



Torah Reflections: Conversations on the Weekly Parsha  
Parshat Devarim 5785: The Power of Words

Integrating Torah into one's life through reflection and conversation can be an incredibly fun and engaging experience. It's a journey of discovery, where ancient wisdom and timeless teachings come to life in our daily experiences. Through reflection, we have the opportunity to dive deep into the rich tapestry of Torah, extracting profound insights and lessons that resonate with our modern lives. The joy lies in the 'aha' moments, those instances when a Torah verse or story suddenly connects with our personal challenges, aspirations, and values. And when we engage in conversations about Torah with others, it becomes an interactive exploration, where diverse perspectives and interpretations enhance our understanding. These dialogues often spark excitement and intellectual curiosity, making the learning process both enjoyable and fulfilling. Torah becomes a vibrant and dynamic part of our lives, offering not just guidance but also a source of endless fascination, connection, and growth.

NOTE: Don't feel obligated to go through every source or answer all the questions—unless you want to. Even one source, or one question will give you plenty of material for discussion and meditation. Enjoy this!

### Some thoughts about Parshat Devarim

*"These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel..."*  
(Deuteronomy 1:1)

The book of Deuteronomy opens with a long speech—Moses's final words to the people of Israel. Much of this speech is rebuke, a reminder of past failures. And yet, our sages tell us it was delivered with love, respect, and extraordinary wisdom.

But here's something curious: early in Moses's journey, he claimed, "I am not a man of words... I am slow of speech and tongue" (Exodus 4:10). How is it that someone who described himself this way now becomes one of the greatest orators in history?

### **The Midrash Helps Us Understand**

A parable is told about a peddler who declared in the marketplace that he had the finest merchandise—royal purple wool. When summoned by the king and asked what he sold, the peddler replied: "Nothing, my lord." Why the change? He explained that while his goods were precious to ordinary people, they were "nothing" compared to the wealth of the king.

This is how our tradition explains Moses's seeming contradiction. When speaking to G-d—the King of the Universe—Moses felt utterly mute. But when speaking to people, especially when tasked with helping them grow morally and spiritually, he became eloquent and clear.

### **Speech: A Divine Power**

In Jewish thought, speech is not just a human function—it is a reflection of the divine. One of the names of G-d's presence in the world, *Malchut* (Kingship), is directly associated with the gift of speech. And Moses, who led the people with clarity and holiness, drew from that same attribute.



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This is a powerful lesson for everyone—Jew and Noahide alike. We are born with the capacity to speak, but true speech is much more than talking. It means using our words to build truth, to bring people closer to goodness, and to uplift the soul.

And when we speak to G-d? Sometimes we feel the words fail us. That's why even the most righteous people say before prayer, "G-d, open my lips so that my mouth may declare Your praise." Even if we recite familiar words, the ability to speak to the Divine is not something we should take for granted.

### Access to the Infinite

A great rabbi once told a visitor: "I just met with a man who was an advisor to the President. He had access to the most powerful man in the world 24 hours a day. But I want you to know: even the simplest Jew has access to the Creator of the world—24 hours a day."

That truth applies to all people who revere the One true G-d. Access to the Divine is not determined by status. It is determined by humility, sincerity, and clarity of purpose.

### Now, reflect on the following questions:

1. Do I use my speech to clarify truth—or to obscure it?
2. Am I as thoughtful with words to those I love as I am when I speak in public?
3. How do I experience prayer—as a duty, or as a conversation with G-d?
4. In what ways can I refine my speech to reflect the moral clarity I seek?
5. Do I take time to listen for the words G-d may be placing on my lips?

May we learn to speak with courage, listen with humility, and use the divine gift of words to bring more light into the world.

Shabbat Shalom!