

דְּבָרִים

D'varim

(the words)

Devarim 1:1-3:22

These are the Words

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 1:1

1 These are the words which Moshe spoke to all Israel beyond the Yarden (Jordan) in the wilderness, in the Aravah over against Suph, between Paran, and Tophel, and Lavan, and Chatzerot, and Di-zahav.

The book of Devarim [Deuteronomy] can be divided into three sections:

- 1) the preamble or Moshe's first address, chapters 1-4;
- 2) the main discourse, 5:1-27:8; and
- 3) Moshe's outline of the blessings and the curses, 27:9-33:29.

Please note the phrasing of the passage above in which it states, "These are the words which Moshe spoke...." This is different than what we have in the previous books of Torah in which Moshe recorded, "Then YHWH spoke to Moshe, saying...." Then YHWH would tell Moshe exactly what to say to Israel.

In the book of Devarim (Deuteronomy) we find that Moshe is speaking to Israel more on the lines of how the later prophets would speak to Israel. The words spoken by Moshe were still the words of YHWH, but he was speaking the words of Devarim in a different context.

The place names listed in the above verse are somewhat disputed as to where they might be located. For example, Suph is sometimes translated into English Bibles as Red Sea or Sea of Reeds. However, this does not seem likely as it does not seem to fit the context. Suph is sometimes translated as "reed", but literally means "to terminate" or "limit."

Tophel and Lavan also each has its own difficulty of understanding as place names. Both Rashi and R' Yochanan state that they had searched the Scriptures from beginning to end and could not find either of these "places" mentioned anywhere else. This would indicate to us that we probably should not understand them as place names, but rather we should understand both words for their respective meanings.

We could understand Tophel (תִּפְּל) to mean “calumny”; i.e., to intentionally slander someone with lies; whereas, Lavan (לָבָן) means “white”. What these two words may actually be a reference to is the incident with the manna, in which Israel did not believe YHWH, nor follow His command initially concerning the gathering of manna during the week or on Shabbat.

To say with our words that we will obey YHWH and then disobey YHWH with our actions, is in effect slandering His good Name. In fact, each of the words (places) mentioned, is actually a veiled rebuke from Moshe to the people, as each “place” is dealing with a particular sin that they committed against YHWH.

The book of Devarim prepares His people to enter His Land. It is particularly pertinent for us today as we too prepare to re-enter His Land. Let us see what we can glean from this Parasha to help us prepare for that event.

Moshe Spoke at His Command

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 1:2-5

2 It is eleven days from Chorev (Horeb) by the way of Mount Seir to Kadesh-Barnea.

3 And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moshe spoke to the children of Israel, according to all that YHWH had given him in commandment to them;

4 after he had smitten Sihon the king of the Amorites, who dwelt in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, who dwelt in Ashtarot, at Edrei.

5 Beyond the Yarden (Jordan), in the land of Moav, began Moshe to declare this Torah, saying,

The entire book of Devarim is basically a reiteration of all previously given Torah. While there is some new information contained in Devarim, it basically consists of greater details of previously given commands.

Moshe emphasizes all the previously given commandments from YHWH to Israel as they prepare to enter His Land.

Occupy the Land

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 1:8

“Behold, I have set the land before you; go in and occupy the land which YHWH swore to your fathers, to Avraham, to Yitzchak (Isaac), and to Ya’aqov (Jacob), to assign to them and to their seed after them.”

In this week's Parasha, YHWH commands Israel at least 8 times to go into His Land and occupy it. Eight is the number of newness. This ought to tell us something very important. As we shall see, many of those commandments to occupy His Land find their fulfillment by obeying His Torah. We will not, and cannot, stay in His land to occupy it without being in full obedience to His commandments (Torah).

Moshe's Burden and Blessing

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 1:9-11

9 "And I spoke to you at that time, saying, 'I am not able to bear you myself alone;

10 YHWH your Elohim has multiplied you, and, behold, you are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude.

11 YHWH, the Elohim of your fathers, make you a thousand times as many as you are, and bless you, as he has promised you!"

This was a very vast multitude of people. Moshe, at one point, was trying to do all the leading himself. He was burning himself out, quickly. Yitro (Jethro), the father-in-law of Moshe, gave Moshe some very sound advice that he followed to the blessing of all Israel.

