

"Hashem, our G-d spoke unto us in Chorev saying, you have dwelt long enough in this mountain. Turn you and take you and take your journey and go to the hill-country of the Emorites and unto all the places near there." (1:6,7)

Rashi explains Moshe's statement in the following manner: You have received a great reward for your dwelling in this mountain. You have made a *Mishkan*, a *Menorah* and the various appurtenances. You have received the *Torah*, you have appointed for yourselves a *Sanhedrin*, officers of thousands and hundreds. Now you should go forth into the neighboring nations. This statement seems enigmatic. One would think that after lauding the great spiritual accomplishments, Moshe would now proceed to explain to them the profound intricacies of the *Torah* and the various codes. Instead, the *Torah* relates a geographical description of the neighboring countries!

Horav Aharon Bakst z.l. infers a valuable lesson from this *pasuk* regarding the essence of *Torah*. One might think that after having mastered the profundities of *Torah* and ascended to a sublime spiritual plateau, the only propitious place for him to live is in the seclusion of the desert, isolated from people. In the desert where the *Torah* was given, he would not have to maintain social relations with others. In the desert where communal responsibilities and interactions with various people are not demanded of him, he will find the tranquility to continue his *Torah* study and enhance his spiritual development. This is a misconception of *Torah* philosophy.

Indeed, the *Torah* was given in the desert, but this is not to preclude its integration into everyday mundane matters. Our *Torah* is a *Toras chaim*, a living *Torah*, which guides and inspires, influences and maintains every aspect of our lives. The *Torah* teaches us how to live among people, how to relate to others, and with whom to associate. It teaches us how to live within the framework of society.

By virtue of our adherence to *Torah* and *mitzvah* observance, we maintain our dignity and self-respect among the nations of the world. For this reason, the *Torah* emphasizes the need to go out of the desert and look around and be cognizant of the neighboring countries. Take your *Torah* out of the desert, and demonstrate to the world what it means to be a Jew! Take the *Torah* and live with it, so that your wisdom and knowledge, your superiority and majesty, your pride and honor are displayed before the entire world.