



## **D'VARIM - WORDS**

This week we start reading the fifth book of the Torah. Bereshit was about the creation of the world till Yosef's death, about 2300 years of our history. Shmot, starts with Yaakov, his sons, and their generation having died out in Egypt through the redemption from Egypt, till the building of the Mishkan, more than 210 years. Vayikra, deals with lots of Mitzvot that were taught in Ohel Moed and Har Sinai. The book of Bamidbar tells about the 40 years that we were in the desert. So what about the book of D'VARIM which was all said in the 37 days before they entered the land of Israel?

The book of D'VARIM is referred to as the "Mishna Torah", the repetition of the Torah. Moshe repeats mitzvot that he had taught the nation already in one of the other books of the Torah. We would think that if this is a repetition of what was stated in the other four books, then this book would have the most mitzvot, but if

someone were actually to check they would find that Vayikra has the most mitzvot.

So we see that the book of D'VARIM doesn't cover the longest time period in our history, it doesn't have the most mitzvot, nor does it have the most "juicy stories". So you may be wondering, what is so special about this book? The name of the book gives it away. The whole sefer is filled with DIBURIM - talking; speeches and dialogues. In the portions of D'VARIM through Ekev there is TOCHACHA - rebuke and memories, in RE'li thru KI TEITZEI there are speeches about specific mitzvot and how to fulfill them and in Ki Tavo thru Vayeilech the speeches are related to the covenant and the book ends with Haazinu and Zot Habracha with a song and speeches.

Rav Yehudah Shaviv in his book on the parsha, points out that for the 40 years in the desert Moshe has led the nation, but he hasn't spoken much. He actually started his career as a leader with a speech impediment, referring to himself as someone who was not able to speak "LO ISH D'VARIM ANOCHI". Moshe even needed Aharon to talk for him, and was punished for hitting the rock, rather than talking to it as he had been instructed to do. It seems in the

last 40 days of his life he spoke to the people more than he had ever done during the rest of his time as their leader. He has become someone who shares D'VARIM.

It could be that now, with his death imminent, he feels that the people will be more willing to listen to what he has to say. It is the perfect time for him to share with them words of faith, rebuke, and more details about the mitzvot. He has learned that "words that go out from the heart, enter the heart - D'VARIM HAYOTZIM MIN HALEV YIKANSU LALEV". These words have the power to educate and shape a whole nation. By sharing his many words with us not only does he teach us specific lessons, but he also teaches us the importance of words themselves - they can influence, teach and shape those around us. Moshe's words are his last will and testament to the nation.

It struck me that it is no coincidence that we read from Sefer D'VARIM just at this time of year, right before 9 Av. There's no better time of year to work on the words, ha'D'VARIM that come out of our mouths. I have started to learn the book "Guard Your Tongue" with one of my sons. It helps make us more sensitive to the power of our words. In the introduction to

his book, the Chafetz Chaim, gives a list of the 31 negative and positive commandments which one violates if he speaks LOSHON HARA. For example one commandment he lists is "Love your neighbour as yourself". By speaking or listening to derogatory words about another Jew, the person shows that he doesn't truly love the other person. In the time of year when we mourn the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash, due to baseless hatred, SINAT CHINAM, we should go out of our way to show AHAVAT CHINUM, true love for our fellow Jew. Working on guarding our own tongue is something we should all be doing now - maybe it will help hasten the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash, speedily in our days.

Since we discussed the importance of speech and guarding one's tongue, here's a simple tongue recipe.

## **TONGUE CASSEROLE**

1 fresh tongue, not pickled

1 box fresh or a can of mushrooms, sliced

1 onion, sliced

3 stalks celery, chopped

1 green pepper, cut in chunks

1 large can tomato sauce

3-4 potatoes, quartered

1/4 c. oil

Garlic powder to taste

Salt & pepper

1 large can peas, drained (optional)

Cook tongue in a pot covered with water. When water boils and darkens, change water and cook in fresh water over medium flame for 1 hour till tender. Pour off water and while still warm, hold stable with a fork and peel off the skin. When cooled, slice tongue and arrange slices side by side in a casserole dish. Sprinkle with salt, pepper and garlic powder. Set aside.

Saute onion, celery, green pepper

and mushrooms. Add tomato sauce; stir well. Pour sauce over tongue. Arrange potatoes on top. Bake in oven, covered until tongue is tender, about 1.5 hours. Add drained peas just before serving. Keep in oven until peas are warm.