

דְּבָרִים

DEVARIM/WORDS

Devarim/Deuteronomy 1:1-3:22

The Torah portion for this week, the first reading from the book of Devarim (Deuteronomy), is always read during the last week of the three weeks of mourning between 17th of Tammuz and the 9th of Av. The 9th of Av is said to be the **saddest day in history**. It is the day the **10 spies** gave their **bad report of the land** leading to יהוה's (Yahweh) decree that the **first generation of Israelites would not enter the Promised Land**. It is the day that the **First Temple was destroyed** in 586 B.C.E. and the day the **Second Temple was destroyed** in 70 C.E. There are many, many other tragic incidents that have continued to occur on this date throughout history.

So is there a **connection** between this **time of mourning** and our **Torah portion**? One of the most **unknown principals** in the **worship of יהוה** is that one should **repent of one's sins, and the sins of one's forefathers before drawing near to the Almighty**. This **double repentance** is also what brings about יהוה's action concerning His **promise of the Land**:

Vayikra (Leviticus 26:40) 'But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, and that they also have walked contrary to Me,⁴¹ if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt - -⁴² then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land.'

It was in keeping with this basic precept, that **Moses reproved the people in chapter 1 of Devarim by reminding them of the failures of the first generation in mistrusting and disobeying Elohim** which led to their **deaths** in the wilderness. Both our **Parasha** and **present-day remembrances** on the **9th of Av recall our past sins** in order to move us towards **repentance**. By **learning from their mistakes** and **repenting** of them, we put ourselves in a **position to be "remembered"** by יהוה. As a result, He will **act on the covenant** He made with our forefathers and "**remember the land**" of our **inheritance**.

Deuteronomy literally means "**Second Law**." This is not to imply that a "**First**" Law is being replaced by a "**Second**". What is happening here is Moses is "**repeating**" Torah principles to the **children of the generation that rejected the Promised Land** and ended up **dying** in the wilderness. The rabbis call this book **Mishneh haTorah** (משנה התורה):

Devarim 17:18 "Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this Torah (תּוֹרַה מִשְׁנָה) in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites.

Devarim simply means "**words**" and comes from the first verse:

Devarim 1:1 These are the words (דְּבָרִים) which Moses spoke to all Israel on this side of the Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain opposite Suph, between Paran, Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab.

The eloquent **words** (**מֹלְבָד**) of Moses make up nearly the entire book of Devarim. Quite a change from how Moses began his ministry to the Israelites:

*Shemot (Exodus) 4:10 Then Moses said to יְהוָה, "O my Adonai, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech (**מַלְבָד**) and slow of tongue."*

The same man who said, “I am **slow of speech**” (words - **מַלְבָד**) now takes up a whole book with “**these are the words**” (**מִלְבָד**)!!

This commentary will mainly focus on **one verse**. Let’s take another look at Devarim 1:1 and our interest will be on the **location**:

*Devarim 1:1 These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel on this side of the **Jordan in the wilderness**, in the plain opposite Suph, between Paran, Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab.*

The Israelites are on the **east side of the Jordan**, still in the wilderness. Much **testing** and many **acts of rebellion** have already occurred here. This is where Israelite men indulged in **sexual immorality** with Moabite women. A **plague** occurred as a result, ending when **Pinchas put his sword through the Midianite woman and the Simeonite leader**. A **census** was taken for the purpose of serving in the army of Israel, and it was here that **Moses proclaimed the authority of Joshua**. It was also here that **Moses reviewed the commands concerning offerings and festivals**. Moses then instituted the **laws concerning vows**. From this location, they took **vengeance on the Midianites**. Also, from here the **Gadites, Reubenites, and ½ tribe of Manasseh were assigned land on the east side of the Jordan**. Now all of these things happened as **preparation for entrance into the Land**. One can only meditate on how these things **relate to our future entrance into the Promised Land**.

