NEWS & VIEWS

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Teaching God Our Torah

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This week, revelation manifests as a rollercoaster in directionality, as Moses rises and falls from the base to the peak of Mount Sinai over and over again:

“And the Lord said to Moses: “Go, descend, for your people....” (32: 7)
“... On the next day Moses said to the people: "You have committed a grave sin. And now I will ascend to the Lord;” (32:30)
“...and Moses arose early in the morning and ascended Mount Sinai” (34:4)
“And it came to pass when Moses descended from Mount Sinai... (34:29)

The text seems to belabor the image, with various forms of the words “ascent” and “descent” appearing almost a dozen times in these chapters. At the base of the mountain is eretz, our earthly human abode, where the people stand waiting. Up the mountain is shamayim, the heavens—God’s domain, conveyed here as a sacred and removed location. As Moses ascends and descends the mountain, he is like a needle threading these two realms together, stitching a seam of connection between the earth of human dwelling and the summit of the divine.