

PARSHAT DEVARIM  
DEUTERONOMY 1:1-3:22  
HAFTARAH ISAIAH 1:1-27  
04 AV 5784/08 AUGUST 2024



*The Marriage of Reason and Squalor, II*  
Enamel on canvass by Frank Stella

## DOWN TO EARTH

1. These are the words that Moses addressed to al Israel on the other side of the Jordan...Adonai our God spoke to us at Horeb, saying: You have stayed long enough at this mountain. Start out and make your way... (Deuteronomy 1:1, 6-7)
2. Deuteronomy roots Jewish law less in the arbitrary will of the Creator than in the concrete history of the nation and its collective memory of what it felt like to be slaves, without rights, without rest, without dignity, and without hope....Society is [not] to be based on abstract principles alone. Instead it is grounded in collective memory and active recall. (Rabbi Jonathan Sacks)
3. Covenantal Language

**Listen** (*shema*) – occurs at least ninety-two times in Deuteronomy

**Love** – appears at least twenty-three times in Deuteronomy. “God upholds the cause of the orphan and widow, and loves the stranger, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are strangers, for you yourselves were strangers in Egypt.” (Deuteronomy 10:14-19)

**Remember** – “Remember the whole way that God caused you to walk...” (Deuteronomy 8:2)

**Transmit to Next Generations** – “Teach these words incisively to your children...” (Deuteronomy 6:7)

4. Prophetic Language

Learn to do good.

Aid the wronged.

Uphold the rights of the orphan.

Defend the cause of the widow.

(Isaiah 1:17, haftarah for Parshat Devarim)

5. The people have to learn to fight their own battles. They must discover God is a force within rather than a force outside that fights their battles for them. They must discern the God who is close – within the camp – and not one who is distant, who performs miracles, liberates the Israelites, brings plagues against the Egyptians, sends the people water from a rock and food from heaven, and divides the sea for them....[Deuteronomy] marks the move from divine initiative to human responsibility. (Rabbi Jonathan Sacks)