Now, the **Jordan River** itself is very significant. It has **four sources**:

- **Mount Hermon** – comes through a spring at Banias
- **The Hasbani stream** which flows from Lebanon
- **The Dan springs** whose source is also Mount Heron
- **The Iyon stream** which flows from Lebanon

The **river drops rapidly** in a 75 kilometer run to the Hula Lake which is **slightly below sea level** in the Galilee area. Then it **drops much more to 690 feet below sea level** at the **Sea of Galilee**. The river continues out of the Sea of Galilee and **falls till it reaches the Dead Sea which is 1,290 feet below sea level (lowest place on earth) and has no outlet**. You should take note that this River has run the gamut from the **clear, clean mountain water** to the **dead and lifeless water** ending at the **Dead Sea**.

There are various meanings of the word “**Jordan**”. We will explore a few of them. Remember in Hebrew way of thinking, **more than one thought can be correct**. Most scholars contend that the word **Jordan** originates from the verb **yarad** (יָרַד) meaning “**to descend**”. Thus the meaning of the **Jordan** becomes “**the descender**”. There is an **inherent emotion** in the word of **moving from a**

place of prominence to one of lesser importance. For example “**to go down to Egypt**” has the overtone of leaving the Promised Land to dwell among people outside the covenant:

Isaiah 31:1 *Woe to those who go down (תַּלְוָה) to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek יְהֹוָה!*

Conversely, “**to go up**” or “**to ascend**”, was to **alah** (עָלָה). Today people who immigrate to Israel are said to make “**aliyah**” (עַלִּיהָ). In the Scriptures, we see it in reference to “**going up to Jerusalem**”:

Ezra 1:3 *Who is among you of all His people? May his Elohim be with him, and let him go up (עַלְתָּה) to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of יְהֹוָה Elohim of Israel (He is Elohim), which is in Jerusalem.*

Now back to the **Jordan and descending**...the question begs to be asked – **what are we descending from?** The last part of the Hebrew word for **Jordan** (יְהוּדָה) is **dan** (דָן) which means “**judgment**.¹ Could the Jordan River symbolize a river that “**descends with judgment?**” Remember that one of the **sources** of the river itself is from **springs in Dan**. Consider also how the **flow of the river takes one from the mountains, downward to the lowest point in the earth** where it suddenly **dead-ends**.

The **Jordan River** in our Torah reading posed a **barrier from entering the Promised Land**. How would they be able to stop the **flow of judgments**? The only way was to **stop the flow of the Jordan River!** Well, **only the Almighty could do that** and that is exactly what we will see happen in the book of **Joshua**. יְהֹוָה stopped the flow of the River at a place called **Adam**:

Joshua 3:16 *that the waters which came down from upstream stood still, and rose in a heap very far away at Adam, the city that is beside Zaretan. So the waters that went down into the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, failed, and were cut off; and the people crossed over opposite Jericho.*

The city of **Adam** is **18 miles upstream of where the people are waiting to cross**. It is certainly **not a coincidence** that this is the spot where יְהֹוָה chose to stop the flow of the Jordan River. If the **Jordan** represents the **flow of Elohim’s judgment**, then the Jordan ceasing its flow from **Adam** would mean that **the Almighty has chosen to stop the flow of judgment going all the way back to the first man!**

To take part in the promises and the inheritance of Yah, the **flow of judgment has to end**. We know that **this happened through Yeshua the Messiah** and it is no coincidence that **the one to take the Israelites across the River Jordan was Yehoshua (Joshua)**, whose name means “**Yah is Salvation!**” **Baruch HaShem יְהֹוָה!!! (Blessed be the name of יְהֹוָה!!!)**

Now we need to be reminded that **those who were disobedient were not permitted entrance into the Land**. Many of the **second generation** had already **died through the various events** that took

place prior to our reading in Devarim. **Only the obedient ones who wholeheartedly acknowledged יְהוָה as their Adonai would enter in and receive their inheritance.**

Okay, we will look now at another definition for the word “**Jordan**.” Before we get there we will have to consider the word “**mikveh**” (מִקְוֵה) from which we understand the English word “**baptism**.” Literally, mikveh mayim means a “**gathering of waters**” (מִקְוֵה הַמֵּים):

Bereshith (Genesis) 1:9 Then Elohim said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so.¹⁰ And Elohim called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters (מִקְוֵה מְיֹם) He called Seas. And Elohim saw that it was good.

