

"Let me go over, please, and see the good land... the goodly mountain and the Levanon." (3:25)

Rashi cites the *Sifri* who interprets the "mountain" as a reference to the *Har Ha'Bayis*, the mountain on which the *Bais Ha'Mikdash* stood. The *Sifri* also views *Levanon* as an analogy for the *Bais Ha'Mikdash*. The word *Levanon* is a derivative of *lavan*, which means white. The *Bais Ha'Mikdash* is that place which "whitens" -- or provides atonement -- for our sins. The *Yalkut Shimoni* differentiates among the words with which our ancestors referred to the *Bais Ha'Mikdash*. *Avraham Avinu* referred to it as "*har*," mountain; *Yitzchak* called it a "*sadeh*," field, while *Yaakov* viewed it as a "*bayis*," house. What is the meaning of these three names, and what message can be derived from each one?

Horav Mordechai Rogov, zl, offers an explanation of this *Midrash* which is relevant to us today. The *har* is the symbol of spiritual ascendancy. It is the place to which only the daring may strive to go. In spiritual matters, the mountain remains a metaphor for those unique individuals who are prepared to elevate themselves to great spiritual heights. "*Sadeh*," a field, signifies that which everyone needs. The field sustains; it gives nourishment to all. If we were not to have access to the grains and crops that are the products of the field, we would perish from hunger. The "*bayis*," house, is yet a greater necessity. While the field reaches out to everyone, only some people are actually involved in the process of planting and harvesting the crops. A house, however, is something that everyone requires. Each and every person must have a roof over his head, a place to call home. The house is truly a metaphor for that which we cannot be denied.

During *Avraham Avinu's* time, *Har Ha'Moriah* served as the pre- eminent place from which *Torah* emanated throughout the world. It served as the source of *kedushah*, holiness, for those unique individuals who had the capability to receive its inspiration. The common person was able to receive his inspiration even from the streets and market places which Jews frequented. The *kedushah* was so sublime, the spiritual influence so intense, that they were able to absorb the necessary influence everywhere. The "*har*," mountain, was set aside for the unique Jew, who totally devoted himself to spirituality.

As times changed, people became more "progressive." No longer were the streets and public places centers of *Torah* influence. No longer could the people suffice by hearing a *shiur*, *Torah* lecture, once in awhile from a great *tzaddik* who occupied himself with pure *Torah* study. The *Har Ha'Bayis*, the spiritual center of *Klal Yisrael*, became a place to which a greater number of Jews gravitated. It was now necessary for the average Jew to spend more time in the halls of the *Bais Ha'Mikdash*. To a greater extent, people realized their personal need to come closer to Hashem.

Yaakov's times represented the era in our history in which everyone acknowledged the importance of personally studying in the *Bais Ha'Mikdash*. The streets had become completely decadent. The

lifestyle of those who remained outside of the *Torah* camp had digressed so much that it had become difficult to distinguish between Jew and non-Jew. Those who were "unaffiliated" were completely out of it! It had become evident that the *makom Torah* was a necessity for all Jews. We remained unprotected outside of the parameters of *Torah*. *Har Ha'Bayis* was finally viewed as a "house," a place where all must go to live.

Years ago, the *Torah* centers, the *yeshivos* of Europe, were designated for the unique bachur, the student who was prepared to devote himself to the pure study of *Torah*. The Jewish community of that day and age reflected a standard of dedication to *Torah* and *mitzvos* that had been unprecedented. This determination was manifest during the Holocaust when the "*pashute yid*," the common simple Jew, maintained his *emunah* and *bitachon*, faith and trust in the Almighty, despite undergoing cruel suffering and death, unparalleled in Jewish history. Indeed, in those days the Jewish ghetto with its sheltered environment provided a healthy *Torah*-oriented environment for the Jew. The spirit of *Torah* and *yiraas Shomayim* reigned and permeated the atmosphere. Regrettably, in contemporary times the *Torah* institutions -- regardless of their "name" and venue -- have become like a field and a house that are an essential pre-requisite for every Jew. We, therefore, must remember that the type of Jewish education our children receive will determine their "Jewish" future.