



# Likkutei Sichos

Volume 19 | Devarim | Sichah 2

## The Intermediary

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## 1.

### REBUKE OR REVIEW?

On the verse, “In the fortieth year... Moshe spoke to the children of Israel...,”<sup>1</sup> we find two commentaries from two *pashtanim*<sup>2</sup> regarding what exactly Moshe said to the Jewish people:

(a) Rashi (quoting *Sifri*) says that these are words of rebuke (“He rebuked them only a short while before his death”); (b) *Seforno* says, “He reviewed for them the whole Torah until this point.”

These two commentaries are not contradictory because the verse includes both a rebuke and a review: The book of *Devarim* contains rebuke and it also contains a review of “the whole Torah,” as is indicated in its moniker: ***Mishneh Torah***.<sup>3</sup> The only difference between the two commentaries is where to place the emphasis, or more specifically, which of these characterizations of *Devarim* is primary.

We do, however, require clarification: Since the phrase, “Moshe spoke...” relates to the entire book of *Devarim*, we must say that each of these two components — (a) rebuke; and (b) a review of the Torah — are mutually inclusive, or share a similar theme.

## 2.

### THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE BOOKS

Describing the difference between the first four books of the Torah and the book of *Devarim*, the *Gemara*<sup>4</sup> says that the first four were conveyed “from the mouth of the Omnipotent” while *Mishneh Torah* was said by Moshe on his own.

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<sup>1</sup> *Devarim* 1:3.

<sup>2</sup> {This refers to the commentators who explain Torah according to *pshat*.}

<sup>3</sup> {Lit., “a repetition of the Torah.” Throughout this *sichah*, *Mishneh Torah* refers to the book of *Devarim*, and not to the *Rambam*’s halachic work.}

<sup>4</sup> *Megillah* 31b.

The meaning of *on his own* is not that Moshe, G-d forbid, said anything on his own, using **his own** words. Instead, as Rashi explains elsewhere:<sup>5</sup> “Moshe did not teach *Mishneh Torah* to them on his own... rather, just as he received it, he repeated and conveyed it to them. Anything written in the second {set of the} Ten Commandments<sup>6</sup> was included in the {first} Tablets, and that is what Moshe heard at Mt. Sinai.” *Tosafos*<sup>7</sup> also says that “Moshe said them on his own” means that he spoke “with Divine inspiration.”

This is puzzling: Since *Mishneh Torah* was also not Moshe’s **own** words, but conveyed by Moshe with Divine inspiration — “the **Divine Presence** spoke through his throat”<sup>8</sup> — [which is how he was able to say “I will give rain...,”<sup>9</sup> since it was “the spirit of Hashem speaking”] — why was it considered to be from *Moshe’s* mouth?

We can ask the same question regarding the *Gemara’s* teaching<sup>10</sup> that “even the one who generally does not expound juxtaposed verses,<sup>11</sup> *does* expound them in *Mishneh Torah*.” *Raavan* explains:<sup>12</sup> “The reason is because the entire Torah was said by Hashem, and there is no specific order; however, Moshe redacted *Mishneh Torah* in order, one *parshah* after another, only for the purpose homiletic interpretation.” —

This, too, is unclear: Since Moshe conveyed *Mishneh Torah* “with Divine inspiration,” why was the order of *Devarim* {alone} dependent on Moshe, and not the {order of} earlier four books of the Torah (which were also conveyed to the Jews by Moshe)?

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<sup>5</sup> *Sanhedrin* 56b, s.v. “*kaasher tzivcha*.”

<sup>6</sup> {In *parshas Vaeschanan*.}

<sup>7</sup> *Tosfos, Megillah* 31b, s.v. “*Moshe*.”

<sup>8</sup> *Shemos Rabbah*, ch. 3; *Vayikra Rabbah*, ch. 2; *Mechilta Shemos* 18:19.

<sup>9</sup> *Devarim* 11:14.

<sup>10</sup> *Berachos* 21b; *Yevamos* 4a.

<sup>11</sup> {Whether or not *semuchin* — verses that appear in Torah in proximity to other verses — have meaning is a subject of debate.}

<sup>12</sup> *Raavan*, ch. 34 (quoted in *Hagahos Maharav Ranshburg’s* commentary on *Yevamos* 4a).