It is through these **waters** that one is **brought to purity**, which is a **requirement to fellowship with יְהוָה**. **Purity of heart** is also a **requirement to dwell with Elohim** in the **renewed Garden of Eden** in the future:

Psalm 24:3 Who may ascend (עַל־עַל) into the hill of יהוה? Or who may stand in His holy place?⁴ He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully.⁵ He shall receive blessing from יהוה, And righteousness from Elohim of his salvation.⁶ This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, Who seek Your face.

Another meaning ascribed to the word **Jordan** comes from a **contraction of the Hebrew meaning “descending from Eden”** (ירד .עַד). It was a **spring-fed stream of living water** that flowed out from **Eden to water the earth...and flowing into every river on earth** (including the **Jordan River**):

Bereshith 2:10 Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads.

The **Mishneh** (Jewish oral commentary on the Torah written down in 200 C.E.) speaks of **six levels of immersion by mikvaot** (plural for mikveh). Each is for a particular kind of **ritual purification**, required at specific times. **John the baptizer** was only involved with the **baptism of repentance** which is also the **highest level of mikveh**:

Luke 3:3 And he (John the Baptizer) went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,

Now remember that in our Parasha in Devarim, Moses is relating to the people **their past, implying the need for corporate repentance due to the sins of their forefathers**. Then very shortly, they will **walk through the Jordan River**. This is the **same area** where hundreds of years later, John will be **baptizing for repentance!**

John 1:28 These things were done in Bethabara **beyond the Jordan**, where John was **baptizing**.

John is **baptizing Israelites in the Jordan....in the same area where we have the children of Israel about to walk through the Jordan River to enter into the Promised Land!** Did John pick this site so that the people would, following their **repentance**, be **immersed in the Jordan?** This is a **repeat of the very footsteps of those following Joshua into the Promised Land!** Notice another **similarity.** When Joshua took them through the Jordan, look what was in the middle of the river:

Joshua 3:17 Then the priests who bore the Ark of the Covenant of יְהוָה stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Israel crossed over on dry ground, until all the people had crossed completely over the Jordan.

Just as the **Ark of the Covenant** containing the **written Word of יהוה** stood in the **midst of the Jordan**, so the **Living Word** also stood in the **midst of the living waters of the Jordan** as the people who were **repentant**, followed in His footsteps by being **immersed**:

Matthew 3:13 Then Yeshua came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him.

The Pharisees also understood this **identification** with the **Jordan, repentance, and entry into the Promised Land.** John was immersing the **repentant multitudes** who had come to him in **preparation for the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement.**

The **Pharisees** sent priests and Levites to question John as to whether he was the **Messiah, the Prophet** (Devarim 18:15) or **Elijah** (John 1:19-26) because the Israelites had a **tradition that no one could perform immersion in the Jordan River except one of those individuals.** Immersion in the Jordan was a sign of the coming of the Messiah.

Just as the Israelites had crossed over into the Promised Land with Joshua, the **tradition** held that the **Promised Land would not be fully occupied** and enjoyed by the Israelites **until the Messiah came** to rule and reign on the earth. Now, with this understanding of their **traditions**, you can see why they asked John the Baptizer the **questions** that they did:

John 1:19 Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"²⁰ He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah."²¹ And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."²² Then they said to him, "Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?"²³ He said: "I am 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Make straight the way of יהוה,' as the prophet Isaiah said."²⁴ Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees.²⁵ And they asked him, saying, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"²⁶ John answered them, saying, "I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know.

John's immersion was an outward sign of a **mysterious inward change** that enabled **repentant individuals** to enter an **elevated state of purity.** The one immersed would be **ready to receive the Spirit of Elohim** so that he could enter the **Kingdom of Yah** (compare with the **Promised Land**):

John 3:5 Yeshua answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of Yah.

