

THE OPEN BIBLE



Parasha Devarim

Deuteronomy 1:1-3:22

Isaiah 1:1-27

Acts 7:51-8:4

The Torah Portion at a Glance

Moses begins his repetition of the Torah to the assembled Children of Israel, reviewing the events that occurred and the laws that were given in the course of their 40-year journey from Egypt to Sinai to the Promised Land, rebuking the people for their failings and iniquities, and enjoining them to keep the Torah and observe its commandments in the land that YHWH is giving them as an eternal heritage, into which they shall cross after his death.

Moses recalls his appointment of judges and magistrates to ease his burden of meting out justice to the people and teaching them the word of YHWH; the journey from Sinai through the great and fearsome desert; the sending of the Spies and the people's subsequent spurning of the Promised Land, so that YHWH decreed that the entire generation of the Exodus shall die out in the desert. "Also against me," says Moses, "was YHWH angry for your sakes, saying: You, too, shall not go in there."

Moses also recounts some more recent events: the refusal of the nations of Moab and Ammon to allow the Israelites to pass through their countries; the wars against the Emorite kings Sichon and Og, and the settlement of their lands by the tribes of Reuben and Gad and part of the tribe of Menasseh; and Moses' message to his successor, Joshua, who will take the people into the Land and lead them in the battles for its conquest: "Fear them not, for YHWH your Elohim, He shall fight for you."

(adapted from chabad.org)

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

Moshe gives a repetition of words of the Torah in our last book of the Torah. In the book of words, or Devarim, Moshe says, "I charged your magistrates at that time as follows, "Hear out your fellow men, and decide justly between any man and a fellow Israelite or a stranger. You shall not be partial in judgment: hear out low and high alike. Fear no man, for judgment is YHWH's. And any matter that is too difficult for you, you shall bring to me and I will hear it." Thus I instructed you, at that time, about the various things that you should do," Deuteronomy / Devarim 1:16-18

Here we see how judgment is YHWH's. It is interesting to note that Y'shua too left the judgment to YHWH the Father. Y'shua once said, "And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him--the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day," John 12.

The Messiah also said in Matthew 7:1, 2 "Judge not that you be not judged. For with the judgment that you judge, you shall be judged; and with the measure that you mete, it shall be measured to you." Here Y'shua made it clear that one must be careful how they judge others and do so without partiality. Y'shua went as far to state that how you express condemnation, correction, or high standards will be the same way such is given back. The actions and words of Y'shua judges each and every human being on the face of the earth. Either we see the example left by Y'shua and allow his word to conform us to His image or we will be judged by his word on the last day.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

In the book of Devarim, Moshe raises his voice and reminds his listeners about the nuts and bolts of living as YHWH's set apart nation. In fact the whole scroll of Devarim is pretty much a review of the rest of Torah, as just seventy new laws are presented in the whole book.

Instead of bringing lots of new ideas, the foundation of Hebrew faith is presented as Moshe acts as the speaker in Deuteronomy. Here Moshe addresses the nation as they are poised to enter into the Promised Land. In a series of three speeches he reminds them of their past, reviews their laws, and challenges the nation to live up to their high calling. This is great reading!

The first Torah reading section is named "Devarim" like the entire scroll itself. "Devarim" means "words" and is derived from chapter one verse one, "These are the words that Moshe addressed to all Yisra'el on the other side of the Jordan." The English name Deuteronomy comes from the Septuagint and literally and correctly means "second law." The entire book is also referred to in Judaism by an ancient Rabbinic title, "Mishneh Torah." This is just like most ancient middle-eastern manuscripts, which receive their name from some of the first opening phrases. Even the Torah reading portions are usually named after the first important word or phrase used.

For example, the section on the evil king Balak and the evil prophet Bilaam is titled "Balak." And the first parasha in the Torah is called "Beresheet" after the first Hebrew word found in the Torah, which means "beginning." The Torah is the "basics" of Biblical faith and reading, the Torah is one of the most vital parts of having an abundant faith. To help with reviewing the basics, the Torah has been divided into 54 sections called "parashot."

The Hebrew term "parasha" literally means "portion or section," and Judaism has used an annual reading cycle for over two thousand years. Reading each week's parasha will walk you through the five books of Moshe within a year.

Some say that Moshe instituted reading the Torah in a year's time, but early history teaches that in Yisra'el the Torah was divided into 155 portions and took three years to read. Some groups, like the Reformed Jews, still use this triennial cycle of smaller sections. Most believers have adopted the annual cycle that at least dates back to the Babylonian exile. The annual cycle begins and ends near the holy day of Simchat Torah. Simchat Torah is a festive celebration of the Torah and the Torah reading cycle, which is promoted in the places of worship or synagogues. Sometimes two portions are read to complete the cycle in a year, because of leap years and holy day readings. When one completes the reading of one of the five books it is customary to stand and say the phrase, "Chazak, chazak, v'nit chazak" which means, "Be strong, be strong, and let us be strengthened." This is an encouragement to continue the reading cycle.

