



Devarim

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 1:1- 3:22

With *Devarim*, we begin the fifth and final book of the *Chumash* (the Five Books of Moses). As *Devarim* begins, the Jewish people are situated on the east side of the Jordan River, waiting for the moment when they will begin the conquest of *Eretz Yisrael*.

The Book of *Devarim* is actually a collection of three farewell discourses given by Moses to the new generation of Israelites. The first of these discourses begins in this *Shabbat's Parshah* and concludes in the middle of next week's *Parshah*. Each of these speeches has a particular theme and message. This first one serves as a retrospective of the 40 year journey from Mt. Sinai to Moab (1:6-3:29) as well as an exhortation to maintain faith in G-d (4:1-4:40).

Moses recalled G-d's commandment to the Israelites at Mount Horeb telling them to begin their long march which would culminate in the conquest of Canaan. Later, arriving at Kadesh Barnea, the Children of Israel had been instructed to attack Canaan and take possession of the hill country of the Amorites. Instead, they had urged that spies be sent to ascertain conditions in the land. Angered by their response and their lack of faith, G-d had decreed that, apart from Caleb and Joshua, only their children who "this day have no knowledge of good or evil" would enter the Promised Land. Moses then reminds them that the people ignored Moses' warning against any further defiance of G-d's will. They attacked Canaan and were heavily defeated. Only after many years' wandering were they able to advance through the lands of the Edomites, the Moabites and the Ammonites, all of whom they were admonished not to engage in battle.

This *Shabbat* is known as *Shabbat Chazon*, the name given to the *Shabbat* immediately preceding the observance of *Tisha B'av*, (the 9th of *Av*), the saddest day of the year. On *Tisha B'av* we commemorate the destruction, on two separate occasions, of our Holy Temple, as well as other national calamities, which have befallen the Jewish people on the same date throughout the years.



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