

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	RENEWED
Vezot HaBrachah	19 Oct. 2019	20 Tishrei 5780	Deut. 33:1-34:12		

It is written, “And he [Moshe] said, “YHWH came from Sinai, and rose from Se’ir for them. He shone forth from Mount Paran, and came with ten thousands of set-apart ones – at His right hand a law of fire for them.” (Devarim 33:2) The Zohar<sup>1</sup> explains that Esau from Se’ir and Yishmael from Paran are the spiritual progenitors of the seventy nations. When their descendants rejected the Torah, all the other nations followed suit. Since these nations rejected the Torah and its holiness, Hashem gave this holiness to the Yisraelites who said, “We shall hear and do it” (Devarim 5:27) when the Ten Commandments were given.

Avodah Zarah (2b) explains that Hashem desired that everyone should have the Torah. When Hashem offered the Torah to the nations, He brought with it thoughts of repentance. But the nations did not want to arouse themselves to receive the Torah, and they rejected it. Likutey Halakhot<sup>2</sup> asks why do some people follow the true path, while others who want to serve Hashem follow paths that are not always the right ones? As explained previously in *parashat ha’azinu*, Hashem reveals Himself to everyone. The merit a person wants to receive depends on how much he is willing to sacrifice to Hashem.

Rashi explains “a law of fire” that Hashem gave the Torah in the form of black fire [the letters] on white fire [the background]. White represents “spiritual consciousness” which cannot be seen or comprehend. Black represents “form” which can be understood. Meaning, even though we can understand the “black fire” (*pashat* / literal) of Torah, we can truly never understand the “white fire” which is beyond our comprehension.

It is written, “Indeed, He loves the peoples, all His set-apart ones are in Your hand. And they, they sat down at Your feet, receiving Your Words.” (Ibid, v. 3) “The peoples” in Hebrew is עַמִּים (*am-mim*) which refers to those who repented and converted for the sake of Hashem. These were the people who were once distant by worshiping idols and now have come closer to Hashem, and draw strength to reject their previous lives by bringing true faith into the world. Thereby, “all His set-apart ones are in Your hands.”

Thus, “they sat down at Your feet” who pound their feet going from city to city in order to study and teach Hashem’s word. These righteous people engage conversation with all types of people, from scholars to sinners. Their speech sometimes might be mundane, but it serves as a cloak so that the brilliance and intensity of the Torah will not overwhelm people. In this way, the righteous elevate holy sparks and subdue evil.<sup>3</sup>

In verse 4, “Moshe commanded us a Torah, an inheritance of the assembly of Ya’akov.” The Mishnah states: “Make yourself fit to study the Torah, for it is not yours by inheritance.”<sup>4</sup> How can we reconcile the difference? Torah is the inheritance of the Yisrael community at large that unites the people through the study of the Torah, for this unites them with Hashem. When we can be truly called a “community,” the Torah is ours by inheritance. Thus, one must study diligently and make every effort to acquire Torah knowledge. The sages explain that instead of reading ‘inheritance’ (מִוְרָשָׁה, *mo-ra-shah*), because Torah is not an inheritance. Rather, it should be read as ‘betrothed’ (מְוָרָשָׁה, *me’orasah*) since the relationship

<sup>1</sup> The Zohar, Vol. 3, 193a

<sup>2</sup> Likutey Halakhot II, p. 119a

<sup>3</sup> Likutey Moharan I, 22:3

<sup>4</sup> Avot 2:12

between Yisrael and Hashem is often conceived of not as a full marriage, but merely as a betrothal. To be betrothed is to be in a binding, committed relationship, yet without access to the true intimacy that only comes when the betrothal is consummated as a marriage. The relationship between Yisrael and the Torah happens through the act of study which in metaphorical framework becomes conceived as an act of consummation of marriage.

It is written, “Blessed are you, O Yisra’el! Who is like you, a people saved by יהוה, the shield of your help, and He who is the sword of your excellency! And your enemies are subdued for you, and you tread down their high places.” (Ibid, v. 26) Similar verse is also found in Shemot 15:11, ““Who is like You, O יהוה, among the mighty ones?” Moshe praises the Yisraelites in Devarim, whereas the Yisraelites praises Hashem. The praise of the Yisrael is associate with an “arousal from below” while the praise of Hashem is associated with an “arousal from Above.”<sup>5</sup>

“Blessed are you, O Yisra’el!” King David said, “Blessed is the man.” (Tehillim 1:1) Meaning, the Torah is not complete unless a person learns how to praise Hashem and pray to Him. Therefore, Moshe concluded the Torah with “Blessed are you, O Yisra’el,” teaching us to praise Hashem for our good fortune. The sages explain that Moshe could not begin his prayers with praise because he was born during the Mitzrayim bondage, and there had never been any salvation before his birth. Since Moshe took the Yisraelites out of Mitzrayim and worked his entire life to instill Torah into the people, he could now say, “Blessed are you.”<sup>6</sup>

