

Shiur L'Yom Sheni¹

[Monday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Vezot:*** Deuteronomy 33:1-5
 Haftarah: Joshua 1:1-5
 B'rit Chadasha: Matthew 24:1-8

The Torah that Moshe gave us

[Deuteronomy 33:5a]

Today's Meditation is Jonah 3:1-5;

Today's Prayer Focus is the *Aleinu* [Our Purpose (in life) ...]

Adonai miSineh ba – the Holy One went out from Sinai ... *vezarach miSe'ir lamo* – and He shone forth to His People from Seir ... *hofia mehar Paran* – and He appeared at the watershed Paran Deuteronomy 33:2a.

With the Divine Appointments of our King coming at us fast and furious this time of year it is almost as an afterthought that we quietly say goodbye to Moshe Rabbeinu. But *say goodbye we must*, nonetheless. The Holy One must increase, and Moshe must decrease. He must spread His Presence over us like a *tallit*; and we must ascend into and acclimate to His Glorious Light.

The Spiral Staircase of Light

Every Torah cycle we are privileged to complete is like another day's journey up the Mountain of the Holy One. That means that as each new cycle begins our soul is closer to the Glorious Cloud of the Radiant Presence that rests upon that Mountain than ever before.

With each day's journey it seems the path becomes steeper and narrower. Each trip through the Torah cycle brings more and more accountability - and less and less room for error. With each cycle we complete a little more *excess baggage* has to be jettisoned. With each additional height to which our Torah study takes us we find ourselves challenged to let go of *comfortable but immature attitudes, familiar but erroneous belief systems, and habitual but unBiblical practices* – not to mention time-consuming and energy-draining relationships. From our higher vantage point we can see such things for what they are. When that happens we realize these things have *at best* lost any value they ever possessed for us or for those around us, and *at worst* are totally inconsistent with where the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven is calling us to go from here.

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Every year we study Torah it pushes us to change. It both *empowers* and *requires* us to conform ourselves to it.

But any seeming detriment or discomfort inherent in the changes called for by Torah is much more than counterbalanced by the tangible benefits of proceeding higher up the Mountain. For one thing, the higher one climbs [i.e. the more ‘days’ journeys one completes], the more incredible is the view. Moreover as we continue to climb we find His overshadowing Presence becomes more and more palpable, and that the Divine Voice that calls us upward becomes more and more clear, more familiar to our ears, and more comprehensible.

The Bridegroom King beckons us. Our destiny awaits us. This is what we were born for. It is the reason we have been given the breath of life at such a time as this. Nothing earth has to offer can come close to comparing to the joy of this pursuit. So let us press on.

Moshe’s Fond Farewell

The final *Parsha* of Torah is called *Vezot² Ha-Berachah*, meaning literally “*and these are the blessings ...*” Here is how it begins.

Vezot ha-b’rachah

This is the blessing

asher b’rach Moshe ish ha-Elohim et-b’nei Yisra’el

with which Moshe, man of God, blessed the sons of Israel

lif’nei moto

as he faced death.

[Deuteronomy 33:1]

Before Moshe departs our camp Moshe is going to do something very, very special for those he is leaving behind. He is going to personally visit and speak a prophetic blessing over each of the tribes of Israel, one by one.

To what can Moshe’s parting *b’racha* be likened? Well in one sense it can be likened to *a father’s Shabbat blessing*. As a father blesses each of his children on Friday evenings as the gentle mist of Sabbath rest falls upon the earth, so will Moshe bless each of the tribes of Yisrael as he prepares to enter into his rest. But there is even more to Moshe’s blessing than that Beloved. Moshe’s blessing is the ‘bookend’ of Torah.

