

Dvar Torah by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

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BAMIDBAR

This Shabbat we begin Sefer Bamidbar with Parshat Bamidbar - In the wilderness. Bamidbar is mostly read the Shabbat before Chag Shavuot. We go out of our way, last Shabbat, to read a double portion so Bamidbar falls out now preceding Shavuot. Why?

Perhaps, simply, the whole episode of Shavuot takes place in the barren wastes of the Sinai as the Rabbis infer from the verse (21:8) UMIMIDBAR MATANA - "From out of the wilderness came the gift of the Torah".

However, there is a contrast and contradiction in all the names of this holiday. Shavuot is also called Chag HaBikurim - the Festival of the First Fruits. Midbar is a wasteland that cannot be planted or bring forth fruit. On the other hand, Bikurim means blossoming and greening the land.

Perhaps the connection of Bamidbar and Shavuot is a deeper one. A world without Torah is nothing more than a midbar - a barren wasteland. However, a world with the gift of Torah guiding us, can be Bikurim, a beautiful garden of paradise encom-

passing all of man's initiative and creativity for the good of Mankind. A world lacking the moral compass of the Torah quickly becomes desolation.

Adam created by G-d, placed in Gan Eden - Paradise. This was the most natural and perfect environment for him, given the ability to achieve satisfaction and reach great highs there. However, with the absence of Torah in restricting his freedom of desire and action, very quickly paradise turned into wilderness for the first human being. In only one generation, man killed another man. Eventually, even the great Egyptian culture and civilization, became a nation that enslaved fellow human beings.

When all seems lost and when it seems the world has fallen completely from its pedestal, the giving of the Torah ensues.

That first Shavuot presented a way that through Torah, one can transform a wilderness to a paradise, a midbar into bikurim.

One can say that Shavuot was much more than the day the Torah was given, rather, it was the day that the world was created. The world went from being a wilderness to becoming Gan Eden again. Some Sages comment on the final pasuk in the first chapter of B'reishit ...VAYHI EREV VAYHI VOKER, YOM HASHISHI, it

was the sixth day of creation, as well as the sixth day of Sivan, the day the Torah was given. If the Torah is accepted then the Creation of Heaven and Earth will have found fulfillment.

We pray that Hashem will continue to watch over us and provide the protection to our citizens as well as to our military personnel. May our Torah life help us turn this wilderness and barren landscape to a growing garden with serenity and peace upon us. 🕯️