

SHABBAT GUIDE

DEVARIM

ABOUT THE STORY OF DEVARIM

In Aramaic, *devarim* means "words." The first verse of this chapter opens with: "These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel." In the Zohar, Rav Shimon explains the difference between the curses that Moses uttered in Leviticus and the ones he spoke in Deuteronomy. Devarim connects us to the world of thoughts, action, and physicality. Spirituality is not to be found only by meditating or isolating oneself on a mountaintop; spirituality is primarily about who we are and how we live our daily lives in the physical world.

MICHAEL BERG ON DEVARIM

The portion Devarim begins with a discussion between Moses and the Israelites. Moses gathers all the Israelites and seems to be telling them all of the negative things they have done throughout the 40 years. The Israelites say to Moses that they did not do any of the things he said they did. So, on the one hand, there seems to be the understanding that the Israelites stood there and accepted the whole list of things Moses said they did wrong over the past 40 years, while on the other, it seems to be that none of the accusations Moses was making about the Israelites were true. How can we make sense of both these things?

Rav Ashlag explains that the ultimate purpose of everything we do, even of a physical nature, is to elevate our consciousness, and to be in a state where our mind is completely unified with the Light of the Creator. To get there, we have to purify the mind.

Most of us know that when we do something negative in action, we remember it, and if somebody tries to awaken us to that negative action we have done, we can accept it. But, we fall many more times in our thoughts than we do in actions. And that is a problem because those negative thoughts limit our ability to connect to the Light of the Creator. In order for us to be able to come to the state for which we came

into this world, in order for our mind to truly be able to connect to the Light of the Creator, we have to take out and cleanse all the negative thoughts we have ever had, and that is what Moses was doing on this Shabbat.

So, now we understand; it was not that Moses was telling them about all the negative things they had done. Rather, he was awakening within them a remembrance of all the negative thoughts they had throughout their entire lives. The Zohar says we have to know that the energy created not only by every word we speak and every action we do, but also every thought we have, remains forever. And unless we are able to remove it and change it, we are not able to truly elevate and connect. The reason we study and read the Zohar is to detach our minds from the overwhelming consciousness of this world and attach it to true consciousness. It is one of the great gifts of Shabbat Devarim, the Shabbat when Moses, soon before he leaves this world, gathers the Israelites for the purpose of enabling them to purify and transform their minds.



CONSCIOUSNESS FOR NEXT WEEK

The upcoming portion of Va'etchanan helps us connect with the power of prayer. In kabbalistic thinking, praying isn't about getting favorable results in life, but rather about strengthening our connection to, and certainty in, the Light of the Creator. When we pray with true intention, accepting that the Light has the answers we *need* but don't necessarily *want*, we open our souls to immense energy and blessings.

****For online Shabbat Connections during the COVID-19 pandemic, we suggest doing your best for each step with the materials you have available. Remember: your consciousness is the key to a pure connection.***

CANDLE LIGHTING

We light candles at specific times and with pure intentions in order to establish a connection to the energy available. Like flipping the light switch upon entering a dark room, the simple act of lighting candles initiates a flow of energy.

EVENING CONNECTION (KABBALAT SHABBAT)

On Friday nights, we sing songs, recite kabbalistic prayers, and consume blessed wine and bread. These acts invite the energy of Shabbat into our lives and enhance our connection to the Light.

SHABBAT DINNER

The first of three meals, we bless the wine and bread before enjoying our Shabbat dinner. These kabbalistic blessings help us connect with our inner desire to share.

BIRKAT HAMAZON (PRAYERS AFTER EATING)

After eating the first meal, we engage in the Birkat Hamazon prayer. Reciting this prayer shows our appreciation for the food and our connection to the Light.

MORNING CONNECTION (SHACHARIT)

On Saturday mornings, we gather to recite prayers and meditate on our relationship with the Light. The energy awakened by the Morning Connection awakens the spiritual force of mercy, which helps keep chaos and judgment from our lives.

CONSCIOUSNESS LECTURE

In the Consciousness Lecture, we learn about the portion of the week that will be read during the Torah reading. This lecture helps us truly understand the forthcoming teachings and explains in detail the kabbalistic principles behind the stories.

TORAH READING

The Torah is read aloud, in Hebrew, by a Kabbalah Centre teacher. The stories of the Torah are actually codes that, when decoded, transmit energy and repel negativity for the week to come.

AFTERNOON CONNECTION

In the Afternoon Connection, we engage in prayers that strengthen our connection following the reading of the Torah.

SHABBAT LUNCH

During Shabbat Lunch, we sing a number of songs in Aramaic and Hebrew, many of which were written by history's greatest kabbalists. They help us manifest the Desire to Share aspect of the Morning Connection.

THIRD MEAL

The third meal is the highest point of Shabbat, known for its tremendous healing properties. This includes a blessing for hand washing, a connection with bread, and special prayers and meditations for creating positive change within ourselves and all of humanity.

EVENING CONNECTION

The Evening Connection consists of unique kabbalistic prayer and song. These recitations bring Shabbat to a close and help us determine our energy for the new week to come.

HAVDALAH

Havdalah refers to the verbal declaration made at the end of Shabbat that is recited once the sun sets on Saturday night. We say the Havdalah to demonstrate our appreciation for the Light, and to ask it for spiritual sustenance in the upcoming week.