Moshe’s Blessing as Torah’s ‘Bookend’

Torah’s account of the story of man’s relationship with the Holy One began with a

² The word *vezot* [... and these] is *vav, zayin, alef, tav*.

blessing. It is fitting that it ends with one. What do I mean? Way back at the beginning of Torah when *the Holy One Elohim* created and breathed life into Adam Torah told us that:

The Holy One blessed them, and said to them:

“Be fruitful,

and increase [i.e. in number, wisdom, positive influence, and ecosystem-nurturing impact]

fill [i.e. bring forth fullness and abundance to] ***the earth,***

and subdue [i.e. subordinate it to the Creator’s Plan] ***it.***

Take dominion over the fish of the sea, and the birds of the air,

And over every living thing that moves upon the ground.”

[Genesis 1:28]

At the time this blessing was spoken the Holy One was preparing a garden that the man - Adam, the apple of His Eye – was designed and commissioned to ***abad*** [usually translated as ‘dress’ or ‘tend’] and to ***sh’mar*** [usually translated as ‘keep’ or ‘guard’]. Now as Torah draws to a close³ the Holy One is preparing *Eretz Yisrael* [the land of Israel] as a garden for *Am Yisrael* [the people of Israel], the apple of the Holy One’s Eye, to ***abad*** and to ***sh’mar***.

The blessing that Moshe – the friend of the Bridegroom – speaks over *Am Yisrael* is the ‘bookend’ to the blessing the Holy One spoke over Adam at the beginning. To fully understand this blessing it should be compared to and contrasted with the blessing of Genesis 1:28.

The Contrasts Between the Two Bookend Blessings

How can one blessing be compared to the other? First of all it should be noted that the concluding blessing, the blessing uttered by Moshe on the day he was ‘gathered to his people’, differs from the original blessing of the Holy One in that it was not spoken over all Adam. Moshe’s final blessing is spoken only over one bloodline – the bloodline of Ya’akov, through Yitzchak, through Avraham, through Terach, back through Shem, through *Noach* [Noah], back through *Shet* [Seth].

The Holy One’s blessing in Genesis 1:28 was over all mankind – over all Adam’s descendants. Moshe’s blessing was spoken only over the tribes⁴ of Israel.

The tribes descended from Ya’akov who stand poised to enter the Holy One’s

³ The term ‘Torah’ is used here in the traditional sense, as referring to the five ‘books’ written by Moshe. This is because the Mosaic revelation contains the ‘seed’ form of all Scriptural revelation. As an acorn contains all the essence of not only an oak tree but a vast oak forest so Torah contains all the essence of Scripture - and indeed of every subsequent revelation of God to man. Torah is the standard, the root, the pattern to which all true revelation must conform.

⁴ With no specific reference to Sh’mo[n] [Simeon], whose omission Torah does not explain.

garden have been *separated out from the rest of mankind*. Just as on the first day of Creation the Holy One separated Light from Darkness, and on the second separated the firmament from the waters, and on the third day separated the dry land from the seas and oceans, etc., the Holy One has, through the events recorded in Torah between the bookends, Divinely separated the descendants of Adam into two factions – Israel, on the one hand, and the *Goyim* [nations or peoples] of earth on the other.

What does this mean? What are we to understand from the fact that the final blessing of Torah is only spoken to and over the tribes descended from Ya'akov? Why were the rest of Adam's descendants – i.e. the descendants of Noach's sons Cham [Ham] and Yafet [Japheth], as well as the Shemites [Semites] with bloodlines other than that of Ya'akov [Jacob] – excluded from the concluding blessing of Torah? How, in light of this glaring contrast, can the concluding blessing spoken by Moshe in parsha *Vezot Ha-B'rachah* be compared to the universal blessing spoken by the Holy One in Genesis 1:28?

Does this exclusion of all but *Am Yisrael* from this final blessing of Torah mean that – horror of horrors – the Holy One has *abandoned* the rest of mankind? Does it mean that He has *given up on* the vast majority of Adam's descendants? Does He thereby relegate goyim to the status of '*second-class citizens*' of planet earth? No Beloved. Not at all. Remember, if you will, that it was the Holy One's plan that these 12 tribes and their descendants forever, were to not just to RECEIVE the Holy One's blessing but were to RELEASE that blessing on the rest of mankind.

