

Parashah #54

(Updated for 10.22.11)

V'Zot HaBrachah ~ וְזוֹת הַבְּרָכָה ~ And this is the blessing

Torah: D'varim/Deuteronomy 33:1-34:12

Haftarah: Y'hoshua/Joshua 1:1-18

B'rit Hadashah: Mattityahu/Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-10;

Luke 9:28-36; Y'hudah/Jude 3-4 & 8-10

Normally, this Parashah is read on (sim-kaht tor-ah) *Simchat Torah/Rejoicing of the Torah*, which is the case this year.

CHAPTER 33

These final words of *Moshe/Moses* are a combination of blessing and prophecy. The Sages indicate the phrase “And this is the blessing . . .” was used to indicate a continuation of *Ya'akov/Jacob's* blessing (**B'resheet/Genesis 49:1-28**). The tribes were blessed at the beginning of their national existence and again as they are about to begin life in *Eretz Isra'el/Land of Israel*. These same words were used when Moshe began his summation of the Torah before he died, which symbolizes Israel's way to achieve his blessing and The Holy One's is by studying and observing the Torah. I would dare say it applies to us today as well.

Just as *Ya'akov/Jacob* and *Yitz'chak/Isaac* blessed their sons before they died, so, too, Moshe blesses his disciples, B'nei Yishra'el. We find the same tradition holding true, years later in **Yochanan/John 17** when Yeshua prayed over His disciples on the night before His death and again as He ascended into heaven. (**Luke 24:50-51**).

In **verse 1**, “the Children of Israel” would indicate that the blessing applied collectively to the entire nation. However, as we will see, Moshe directed his blessings on each of the tribes individually, since the welfare of each tribe depended upon the others and the collective welfare of the nation depended upon the success of them all.

“Yehovah came from Sinai – having shone forth to them from Seir, having appeared from Mount Paran . . .” (**verse 2**) I believe this refers to The Almighty offering Torah to the descendants of Esau, who lived in Seir and to the Ishmaelites, who lived in Paran. Both refused to accept Torah because it prohibited killing and stealing, which was, and still is their lifestyle. According to the Sage, Ramban, there are three outstanding merits of Israel:

- God dwells among them
- They accepted His Torah
- They acknowledged His sovereignty

Consequently, since the Israelites submitted to The Holy One and accepted His Torah, they truly are the only nation worthy of the blessing they received.

There is a discrepancy of words in **verse 4**. Some translations use the word “heritage” and others use the word “inheritance”. One of the Sages explains the difference between “inheritance” and “heritage” in this way. An “inheritance” belongs to the heirs to use and dispose of as they please. A “heritage”, on the other hand, is the property of generations before and after and is incumbent upon the heirs to preserve it intact. I prefer to use the word heritage. As an example, the first generation in The Land abused their heritage as though it was an inheritance to be squandered. As a result, they lost it! Our generation, who follow Torah, on the other hand, seems to view it as our heritage and value it more.

Some might remember we have seen where Israel was called *Yeshurun/Jeshurun*, in the past, which is a title of honor meaning *straight* or *righteous* and designates Israel in its ideal state as The Almighty’s “upright nation”. It is used again in **verse 5**. Once Israel chose to be loyal to the Torah (**verses 3-4**) The Holy One became “King of Jeshurun” because He truly is King to those who grasp and diligently involve themselves in Torah study. This would include us as well, as stated in **2nd Timothy 2:15** “Study to show yourself approved unto God.”

Here’s a portion of an interesting commentary concerning “King of Yeshurun”. There are some who interpret “He was king in Yeshurun” as Moshe being this king; if so, this is the only place in scripture where Moshe is given the title of king. If you consider this from a Messianic perspective, it does make sense, since Moshe is considered the first redeemer of Israel and set the pattern for The Redeemer, Yeshua.

THE BLESSINGS

Moshe blessed *Re’uven/Reuben* first because he was the firstborn and because he would be the first to receive a portion of The Land. Generally speaking, Moshe blessed all the tribes in the order in which they would conquer their portions of the Land. This accounts for the almost random order in which he named the tribes. (**Verse 6**)

The tribe of *Y’hudah/Judah* (the Davidic royal line) was to play a major role in the life of the nation and would lead the nation in the wars for *Eretz Yisra’el/Land of Israel*, as prophesied over him by Ya’akov (**B’resheet/Genesis 49:8**). Therefore Moshe’s prayer was for Judah’s armies to be victorious and for him to rely only on Yehovah Who would respond to his prayers. (**Verse 7**) A side note here: We recognize *Y’hudah/Judah* is in The Land now. During Operation Cast Lead in Gaza during the several days of fighting, not one Israeli soldier died. Yehovah is still blessing them because they prayed first!

