

“They have strayed quickly from the way that I have commanded them; they have made themselves a molten calf.” (32:8)

The *eigel* rebellion, in which a group of mutineers led the Jewish People to create a Golden Calf, is recognized as one of our people’s darkest moments. What makes it more egregious is that it took place a mere forty days after they had accepted the Torah with a resounding declaration of *Naaseh v’Nishma*, “We will do and we will listen!” In the *Midrash Rabbah*, *Chazal* compare this incident to a servant who has been given two very expensive goblets. “Please take great care of these goblets. They are very precious,” the king said to the servant. Understandably, the servant took great pains to care for the goblets. Regrettably, one day as he entered the palace carrying the goblets, a calf gored him and consequently he dropped one of the goblets, shattering it. The servant was beside himself, afraid of the king’s reaction. However, he had no choice but to tell his master what had happened to one of his precious goblets. Shaking, he waited for the king’s reply: “I gave you two goblets. Now one of them is gone. Take special care of the other one.” Likewise, Hashem told the Jewish People, “You poured two ‘goblets’ at Sinai – one for *Naaseh*, ‘We will do’, and the other for *Nishma*, ‘We will listen.’ You have already lost one of them. Be extremely careful not to lose the other.”

Two precious gifts became part of the nation’s heritage: *Naaseh*, representing *mitzvah* observance and *Nishma*, which refers to *limud*, study of Torah. When *Bnei Yisrael* sinned with the *eigel ha’zahav*, they “broke” *Naaseh* – the gift of *mitzvah* observance was destroyed. Hashem said, “Be careful with the second gift!” *Horav Shimshon Pincus*, *zl*, quotes from an *adam gadol*, distinguished Torah scholar that following the sin of the Golden Calf, the primary function and purpose of a Jew is to study Torah. No day should pass devoid of Torah study. If we were to “lose” this second precious goblet, we would be “finished.”

Rav Pincus notes that this idea is quite evident in recent years, as young people have returned to their Jewish roots and embraced their heritage. *Shabbos*, *Kashrus*, *Tefillin* and *mitzvah* observance, however, are not the end. If the people will not be availed opportunities for Torah study, there is a possibility that even their *mitzvah* observance will eventually wane. In order to maintain a *baal teshuvah*’s spiritual consistency, and ensure that he completes his journey of return, one must see to it that Torah study is an integral part of his life. This is the essence of our relationship with Hashem, which extends to all Jews across the board. To focus on anything less is to court disaster.

This is how the Jews of old lived. Their primary focus was Torah study – early in the morning, late at night; it was all about Torah study. It was their *geshmak*, sense of satisfaction. Veritably, there was little else – no sports, electronic media, or other diversions – but they needed little else. They had their *Gemorah*. Were they “simple” Jews? We should be so simple.