### 3.

#### MOSHE AS INTERMEDIARY

The explanation:

Our Sages teach<sup>13</sup> that Torah preceded the world by 2,000 years. The term “preceded” implies not (only) chronologically, but (primarily) in stature and importance.<sup>14</sup> Torah, in and of itself, is altogether loftier than the world; therefore, in order for Torah to descend into the world, there needed to be an intermediary that had within it both elements (it had to be **loftier** than the world but also **within** the world), which enabled it to bridge between the two.

Moshe Rabbeinu served as the intermediary between Torah and the world, as he embodied both extremes: He was completely selfless; he was **not** {an independent} entity — “For what are we?”<sup>15</sup> — an expression of *bittul* loftier than the world. At the same time, he personified the most **perfect** existence possible within the world<sup>16</sup> [which is why he was also extraordinarily tall<sup>17</sup> — “ten cubits,”<sup>18</sup> considerably taller than a typical person’s height of three cubits].<sup>19</sup>

This is how Moshe was able to bridge the Torah, which transcends the world, and the world.

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<sup>13</sup> *Midrash Tehillim*, ch. 90 par. 3; *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 8, par. 2; *Tanchuma*, “Vayeshev,” sec. 4; *Zohar*, vol. 2, p. 49a.

<sup>14</sup> See *Sefer HaMaamarim 5653*, discourse entitled, “Issa Midrash Tehillim”); (*Sefer HaMaamarim 5708*, end of p. 272).

<sup>15</sup> Scriptural wording {regarding Moshe and Aharon}, *Shemos* 16:8.

<sup>16</sup> See Rambam’s *Perush HaMishnayos*, “*Sanhedrin*, ch. *Chelek*, 7th principle”: “The choicest of all humanity.”

<sup>17</sup> See *Shabbos* 92a; *Nedarim* 38a: “Strong and wealthy, etc., and all of these {attributes are derived} from Moshe.”

<sup>18</sup> *Berachos* 54b; see *Shabbos* 92a.

<sup>19</sup> See *Eruvin* 48a; *Rashbam’s* and *Ramban’s* commentaries on *Bava Basra* 100b (end) {which remark} that this measurement includes the head.

## 4.

### PASSIVE VS. INVESTED

An effluence<sup>20</sup> can be transmitted by means of an intermediary in two ways:

- (a) “Passing through” — The effluence does not become fused with, and invested into, the intermediary. Therefore, the intermediary does not make any change to the effluence. The intermediary’s only role is to draw the effluence (**unchanged**) from a loftier level to a lower one.
- (b) “Investment” — The effluence becomes **invested** into, and fused with, the intermediary, causing a change in the effluence — adapting itself relative to the intermediary’s level — thus allowing for the recipients to acquire the effluence according to **their** ability to comprehend.

This is the difference between the the first four books of the Torah and *Mishneh Torah*:

In the first four books, Moshe served as an intermediary acting as a “conduit” [or, to use Rashi’s wording,<sup>21</sup> he became an emissary]. **His** grasp of the words of Torah did not entail {any change in them by} becoming {intellectually} garbed; rather, they remained on the level of “(from the mouth of) **the Omnipotent**.” Conversely, despite *Mishneh Torah* being conveyed by “Divine inspiration,”<sup>22</sup> the “G-dly spirit” was invested and en clothed in Moshe’s comprehension. Therefore, it was referred to as *on his own*.

This also explains why even according to the opinion that we generally “do **not** expound juxtaposed verses,” we do “expound them in *Mishneh Torah*”:

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<sup>20</sup> {In the original Hebrew, “השפעה.”}

<sup>21</sup> *Megillah*, 31b.

<sup>22</sup> {In the Hebrew original, “*Ruach Hakodesh*”; lit. “Holy Spirit,” akin to prophecy.}

Since the first four books were not invested in Moshe's intellect, although the order of the verses is absolutely precise,<sup>23</sup> they still follow a “loftier” order — the “juxtaposition” of their verses does not correspond to human comprehension. Thus, we “do not expound juxtapositions {in Scripture}.”

In *Mishneh Torah*, however, where Hashem's word integrated itself with Moshe's comprehension, the order of the verses also corresponds to Moshe's intellect (and human intellect). Consequently, we *do* “expound juxtaposed verses.”