Levi’s blessing began with the *Kohanim/Priests* and proceeded to the tribe in general. In **verses 8-11** Moshe praises the steadfast loyalty and bravery of this tribe as well as their position

of teachers of the nation. They were selfless in their manner of performing their religious duties.

Binyamin/Benjamin is mentioned in **verse 12** and as I was reading it, I was intrigued with the words “. . . and He rests between his shoulders.” Initially, I thought Yehovah was in the middle of Benjamin’s back but that’s not what the **Ruach HaKodesh/Holy Spirit** revealed to me. The middle of his shoulders on the front side would be his heart!!! The Sages indicated because the Temple was located in Benjamin’s portion of **Yerushalayim/Jerusalem**, his blessing followed Levi’s. And because the Tabernacle at Shiloh was in the portion of **Yosef/Joseph’s** offspring, Ephraim, for over 200 years, Joseph’s blessing follows Benjamin’s. (**Verses 13-17**)

Z’vulun/Zebulun and **Yissakhar/Issachar** had a very unique partnership. Zebulun was very successful in maritime commerce and supported Issachar who devoted his time to Torah study. Although Issachar was older, Zebulun is mentioned first because he made Issachar’s Torah study possible. This tradition is still ongoing. There are many wealthy people today who support Torah scholars so they can devote their entire time to Torah study. (**Verses 18-19**)

The territory of **Gad** (**verses 20-21**) was on the eastern side of the **Yarden/Jordan** and extended so far east it was larger than the territory of any of the western tribes. Because of his positional location, Gad was like a fierce lion, defending its territory and the neighboring tribes. Obviously, they weren’t thinking only about themselves.

Dan’s province was along the Mediterranean coast so he was the first tribe to encounter seagoing marauders. Since Dan lived close to the border, he too is described as a lion. (**Verse 22**)

The blessing for **Naphtali** (**verse 23**) refers to the riches of its territory, which was very fertile and contained everything its inhabitants could desire. Additionally, Naphtali’s territory was in the northwest and included the Sea of Kinneret, also known as Lake Tiberias and the Sea of Galilee.

Asher was a large tribe and Moshe blessed them to remain so and not be diminished by sin. According to the Sage, Ramban, Asher supplied all the tribes with such abundant and delicious produce everyone blessed Asher for it. (**Verse 24**)

Sh’mom/Simeon is omitted. There are several explanations for this but the one I believe to be most logical has to do with the Torah always listing the number of the tribes as twelve, never more. Therefore, Moshe had to decide which tribe to omit. Usually, there were two alternatives:

- to list Levi and the unified tribe of **Yosef/Joseph** (combining Manasseh and Ephraim) or
- to list Manasseh and Ephraim separately and omit Levi, which was in a different category from the other tribes.

Moshe chose to bless the tribe of Levi because they were the tribe who performs Temple service and whose blessings would benefit the entire nation. Simeon's tribe was small and would be scattered throughout southern Israel so they would share in the blessings of their host tribes.

Okay, I know I have told you The Holy One speaks to me in pictures, sometimes, and in very bizarre ways, so bear with me on this one. **Verse 26** says in part “. . . He rides across heaven to help you . . .” This is what I saw: The Almighty, on a huge steed, riding faster than the wind, across the heavens, to come to their rescue, just like the cavalry of old. He does the same for us, especially when we are *Yeshurun/Jeshurun*, “straight and upright”.

CHAPTER 34

Being obedient to HaShem, Moshe blessed *B'nei Yisra'el/the Children of Israel*, prayed for them and then ascended the mountain as he had been commanded. Here, I believe, HaShem showed Moshe, not only a physical panorama but, prophetically, the future of Jewish history as well; the good and the bad; the obedience and the idolatry. (**Verses 1-4**)

Wow, there is a lot in **verse 5**!!! Here, Moshe is called “servant of HaShem”. When he was alive, he was called . . . אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים. . . *ish haElohim/man of God*. Now, for the first time, he is called *servant/eved*, (eh-vehd) in Hebrew. As I pondered on this, I thought, “Gosh, that's pretty ‘kewl’!! You know, a servant/slave is allowed entrance into the inner chamber of the king and now Moshe actually would be in the presence of Adonai.

There is speculation as to who wrote the remainder of Torah since this verse says “So Moses . . . died there”. I found that there are two opinions:

- Moses wrote the Torah up to this point and Joshua wrote the remaining verses or
- HaShem dictated these words to Moses and he wrote them with tears instead of ink.

I am much more comfortable with the former than the latter.

