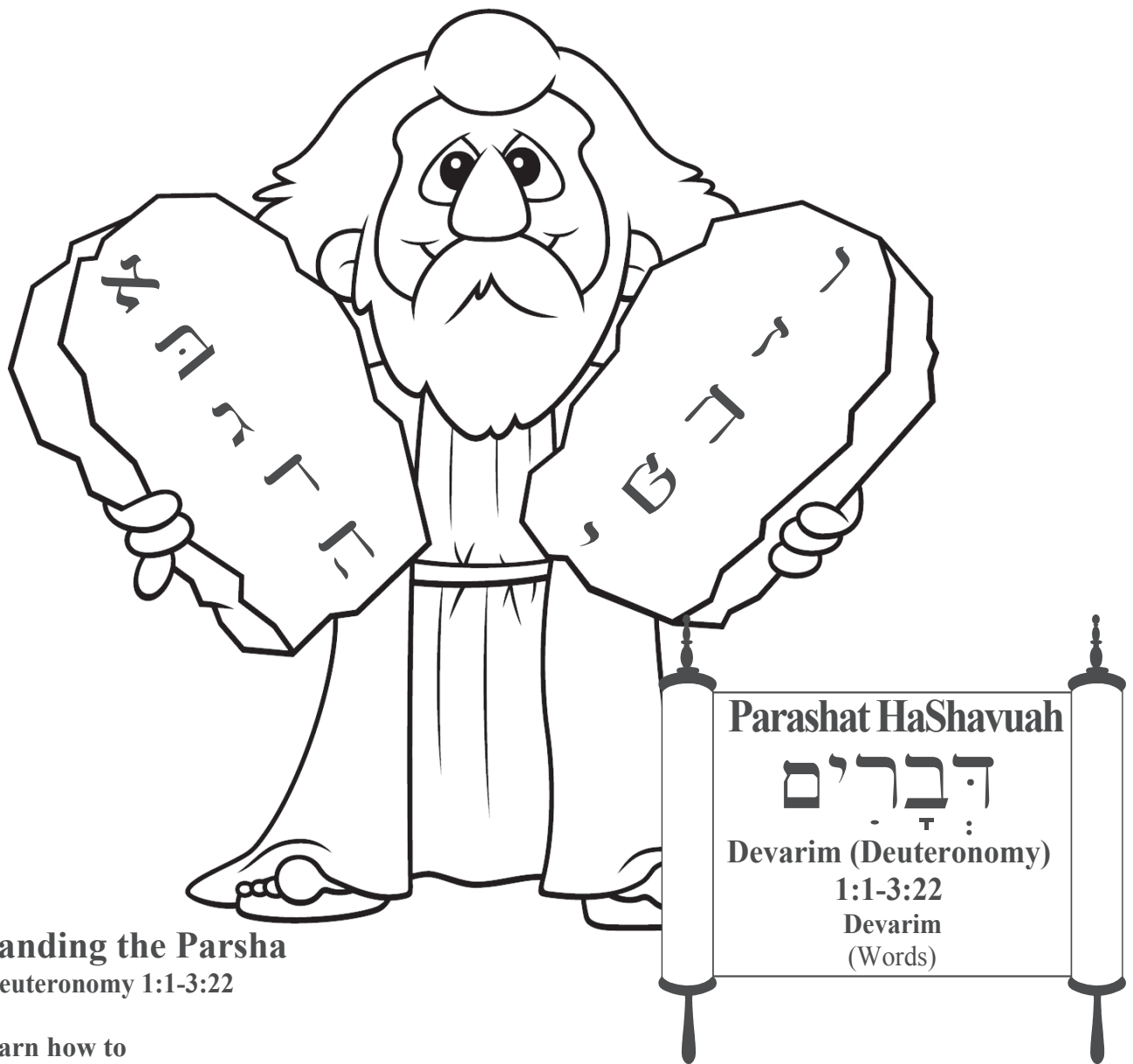




Understanding the Parsha

Devarim Deuteronomy 1:1-3:22

We will Learn how to

- 1) **interpret the main theme (subject) of a Parsha** (weekly reading from the Torah),
- 2) **make thematic connections to that Parsha** (study the Scriptures related by a common theme [subject], line upon line and precept upon precept)
- 3) **learn how to gain greater understanding of the Parsha we are looking at through its thematic connections to other portions of Scripture.**

Understanding the Book of Devarim

Objective—Understand the literary structure of the book of Devarim.

