

"And they journeyed from Kadesh, and the Bnei Yisrael came, the whole congregation, to the Har Ha'Har." (20:22)

Rashi cites a *Midrash* which is particularly relevant in contemporary times. The pillar of cloud which travelled before *Bnei Yisrael* leveled out the mountains and flattened the hills which stood in *Bnei Yisrael's* path. There remained, however, three mountains which resisted the shattering clouds: *Har Sinai* was spared, since the *Torah* would be given on it; *Har Nevo* was to be Moshe's burial place; and *Har Ha'Har* was singled out as Aharon's burial place.

Horav M. Swift, z.l., poignantly expounds on this *Midrash*. He draws an analogy between the significance represented by the stated purpose of these mountains and important aspects of Jewish life. Throughout our tenuous history, mountains of all kinds have crumbled to extinction. Mountains, fortunes, fame and glory, even life itself, all have been decimated. One mountain has endured, the mountain upon which Aharon transferred his vestments and charge to Elazar, his son. This mountain symbolizes the transmission of our heritage from father to son, generation to generation. On this mountain, Moshe comforted Aharon saying, "*Happy are you to see your crown rest upon your son's head.*" A father could pass on in serenity, knowing that he had successfully conveyed the message of the past to the future generation. Such a mountain could never be eliminated.

Har Nevo, on which Moshe spent his last moments before taking leave of *Bnei Yisrael*, could not be destroyed. Until this day no one has been able to locate Moshe's grave. *Moshe Rabbeinu's* burial place defies discovery and alludes detection. His *neshamah*, soul, was bound up with Hashem, Who attended to his mortal remains. A significant message can be gleaned from this concept. While others have transformed the burial place of their leaders into shrines, our immortal leader's burial place remains unknown. Moshe began the overwhelming ascent upward. He continued to even greater heights of distinction, to walk in eternity.

There is yet a third mountain, *Har Sinai*. The mountain upon which the *Torah* was given represents the resoluteness of Jewish life to resist the challenging forces of the changing times. Whether the challengers appear in the form of reformers to distort our legacy or as apologetic moderates to sterilize our heritage, whether they came from within or without, not one letter of the *Torah* has been altered. The mountain of *Torah* resists change! We have seen in our own generation how a small group of dedicated Jews overcame adversity, prevailed against indifference, and surmounted ignorance in order to build a proud *Torah* community in this country. The mountain representing *Torah* devotion resists all adversity and will continue to grow stronger.

The lesson of these mountains is clear. We must be resolute in our commitment to preserve our *Torah* legacy. We must consistently grow by seeking more knowledge of its profundities, and we must be cognizant of our inherent obligation to see that this legacy is transmitted to future generations. With this tripartate commitment, the winds of change will never level the heights of our

achievements.