Considering that Israel was already a great multitude, Moshe asks YHWH to increase them a thousand times more. The census was over 600,000 men, with estimates that range from 2-6 million total people. So a conservative estimate would be around 3 million people (that is not even giving each family an average of four children, so it could have been much higher).

A thousand times more than the census would be 600,000,000 men of war. Then to add their families in, would be somewhere between three billion and six billion people (the current population of the earth). So we have not yet seen this blessing come to pass. It would seem likely that it will be during the Millennium when we will see Israel expand to this degree.

The Leadership

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 1:12-15

12 "How can I alone bear your load, and your burden, and your strife?

13 Take you wise men, and understanding, and known, according to your tribes, and I will make them heads over you.'

14 And you answered me, and said, 'The thing which you have spoken is good to do.'

15 So I took the heads of your tribes, wise men, and known, and made them heads over you, captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds, and captains of fifties, and captains of tens, and officers, according to your tribes."

Again, Moshe reminds them that he could not bear them alone. He reminds them that he appointed captains from among them. Literally, captain is the word “sar” (רָשָׁ). The common understanding of this word is that of a prince. The concept is that these men were natural leaders anyway and Moshe just made it official.

This is much like what will probably happen in the days ahead as the northern kingdom of Israel is reformed into a nation. As the numbers grow, YHWH will raise up and appoint captains of thousands, captains of hundreds, captains of fifties, and captains of tens; along with officers. YHWH must do the raising up and the setting apart for service. Only He knows who is worthy of a leadership position in Israel. Beware of those self-proclaiming individuals who claim to be someone! A true leader in Israel does not need to toot his own horn or ring his own bell, as this truth will readily manifest itself as His chosen leaders deal righteously with His people.

Reminder to Judge Righteously

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 1:16-18

16 “And I charged your judges at that time, saying, ‘Hear between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his brother, and the sojourner that is with him.

17 You shall not respect persons in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike; you shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is Elohim’s; and the cause that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me, and I will hear it.’

18 And I commanded you at that time all the things which you should do.”

Moshe then reminds the people, and in particular, the judges, that they were not to judge with their own thoughts and ideas. Rather they were to have righteous judgment; i.e., they were to judge according to YHWH’s words, the Torah; because the judgment actually belonged to YHWH our Elohim.

Furthermore, in this judgment they were not to show any fear or partiality towards anyone because of their particular circumstances or station in life. Because this admonition follows that they were to judge righteously between brothers and between those who sojourned among them, we can rightly see that those chosen to judge Israel are not to show partiality to the native born Hebrew above a sojourner. There was to be equal justice for all in Israel.

Fear Not!

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 1:21

“Behold, YHWH your Elohim has set the land before you; go up, occupy, as YHWH, the Elohim of your fathers, has spoken to you; fear not, neither be dismayed.”

The Land is His Land. He is an all-consuming fire. The Land will consume the inhabitants that do not obey His Voice!

But, we are not to fear. Rather, we are to listen to His Voice and obey Him. Then and only then can we occupy the Land.

The Spies Remembered

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 1:22-25

22 “And you came near to me every one of you, and said, ‘Let us send men before us, that they may search the land for us, and bring us word again of the way by which we must go up, and the cities to which we shall come.’

23 And the thing pleased me well; and I took twelve men of you, one man for every tribe;

24 and they turned and went up into the hill-country, and came to the valley of Eshcol, and spied it out.

25 And they took of the fruit of the land in their hands, and brought it down to us, and brought us word again, and said, ‘It is a good land which YHWH our Elohim is giving to us.’”

Please note that Moshe is speaking to them as if they were the ones that had gone in and spied out the Land. He is speaking to them as if they were the ones who had rebelled against the commandment of YHWH. Moshe is admonishing the people in this fashion so that they will not be guilty of committing the same sins their fathers had done against YHWH.

Your Fathers Rebelled

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 1:26-28

26 “Yet you would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of YHWH your Elohim;

27 and you murmured in your tents, and said, ‘Because YHWH hated us, he has brought us out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us.

28 Where can we go up? Our brethren have made our hearts melt, saying, “The people are greater and taller than we; the cities are great and fortified up to heaven; and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakim there.””