A Series of Speeches

We will begin this week's study by showing you some background information that I've gathered from articles of some of the Rabbis I read on a regular basis. Most of my extra information comes from the Rabbis at Har Etzion Yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael (<http://www.vbm-torah.org/index.html>) and from The Tanach Study Center (<http://www.tanach.org/>). Har Etzion is a Yeshiva (house of study) in Israel. They have numerous levels of on-line courses available to the public. One of the benefits of studying the Torah from Jewish sources is having the opportunity to be exposed to the wisdom of the great Torah teachers of Judaism. Many of the great Torah scholars such as RASHI, RAMBAM, RASHBAM, RAMBAN, Ibn Ezra, etc., have put together, being very

careful of details an analysis of the Torah. This is invaluable to us because as non-Jewish believers, most of us have many different handicaps when we study the Torah. The culture, worldview, language, idioms(a meaning that is different from the literal meaning), and geography of the Torah (and much more) are totally alien to most of us. These men are very familiar with all of these things concerning the Torah, especially the language; so, they are able to give information to us that would take a lifetime for us to discover on our own. With that as a short introduction, let's see what we can gather from the collective wisdom of the sages of Israel and the modern Rabbis of Judaism.



You will be fascinated to discover that the book of Devarim is actually four different speeches delivered by Moses to Am Yisrael (the people of Israel) a few weeks before his death. And how do we know that this book is four speeches? For the most part, the other books of the Torah are written in third person, or narrative style. However, Devarim is unique because it is mostly written in first person! By simply reading the book and paying attention to when the story switches between first and third person, you can figure out that Moses actually gave four separate and distinct speeches. Let's see how this works.

Look at Devarim 1:1-7. Which of these first seven verses is spoken in third person singular. Then, can you figure out which verse begins the first speech in first person singular?

The first f_{ive} verses are written in third person singular, the normal narrative mode.

Verse S_{ix} is the first sentence of the first speech because it uses first person singular.

How long does this speech last?

It lasts until Devarim 4:₄₀.

That's right. We know the first speech ends in Devarim 4:40 because verse forty is the last verse spoken in the first person singular. Do you see how Devarim 4:41 switches back to third person singular! So, Devarim 1:6-4:40, is Moses' first speech. Simple, yet amazing!

If we continue using this process—of seeing when the text switches from third to first person and first to third person—throughout the book of Devarim, we can make our outline of Moses' speeches. Draw a line from the Scripture reference to the correct topic to create your study outline:

Scripture Reference	Topic
Devarim 1-4	Tochacha (Admonition)
Devarim 5-26	Teshuvah (Repentance)
Devarim 27-28	Introductory Speech
Devarim 29-30	Main Speech

The key verse in understanding Moses' purpose for his speeches is found in Devarim 5:1.

And Moses called all Israel, and said to them: "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your hearing today, that you may learn them and be careful to observe them (Devarim 5:1)."

We can see, his purpose is to **review** statutes and judgments so that Am Yisrael will obey them. So what are these statutes and judgments he's going to talk about?

Read Devarim 5:1-6:3. In these verses, Moses reminds them of the sealing of the covenant and the revelation of the Ten Commandments. Notice what happens in Devarim 5:23-31! The people decided that they did not want to hear any more commandments directly from the Holy One because they feared for their lives! **What was the solution? Pay very, very close attention to Devarim 5:31!**

But as for you, stand here by Me, and I will speak to you all the commandments [the entire commandment], the statutes, and the judgments which **you** (Moses) shall teach them, that they may observe them in the land which I am giving them to possess (Devarim 5:31) .