Keeping in mind the reoccurring subject of **repentance**, let's take a look at a **midrash Yeshua made**, when He compared **John the Baptizer** to **Elijah**:

Matthew 11:10 "For this is he of whom it is written: '**Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.**'

Yeshua was quoting from **Malachi**:

Malachi 3:1 "**Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me.** And the Adonai, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," Says יְהוָה of hosts.

Remember in the **first century**, there were **no chapter numbers or verses** in the Hebrew Scriptures. If a person wanted to **reference Scripture**, he would **quote a phrase**. For those who were educated in the Hebrew Scriptures, they would understand a quote to mean not only the phrase, but **everything in context with that phrase**. Therefore, Yeshua was not only speaking of Malachi 3:1, but also what surrounds it. Malachi speaks of people in the end times **repenting and returning**. Returning to what? **Returning to Torah!**

Malachi 3:6 "For I am יְהוָה, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.⁷ Yet from the days of your fathers You have gone away from My ordinances And have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," Says יְהוָה of hosts....¹⁶ Then those who feared יְהוָה spoke to one another, And יְהוָה listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear יְהוָה And who meditate on His name.¹⁷ "They shall be Mine," says יְהוָה of hosts, "On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them As a man spares his own son who serves him."¹⁸ Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked, Between one who serves Elohim And one who does not serve Him.... **4:12** "Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, With the statutes and judgments.⁵ **Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of יְהוָה.**⁶ And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."

Now you may be surprised to learn that **Elijah also parted the Jordan River** in the same location as that of our Torah portion. Elijah was a prophet who understood that the nation of Israel had a mission to **preserve its religious system – the worship of the one true Elohim – in a pure form without any mixture with idol worship**. He taught Israel's responsibility for **total commitment**. In 2 Kings we read of Elijah passing on his ministry to **Elisha**. In the same location, **Elijah is taken by chariot up to heaven**. We also see that **Elisha** begins his ministry with his first **miracle...the parting of the Jordan River**:

2 Kings 2:8 Now Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water; and it was divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground....¹¹ Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven....¹³ He also took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and

stood by the bank of the Jordan.¹⁴ Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, "Where is יהוה Elohim of Elijah?" And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over.

Hmmm...this location on the **east side of the Jordan** seems to be a **very significant place** throughout Israel's history. **The Jordan River** itself seems to be full of **symbolism**. Let's see if we can pull back and see **an even greater picture**. To do that we'll have to go back to the **very beginning**:

Bereshith 2:10 Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden...

Now what was in the **middle of the garden** being **watered** by a **river**?

Bereshith 2:9 And out of the ground יהוה Elohim made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The Tree of Life was also in the midst of the garden...

Adam was able to eat of the Tree of Life, but commanded **not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil**:

Bereshith 2:16 And יהוה Elohim commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;¹⁷ **"but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."**

It was the custom of יהוה Elohim to **walk with Adam and Eve** in the garden in the cool of the day. However, **after they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil**, they were **no longer blessed with His Presence**:

Bereshith 3:8 And they heard the sound of יהוה Elohim walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of יהוה Elohim among the trees of the garden.... And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" --²³ therefore יהוה Elohim sent him out of the garden of Eden....

Totally **by grace**, thousands of years later, יהוה established a **Tabernacle** which was **His appointed place for man to meet with Him once again**:

Shemot 25:8 "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.

The sages taught that the **tabernacle** was a **miniature Garden of Eden**, totally devoted to the service of Yah. Everything that had anything to do with **man's fallen state** was to be **excluded**. The **tabernacle** was to be a place of **purity and holiness**. Those who had become **defiled** by contracting certain diseases, having various fluid discharges, association with a corpse, etc., were **required to be immersed in a mikveh...in living water...** before entering. Such an **immersion** represented a **change in state from unclean to pure**. The picture is that of one **losing his contamination from the world of sin**, through the **living water that flows from the Garden of Eden**, so that he might once more have **fellowship with Elohim**. Note all the implications of Yeshua being this "**living water**" that initiates from the **Garden of Eden** and brings one to **purity**.

