

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	RENEWED
Devarim	10 Aug. 2019	9 Av 5779	Deut. 1:1-3:22	Isa. 1:1-27	Matt. 24:1-22

Today is Tisha B'Av (9<sup>th</sup> of Av). It is the ninth day of the Fifth month according to the Scriptures. On this day, both Temples fell. Therefore, this is a day of remembrance. It is a solemn day to remember the destruction of the Temples with fasting. But, today being Shabbat, we fast tomorrow in observance of Tisha B'Av.

The parashat Devarim is always read on the Shabbat before Tisha B'Av. The destruction of the Temples are reflected in the choice of Haftarah for the surrounding weeks, those before the Tisha B'av expresses the prophecies of rebuke for the sins that were the spiritual cause of the destruction; those afterwards conveying messages of comfort and solace.

Today is also known as Shabbat Chazon (Shabbat of the Vision) as it is the Vision of Yeshayahu (Isaiah). Traditionally, it is read as a powerful indictment of a rebellious people. According to the Chassidic tradition, R' Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev saw it in a distant "vision" of the Third Temple of Messianic times.

The book of Devarim (Words; "second law" from Greek *deuteros* + *nomos*) consist of three sermons or speeches delivered to the Yisraelites by Moshe on the plains of Moab, shortly before they enter the Promised Land. The first sermon recounts the forty years of wilderness wanderings which had led to that moment, and ends with an exhortation to observe the law (or teachings), later referred to as the Law of Moses; the second reminds the Israelites of the need to follow Yahweh and the laws (or teachings) he has given them, on which their possession of the land depends; and the third offers the comfort that even should Israel prove unfaithful and so lose the land, with repentance all can be restored. The final four chapters (31–34) contain the Song of Moses, the Blessing of Moses, and narratives recounting the passing of the mantle of leadership from Moses to Joshua and, finally, the death of Moses on Mount Nebo.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike the four previous books which started with "Thus says YHWH", the book of Devarim says, "And Moshe said." This book was given to the next generation of Yisraelites who heard Hashem but did not see Him whereas the first generation saw Hashem. The difference of being seen and heard is different as "hearing" may eventually doubt if he heard it whereas "seeing" is someone who witnessed an event is undoubtable to the scenes he saw.

Another difference is that it was Hashem who is in "heaven" spoke to the people on the "earth." Hashem turned toward His creations and spoke to them. Then in Mount Sinai, Hashem spoke through Moshe to convey His commandments. Thus, the first four books were transmitted through Moshe without any input on his part; he conveyed them to the Yisraelites as he received them. In the Book of Devarim, it was Moshe who was on the "earth" repeated the words of Hashem who was in "heaven." Our parashat begins with, "These are the words Moshe spoke." (Devarim 1:1) Therefore, Hashem's word became part and parcel of Moshe's own thought.

In this Book, rather than Hashem speaking to man, the words flow forth from below, from the innermost of Moshe as man. Thus, the book of Devarim signals a new concept in our understanding of the Torah. Until now, it was Hashem speaking. Now, Moshe's words are adopted by Hashem, and they are equated with eternal holiness on the same level as the previous books of the Torah. This is an example of man reaching

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book\\_of\\_Deuteronomy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Deuteronomy)

a level of partnership with Hashem – the Torah including the words that flowed from man's souls. The Torah which descended into the world in order to uplift it and to reveal its Divine essence, effected Moshe to the extent of purifying his entire being till everyone could see that his face shone... Thus, the Book of Devarim completes the Torah because it represents human partnership with the Divine, and it is the living example of what dedication to Torah can accomplish.

So, over the last five weeks of Moshe's life, beginning on the first day of the month of Shevat (eleventh month) and ending on the 6<sup>th</sup> of Adar (twelfth month), the even of his death, Moshe gave over this book. He explained the entire Torah to each and every individual. He said, "I am close to my death, whoever heard a verse, or a chapter, or a section, but forgot it, let him come to me now and I will go over it again."

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of Adar he was informed of his impending death and he commanded Yehushua, and on the 7<sup>th</sup> of Adar he blessed Yisrael and passed into the Coming World. The sages refer to this book as Mishneh Torah, meaning a review of the Torah. Specifically, it is an explanation of the Torah. The word used in verse 5 for 'explain' is *be'er* (בִּיעַר), the very same word meaning a 'well' of water. Moshe opened the well of knowledge and understanding for all future generations.

If we are to only have the first four-books, it would have been impossible for our powers of understanding to unite completely with the Torah. By having the book of Devarim passed through Moshe's intellect that gives us the capacity to understand the previous four books in a similar situation.

Moshe recites the book of Devarim as the Yisraelites stood on the banks on the Yarden (Jordan), preparing to enter the Promised Land. The crossing of the Yarden river was to be a spiritual as well as a geographic movement. During their journeys through the desert, the Yisraelites depended on miracles of Hashem. They ate manna, their water came from the Well of Miriam, and the Clouds of Glory preserved their garments. After entering the Promised Land, however, the Yisraelites were to live within the natural order, working the land and eating the fruits of their labor.

To make this transition possible, they required an approach to the Torah that would relate to man as he functions within his worldly environment. It was for this purpose that Moshe taught the Book of Devarim. We are standing "on the banks of the Yarden" preparing the Promised Land (Eretz Yisrael) together with Mashiach. It is through the approach emphasized by the Book of Devarim fusing the word of Hashem with mortal wisdom that we will merit the age when "the occupation of the entire world will be solely to know Hashem,"<sup>2</sup> the Era of the Redemption.

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<sup>2</sup> Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Melachim 12:5