Still in **verse 5** . . . noted Sage, Rashi, says the words “by the mouth of HaShem” indicate Moshe died by the Divine Kiss. Given the “love affair” I have with The Holy One, I pray I die by His Divine Kiss when I have fulfilled His calling on my life.

Verse 6 is very interesting, “He buried him in the depression . . . and no one knows his burial place to this day.” Rabbinic tradition indicates Moshe's grave was ready for him since the six days of Creation and was one of the ten things created during twilight, on the eve of the first Shabbat. It is also taught The Almighty, Himself, buried Moshe's body “. . . and no one knows . . .” Supposedly, not even Moshe knew before his death where he would be entombed. The

purpose it has remained concealed is so his tomb won't become a shrine of pilgrimage for those who deify national heroes. To which I might add has taken place all over the land of Israel by "outsiders" who have come into The Land.

Just as *Aharon/Aaron* was mourned for 30 days, so was *Moshe/Moses* (verse 8) and then because his mantle had been passed on to *Y'hoshua/Joshua*, "... the Children of Israel obeyed him and did as HaShem had commanded Moshe."

Our Torah portion ends in verses 11 & 12, explaining the greatness of the signs and wonders The Almighty performed through Moshe's leadership. For instance:

- The ten plagues
- Death of the firstborn
- Splitting of the Red Sea
- Giving of the Torah
- The manna
- Water from the rock
- Pillar of fire
- Cloud over the camp

... not to mention all the other miracles performed in the wilderness. Although Yeshua performed many miracles, most commentaries indicate He didn't perform miracles as great as Moshe. Consequently, the phrase, "no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses" still stands true. However, when Yeshua returns, He will perform even greater wonders than Moshe's.

The Midrash Rabbah explains how the miracles of the Messianic age will far surpass those of Moshe. The Midrash lists ten amazing signs and wonders of the future and there some additional proof texts from the B'rit Hadashah.

1. He will cause a light to shine on the whole world. Isaiah 60:19; Revelation 21:23 and 22:5
2. He will make living water flow out from Jerusalem which will heal the sick. Ezekiel 47:9; Revelation 22:1
3. He will cause trees to bear fruit every month, and when man eats of their fruit he will be healed. Ezekiel 47:12; Revelation 22:2
4. All the ruined cities will be rebuilt so that there shall not be one desolate ruin left in the world. Ezekiel 16:55; Revelation 21:5
5. He will rebuild Jerusalem with sapphire stones. Isaiah 54:11; Revelation 21:19; Isaiah 60:3; Revelation 21:24
6. "... the cow and the bear will graze" Isaiah 11:7

7. He will call all the wild creatures, birds and creeping things and make a covenant with them and with all Israel. Hosea 2:18; Romans 8:21
8. There will be no more weeping or crying in the world. Isaiah 65:19; Revelation 21:4
9. There will be no more death in the world. Isaiah 25:8; Revelation 21:4; 1st Corinthians 15:54-55
10. There will no longer be any sighing, crying or sorrow, but that all will be rejoicing. Isaiah 35:10; Revelation 21:4

V'Zot HaBrachah ~ וְזוֹת הַבְּרָכָה ~ And this is the blessing
Haftarah: Y'hoshua/Joshua 1:1-18

The reading of this first chapter of *Y'hoshua/Joshua* opens the section of Scripture known as *HaNaviim/The Prophets*. It reminds us, although *Moshe/Moses* is dead, his work and message are eternal.

This Haftarah pretty well picks up where the Torah leaves off. We just finished reading Moshe died but before his death, he laid his hands on Y'hoshua and formally commissioned him to take over the leadership of B'nei Yishra'el. Y'hoshua is depicted as a godly, wise and strong leader in both the Torah and the *Book of Joshua/Sefer Y'hoshua*. He is fully capable of leading the people of Yehovah – just as his mentor and predecessor, Moshe.

Verses 3, 4, 5, and 9 exactly parallel verses from *D'varim/Deuteronomy* as well as the continual pattern and recurring theme of “be strong; be bold”, which is urged no less than three times by The Almighty upon Y'hoshua and once by the tribes of *Re'uven/Reuben*, Gad and *M'nasheh/Manasseh*. Yehovah's three exhortations remind us of the three times Moshe exhorted Y'hoshua with the same words, to realize his true potential (*D'varim/Deuteronomy* 3:28; 31:7; 31:23)

V'Zot HaBrachah ~ וְזוֹת הַבְּרָכָה ~ And this is the blessing
B'rit Hadashah: Mattityahu/Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-10;
Luke 9:28-36; Y'hudah/Jude 3-4 & 8-10

Mattityahu/Matthew 17:1-9 These verses are commonly known as “The Transfiguration on the Mount”. In **verses 2-3**, we read Yeshua's “face shown like the sun, and his clothing became white as light.” From our study of Torah, we are aware white garments represent being in a state of spiritual preparedness and from (Koe-heh-let) **Kohelet/Ecclesiastes 9:8** “Let your garments be always white; and let your head lack no ointment.” Additionally,

commentary says “His clothing became white as light” so His glory would not be less than *Moshe/Moses* and *Eli’yahu/Elijah*, who were “speaking with Him”.

