

## Moshe led the people out of the camp toward the Divine Presence. They stood transfixed at the foot of the mountain. (19:17)

In a statement that has become endemic to *Kabbolas haTorah*, the Acceptance of the Torah, Chazal state that Hashem raised *Har Sinai* above the heads of the Jewish People and declared: *Im mekablīm atem es haTorah mutav – v'im lav – sham tehei kevuraschem*, "If you accept the Torah – good – and if not – there will be your burial." The question is obvious: If they are standing beneath the mountain, the correct term would have been: *Po*, "here will be your burial." What is the meaning of *sham*, "there"? Where is there? Furthermore, why wait? If they did not accept the Torah, their burial would be here and now

**Horav Yaakov Galinsky, Shlita**, offers an explanation that has great practical meaning. He explains that there is a "place" called *sham* – "there" – which is a graveyard. What does this mean? A young boy entered primary school and began to study *alef bais*. He found it difficult, but did not despair, since he thought he could catch up in elementary school. "There" he will soar; "there" he will excel in his studies. Elementary school brought about very little opportunity for change. The teacher just was not the right match; the principal just did not understand him. There was still hope. In *yeshivah gedolah*, high school, "there" he would succeed in growing into a Torah scholar. High school did not work out as well as he had expected, but there was always *bais medrash*, where the students are more mature and there is greater leeway in learning; "there" he would mature to his potential.

Regrettably, at *bais medrash*, he did not achieve his expectations – nor did he in *Eretz Yisrael*. There was still one remaining option: marriage. How little he realized the various pressures that are part and parcel of married life. Responsibility to a wife and family, coupled with parents, who, albeit they stayed out of his business, still wanted to know everything and offer an opinion – whether it is solicited or not. *Kollel*, versus earning a more lucrative living, is always a wonderful topic open to discussion. While no one has the correct answer for each individual case – everybody has an opinion, and all of this added to the young man's decision to put off excellence in Torah scholarship to the next milestone in life. When he arrives "there," things will be better. This goes on throughout life until he reaches the final "*sham*." He is now "there," at the cemetery, where he is the star attraction. Only now, it is too late. He can no longer push it off until later, or until he gets "there." *Sham tehei kevuraschem*, "There will be your burial," If one does not accept the Torah now – later, it will be too late.

One should not fault the place in which he is, the teacher that he has, or the environment in which he finds himself. We must stop playing the game and begin to accept responsibility. "There" will not save him. He is the problem. It is neither the place, nor is it the time; it is the person.

Rav Galinsky quotes the **Imrei Chaim** of Vishnitz, who interpreted the *pasuk* instructing Moshe

*Rabbeinu* to gather weapons and battle with Amalek: *V'tzei hilachem ba'Amalek machar*, "And go out and battle with Amalek tomorrow" (*Shemos* 17:9). The *Rebbe* explained a unique form of Amalek, a specific power of spiritual contamination, called *Amalek machar* – Amalek tomorrow. This powerful *koach ha'tumah*, contaminated power, encourages us to perform a *mitzvah*, to have that *hislahavus*, fiery passion, for *mitzvah* observance, but not to have it "today." Tomorrow would be much better. Only tomorrow is too late. The passion has dissipated; the fire has cooled.

**Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl**, related that he heard a thought from his father concerning an incident which took place in Volozhin. A student was a *masmid atzum*, very diligent, and a scholar who possessed a photographic memory. One day during lunch, a question was posed to the young men who were sitting around the table. Each one gave his opinion, as did the diligent young man. Suddenly, one of the young men raised his hand and rendered his opinion: "I am surprised that all of you are unaware of a *p'sak*, an opinion, rendered by *Tosfos*." Our young man was visibly shocked. How could he have overlooked a *Tosfos*?

The student immediately put down his portion, stood up and left for the *bais medrash*. Seven years went by, as he reviewed the entire *Talmud* a number of times, until he was proficient in its every nuance. He later became a member of *Klal Yisrael's* spiritual elite. Someone asked the *Rosh Yeshivah*, the venerable *Horav Chaim Volozhiner, zl*, how could a *ben Torah* leave a meal before *benching*, saying the grace after meals. *Rav* Chaim explained that had he waited five minutes to *bench*, the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, would have had already cooled his desire for growth in Torah. The Amalek of *machar*, tomorrow, would have had a field day and probably would have succeeded in preventing a seven-year sojourn in the *yeshivah*. Torah scholarship neither brooks excuses, nor does it allow for pretext and mitigation. One does what he is supposed to do with his own G-d-given abilities.

In closing, *Rav* Galinsky relates that *Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl*, once asked his *rebbe*, *Horav Eliyahu Lopian*, "*Rebbe*, please tell me a *shmuess*, ethical discourse." (Apparently, *Rav* Sholom felt the need for some form of "inspiration" from his revered mentor.) "*Nu*, if you want to hear a *shmuess*, bring over a *shtender*, lectern. If we are going to do it, we may as well do it properly." *Rav* Sholom brought over a *shtender* and sat down in a chair. He was the audience, and the *Rebbe* was the speaker. *Rav* Elya arose and took hold of the *shtender* with both hands, which was his usual stance when he spoke. He said, "*Rav* Sholom, if I would have a beard as dark as yours (if I would be as young as you), I would know how to spend my time!" *Rav* Elya sat down. This was his discourse. The bottom line is: One does not waste time. Tomorrow is not today. We begin with now – not tomorrow. This idea applies to all of us as well.