Devarim Ch. 33	Verse	Beresheet Ch. 49	Verse	Note
6	Let Reuben live, and not die in that his men become few.	3-4	<p>“Re’uḇēn, you are my first-born, my power and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of exaltation and the excellency of power.</p> <p>“Boiling like water, you do not excel, because you went up to your father’s bed, then you defiled it – he went up to my couch.</p>	All brothers who were involved in the sale of Yosef died “a second death” through the sages who were martyred during Roman occupation (Shemot 21:16). The only one who lived and died, and did not die afterwards “a second death,” is Reuben.
7	And this of Yehudah, and he said, “Hear, יהוה, the voice of Yehudah, and bring him to his people. His hands shall fight for him, and You be a help against his enemies.”	5-7	<p>Shim’on and Lēwi are brothers, their weapons are implements of violence.</p> <p>“Let my being not enter their council, let my esteem not be united to their assembly; because they slew a man in their displeasure, and they lamed an ox in pleasure.</p> <p>“Cursed be their displeasure for it is fierce, and their wrath for it is</p>	The Talmud <sup>7</sup> explains that the bones of Yahudah were continuously rolled about in his coffin (the voice of Yahudah) until Moshe beseeched Hashem for mercy, recalling Yahudah’s confession that he had fathered Tamar’s child (Beresheet 38:26). Thus, Yahudah’s bones were restored to their proper position (bring him to his people).

<sup>5</sup> Zohar III, 128a

<sup>6</sup> Likutey Halakhot VIII, p. 111a

<sup>7</sup> Sotah 7b

[illegible]

<sup>8</sup> Ketuvot 96a

	him all the day, as he dwells between His shoulders.”			<p>about the construction of the <i>Beis HaMikdash</i> in his portion.</p> <p>Moshe put the blessing of Yosef immediately after Benjamin because he also has a special relationship with the sacrificial service in that the Tabernacle of Shilo was built in his portion.</p> <p>And because the Eternal House is more precious than the Tabernacle of Shiloh, Moshe put Benjamin in whose portion the <i>Beis HaMikdash</i> was located ahead of Yosef.</p>
13-17	<p>And of Yosēph he said, “Blessed of יהוה is his land, with the choicest from the heavens, with the dew, and the deep lying beneath,</p> <p>with the choice fruits of the sun, with the choice yield of the months,</p> <p>with the finest of the ancient mountains, with the choicest of the everlasting hills,</p> <p>with the choicest of the earth and all that fills it, and the good pleasure of Him who dwelt in the bush. Let it come on the head of Yosēph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers.</p> <p>“His splendor is like a first-born bull, and his horns are like the horns of the wild ox. With them he pushes the peoples to the ends of the earth. And they are the ten thousands of Ephrayim, and they are the thousands of Menashsheh.”</p>	22-28	<p>“Yosēph is an offshoot of a fruit-bearing tree, an offshoot of a fruit-bearing tree by a fountain, his branches run over a wall.</p> <p>“And the archers have bitterly grieved him, shot at him and hated him.</p> <p>“But his bow remained in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty One of Ya’aqob – from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Yisra’el –</p> <p>from the Ėl of your father who helps you, and by the Almighty who blesses you with blessings of the heavens above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb.</p> <p>“The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, up to the limit of the everlasting hills. They are on the head of Yosēph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separated from his brothers.</p>	<p>Yosef, the righteous ascended above the curse of Adam and rectified eating of the Tree of Knowledge. Thus, Yosef merited the blessing.</p> <p>The entire Land of Yisrael is blessed, for Hashem has called it “a land flowing with milk and honey”. But the portion of Yosef is particularly called “blessed by Hashem” because of the great variety of blessings found there. Thus, “the choice fruits...”</p> <p>Targum Onkelos translates “splendor” as “radiance.” Ya’akov is associated with inner intelligence, that is the wisdom that uses to draw closer to Hashem. Yosef resembled Ya’akov more than any of his brothers. Thus, Moshe calls Yosef <i>bekhor shoro</i> (firstborn of oxen). “Firstborn” corresponds to inner intelligence, and <i>shoro</i> (his oxen) connotes gazing and focusing as in “I behold it, but it is not near.” (Vayikra 24:17) Thus, the “firstborn”, that is Yosef attained the birthright “of his oxen” because he always focused on finding the inner</p>