In the Land at that time there were giants. To look at them was to fear them. They were fearsome warriors, not afraid of anything. There were several races of giants, each and every one of them fearsome to behold. We must remember that these giants were the product of fallen angels having relations with human women and giving birth to men who grew to be giants in stature. The primary characteristics of these giants was not their size, but rather that they were tyrants.

Today in the Land, there are once again giants dwelling. Not the physical kind, but the metaphorical kind, giants of tyranny. How is it possible to overcome these “giants” that kill and maim our people?

Notice in verse 26, that it was rebellion that caused the difficulty before. Likewise, it is the same thing today, a lack of total obedience to His commandments today, that the problem with the “giants” persists. If we want to get rid of the giants, then we need to hear and obey His Voice. Only then will we be able to rid the land of this heinous plague of giants that infests the land of our fathers.

Do Not Fear the Giants

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 1:29-31

29 “Then I said to you, ‘Dread not, neither be afraid of them.

30 YHWH your Elohim who goes before you, he will fight for you, according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your eyes,

31 and in the wilderness, where you have seen how that YHWH your Elohim bore you, as a man bears his son, in all the way that you went, until you came to this place.”

YHWH promised to fight the battles of Israel.

The thing that YHWH expected in return was for Israel to listen to and obey His Voice in all matters. They were to obey all of Torah. If they would do that very simple matter, then they would be victorious.

If they chose not to obey Him, then they would be defeated by the giants.

It is a simple matter of obedience. If we obey Him and listen to His Voice, then He will fight for us and thus He will defeat them. Without hearing and obeying His Voice we cannot and will not have victory in His land. It is absolutely essential to seek His face and obey His Voice to us, otherwise we have no hope of victory. However, if we do hear and obey His voice, YHWH assures us of victory.

Unbelief Results in Disobedience

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 1:32

“Yet in this thing you did not believe YHWH your Elohim.”

If we truly desire to be blessed by YHWH, then we must believe Him in all things.

When He commands us that we are not to bring His Name into nothingness, then we should not do that.

When He commands us to keep all of His commandments, then we should keep all of His commandments.

There is a very intimate relationship between what one believes and what one does. We will examine this in more detail shortly.

His Daily Presence

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 1:33

“who went before you in the way, to seek you out a place to pitch your tents, in fire by night, to show you by what way you should go, and in the cloud by day.”

From the moment that Israel left Egypt, YHWH was leading them with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. At all times they could see the visible reminder of His constant Presence with them.

Yet in spite of this constant visible reminder of His presence, they still chose to rebel against His Voice and disobey His commandments. This is pretty hard to fathom and we tend to think harshly of them for doing this. Yet, how many times have we done something as equally unfathomable? Has He not given us of His Spirit? Does His Spirit not dwell in us day and night? Is His Spirit not a constant reminder of His presence in our lives? Yet, how many times do we do things that are against His will as we seek our own way?

Moshe reminds them that they should be careful to obey because while their fathers had this visible reminder in all their travels and encampments, it did not seem to help them walk in obedience to YHWH.

How much more careful do they need to be after going into the Land when they each settle into that portion that is assigned to them and they will not be able to see the visible Presence every day? Surely they need to be that much more watchful to keep and do all of His commandments.

Reminder of YHWH’s Anger

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 1:34-40

34 “And YHWH heard the voice of your words, and was angry, and swore, saying,

35 ‘Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see the good Land, which I swore to assign to your fathers,

36 except Calev the son of Yephunneh; he shall see it; and to him will I give the land that he has trodden upon, and to his children, because he has wholly followed YHWH.'

37 Also YHWH was angry with me for your sakes, saying, 'You also shall not go in;

38 Yehoshua (Joshua) the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall go in; encourage him; for he shall cause Israel to divide it.

39 Moreover your little ones, that you said should be a prey, and your children, that this day have no knowledge of good or evil, they shall go in, and to them will I give it, and they shall occupy it.

40 But as for you, turn you, and take your journey into the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea.'"

All those that had rebelled and sinned against YHWH have all perished in the wilderness by the time that Moshe is speaking this words to the people. They are all dead. Their children are adults and have all taken up the mantle of leadership in Israel.

Yet Moshe is speaking to them as if they personally had committed the rebellious acts against YHWH.

He seems to be admonishing them not to be puffed up and to be careful not to fall into the same sin as their parents did before them.

