

The Pardes Center for Jewish Educators presents

# An Interactive PARSHA EXPERIENCE



**Parsha:** Devarim

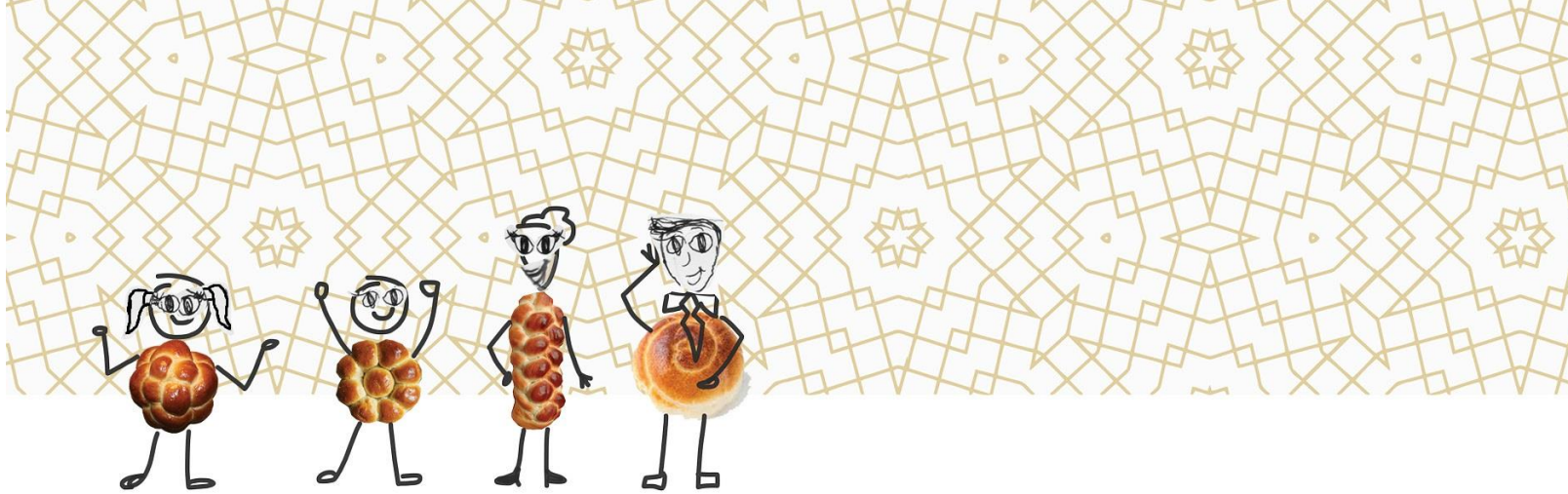
**Title:** Deconstructing Moshe's Speech

**Contributor:** Rachel Friedrichs, Assistant Director of the Pardes Center for Jewish Educators, Pardes Day School Educators Program '05-'07

## *The Parsha at First Glance*

### Spotlight on the Parsha:

*Bnei Yisrael* have been traveling through the desert for 40 years! They have had some pretty big adventures – the exodus from Egypt, receiving the Ten Commandments at Sinai, fighting enemies in the desert, receiving manna from heaven, getting punished for



not obeying God, and more! Throughout all that, the generation that was taken out of Egypt has passed away and now their kids and grandkids are camped near the banks of the Jordan River, waiting to cross into the land that God had promised them. But Moshe, who will not be going into Canaan with the people, decides to give them a 'farewell speech' before they cross the river without him. In fact, most of the Book of *Devarim* shares with us what Moshe says to Bnei Yisrael before they advance, for the first time, without his leadership.

### Zooming In:

So, what does Moshe say in this all-important speech? This is his last chance to tell them what they are going to need to know as they conquer the land, settle there and grow into an established nation. Imagine all the things running through his head...

