

## **"And they arose early on the morrow, and they offered burnt offerings, and they brought peace offerings, and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and they rose up to (play) make merry." (32:6)**

The Golden Calf incident was *Am Yisrael's* first deviation from the *Torah* path. This was the first time that *Bnei Yisrael* supported ideals antithetical to *Torah* values. The relationship between the ideology of these historical sinners and their actions is typical of those who have espoused distorted thinking throughout the generations. The visions and their behavioral consequences are the same today. It is only the names and places which have changed.

*Horav Y. Galinsky, Shlita*, notes the progressive deterioration of *Bnei Yisrael's* values from the sequence of events portrayed by the *pasuk*. First it states, "*They offered burnt offerings.*" A burnt offering is a donation totally devoted to the Almighty, since the whole animal is burnt upon the altar. In the beginning, *Bnei Yisrael* maintained complete dedication to their ideals. They demonstrated neither self-serving interests nor self gratification. After a while, the spark of their enthusiasm dissipated. It was replaced by a pervasive attitude, represented by the phrase "*They brought peace offerings.*" They affirmed their devotion towards the Divinity, but it was no longer with the same zeal. They were gradually submitting to their personal vested interests. This sterile form of service gave way to a routine approach, reflected in the words "*They sat down to eat and drink.*" The facade of spirituality was destroyed. Their true intentions were revealed. The deception of piety and spiritual concern was unmasked. Now they were prepared for the total decadance, indicated by the final phrase of the *pasuk*, "*They rose up to play and make merry.*"

The truth overcomes the sham. The sham of false idealism and the deception of insincere religious enthusiasm are ultimately exposed. Hashem had granted us a *Torah*, which presents the prescribed blueprint for an integrative lifestyle. Deviation from the *Torah*, as expounded by *Chazal*, even in the name of religious idealism is tantamount to blasphemy.