

Because It Is There

By: Rabbi Yanki Tauber

According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the sport of mountain-climbing was born in 1760, when a young Genevese scientist, Horace-Benedict de Saussure, offered prize money for the first person or persons to reach the summit of Mount Blanc, Europe's tallest peak at 15,777 feet.

I suspect that it's been going on for much longer than that. Something tells me that for as long as there have been humans and mountains, humans have been climbing mountains. Not just for some "useful" purpose, but also for sport, for the challenge it poses, for no other reason--as one famous mountaineer put it--than "because it is there." Or rather, because we are *here*, down below, and we want to be someplace higher than here.

Consider the case of Moses. Granted, Mount Sinai was no Everest. Remember, however, that Moses was 80 years old at the time. Remember, also, that he was doing it on behalf of 600,000 people (600,000 Jews, that is, which means that he had to contend with 600,000 opinions on which route to take, what equipment to use, etc.; indeed, Moses had to build a fence around the mountain to hold them back from having a go at it themselves).

Now, you might say that Moses' climb wasn't just for the challenge, but for a specific purpose: to receive the Torah. Yet G-d was coming down from the heavens--an infinite number of light years away. He certainly could have descended another few thousand feet, instead of making an octogenarian sage climb a mountainside. As, indeed, He could have programmed the Torah right into our brains, together with all the other stuff we're born knowing, instead of chiseling it into two stone tablets for us to study and decipher.

But G-d was telling us: Yes, you are so far down below, and I am so high up, that you'll never get here on your own. The only way that there can be anything eternal, infinite or true in your lives is if I come down to you. But if I came all the way down, whatever I might give you will be meaningless to you -- as meaningless to you as your own existence which, because you were born into it and did not struggle to achieve it, you are oblivious to it.

So, says G-d, I am going to make these mountains. Mountains that will try your skills, that will consume every iota of your energy and determination. Mountains so high, that they will require a super-human effort on your part to attain their peaks.

And when you reach the summit, I'll be there waiting for you.

The content in this page is produced and copyrighted by www.chabad.org

13 May | 9th Iyar

Behar

Shabbat Begins: 8:29 pm

Shabbat Ends: 9:42 pm