

And they stood at the bottom of the mountain. (19:17)

In the *Talmud Shabbos 88 Chazal* say that *Bnei Yisrael* did not merely stand at the foot of the mountain, but that Hashem lifted up the mountain over their heads, declaring, "If you will accept the *Torah*, it is good. If not, here will be your burying place." This implies that Hashem imposed the *Torah* upon us against our will. He threatened us with extinction if we were not to accept the *Torah*. Is this true? The commentators offer a number of explanations to lend insight to *Chazal's* words. **Horav Eliyahu Meier Bloch, zl**, views the mountain over *Bnei Yisrael's* heads as a symbolic lesson about what our attitude in approaching the *Torah* should be.

When *Klal Yisrael* stood beneath the mountain, they understood the meaning of the moment. They either accepted the *Torah* -- or they would die. This same idea forms the basis of perspective through which we are to view the *Torah*. One either accepts, studies and adheres to it, or his life has no validity or meaning. One who studies *Torah* as if it were just another intellectual pursuit, regardless of its profound nature, demeans the *Torah*. In addition, he will derive nothing from his endeavor. One who studies *Torah* because it is the lifeblood of our People, the blueprint of our lives, is sustained through his effort. *Torah* is a life-sustaining force that nourishes the Jewish soul. The *Torah* gave the Jewish people throughout the ages the strength and resolution to sacrifice themselves to sanctify Hashem's Name. They understood that without the *Torah*, the mountain might as well have been dropped on them. The *Torah* gives meaning to life. Without the *Torah*, we have no life.