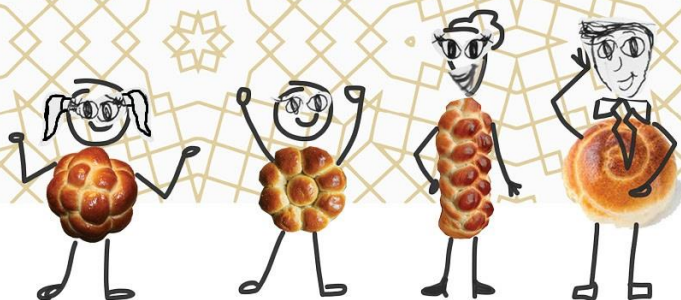
To really find out what Moshe did decide to say to the people, you need to read the entire Book of Devarim! But a quick summary can be divided into three main parts:

1. Reminding the people of their previous experiences in the desert, including their sins and mistakes and God's miracles
2. Reviewing all the commandments - to make sure the people know how to behave and follow God once they are living in their own land
3. A final strong reminder that the people must follow God's commandments in order to continue to receive God's blessings and to avoid punishment from God

### Questions for Consideration:

Hmmm... so what do you think Moshe should have said to Bnei Yisrael?

- What would be most important? What would be most helpful to the people as they cross the Jordan River and fight to settle in Canaan?
- What would YOU say to Bnei Yisrael at this time?



## The Parsha Through Another Lens

### Reconsidering Moshe's Considerations...

Let's try to get into Moshe's head and figure out what he might have been thinking as he chose his words to deliver to Bnei Yisrael at this important turning point in their journey. Below are some quotes from this week's *parsha* that Moshe said to the nation, with some context and questions alongside them...

**With your friends or family, consider the prompts and see if you can determine why you think Moshe included this in his farewell speech and whether you think it was a good idea.**

[Note to facilitator: The excerpted verses from this week's parsha, with the questions/prompts next to them, have been laid out so that each quote can be cut out into separate cards and passed out among different members of the group.]



Deuteronomy 1:8

רָאֵה נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיכֶם אֶת-הָאָרֶץ ; בָּאוּ,  
וּרְשׁוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה  
לְאֲבוֹתֵיכֶם, לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיַעֲקֹב  
לְתֵת לָהֶם, וּלְזָרְעָם אַחֲרֵיהֶם.

See, I place the land at your disposal. Go, take possession of the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to assign to them and to their heirs after them.

*[Moshe says this verse as one of his opening lines of his speech to the nation:]*

- Why does Moshe make a point to mention that the land (Canaan) had already been promised to Bnei Yisrael's ancestors Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov?
- Do you feel a different kind of connection to something that has been a part of your family for a long time?

Deuteronomy 1:17

לֹא-תִכְפְּרוּ פָנִים בַּמִּשְׁפָּט, כְּקִטּוֹן כְּגֹדֶל  
תִּשְׁמְעוּן--לֹא תִגּוּרוּ מִפְּנֵי-אִישׁ, כִּי  
הַמִּשְׁפָּט לַאלֹהִים הוּא ; וְהִדְבַּר אֲשֶׁר  
יִקְשֶׁה מִכֶּם, תִּקְרְבוּן אֵלַי וְשָׁמַעְתִּיו.

...You shall not be play favorites in judgment: hear out low and high alike. Fear no man, for judgment is God's. And any matter that is too difficult for you, you shall bring to me [Moshe] and I will hear it.

*[Moshe is reminding the people about an important aspect of the 'court system' they established while in the desert:]*

- Why is it important for Bnei Yisrael to be reminded of how they had conducted a fair justice system just before they cross into Canaan?



Deuteronomy 1:26-27

כּו וְלֹא אָבִיתֶם לַעֲלֹת ; וַתִּמְרוּ אֶת-פִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם. כִּי וַתִּרְגְּנוּ בְּאֶהְלִיכֶם, וַתֹּאמְרוּ, בְּשָׂאֵת יְהוָה אֶתְנוּ, הוֹצִיאֵנוּ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם--לְתֵת אֶתְנוּ בְּיַד הָאֲמֹרִי, לְהַשְׁמִידֵנוּ.

26. Yet you refused to go up, and flouted the command of the LORD your God. 27. You sulked in your tents and said, "It is because the LORD hates us that He brought us out of the land of Egypt, to hand us over to the Amorites to wipe us out..."

*[Moshe does not hold back from reminding the nation of all the sins and mistakes they made while they were in the desert - including the time they believed their spies' false report about Canaan and refused to travel there:]*

- How do you feel when you have been reminded of a mistake you made in the past? Does it matter who is reminding you or when?
- Will hearing about this mistake help Bnei Yisrael as they cross into Canaan?

Deuteronomy 1:34-35

לֹד וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה, אֶת-קוֹל דְּבָרֵיכֶם ; וַיִּקְצַף, וַיִּשְׁבַּע לֵאמֹר. לֹה אִם-יִרְאֶה אִישׁ בְּאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה, הַדּוֹר הַרְעָה הַזֶּה--אֵת הָאֶרֶץ הַטּוֹבָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְתֵת לְאֲבֹתֵיכֶם.