				<p>intelligence in each thing. Therefore, “splendor is his” as this wisdom illuminates his way and guides him on the proper path. (Likutei Moharan I, 1:4)</p> <p>Ephrayim will gore enemies by ten thousands while for Menashsheh thousands. The sages explain that when Yosef brought his sons for the blessing by Ya’akov, Yosef placed Menashsheh on the right side of Ya’akov and Ephrayim on the left. However, Ya’akov crossed his arms and blessed Menashsheh with his left and Ephrayim with right hand. (Beresheet 48:13-14) In Tehillim 91:7 it is written, “One thousand will fall at your [left] side and a myriad at your right arm.”</p>
18-19	<p>And of Zebulun he said, “Rejoice, O Zebulun, in your going out, and Yissaskar in your tents!</p> <p>“They call peoples to the mountain, there they bring offerings of righteousness, for they draw from the riches of the seas, and treasures hidden in the sand.”</p>	<p>13</p> <p>14-15</p>	<p>“Zebulun dwells at the seashore, he is for a haven for ships, and his border is unto Tsidon.</p> <p>“Yissaskar is a strong donkey lying down between two burdens,</p> <p>and he saw that a resting place was good, and that the land was pleasant, and he inclined his shoulder to bear a burden, and became a subject to slave labour.</p>	<p>Zebulun was a successful businessman and Yissaskar was a Torah scholar. They entered into an agreement that Zebulun would support Yissaskar and in return Zebulun would receive a share of the merit due to Yissaskar for his Torah study. When the time comes for them to return to their Creator and come before the Heavenly tribunal, Zebulun will be very happy for the royal treatment he will receive in consideration of the Torah study which is credited to him. Yissaskar, on the other hand, will be troubled upon realizing that for comfortable amenities in the mundane world, he lost half the credit for his Torah study. Therefore, Moshe blessed them together in the same verse, but instructed each one to rejoice individually in his respective field.</p>
20-21	<p>And of Gad he said, “Blessed is he who enlarges Gad. He dwells as a lion, and shall tear off the arm, also the crown.</p> <p>“And he chose the best for himself, for there the portion of the lawgiver was hidden. And he came with the heads</p>	19	<p>“Gad, a raiding band raids him, but he raids its heel.</p>	<p>The tribe of Gad consisted of mighty warriors. The verse (Beresheet) is a prophecy that in their battle to conquer Eretz Yisrael not one of their troops would be missing. “Tearing off the arm and also the crown” means that they did not violate the law as such they were blessed with the strength to destroy the</p>

	of the people. The righteousness of יהוה he did, and His right-rulings with Yisra'el."			<p>enemy and not lose any troops in battle.</p> <p>The "lawgiver" is Moshe. In Hebrew "lawgiver" is מְחַקֵּק (<i>me-cho-kek</i>) which has a numerical value of 248, corresponding to the number of positive commandments. When Moshe died, he passed into the realm of Divine Will, which is concealed from human perspective. Therefore, his gravesite is hidden.</p>
22	And of Dan he said, "Dan is a lion's cub, that leaps from Bashan."	16-18	<p>"Dan rightly rules his people as one of the tribes of Yisra'el.</p> <p>"Dan is a serpent by the way, an adder by the path, that bites the horse's heels so that its rider falls backward.</p> <p>"I have waited for your deliverance, O יהוה!</p>	<p>The portion of the land given to Dan was adjacent to the border. Thus Moshe compares him with lions.</p> <p>Targum Onkelos renders: For the Yarden goes forth from his portion from the cave of Pamias which is Leshem. But the Yarden's starting point and source of flow is from the Bashan which is in the territory of the tribe of Manasseh. Thus, this verse means that the Yarden, which starts as a small stream in the Bashan, becomes a river when it emerges from the cave of Pamis in the territory of Dan.</p>
23	And of Naphtali he said, "O Naphtali, satisfied with pleasure, and filled with the blessing of יהוה, possess the west and the south."	21	"Naphtali is a deer let loose, he gives words of elegance.	The land of Naphtali lay to the north and west of the Sea of Galilee. The tribe was also granted a strip at the south of the Sea wide enough to allow them to pull in their fishing nets.
24	And of Asher he said, "Asher is most blessed of sons. Let him be accepted by his brothers, and dip his foot in oil.	20	"Bread from Asher is rich, and he gives delicacies of a sovereign.	Rashi explains that Asher made himself pleasing to his brothers with anpikinon oil (olive oil used for cosmetic purpose). Alternatively, his daughters were beautiful. "And the sons of Beriah...who was the father of Birzaith" (1Chr. 7:31) because his daughters would marry High Priests and kings who are anointed with olive oil. The name "Birzaith" (בִּרְצִית) is a contraction of בֵּר זַיִת (bar za-yit), "a person of olive oil).