Then in **verse 5**, “Listen to him! Because he is the “prophet like Moshe” whom you have just seen” is a direct reference to **D’varim/Deuteronomy 18:15-19**.

Mark 9:2-10 These verses are Mark’s version of what we read in Matthew 17:1-9.

Luke 9:28-36 And these verses are Dr. Luke’s version of the same event.

Y’hudah/Jude 3-4 & 8-10 **Verses 3 & 4** are interesting admonitions from Y’hudah. He urges us to keep striving for the faith we originally received by believing in Torah and Yeshua. The Messianic Way of life meant observing Torah, which Yeshua was faithful to do. He did not deviate from what His Father spoke to Moshe. There are many who pass on mistaken information and consequently pervert The Holy One’s grace into a license for debauchery; indicating that a person is considered righteous by Yehovah on the ground of professing faith in Yeshua regardless of what sort of life he leads, removing the ethical and moral component of faith/faithfulness/trusting.

Some interesting commentary with regard to **verses 8-10** follows: According to tradition, there was a dispute an hour before Moshe died between Samma’el – regarded in Judaism as the angel of death and often identified with *HaSatan/Satan*, the accuser – and *Mikha’el/Michael*, who, on the basis of **Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1**, is regarded in Jewish tradition as Israel’s defender and HaSatan’s opponent. The Targum Yonatan says Moshe’s tomb was put under Mikha’el’s authority. Some believe Yehovah assigned Mikha’el to bury Moshe’s corpse, but when HaSatan claimed it as his, Mikha’el took issue with the Adversary, arguing over the body of Moshe. Although he was one of the chief angels, Mikha’el did not dare bring against HaSatan an insulting charge, because he recognized Satan’s role as accuser was given to him by The Almighty. (This is clearly portrayed in **Job 1 & 2**. The *B’rit Hadashah/New Testament*, like the Tanakh, does not consider Satan an independent force for evil, but a servant of The Holy One with limited authority.) Rather, in keeping with the warning, “Yehovah says, ‘Vengeance is my responsibility; I will repay’”, Mikha’el said only, “May Yehovah rebuke you,” echoing The Almighty’s own rebuke of Satan in **Zechariah 3:1-2**.

The corresponding Psalm for this Torah portion is: Psalm 12

Finally, as is the custom at the end of each Book of Torah, let us recite . . . in Hebrew, then in English . . .

“Chazak, Chazak v’nit chazek!”

(Kah-zahk, kah-zahk v'neat-kah-zeck!)
(Be strong, be strong and let us be strengthened!)

Next week's lesson: Parashah #1

B'resheet ~ בראשית ~ In the Beginning

Torah: B'resheet/Genesis 1:1-6:8

Haftarah: Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 42:5-43:10

B'rit Hadashah: Mattityahu/Matthew 1:1-17; 19:3-9;

Luke 3:23-38; Luke 10:1-12; Yochanan/John 1:1-18;

1st Corinthians 6:15-20; 1st Corinthians 15:35-58; Romans 5:12-21; Ephesians 5:21-32;

Colossians 1:14-17; 1st Timothy 2:11-15; Ivrim/Hebrews 1:1-3; Ivrim/Hebrews 3:7-4:11;

Ivrim/Hebrews 11:1-7; Kefa Bet/2nd Peter 3:3-14; Revelation 21:1-5; 22:1-5

Who fills his mind with Torah clears it of fear and folly.

Rabbi Chanina Sgan HaKohanim

**The giving of Torah happened at one specific time, but the receiving
of Torah happens all the time, in every generation.**

Meir Alter, the Gerer Rebbe

**Organize yourselves into classes for the study of Torah,
since it can best be acquired in association with others.**

Talmud: Berkot 63b

שבוע טוב

Shavuah tov (have a good week)!!!

We have completed another annual cycle of our beloved Torah and I have thoroughly enjoyed it! I pray it has been a blessing for you as well. I want to take this time to thank each and every one of you for allowing me to share with you. It has been my honor and pleasure to do so for the last several years.

After much prayer and seeking to be in the will of my Heavenly Father, I am taking a “Shabbatical” during 2011/2012. So this will be my last Torah portion mailing to you.