# Devarim: Devarim (Deuteronomy)

## What's it all about?



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This week's parsha kicks off the Torah's final book, the Book of Devarim, or Deuteronomy. The Greek word means "second law," and the book, appropriately, consists of Moses's repetition of the Torah to the assembled Israelites, beginning on the first day of the month of Shevat, 37 days before his death.

**Moses reviews the 40-year history of the people**, from the Exodus to the present, rebuking the Israelites for their failures and commanding them to keep the Torah and its mitzvot. He recalls the appointment of judges to ease his burden, the journey through the wilderness, the dispatch of the spies to the Promised Land, and God's decree that the faithless Israelites spend four decades in the desert before entering Canaan. He also recounts more recent events, like the refusal of the Moabites and Ammonites to let the Israelites pass through their countries, the wars against the Emorites, and the settlement of land requests by the tribes of Reuben and Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh. Finally, **Moses instructs his successor, Joshua, to lead the battle for the conquest of the Promised Land .**

"“Fear them not, for the Lord your G-d, He shall fight for you.”"

# **Take** a deeper dive

In Hebrew, the final book of the Torah, Deuteronomy, is called Devarim, which could be loosely translated as "spoken things." Which is a bit curious, given that the speaker, Moses, was known for being *k'vad peh ve'lashon*, heavy of tongue and mouth, or, in short, a stutterer.

Why did Moses stutter? As Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel, better known as the Maharal of Prague, explained, he only began stuttering when he received God's commandments and realized how difficult it would be to bring these sacred "spoken things" down from heaven to earth.

Which, the late Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook taught us, is the true power of the Torah. "The most wondrous thing about the Torah," he explained, "isn't the essence of spiritual perfection it presents, but **the special** and **specific ways of attaining this spiritual perfection."** This, he concluded, was why while the other parts of the Hebrew Bible dealt with prophecy and other lofty teachings, the Torah itself was focused on the most practical laws and commandments—the Torah is here to teach us that when we make it our own, by studying and internalizing it, **we make our "spoken things" a world-changing reality**, just like Moses.

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