In Genesis 12 the Holy One called Avraham and the process of 'dividing' mankind began. This was however merely the early seed form of the process we see entering a new phase in Moshe's blessing. Remember what the Holy One told Avram? He said:

***I will make of you a great nation.
I will bless you, and make your name great.
You will be a blessing.***

***I will bless those who bless you,
and I will curse him who curses you.
In you will all of the families of the eretz be blessed."***

[Genesis 12:2-3]

If you will receive it Beloved the essence of what this means is that through the blessing of these 12 tribes the Holy One was actually *beginning the process of Creation again*. The blessing of the 12 tribes descended from Ya'akov was the acorn. From the acorn would grow a forest.

The tribes descended from Ya'akov were ordained by the Holy One to be a “*light to the gentiles*”⁵. *All* the tribes, Dear Reader - not just the tribe of Y'hudah (Judah).

What does this mean? What is the Biblical precedent? Think about it, Dear Reader. On the First Day of Creation Week the Holy One said: “*yehi-ohr*” [*Light, be!*], so at the end of Torah he calls forth *Am Yisrael*, tribe-by-tribe, to be a light to the gentiles, to shine into the self-imposed darkness that resulted from the debacle of *Bavel*⁶. As Moshe told us recently in his shir (song):

*When Ha-Elyon gave to the nations their inheritance,
When he separated the children of men,
He set the bounds of the peoples
According to the number of the children of Yisra'el.
[Deuteronomy 32:8]*

Note also that even with regard to the sons of Israel the blessing of Moshe is given *tribe-by-tribe* rather than over all *Am Yisrael* as a unified body. Each tribe [except Sh'mon (Simeon), which is omitted without explanation] has a unique part to play in *abad*-ing and *sh'mar*-ing the Holy One's garden.

Thus even before Moshe begins the tribe-by-tribe blessing he declares:

*Af choveiv amim
Although You love all peoples,
kol-kedoshav b'yadeicha
Your k'doshim are in Your Hand.
V'hem tuku l'rageicha
They follow Your footsteps,
yisa m'dabroteicha
and uphold Your Word.
[Deuteronomy 33:3]*

The *following of the Holy One's footsteps* [i.e. living a *sh'ma* lifestyle, responding to every movement of the Holy One as a Bride responds to her Bridegroom] and the *upholding of the Holy One's word* [i.e. *sh'mar*-ing and *asah*-ing His *mitzvot*] are the two essential elements of emitting the *ohr* [light] the rest of mankind needs.

⁵ *Isaiah 42:5-7* says: “*Thus says God the Holy One, he who created the heavens, and stretched them forth; he who spread abroad the eretz and that which comes out of it; he who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk therein: I, the Holy One, have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand, and will keep you, and give you for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Goyim; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and those who sit in darkness out of the prison-house.*”

⁶ See Genesis 11:1-9.

Israel was not called upon to *invent* light – it was merely to be called to *shine* the Holy One’s light upon the rest of Creation.

The Torah As Our ‘Eternal Heritage’

The next-to-last verse of our aliyah for today reads as follows:

Torah tzivah-lanu Moshe

Moshe⁷ prescribed the Torah⁸ to us,

morashah kehilat Ya'akov

an eternal heritage for kehilat Ya'akov.

[Deuteronomy 33:4]

Please note that Torah was not given as a ‘temporary’ covenant. It was not designed to mysteriously fade away when Messiah appeared in the flesh. Torah is instead called an *eternal heritage* - entrusted to Am Yisrael for *all time*. Am Yisrael holds this eternal heritage in trust for all mankind, in all generations, in all the earth.

The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as “*eternal heritage*” is ***morashah***⁹. This noun is derived from the Hebrew verb root ***yarash***¹⁰, meaning “*he possesses by right, as an inheritable estate*.”