## 5.

### REACHING THE BOTTOM

We still need to clarify: Why did Hashem make it so that (*Mishneh*) Torah should be integrated in Moshe's intellect to the extent that it is referred to as being *on his own*? Seemingly, this is a deficiency!

To explain:

When an effluence becomes invested in the intermediary, it still remains beyond the recipients' comprehension, since it is {inherently} beyond their capacity to absorb and the intermediary does not attenuate it. So the aspect of the effluence that the recipients do “acquire” — and is integrated into **their** comprehension — is **not** comparable to the effluence itself.

Therefore, had Torah descended merely by passing through Moshe, the Jews with **their** {limited} capacity of comprehension would not have been able to apprehend the essence of Torah and “acquire” the “word of **Hashem**,” which is beyond comprehension. Anything they would have

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<sup>23</sup> See *Shlah*, “*Chelek Torah SheBaal Peh*,” p. 402b.

been able to apprehend would have been a mere ray, etc., of the “word of Hashem.”

This was what *Mishneh Torah* accomplished: By Moshe “reviewing the whole Torah **for them**” as it was invested in his **comprehension** (on **his own**), a Jew who later studies Torah, regardless of his circumstances [even if he is in a state of impurity, G-d forbid], could “acquire” Torah and integrate “**My words**, which are like fire,”<sup>24</sup> “the actual words of Hashem.”

Since Moshe’s review consisted of “the whole Torah,” it also affected the study of the first four books.

Moshe was the intermediary between **all** Jews and Hashem. [He served as an intermediary even for those Jews who were on an extremely low {spiritual} level. As we learned regarding the verse, “Where can I get meat?”<sup>25</sup> Moshe was unable to lower himself to the level of meat (i.e., craving). So Hashem told him, “Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel... and I will emanate some of the spirit that is upon **you**....”<sup>26</sup> even **this** outflow had to be brought about through (an emanation of spirit from) Moshe, since all effluence to the Jews have to come through Moshe.]

Therefore, once Torah became invested in Moshe as the “intermediary,” in all of his “ten cubits,” including the lowest cubit, Torah was able to reach all Jews, including the simplest ones.

## 6.

### COMBINING EXTREMES

Still, how can two opposites coexist — Torah that is **invested** in human comprehension to the extent that it is called his own,<sup>27</sup> allowing him

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<sup>24</sup> See *Berachos* 22a.

<sup>25</sup> *Bamidbar* 11:13.

<sup>26</sup> *Bamidbar* 11:16-17.

<sup>27</sup> *Avodah Zarah* 19a.

to forgo his honor {due to him} by virtue of {his comprehension of} Torah,<sup>28</sup> together with Torah as “the word of **Hashem**”?

They can coexist because *Mishneh Torah* comes from Hashem’s Essence,<sup>29</sup> {the unity of} which precludes fragmentation. *Lights*<sup>30</sup> and revelations, even the most sublime *lights*, can be fragmented. Therefore, they are either revealed at full strength (when they aren’t invested {in an intermediary}), or they experience change and are reduced (if invested in Creation).

Only on account of Hashem’s Essence, which is never affected by fragmentation and change, can both elements coexist: The effluence can descend and become invested in Creation, to the extent that it says *on his own* — human comprehension, while at the same time retaining its essential-character as the “word of **Hashem**.”

This is the distinction between the first four books of the Torah and *Mishneh Torah*:

The first four books were “from the mouth of Hashem.” Moreover, as *Ramban* says,<sup>31</sup> they were written and narrated in “the third person,” (“Hashem spoke to Moshe,” and the like). Chassidus explains<sup>32</sup> that {third person is used because} the “speaker” is the Essence of the Emanator, more sublime than even (the Divine name) *Havayah*.<sup>33</sup> This enables a connection between “*Havayah*” and “Moshe.”

Nevertheless, the mere fact that it is referred to as “the **third** person” (that connects the **two**, “*Havayah*” and “Moshe”) indicates that there can be fragmentation, so to speak.

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<sup>28</sup> *Kiddushin* 32b (top).

<sup>29</sup> See *Or HaTorah*, “*Devarim*,” p. 7; *Or HaTorah*, “*Emor*,” p. 841; *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5626, p. 317-8.

