

**"And it came to pass when he came near to the camp, that he saw the calf and (the) dancing that Moshe's anger arose, and he threw from his hands the Luchos and he broke them."  
(32:19)**

We must endeavor to understand what transpired when Moshe approached the camp that precipitated his angry reaction. Did he not already know the extent of *Bnei Yisrael's* transgression? The *Abarbanel* questions Moshe's intentions in bringing the *Luchos* down only in order to break them. He responds that Moshe desired to accentuate *Bnei Yisrael's* travesty and its consequences. Therefore, he broke the *Luchos* blatantly in front of them. The text, however, seems to imply that it was only after Moshe "came near" the camp and actually saw their conspicuous transgression that he reacted in such an intense manner. We may also question the wording of the text. The *Torah* states, "*He saw the calf and dancing.*" This is not a single vision! It is two distinct spectacles. The *Torah* should have written, "*And he saw the calf and (he saw the) dancing.*"

*Horav Yaakov Kamenetsky, z.l.*, suggests the following interpretation. Upon descending the mountain, Moshe sought a merit upon which to vindicate the Jews' tragic sin. Perhaps they made the calf as a result of severe depression or hardship. Possibly it was an inevitable outcome of their being deprived of Moshe, their leader. When he approached, however, he saw the people dancing with the calf. His anger mounted as he recognized their joy in partaking in this sinful act. The calf alone did not cause Moshe's reaction. Rather, the Jews' audacious exalting in their sinful act catalysed his response.