



The Campus Rabbi's Message

Dvar Torah

On Shabbat we will begin reading a new book of the Torah, Bamidbar. The book of Bamidbar is generally referred to as the book of Numbers, but the accurate translation would be “in the desert”. This coming Saturday night we will be celebrating the festival of Shavuot, the day on which we received the Torah. Many people know that the mountain on which the Torah was given was Har Sinia, Mount Sinia, however, something that is often overlooked is that the Jews received the Torah in the desert. Perhaps there is something Hashem is teaching us by choosing the desert as the location for the giving of the Torah. Deserts are hot and dry areas with very few people being able to settle there and claim ownership of the land. The Gemara in Nedarim 55a states that “if one makes oneself like the desert, available to all, the Torah is given to them as a gift”. Rashi explains that “being like a desert”, refers to someone who is willing to share and teach Torah freely, to that person the Torah will be open.

This explanation of the midbar (desert) relates to the *person* learning Torah; the following one relates to the nature of *Torah* itself. We tend to view the desert as a place of nomads, a place where anyone can come and pitch a tent and make their “home”. It is open to everyone regardless of social, financial or any other status. So it is with the Torah, Hashem especially gave the Jews the Torah in a location that was ‘ownerless’ to emphasise the point that any Jew is welcome to partake in its delights and has an equal share in it. The Torah is a Morasha to the Jews, an inheritance to every single Jew. We all have our role to play in learning and living the Torah, all we need to do is start the journey.