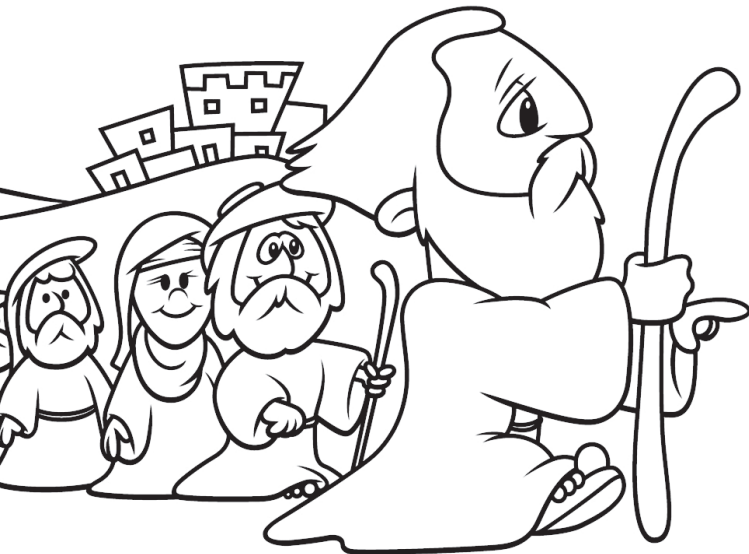
The phrase, "all the commandments" is not the best translation. If you have a Chumash, you will see that the Hebrew is "כל המצודה" which is literally interpreted, "the entire commandment." A better translation would be:

...and I shall speak to you the entire commandment, and the statutes, and the judgments that **you** shall teach them... (Devarim 5:31)

More importantly, did you notice the phrase, "the statutes, and the judgments." Do you see what is happening here? Moses told them in Devarim 5:1 that he wants them to listen to the statutes and judgments that he is about to give them. Then he went on to retell WHEN and HOW those statutes and judgments were given— pay attention to the way he used these two words. Devarim 5:31 tells us that the statutes and judgments were given directly to Moses, who was supposed to tell them to the people because the people were afraid to hear any more. In other words, had the people not been afraid, the Holy One would have continued giving them the statutes and judgments after finishing with the Ten Commandments! So, now we know that the statutes and judgments Moses is about to give Am Yisrael were the same statutes and judgments given to him on Mount Sinai.

Now read Devarim 6:1.

Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess... (Devarim 6:1) "



Once again, the English translation is far from perfect. A better translation would be:

This is the commandment, and the statutes and the judgments that...(Devarim 6:1)

The important point to see is the structure of the sentence. It matches perfectly with Devarim 5:31. We know that Devarim 5:31 is about Adonai's plan when the Torah was given— Moses will receive the Holy One's commandment, statutes and judgments and later pass them on to the people. Devarim 6:1 tells us what Moses is about to teach the new generation poised to enter the Land— the Holy One's

commandment, statutes and judgments. In this manner we know that the commandment, statutes and judgments Moses is about to teach Am Yisrael are the same ones originally given to Am Yisrael at Mount Sinai.



Can you find the words from this Parsha?

C	N	S	T	N	E	M	G	D	U	J	D
A	O	M	U	R	I	T	E	R	R	E	E
M	B	M	R	H	O	L	Y	O	N	E	V
Y	S	L	M	A	R	E	M	P	T	I	A
I	E	S	T	A	T	U	T	E	S	C	R
S	R	O	S	N	N	I	E	S	R	H	I
R	V	E	I	A	U	D	S	O	J	H	M
A	E	P	N	Y	I	S	M	A	E	C	H
E	A	L	A	N	D	U	M	E	E	A	S
L	A	A	I	K	N	U	M	B	N	E	S
M	O	S	E	S	N	U	M	B	E	T	S

MOSES
 DEVARIM
 COMMANDMENT
 STATUTES
 JUDGMENTS
 MT SINAI
 AM YISRAEL
 HOLY ONE
 TEACH
 LAND
 OBSERVE