

PARASHAH: D'varim (Words)
ADDRESS: D'varim (Deuteronomy) 1:1-3:22
READING DATE: Shabbat
AUTHOR: Torah Teacher Ariel ben-Lyman

*Updated: July 3, 2006

(Note: all quotations are taken from the Complete Jewish Bible, translation by David H. Stern, Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., unless otherwise noted)

Let's begin with the opening blessing for the Torah:

***“Baruch atah YHVH, Eloheynu, Melech ha-‘Olam,
asher bachar banu m’kol ha-amim,
v’natan lanu eht Torah-to.
Baruch atah YHVH, noteyn ha-Torah.
Ameyn.”***

(Blessed are you, O' LORD, our God, King of the Universe,
you have selected us from among all the peoples,
and have given us your Torah.
Blessed are you, LORD, giver of the Torah.
Ameyn.)

Welcome to a most wonderful book in Moshe's set of five: Deuteronomy, or D'varim ("D-var-eem") as we say in Hebrew! The literal word "d'varim" is the plural form of the word "d'var", which means, "word". I won't go into each detail of this parashah, which actually serves as a recap of the major events of B'midbar, much like the last parashah of B'midbar (please recall **Parashat Masa'ei**). The title of the first portion takes its name from the title of the book, just like every other opening parashah of the Torah. This first parashah will function primarily as an introduction to this fifth book Moshe. First, some historical background behind this book, as quoted by modern rabbis. This initial portion will be very light, so take a break from the scholarly approach and enjoy the fascinating insights!

Rabbi Aaron Tendler and Project Genesis (<http://www.torah.org>) explain,

"In the first four books G-d spoke directly to Moshe and Moshe repeated G-d's words to the Jews while he was still within the context of receiving G-d's prophecy. "It was as if G-d was speaking to the Jewish nation through the throat of Moshe." In the last book, G-d also spoke to Moshe; however, Moshe repeated G-d's words to the nation some time after receiving the directive from G-d. At the time of Moshe's delivery G-d's presence had already withdrawn from Moshe and he was no longer within the context of receiving the prophecy.

"In this regard, Divarim was heard by the nation in the same manner that all other subsequent prophecies were heard. The prophet would receive a vision. After awakening from the trance, the Prophet would decipher G-d's message and then sometime later deliver the "message" to the people."

Now whether or not I agree with the entirety of his comments concerning the reception of revelation of Moshe, we scholars must certainly agree to the pinpointed change of voices (first, second, third) in the previous writings, and Moshe's recall here in D'varim. Consider Rabbi Menachem Leibtag's comments (website <http://www.tanach.org>):

"In contrast to these four books where the story (and/or mitzvot) are presented in THIRD person, the style of Sefer Devarim is very different for it is written almost entirely in FIRST person. The reason for this is quite simple: Sefer Devarim consists of a collection of speeches delivered by Moshe Rabeinu before his death. Therefore, to understand Sefer Devarim, we must first determine the purpose of these speeches and how they relate to one another. To do so should be quite simple, as we need only to identify each speech and then read what it's about.

"To do so is a bit complicated, for to identify each speech we must read through the entire Sefer and note the changes from third person (i.e. the regular 'narrator mode' of Chumash) to first person (i.e. the direct quote of Moshe Rabeinu).

"If you have ample time (and a Tanach Koren handy), I highly recommend that you try this on your own. If you are short on time, you can 'cheat' by reading at least 1:1-7, 4:40-5:2, 26:16-27:2, 28:69-29:2, & 30:19-32:1, noting the transition from third person to first person, and hence where and how each speech begins."

How does all of this information help you and me the average readers? By understanding the historical, linguistic, and stylistic approach to any given book or text, we can begin to understand its message in a more theologically correct way. In some cases, a misunderstanding of any of these important areas will cause us to misunderstand the author's true intent behind any given text. So let's approach the text with some caution, shall we?

Yeshua – The Living Torah!

I want to close by quoting a few familiar verses from the B'rit Chadashah (Renewed Covenant, i.e., New Testament). In these verses, we see the Word identified in a way that was most certainly shocking to the average first century reader, and still shocking to many Jewish people today. Yochanan (John) 1:1 and 14:

**"In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God."**

**"The Word became a human being and lived with us,
and we saw his Sh'khinah,
the Sh'khinah of the Father's only Son,
full of grace and truth."**

In Hebrew these verses read (now carefully watch for the familiar word "Davar!"):

**"B'resheet hayah haDavar,
v'haDavar hayah eem haElohim,
vey'Elohim hayah haDavar."**

**"HaDavar ni'hyeh basar v'shakheyn b'tochenu,
v'anach-nu ra-eenu eht K'vodo [Sh'khinah],
K'vod [Sh'khinah] Ben yacheed milifney Aviv,
maley chesed v'emet." (Transliteration from the Hebrew, mine)**

As we can see, this Word (Heb. "Davar") is none other than Yeshua! These Words (Heb. "D'varim") are the very image of God, veiled in flesh, and clothed in grace and truth!

**May we appreciate the written Word of God, as we seek
a stronger and closer relationship with the Living Word
of God!**

The closing blessing is as follows:

***"Baruch atah YHVH, Eloheynu, Melech ha-'Olam,
asher natan lanu Toraht-emet,
v'chay-yeh o'lam nata-b'tochenu.
Baruch atah YHVH, noteyn ha-Torah.
Ameyn."***

(Blessed are you O' LORD, our God, King of the Universe,
you have given us your Torah of truth,
and have planted everlasting life within our midst.
Blessed are you, LORD, giver of the Torah.
Ameyn.)

"Shabbat Shalom!"

Torah Teacher Ariel ben-Lyman yeshua613@hotmail.com