

Parshat Bamidbar 5782

This week's parsha opens 'וידבר ה' אל-משה במדבר סיני, באהל' – *"And Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Sinai Desert, in the Tent of Meeting."*

A number of commentators ask why the Torah mentions that this was in the 'Sinai Desert'. We have not heard in previous Sedras that the Jews had moved on from their encampment in the Sinai Desert, so surely this is obvious?

The Ibn Ezra says the Torah is highlighting that even though the Jews were near Har Sinai and Moshe could easily have returned there to receive these commands. However, now that the Mishkan had been built, this is where the Shechina rested and this was therefore from where Hashem communicated with Moshe.

In a similar vein, the Rashbam points out that any time Hashem spoke to Moshe in the first year of their being in the desert prior to the building of the Mishkan, it says 'behar sinai', Hashem spoke to Hashem 'on Mount Sinai' e.g. in the beginning of parshas Behar. However, once the Mishkan was built at the start of the second year of their time in the desert, Hashem spoke to Moshe from the mishkan.

The Shaarei Aharon asks on this point that already in the book of Vayikra we see Hashem speaking to Moshe from the mishkan, yet at the end of the book of Vayikra we see Hashem speaking to Moshe 'behar sinai', from Mount Sinai.

This surely suggests that Har Sinai was still used after the construction of the Mishkan?

To answer this, he quotes the Ibn Ezra who explains that Behar and Bechukosai took place prior to the other content of the book of Vayikra, using the principle 'ein mukdam umeucha baTorah', the Torah does not always follow chronological order.

The Netziv explains that the phrase 'in the Sinai Desert' describes the very reason why Hashem counted the Jews now. This count was right at the very start of the Jews' long travels through the desert, before coming to Eretz Yisrael. They were only going to be able to do so if the Shechina rested with them.

We know that a king does not go out alone. Rather, he is accompanied by an entourage befitting his stature. Thus, we are told here of the great number of Jews who were in the desert, and were, so to speak, accompanying Hashem on the journey.