

If I were to travel deep into the Sinai desert, I would come across, in the place which is presumed to be Mt Sinai; St Catherine's monastery on its base and as I climb up the 3750 steps to its summit, I would discover an Islamic shrine and a Greek Orthodox Church. However, in that place where we Jews witnessed the revelation of G-d, experienced the greatest event in our history, there is no Synagogue or Jewish plaque to commemorate the event. Indeed, there is no annual pilgrimage to the site and we do not hallow the ground.

Of course there is room to say that Mt Sinai or Jabal Musa as the Bedouin call it in the Sinai Peninsula is not the right place. Look at the story in the Torah, Mt Sinai is synonymous with *Har HaElokim*, the Mountain of G-d; this was the place near Midian where Moshe witnessed the Burning Bush. After G-d had delivered His message of salvation to Moshe He said these words:

“When you take out the people from Egypt, you will serve G-d on **this** mountain.”

Notice the accentuation; the mountain in the wilderness near Midian where Moshe had witnessed the Burning Bush would become the Mountain on which the Children of Israel would serve.

The Mt Sinai in the Sinai Peninsula could be an impostor; it might be far too removed from historic Midian to be the place where the Torah was given. Indeed there are a total of four different places that archaeologists suggest could be the original Mt Sinai. So the question returns, why is it that in the Jewish world we do not make a big fuss over Mt Sinai and put a big X to mark the spot where G-d revealed the Torah to His people?

The answer I believe lies in a few words in this week's Sedra. It was the third day of Sivan; Moshe was instructed by G-d to set boundaries around the mountain saying:

“Beware of ascending the mountain or touching its edge, whoever touches the mountain shall surely die.”

G-d is about to give the Torah on Mt Sinai, the mountain is holy. Whilst revelation is taking place you're not allowed up the mountain, it's a capital offence punishable by death.

But read on. “Upon an extended blast of the Shofar, they may ascend the mountain.”

From death to life. After revelation is over, and the all clear blast of the Shofar is sounded not only do they not receive retribution but they may ascend the mountain. The mountain is no longer holy. Revelation, the giving of the Torah is over.

Normal service resumes.

The message; it's got to be either the contribution from G-d or man that maintains kedusha. If that input ceases then holiness is not sustained.

That's why G-d gave the Torah on a desolate mountain to teach us that we need not go into the wilderness to find the holiness, but it's up to us to create in our homes, our Shuls, wherever we might be, by our contribution, places worthy of holiness.