Later, the **heavenly pattern for the Temple** to be built in Jerusalem was given. **Yeshua** ascended into the **heavens to prepare a place for us**. That prepared place, after which the **Tabernacle and the Temple** were patterned after, will come down from the **heavens to a renewed earth**. It will be called the **New Jerusalem** and it will be a **return to Eden**. There we will again eat of the **Tree of Life** and drink of the living water!

Revelation 21:1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.² Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from Yah, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.³ And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of Yah is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. Yah Himself will be with them and be their Adonai.

Revelation 22:1 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of Yah and of the Lamb.² In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the Tree of Life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.³ And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of Yah and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.

So, as you can see, we have made the **full circle from Eden to Eden**. Maybe what was not so obvious in these verses **from Genesis to Revelation** was that the completed circle depended on **repentance** i.e., **return to Torah**. Impurity that requires an **immersion by mikvah** (baptism) primarily involves the **soul**. All sin, all death and imperfection is a result of the sin of Adam. To be "**born again**" represents being **immersed in the living waters of Eden**. By the **physical**, we picture the **spiritual**...being **born again through the water of the Word**, which is the **Spirit of the Messiah**:

John 3:3 Yeshua answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of Yah."⁴ Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"⁵ Yeshua answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of Yah."⁶ "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

The **immersion by mikveh** represents both the **womb and the grave**. In an **immersion**, the individual enters the **world of the non-living (grave/womb)** since he ceases to breathe under the water. Then he **emerges from the grave (womb)**, his soul having been **overwhelmed by the Spirit of Yah**:

Matthew 3:16 When He had been baptized, Yeshua came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of Yah descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.

His **ascending out of the waters** represents His **resurrection**. When we **identify with Him**, we also **resurrect** and leave behind that **body of sin**. The level of **purity** that we have attained enables us to **keep the Torah** and enter into the **Kingdom of fellowship with Him**:

Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?² Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?³ Or do you not know that

as many of us as were baptized into Messiah Yeshua were baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Messiah was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. ⁷ For he who has died has been freed from sin.

Since these verses say that we are done with **sin**, let's make sure we know **what sin is**:

1 John 3:4 Whoever commits sin also commits Torahlessness, and sin is Torahlessness.

Okay, I have “one more thing.” The Israelites crossed over two bodies of water on their way to the Promised Land – **the Red Sea and the Jordan River**. Both times, miraculously, they crossed over on dry ground. When they crossed over the **Red Sea**, they witnessed the “**salvation of יהוה**”:

Shemot 14:13 And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation (Yeshua - עֵשָׂו) of יהוה, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever.

יהוה was asking them to place their **trust in Him** in the midst of impossible circumstances. They simply had to believe that יהוה could deliver them, and He presented **salvation (Yeshua)** to them to part the sea and cross over on dry ground. It was **not a physical act**, but **trust in Him** that accomplished this. **Crossing the Red Sea** pictures the **born again** experience of salvation.

The second “**crossing over**” happens 40 years later when the Israelites **cross over into the Promised Land**. Any who had been **disobedient or rebellious** were **not able to cross over into the Land**. All of the incidents we have been reading of for the past several weeks have been about **weeding out those who were not wholeheartedly acknowledging יהוה** as their Adonai. This difference is important, friends. As individuals, we may have **crossed over the Red Sea** (that is we've been born again)....but to fully enter into the inheritance and the promises of Yah, we **still have the Jordan to cross**. We will cross over that River **together, no longer as individuals**, but as the united body of **Israel**, i.e., the bride of Messiah. To prepare for that we must **repent, obey**, and cease to be **rebellious**:

James 1:22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

The stage is being set as יהוה has begun to act on behalf of His people. The **brothers of the tribes of Israel** are **recognizing each other** and coming together. Yes, there are problems, but יהוה is in this and **it will happen**. People are recognizing the need for **repenting** and also **repenting for the Torahlessness of their ancestors**. Our Abba is in the process of **bringing His loved ones home**:

Isaiah 46:11 ... Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it.

Shabbat Shalom!

Ardelle