34. When the LORD heard your loud complaint, He was angry. He vowed: 35. Not one of those men, this evil generation, shall see the good land that I swore to give to your fathers...

*[Here is the reminder of God's response to the people's complaints about going to Canaan:]*

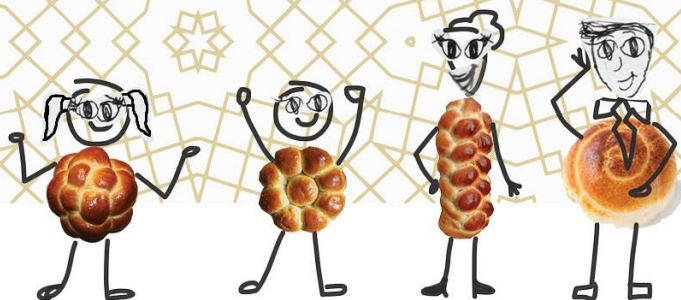
- Notice how Moshe switches from talking about 'those men' to 'your fathers'...why do you think he does that, even if it makes the sentence awkward?
- The people Moshe is speaking to didn't actually sin or get punished - their parents did... so why mention this at all?
- What do you think Bnei Yisrael are thinking when they hear about their parents' punishment?

Deuteronomy 2:8



<p>וַנַּעֲבֹר מֵאֵת אַחֵינוּ בְּנֵי-עֵשָׂו, הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּשֵׁעִיר, מִדֶּרֶךְ הָעֲרָבָה, מֵאֵילַת וַיִּמְעָצוּן גָּבֶר; וַנָּפוּ, וַנַּעֲבֹר דֶּרֶךְ מִדְבַּר מוֹאָב.</p> <p>We then moved on, away from our brother, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir, away from the road of the Arabah, away from Elath and Ezion-geber; and we marched on in the direction of the wilderness of Moab.</p>	<p><i>[Here is one of several times where Moshe recounts the movements and battles they faced in the desert:]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does it seem strange that after hundreds of years and so much history - we still consider the descendants of Esav “our brother”?</li> <li>• Can you think of any way that being reminded of this part of their journey in the desert will help Bnei Yisrael in the future?</li> </ul>
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<p><u>Deuteronomy 2:25</u></p> <p>הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה, אֶחֱלֶה תַת פַּחַדְךָ וַיִּרְאָתְךָ עַל-פְּנֵי הָעַמִּים, תַּחַת כָּל-הַשָּׁמַיִם-- אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁמְעוּן שְׁמֶעְךָ, וְרָגְזוּ וַחֲלוּ מִפָּנֶיךָ.</p> <p>This day I [God] begin to put the dread and fear of you upon the peoples everywhere under heaven, so that they shall tremble and quake because of you whenever they hear you mentioned.</p>	<p><i>[Moshe is telling the people what God had said - that all the surrounding nations in the desert would be afraid of Bnei Yisrael:]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you think of a time where you might ever want someone to fear you? When? Why?</li> </ul>
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Deuteronomy 3:21-22

**כא וְאֶת-יְהוֹשֻׁעַ צִוִּיתִי, בְּעֵת הַהוּא לֵאמֹר: עֵינֶיךָ הִרְאִית אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם לְשְׁנֵי הַמְּלָכִים הָאֵלֶּה--בֶּן-יַעֲשָׂה יְהוָה לְכָל-הַמְּמַלְכוֹת אֲשֶׁר אָתָּה עֹבֵר שָׁמָּה. **כב** לֹא תִירָאוּם: כִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הוּא הַנֹּלְחָם לְכֶם.**

21. I also charged Joshua at that time, saying, "You have seen with your own eyes all that the LORD your God has done to these two kings; so shall the LORD do to all the kingdoms into which you shall cross over. 22. Do not fear them, for it is the LORD your God who will battle for you."

*[Our parsha ends with Moshe telling the people that Yehoshua, who will soon be their leader, has been given a 'pep' talk:]*

- How do you think Yehoshua felt when Moshe first told him these words? Will this make Yehoshua a better leader?
- What do you think is important for a retiring leader to tell the new leader who is about to take their place?

**Shabbat Shalom!**