

# HIGHER THAN SINAI

*by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky*

In the aftermath of the sin of the Golden Calf, Moshe's mortality is transformed to immortality as -- anthropomorphic as it may sound -- he gets G-d to change his mind.

Hashem, who had threatened to destroy Klall Yisrael after the sin of the Golden Calf, finally assures Moshe that His presence will accompany them on their sojourn. But Moshe, it seems, is still not satisfied. In what appears as a daring move, he asks Hashem for more. Not only does he want assurance of the accompaniment of the Divine presence, Moshe now asks Hashem to "show me Your face" (Exodus 33:18). It is not enough that Hashem forgives the Jews for the most audacious sin of their young history. It is not enough that he assures them that he will guide them in the desert. Moshe wants more! He asks for a mortal existence despite an immortal act. He wants to connect to the corporeal with the Omnipotent in a way never done before. He wants to feast his soul on the most spiritual meal ingested through human vision. He wants to see G-d.

Hashem explains that it is impossible to see Him and live. The human soul cannot be confined to a spatiotemporal existence after it has experienced the endless world of infinite spirituality. And thus the answer is, "No. You may however, see my back" (cf. Exodus 33:20-23). Of course the world of G-d's face as opposed to his back fill tomes of commentators from those who analyze textual reference to the great kabbalists, and it certainly has no place in a fax of internet sheet. What does interest me is Moshe's persistence. Why was he dissatisfied with G-d's first acquiescence? What propelled him, after almost losing Klall yisrael to ask for the greatest show of G-d's bond to His creation's?

Lou Maidenbaum, former President of Met Foods, help establish the Gedaliah Maidenbaum Preparatory School Division of Yeshiva of South Shore. Before passing away last month, he was confined to a hospital in Miami Beach.

But in his sick bed he never lost his spunk, charm or the will to live life to its fullest.

A week before he passed away, he was in his hospital room and was experiencing some discomfort. He pressed the button for a nurse, but no one came. Five minutes later he rang again. Still no response. He tried two more times and then decided a new tactic.

He picked up the telephone and dialed 3 digits. 9-1-1. "Emergency services, came the woman's voice, "what is the problem?" "I'm having difficulty breathing" gasped Lou. "Where are you calling from?" "Mount Sinai Hospital, Room 321," came the response. "Mount Sinai Hospital?" Repeated the

incredulous dispatcher, "what are you calling us for? You are in the Hospital already!" Lady," he shouted to the operator. "This is my life we are talking about. And If this is the way I'll get the best response, then I'm calling 911!

Moshe knew that he was -- on Sinai -- with G-d -- receiving the Torah. However, that was not enough. He was not complacent about his accomplishment. He was not content with being the transmitter of eternity. He wanted more! He wanted to attain the highest possible level of mortal achievement. He wanted to see G-d. He wanted to spiritually feast on the face of the Omnipotent. Moshe was only concerned, to attain the greatest degree of spirituality that he possibly could reach. There was nothing else on his mind or in his soul. Hashem responded that if that level is attained, the soul will flee from its mortal constraints and refuse to re-enter a corporal being. "No man shall see Me and live" (Exodus 22:20). So Moshe had to concede with the highest level the physical body could endure. But in Moshe's quest to go higher than Sinai he taught us a great lesson. No matter what level you think you are on, if you are standing on earth, you must reach for the mountain and when you are standing on the mountain you must reach for the clouds. And even if you are standing on a cloud you must reach for the stars.

Good Shabbos

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

*In honor of the marriage of Mordechai Merenstein to Leah Dukler. May they be zocheh to build a bayis ne'eman b'Yisrael!*

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*Warmest regards to the readers of Drasha who I met at the Gertzulin - Pachtman wedding. BZW please e-mail your address.*

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*Thank you to the scores of reader who sent Mazel Tov on the Bar Mitzvah of our son, Pinchus Eliyahu.*

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Drasha is the e-mail edition of FaxHomily, a weekly torah facsimile on the weekly portion which is sponsored by ***The Henry and Myrtle Hirsch Foundation***

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