The first usage of the noun ***morashah*** in Torah is found in Exodus 6, where the Holy One speaks his declaration of intent to *court* Israel as a prospective Bride-to-be. While His Beloved was still in the slave camps of Egypt, the Holy One said:

***I am the Holy One,
And I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.
I will free you from being slaves to them,
And I will redeem you with an outstretched arm
And with mighty acts of judgment.
I will take you as My own people, and I will be your God.
Then you will know that I am the Holy One your God,
Who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.
And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand
To give to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Ya'akov.
I will give it to you as a morashah. I am the Holy One.***

[Exodus 6:6-8]

The land that the Holy One promised with uplifted hand to give to Avraham, to

⁷ These words mention Moshe in the third person, as if he were already dead. Perhaps they were added by Y’hoshua when he recorded the Holy One’s final blessing to the book of Torah.

⁸ English translations often incorrectly translate this word as “law”. The word Torah, Strong’s Hebrew word #8451, does not mean ‘law’, but *instruction*, or *teaching*.

⁹ Morashah is *mem, vav, resh, shin, hey*. Strong’s Hebrew word #4181, it is pronounced *mo-raw-shaw*’.

¹⁰ Yarash is *yod, resh, shin*. Strong’s Hebrew word #3423, it is pronounced *yaw-rash*’.

Yitzchak, and to Ya'akov was not given for any of those persons to consume or waste. It was given not only to Avraham, but also to Yitzchak. Avraham was not permitted to consume it in such a way as to and deprive Yitzchak of its enjoyment. Likewise it was not given to Yitzchak alone, but also to Ya'akov. Yitzchak was not permitted to consume it in such a way and deprive Ya'akov and his progeny of its enjoyment.

So it is for every generation. Each generation can enjoy the land of Israel as a *morashah* – but it can never be consumed. It is *possessed*, but not owned. The Holy One is the owner. Avraham's descendants are just the authorized tenants. Generation after generation after generation.

It is the same with the Torah. Torah does not belong to Israel. It belongs to the Holy One. No generation can cause it to cease, or cut off its character as a *morashah* – an *eternal heritage* - for all of the Holy One's people. It is to be passed down from generation to generation. And just as 'foreigners' were to be permitted to live in Eretz Yisrael, dwelling amidst the Holy One's people, so 'foreigners' are to be permitted to share the *morashah*.

Do your part, Dear Reader – receive Torah, treasure it, share it with everyone you know. And then *pass it on* - to your children and your children's children forever. It is in the Torah, you see, that we – and they – and the nations - will come to know the Holy One, and will meet, and become one with, Messiah in His fullness.

The Gathering – and Dispersing – of the Tribes of Israel

The concluding verse of today's aliyah reads as follows:

Vayehi v'Yeshurun melech

He¹¹ was king in Yeshurun

behit'asef rashei am

when the people's leaders gathered together,

yachad shivtei Yisra'el

[and] the tribes of Israel were united [Hebrew, yachad].

[Deuteronomy 33:5]

Many have considered the unity of the tribes of Israel as they stood on the plains of Moav, as cited in this verse, and have looked back nostalgically. Oh, they say, if we could achieve this level of unity again! I understand the sentiment. But I do not believe such nostalgia is either proper or productive. Why? Because, you see, the

¹¹ The pronoun 'he' with which this verse begins [in English translation] has no clear antecedent. The question therefore arises as to *who* exactly we are being told was *king* [Hebrew, *melech*] in Y'shurun. Was it *Moshe*? Was it *the Holy One*? Or was it *Torah*? You decide, Beloved.

dispersing of the tribes of Israel throughout all nations – which has brought about our current state of disunity - has been a major part of the Holy One’s plan for casting *ohr* [light] into every nook and cranny and every community of planet Earth – and bringing *ohr* [light] to every descendant of Adam. It is His way of spreading the blessing to all mankind. And when the Holy One sends forth Messiah again to regather and re-unify us [we cannot do it ourselves – it is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast], the unity we experience in the context of the regathering will be far greater – and far more inclusive (because it will include multitudes upon multitudes of gentiles, as well as the 12 tribes naturally descended from Ya’akov) – than was the unity our forefathers knew on the plains of Moav.

