

CHABAD  
**DED**  
RESEARCH UNIT

הב

שבת..... *for Friday nights*..... קדש

Friday 12 July 2013 - 5 Menachem Av 5773  
Sedra Devarim

### STAGES IN GIVING THE TORAH

**T**HIS SHABBAT WE BEGIN THE FIFTH OF THE FIVE BOOKS OF Moses, called Deuteronomy. In Hebrew it is called Devarim and the first Sedra<sup>1</sup> in the book has the same name. Further, this is the Shabbat before the fast of the Ninth of Ab (commencing Monday night and extending till nightfall on Tuesday 16 July).

In certain ways the Book of Devarim differs from the other four books of the Torah. Every word of the Torah is Divine, a communication from G-d to humanity. Nonetheless, within the Torah itself there are different ways in which this communication is expressed.

The first four books of the Torah describe how G-d created the world and chose the descendants of Abraham to be a sacred nation, the Jewish people. How G-d took them out of slavery, gave them the Torah Laws, and how they travelled through the desert towards the Promised Land. These books have a spiritual, ethereal quality.

The Fifth Book, Devarim, is different. Devarim means 'Words', and the book begins "These are the words which Moses spoke to the Jewish people". This book consists mainly of the talks given by Moses, preparing the Jews for the task ahead of them: to enter the Holy Land and live normal lives, guided by the Torah.



Dedicated by Mrs Tzipora Sufrin ח'j , to the memory and merit of her father k"z ihaetk rgcus hfsrn ור ו, v j "vrv

105 BAKER STREET, LONDON W1U 6EZ  
www.chabadresearch.net - cru@LubavitchUK.com

The Sages tell us that not one word of the Torah was Moses' own composition. All was transmitted by G-d, through Moses, as expressed in the phrase "the Divine Presence spoke from the throat of Moses". Thus while the Book of Devarim is a record of the speeches given by Moses, it is also a Divine text, just like the rest of the Torah, in which every letter is significant.

Jewish teaching tells us that Torah existed before the creation of the world in the form of Divine fire. There had to be several stages in the transmission of this Divine fire to the men and women in the daily world. The first four books of the Torah constitute one stage, in a sense still beyond the world. The Book of Devarim is a second stage, preparing the Jew to bring the teachings of the Torah into application in daily life.

Then comes the chain of the great teachers of the Torah after Moses<sup>2</sup>: Joshua, the Elders, the Prophets and eventually the Sages of the Mishnah and Talmud, reaching onwards to our own time. These teachers and Sages represent the ongoing 'Moses' in each generation. At every stage, the figure of 'Moses' is crucial - whether the first Moses or the later great Jewish leaders. It is the Moses of the time who shows how the ethereal and exalted Torah should be applied in practical terms, not only for the Jewish people, but for all humanity.

Later chapters of the Book of Devarim tell of the exile of the Jewish people, and of their ultimate Redemption<sup>3</sup>. With the coming of the Messiah the world will be filled with knowledge of G-d, and all nations will keep the Seven Noahide Laws. At that stage, the process of revealing the Torah in the world will be complete.

This is particularly relevant on this Shabbat, shortly before the Ninth of Av, the day when both Temples were destroyed. On this Shabbat (called Shabbat of the Vision, since the Haftarah begins with the word 'Vision') we ourselves have a 'vision', a glimpse, of the radiance of the future Redemption. The transition from the earlier four Books of the Torah to the Book of Devarim expresses our embarking on the series of steps, one by one, which lead to the joyful fulfilment of the purpose of Creation.

1. Deut. 1:1-3:22. 2. See Ethics of the Fathers 1:1. 3. See Deut. 28:15-69, 30:1-6.  
4. Based freely on the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *Likkutei Sichot*, vol. 4, pp. 1087-1091.

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SEDRA DEVARIM

**SAVING FACE**

The end of year Assembly had arrived. All the boys, teachers and parents had taken their seats and were paying their attention to the headmaster, Mr Portman, who was standing at the podium. He had begun his speech by thanking everyone for coming, and then went on to thank all the teachers for their hard work and dedication for teaching the boys in the school.

Mr Portman then went through each class in turn, describing the progress they had made throughout the year. "Beginning with our wonderful Year 7, a very enthusiastic class, in which each pupil put in his utmost efforts in all his studies this year, especially their magnificent science project presented last term at the funfair..."

Jonathan was listening to Mr Portman's words, when he started to tune out and fell deep in thought. His stomach started churning and he squirmed in his chair. He shot a quick glance at his friend, Zac, sitting next to him who also seemed uncomfortable.

The same thought went through both their heads.

*I hope Mr Portman doesn't mention the way we've behaved this year. Year 9's behaviour was not the best behaviour at all. Those pranks we played on our substitute teacher, the time we ran away on our school trip... and there were many other things as well. A lot of us didn't really work that hard for our exams either. I feel terrible...Eeek, I hope Mr Portman doesn't announce our actions in front of the whole school...and all the parents. We were punished for it enough already...*

Zac nudged Jonathan on his arm and whispered, “he’d better not announce all the bad stuff we did...I feel so bad now...” Jonathan bit his lip and nodded.

“...And our Year 9! Well, the boys in Year 9 have certainly had some experiences this year, through which I’m sure they’ve learned and grown. The boys have learnt some important life lessons this year which will surely make them stronger and more mature people. And I am certain that their teachers in the future will have pleasure teaching them.”

*Whew*, Jonathan thought. He looked up at Zac who seemed relieved as well.

“I’m glad he didn’t refer to anything we did...” Zac whispered.

“...Yeh, me too... Hey, it’s like this week’s Sedra.” Jonathan mouthed.

“Huh?” Zac looked at him strangely.

“Shh...lower your voice... This week’s Sedra Devarim talks about Moses recounting various stories of the Jews in the desert. And when he talked about the times they sinned, he doesn’t refer to their actions directly but he just refers to the places they sinned.”

“Oooh,” Zac whispered. “I guess that’s because he still had a concern for the Jewish people, and didn’t want to embarrass them.”

“Precisely because of that,” Jonathan nodded. “And it’s that kind of concern and love for one’s fellow which will help the Temple be rebuilt...”

“Then we won’t have to fast on the Ninth of Av...” said Zac.

“You’ve got it,” said Jonathan. “Brilliant!”

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