Presumptuous Sin

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 1:41-45

41 "Then you answered and said to me, 'We have sinned against YHWH, we will go up and fight, according to all that YHWH our Elohim commanded us.' And you girded on every man his weapons of war, and went forward to go up into the hill-country.

42 And YHWH said to me, 'Say to them, "Go not up, neither fight; for I am not among you; lest you be smitten before your enemies.'"

43 "So I spoke to you, and you listened not; but you rebelled against the commandment of YHWH, and were presumptuous, and went up into the hill-country.

44 And the Amorites, that dwelt in that hill-country, came out against you, and chased you, as bees do, and beat you down in Seir, even to Hormah.

45 And you returned and wept before YHWH; but YHWH listened not to your voice, nor gave ear to you."

Going into His Land without His direction is disastrous.

After attempting to do this on their own, and being soundly defeated, they returned to YHWH and wept before Him. But He would not listen to their voice. After all, why should He listen to their voice when they had refused to listen to His Voice?

Do we expect YHWH to jump at our every prayer? What right do we have to expect such a thing? Is He not the Master and we His servants? Shouldn't we be the ones that jump when He speaks? To be sure!

We need to act upon His commandments in a timely manner so that it does not hinder the flow of His blessings.

Moshe also reminds them of the different kings (people groups) that they defeated and which ones that they were not to harass. These are found in chapters two and three.

The Cycle of Hardness of Heart

In the midst of all these reminders of their past sins, we find a very informative passage.

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 1:32

"Yet in this thing you did not believe YHWH your Elohim."

YHWH had Moshe speak these words to instruct us in righteousness.

The writer of Ivrim (Hebrews) also states this very same Truth.

Ivrim [Hebrew] 3:19

And so we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

What caused them to not be able to enter into the Land? Scripture teaches us it was because of their unbelief.

But this is not the end of the story. Consider this passage as well.

Ivrim [Hebrews] 4:6

Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience.

Please note that in Ivrim 3:19, we are told that those who died in the wilderness (because of rebellion) were not able to enter His Land because of unbelief.

Then Ivrim 4:6 tells us that they were not able to enter because of disobedience.

So which is it?

Actually it is both. Here is how it plays out.

It is the mind of man that controls his actions. As he thinks in his heart, so is he. If a person refuses to believe what YHWH has said (shema His Voice), then the resulting action will naturally be disobedience.

Unbelief will always result in disobedience. Disobedience will always result in more unbelief. Unbelief results in disobedience, disobedience then results in more unbelief, which results in more disobedience, and so on.

This is the cycle of hardness. This cycle can only be broken in one way – true repentance.

When a person truly repents of his unbelieving Torah-breaking disobedience, then he will begin to believe what YHWH has spoken and the result will be Torah-keeping (obedience).

This is also a cycle, a good cycle. As unbelief results in disobedience, likewise true belief in Him results in obedience to Him. This, of course, results in more belief, which results in more obedience.

Which cycle are you in, the cycle of hardening or the cycle of brokenness (obedience)?

An Example

Qorintyah Aleph (1st Corinthians) 10:11

Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

Brethren, the example that was recorded for our instruction is an example of what not to do. In that previous generation they did not believe YHWH, nor obey His Voice. We are not to follow that example.

Rather, we are to hear and obey His Voice. It is only in this way that we will be able to enter into the Land and occupy it.

Please note that in the above passage he is writing and speaking particularly to our generation, the generation that would set up His Kingdom upon this earth and we bring to pass the prayer: “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.”

Final Question

Do you believe YHWH?

I mean, do you really believe YHWH?

Are there ways in which you are aware of that you are not living in obedience to Him?

If that is true, what are you going to do about it?

If you are not going to obey YHWH in all His commandments, then do you really believe Him? Are you one of those who looks for ways to get out of doing His commandments? Who seeks to find Scriptures so that you do not have to obey His Voice?

The Hebrew way is one of doing, one of action; so prove yourself to be a doer of the word (James 1:22).

ABBA YHWH, as your people, we choose to believe you in all things that we might in turn live our lives in obedience to You, Your Voice and Your Torah. Please make us active Kingdom builders so that we may return to the Land promised to our fathers before us; in the Name of Yeshua our Mashiach. Amein.

Shabbat Shalom

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