

# Sefer Devarim

## An Introduction To Devarim

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Sefer Devarim is the fifth and final book of the Torah or Chumash. This book derives its' name from the ancient Israelite custom of naming books after the initial key word of the book (אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים). In Rabbinic literature Sefer Devarim is also known as Mishneh Torah- "the repetition of the Torah." It has been suggested that every halachah found in Devarim is repeated or alluded to in the other four books of the Torah. Devarim contains 34 פרקים - chapters and eleven weekly פרשיות - Torah readings. The first Torah portion of the book is named after the book itself and is called Parashat Devarim.

Sefer Devarim is Moses' final discourse to the Israelites as they stand perched on the eastern side of the Jordan and are ready to enter the promised land.

א אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן בַּמִּדְבָּר  
בְּעַרְבָה מוֹל סוּף בֵּין-פָּאֲרֹן וּבֵין-תַּפַּל וְלִבְנוֹ וְחֶצְרֹת וְדִי זָהָב: ב אַחַד

עָשָׂר יוֹם מִחֶרֶב דֶּרֶךְ הַר-שֵׁעִיר עַד קְדֵשׁ בְּרִנְעַ: גַּיְיָ הִי בְּאַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה  
בְּעֲשֵׂתֵי-עָשָׂר חֹדֶשׁ בְּאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ דִּבֶּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּכֹל  
אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֹתוֹ אֲלֵהֶם: ד אַחֲרֵי הִכְתּוּ אֶת סִיחֹן מֶלֶךְ הָאֱמֹרִי  
אֲשֶׁר יוֹשֵׁב בְּחֶשְׁבוֹן וְאֶת עוֹג מֶלֶךְ הַבָּשָׁן אֲשֶׁר-יוֹשֵׁב בְּעֵשְׂתָרֶת  
בְּאֲדָרְעֵי: ה בְּעֶבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן בְּאֶרֶץ מוֹאָב הוֹאִיל מֹשֶׁה בָּאֵר אֶת-הַתּוֹרָה  
הַזֹּאת לֵאמֹר:

These are the word that Moses told to all Israel on the other side of the Jordan --Through the wilderness, in the Arabah, near Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth and Di-Zahab. It is a journey of eleven days from Horeb to Kadesh-Barnea, via the Mount Seir route. In the fortieth year on the first day of the eleventh month, that Moses addressed the Israelites according to all that God had commanded for them. After he killed Sihon the king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon and Og the king of of Bashan who lived in Ashtaroth and Edrei. On the other side of the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses began to expound this teaching, He said....(Devarim 1:1-1:5)

Since Moses was not able to enter the Promised Land with the israelites, it was his tremendous task to "make plain" the Torah so that they could clearly recall God's instructions to them.

## Outline of Devarim

### **COVENANT HISTORY Past (Ch. 1-4)**

Introduction- (Ch. 1:1-4)

History of Wilderness Wanderings (Ch. 1:5-4:40)

Assigning the Cities of Refuge (Ch. 4:41-49)

### **COVENANT LAW Future (Ch. 5-26)**

Ten Decalogue (Ch. 5)

Monotheism- The Shema (Ch. 6)  
Driving out the Nations (Ch. 7)  
Obeying God's Commands (Ch. 8-11)  
Instructions for Worship (Ch. 12-18)  
Cities of Refuge (Ch. 19)  
Preparing for War (Ch. 20)  
Misc. Laws (Ch. 21-25)  
Tithing (Ch. 26)

**COVENANT TEACHING Present (Ch. 27-30)**

Review of Blessings and Curses (Ch. 27-28)  
Covenant Renewal (Ch. 29-30)

**Moses' Final Farewell Discourse (Ch. 31-34)**

Commissioning of Joshua (Ch. 31)  
Song of Moses (Ch. 32)  
Blessing of Moses (Ch. 33)  
Death of Moses (Ch. 34)

Sefer Devarim has had a substantial impact on Israelite life and culture. Devarim is the book that King Josiah found in the walls of the Temple and he utilized its' teachings to initiate his far reaching reforms. Echoes of Devarim appear in the prophetic books of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Haggai, Zechariah, Daniel and Malachi. Two hundred of the the 613 commandments are based in the book of Devarim. Portions of Devarim are recited in the daily liturgy. Devarim 6:4-9 is recited twice daily during keriat Shema. The first paragraph of the Amidah begins with a quotation from Devarim 10:17. . The theme of Monotheism found in 'Aleinu is based on Devarim 4:39. Three passages from Devarim figure prominently in the Pesah Haggadah.

Devarim's major overarching theme of loyalty to God alone has been a major influence in Judaic theology, Israel's life and culture and indeed it is the key to Israel's future.

**Hear O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord Alone!**

