׂ אָרוֹן עֵצִי שְׁטִים וְאָפְסַל שְׁנֵי־לוחֹת אֲבָנִים כְּרֵאשֹׁנִים וְאָעַל הַהִקְרָה וּשְׁנֵי הַלְּחֹת בְּיָדִי: (ד) וַיִּכְתֹּב עַל־הַלְּחֹת כַּמִּכְתָּב הַרְאשׁוֹן אֶת עֲשֶׂרֶת הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֵלַיכֶם בְּהַר מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ בְּיוֹם הַקִּהָל וַיִּתְּנֶם יְהוָה אֵלַי: (ה) וְאָפֹן וְאָרַל מִן־הַהֵר וְאָשַׂם אֶת־הַלְּחֹת בְּאָרוֹן אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי וַיְהִי שֵׁם כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוֵּנִי יְהוָה:

2. The Ark that Moses created was one of **two arks** that were destined to stand in the Sanctuary (Mishkan). After Moses' descent from Sinai until the creation of the Mishkan, the simple wooden box held both shards of the first tablets as well as the complete set. When the Mishkan was completed, a primary, gold-covered Ark was created at God's command to serve as the permanent home for the second set of tablets. The wooden box remained as the lasting home of the shards of the shattered first tablets. Housed in the Mishkan, this humble ark was removed periodically to accompany the nation in battle (Rashi, Devarim 10:1)

3. Only **one Ark** stood in the sanctuary. This gold-covered ark housed both the shards of the shattered first tablets as well as the complete set. Moses' wooden box was meant to be temporary from the outset. Once the Mishkan's Ark was created, the wooden box was stored away for a respectful burial, as are all sanctified items that have fallen into disuse. That Moses did not prepare a box in advance for the first set of tablets reflects God's omniscience that the tablets would be destroyed at the base of the mountain (Ramban).

4. Another approach: *God did not command Moses to create a separate wooden box at all. Only one Ark* was built at Sinai: The Ark fashioned by Betzalel as part of the construction of the Mishkan. The Ark was primarily built out of cedarwood and could rightfully referred to as a "wooden box." The instruction to Moses to "Make for yourself a wooden Ark," (Exodus 25:10) therefore, does not refer to a new ark at all, but to the Betzalel's Ark that stood in the Mishkan. God sets Moses' mind at ease as if to say: "My first commandment is associated with the fashioning of the Ark. Rest assured that the nation will not be denied the Mishkan as a result of the sin." (Ramban)