

Introduction

We generally relate to Purim as a celebration of salvation for the Jewish people. However, the Gemara in *Shabbos* conveys an additional dimension to the story that represents an epic moment in defining the entire nature of Am Yisrael's relationship to Torah and our mandate as a people. The original depiction of Matan Torah involved a mountain suspended over the entire Jewish people in coercing the affirming response of *na'aseh venishmah* — we will do and we will listen:

"ויתיצבו בתחתית ההר" (שמות, י"ט, יז).
אמר רב אבדימי בר חמא בר חסא: מלמד שכלה הקדוש ברוך הוא עליהם את ההר כגיגית, ואמר להם: אם אתם מקבלים התורה - מוטב, ואם לאו - שם תהא קבורתכם.
"And they stood at the lowermost part of the mount" (Exodus 19:17). Rabbi Avdimi bar Chama bar Chasa said: [the verse] teaches that the Holy One, Blessed be He, overturned the mountain above them like a barrel, and said to them: If you accept the Torah, excellent, and if not, there will be your burial.

Shabbos 88a

Rav Acha noted that for the next significant period of Jewish history, our commitment to Jewish law and tradition would be anchored in an acceptance that was forced, thus undermining the veracity of our personal initiative in accepting the Torah.

Yet, explains Rava, in the aftermath of the Purim story, that commitment would be renewed, this time, without the mountain over our heads, providing a foundation of commitment that is entirely of our own free will:



Rabbi Yaakov Glasser

David Mitzner Dean, YU Center for the Jewish Future
Rabbi, Young Israel of Passaic-Clifton

אמר רבא: אף על פי כן, הדור קבלוה בימי אכשוורוש; דכתיב (אסתר ט', כז) "קיימו וקבלו היהודים" - קיימו מה שקיבלו כבר
Rava said, Even so, they again accepted it in the time of Achashverosh, as it is written: "They ordained and took upon them..." (Esther 9:27); they ordained what they had already taken upon themselves.

Rav Yerucham Levovitz, *Da'as Chochma Umussar* 1:28, wonders how it is possible that the generation liberated from Mitzrayim would engage in an incomplete acceptance of the Torah, while the generation of the Purim story, seemingly a more assimilated and challenged generation, would be the ones to concretize our enduring commitment and connection to Torah.

He answers that while the generation of the Exodus were certainly on a higher spiritual level, the generation of Mordechai and Esther discovered their spiritual destiny in a world concealed of G-d's presence. True kabbalas Hatorah, is not in accepting the obvious and the revealed. True kabbalas Hatorah, is in searching for the truth, in a world of darkness and confusion.

Our generation struggles deeply with our own personal kabbalas Hatorah. In a world in which G-d's presence is often concealed, persevering in our commitment to Torah and mitzvos is

an extraordinary expression of faith and religious fortitude.

For the current issue of *Torah To Go*, we invited yeshiva high schools from across North America to submit a d'var Torah from a faculty member. These outstanding professionals partner with us every day in the larger quest of educating and inspiring the next generation. Institutionally, we share a common goal of guiding young people to discover the passion and purpose of Torah in a complex and difficult world. These educators are the heroes of our generation, in transmitting our *mesorah* with substance, passion, and love. Their entire lives are devoted to empowering each and every student to reach their own moment of "*kimu mah shekiblu kvar*" — to embrace that which has been accepted by them in the past. Many of our young people grow up with their own mountain over their heads — an expectation that their religious life will proceed and endure. The Jewish educators of our community are responsible for inspiring a sense of aspiration and motivation within the hearts and minds, to ensure a perpetuating commitment to the values and ideals of Torah.