Some congregations have huge Torah scrolls that are paraded around the building and read from in Hebrew, while other groups read the English sections in home settings, podiums, or dinner tables. Traditionally a B'racha or blessing is spoken before and after the Torah reading and a small portion from the rest of Tanakh is also usually read. The Brit Chadasha has also been separated into corresponding parashot for those who desire to read from it as well as the Torah. There is great freedom when it comes to reading the Torah parashot – the essential point being that the Torah is read aloud.

In the book of Devarim Moshe spoke the Torah aloud as an example. He told Yisra'el that they should read the Torah aloud on Yom Tov, Rosh Chodesh, and Feast days. Later Ezra the Scribe would institute reading the Torah aloud on Mondays, Thursdays, and Shabbat Afternoons (Nehemiah 8:1, Megillah 4:1). The Brit Chadasha continues this theme when it teaches that "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of Elohim." Without the Torah being read aloud it is difficult for faith to truly set in. "Give attendance to the reading of Torah, to exhortation, to teaching," says First Timothy 4:13 in the Restoration Scriptures. Yahshua the Moshiach set an example for all believers when he attended the synagogue for Torah reading on many occasions. (Surprisingly he never went to church to hear a sermon!) "And He came to Natzareth, where He had been brought up: and, according to his practice, He went into the synagogue on Shabbat, and stood up to read," Luka 4:16, Restoration Scriptures. Yahshua never stopped the Torah reading in the synagogue to do miracles or teach. He read from the Torah and things just started to happen!

Some may say that the "Spirit should lead" what is done during worship services and that is perfectly fine. The Spirit of Truth or "Ruach V'Emet" will certainly lead as the Debar YHWH (word of YHWH) is presented. "All Ketuvim are given by the inspiration of YHWH, and are profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, as Torah in righteousness: that the man of YHWH may be perfect, fully equipped to all tov mitzvot," Timteous Bet 3:16,17. We are to worship in Spirit and in Truth says the Messiah. "Elohim is Ruach: and they that worship Him must worship Him in Ruach and Emet," Yochannan 4:24. The Ruach HaKodesh will minister and move as we first delve into the Emet or Truth of YHWH.

The Torah is the basics of the faith. The rest of the Scriptures are just commentaries on the first five books, and Devarim is a "commentary-like" review of the first four books. Get ready to read through the rest of Devarim with an open heart and an opened Bible. Review the basics and raise your voice as you read.

Portion Points to Ponder

(from various sources)

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "Devarim." What does this name mean?
2. Read Isaiah 1:1-27. How does this relate to the story of Exodus this week?
3. Consider the words found in Acts 7:51-8:4. What did you learn from studying these passages?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week's Torah portion to your life.
What is it about the story, a verse, a word that seems to resonate with some aspect of your life?
6. Is there something about the story that rings a bell?
7. Why was Parashat Devarim given by Moshe? To whom was he speaking and for what reason?

8. Why did Moshe go into such a detailed historical account?
9. Who is the subject of Moshe's story? What significance is that?
10. Is the Tanakh the expression of YHWH's wrath and the Brit Hadasha the expression of YHWH's grace? Explain.
11. Why do you think YHWH had Israel not fight the Edomites or Moabites for their land?
12. Explain the difference between YHWH fighting for Israel and Israel doing the fighting?
13. Why did the YHWH have Gad, Reuven and half of Manasseh fight with the rest of Israel before they settled down east of the Jordan?
14. In the conventional structure of this book, what verses constitute the preamble and what verses make up the historical prologue? What is the importance of each of these divisions of the covenant structure?
15. What are some of the important words found in the Book of Deuteronomy?
16. Who are the primary actors in the parsha and what role or roles does each play? What is the significance of each role? Who are the secondary actors and what roles do they play? What is the significance of their roles?
17. Are any of the mitzvot found in the book of Numbers repeated in the book of Devarim? If not, can you explain why?
18. In Sefer (the book of) Breishit, we find the story of Creation, the Flood and the story of the Fathers of the Faith. Are any of these stories repeated in Sefer Devarim? If so, which story and where it is repeated?
19. Which holiday is believed to be the time when Moshe made his recounting to the people and in which year? Where did he make this speech?
20. Moshe describes how heavy the burden of the Hebrew people was for him, and how he divided up the decision making. How is his description different from what we were told when it actually happened?
21. How is Moshe's recounting of the spies' report different from the report itself?
22. There were certain tribes of peoples that the Israelites were told not to fight. One was the people who lived in Seir. Why were we not to take their land?
23. What was a second tribe we were ordered not to attack, and why?
24. The Israelites completely conquered two peoples and killed their kings. Name one of them and their king. Name a second and their king.
25. There are two mitzvot / commandments in Parasha Devarim. Both are negative precepts. What are they?
26. What did you learn from this Open Bible teaching?

The Open Bible is a teaching series written by Daniel Rendelman of Emet Ministries. Find more teachings, audio messages, videos, and music at www.emetministries.com.

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