<sup>30</sup> {Symbolic of Divine revelation.}

<sup>31</sup> Introduction to *Ramban’s* Torah commentary.

<sup>32</sup> *Or HaTorah*, “*Devarim*,” beg.; See *Or HaTorah*, “*Emor*,” p. 839 ff.; *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5626, p. 315 ff.

<sup>33</sup> {The Tetragrammaton.}



In contrast, *Mishneh Torah* comes from the Essence of Hashem, which transcends even “the third person.” This allows two opposites to coexist — *on his own* (Moshe), together with the “word of Hashem.”

## 7.

### THE PURPOSE OF REBUKE

This element within *Mishneh Torah* can also be found in man’s *avodah* — {specifically} the *avodah* of *teshuvah*:

The impetus for *teshuvah* comes from the penitent himself, since prior to sinning, he was {already} removed from G-dliness. Therefore, a person’s inspiration for *teshuvah* is not a result of a **revelation** of a supernal *light* (for which a person is not a viable receptacle); rather, it comes from **himself**.

But there is a general rule that every inspiration is empowered from Above. Meaning, the power to do *teshuvah* comes from “the essential concealment of the *Ein Sof*,”<sup>34</sup> which is drawn down so discreetly that (it seems that) the person’s *teshuvah* is motivated by the penitent **himself** [similar to the above discussion of *Mishneh Torah* being said {by Moshe}, *on his own*].

This clarifies the connection between the two interpretations of the theme of the book of *Devarim*: (a) words of rebuke; and (b) “He reviewed for them the whole Torah”: The purpose of words of rebuke is {to lead a person to} *teshuvah*, and the *avodah* of *teshuvah* brings about the same intrinsic advantage that is in *Mishneh Torah*, as discussed above.

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<sup>34</sup> Hemshech 5672, p. 1333.

## 8.

### PREPARING FOR REDEMPTION

Understandably, just as the inherent advantage in *Mishneh Torah* was a prerequisite for the Jews to enter the Land of Israel for the first time, the same is called for now, as we prepare to enter the Land of Israel with Moshiach. —

This is accomplished by revealing the teachings of *Chassidus*, particularly the teachings of *Chabad Chassidus*, which contain a similar message as *Mishneh Torah*: *Chabad Chassidus* clarifies Divine subjects in a manner that human **Chabad**<sup>35</sup> {intellect} can understand, to the extent that the intellect and Divine subjects achieve “a most wonderful unity... that they should actually become one and united from every side and angle.”<sup>36</sup>

At the same time, the Divine subjects do not change, G-d forbid; they remain G-dly.

The power for this is on account of *Chassidus* being the revelation of the dimension of “*yechidah*”<sup>37</sup> within Torah (as discussed in the past<sup>38</sup> at length), “**the essence** of the inner part of Torah.” That is why {the G-dliness suffused in} the teachings of *Chassidus* is not eroded, even when invested in human intellect.

This also connects the teachings of *Chassidus* with the aphorism, “spread your **wellsprings** outward” — that the wellsprings {the source of those teachings} itself must reach the “outside.” What can affect the “outside” (which on its own shares no connection with the “wellsprings”)? The “outside” can only be affected with the power of the “wellsprings” itself.

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<sup>35</sup> {*Chabad* חב"ד is an acronym for: *chochmah* חכמה, *binah* בינה, and *daas* דעת — wisdom, understanding, and knowledge.}

<sup>36</sup> *Tanya*, ch. 5.

<sup>37</sup> {The deepest level of the soul's essence, a concept that can also be applied to the deepest level of Torah.}

<sup>38</sup> *Kutres Inyana Shel Toras HaChassidus*, ch. 5 ff.

This is the preparation, therefore, for “the master’s arrival,”<sup>39</sup> because then it will be revealed that “everything that was made will know that You made it.”<sup>40</sup> Even the furthest “outside” point — the “made” thing **itself** [as superficially, it appears not to have any connection to power that made it] — is in fact unified with Hashem, because, “**You**” — Hashem’s **Essence** — “made it.”

– Based on a talk delivered on *Shabbos parshas Va’era*, 5726 (1966)

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<sup>39</sup> {The coming of Moshiach, as described to the Baal Shem Tov by Moshiach himself.}

<sup>40</sup> Rosh Hashanah prayers.