So I say do not look back nostalgically to the unity our ancestors knew. Look *ahead* longingly to the greater and more inclusive unity the Holy One has promised to bring to pass in the days to come.

Questions For Today’s Study

1. Here are some questions with which to begin this week’s study.

[A] Who do you think wrote the last two chapters of Deuteronomy?

[B] Moshe is described in verse 2 as “Moshe the man of God”. In Strong’s and Gesenius look up the words our English Bibles translate as *man* [Hebrew *ish*] and *God* [*Elohim*] as used in this verse. Write each of the Hebrew words and describe the word pictures which each of these words paints for us.

2. According to the author of chapter 33, in addition to appearing to B’nei Yisrael at Sinai the Holy One “*dawned*” over a certain location, and “*shone forth*” from another location.

[A] Over what location is the Holy One said to have “*dawned*”?

[B] When do you think this occurred, and what did it mean?

[C] Look up the word that is translated “*dawned*” in verse 2. Write the Hebrew word and its definition.

[D] From what location did the Holy One “*shine forth*”?

[E] When do you think this occurred, and what did it mean?

[F] Look up the word that is translated “*shone forth*” in verse 2. Write the Hebrew word and describe the word picture it paints for us.

3. Today’s aliyah briefly discusses what happened at Sinai.

[A] Who does today’s aliyah indicate came to Sinai *with the Holy One*?

[B] In verse 3 the NIV translates the objects of the Holy One’s love as “*the people*”. Other translations translate the word as “*the peoples*”. What do you see as the difference, and which do you think is the meaning that best fits the context?

[C] List in order the events that the writer recounts in verses 2-4.

- [D] How did the Holy One become “King” over Jeshurun?
 [E] How does the Holy One become King over our lives today?
 [F] Who besides the tribes of Israel participated in the Holy One’s coronation according to verse 5?

4. In today’s Haftarah reading from *Sefer Y’hoshua* [the book of Joshua] we read:

*Now it happened, after the death of Moshe the servant of the Holy One, that the Holy One spoke to Y’hoshua the son of Nun, Moshe’s minister, saying, “Moshe my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Yarden, you, and all this people, to the land that I do give to them, even to the children of Yisra’el.
 Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread on, to you have I given it, as I spoke to Moshe.
 From the wilderness, and this Levanon, even to the great river, the river Perat, all the land of the Hitti, and to the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your border.
 There shall not any man be able to stand before you all the days of your life.
 As I was with Moshe, so I will be with you;
 I will not fail you nor forsake you.*

[A] In verses 1-2 Moshe is described as being “dead”. How can this and the events of Matthew 17:1-4 be true? Explain.

[B] Does the death of Moshe mean that the revelation of the Holy One given through him is no longer relevant? Explain your answer.

[C] Give the boundaries of the territory of Israel as promised by the Holy One to Y’hoshua [Joshua].

[D] What instructions does the Holy One give to Y’hoshua in verse 2?

[E] List the promises the Holy One gives to Y’hoshua in today’s verses.

5. Today’s suggested reading assignment from Yeshua’s *Olivet Discourse* reads as follows:

*Yeshua went out from the temple and was going on his way.
 His talmidim came to him to show him the buildings of the temple.
 But he answered them, "Don't you see all of these things?
 Most assuredly I tell you, there will not be left here one stone on another,
 that will not be thrown down."
 As he sat on the Mount of Olives the talmidim came to him privately, saying,
 "Tell us, when will these things be?
 What is the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?"
 Yeshua answered them, "Be careful that no one leads you astray.
 For many will come in my name, saying, I am the Messiah,
 and will lead many astray.
 You will hear of wars and rumors of wars.
 See that you aren't troubled, for all this must happen, but the end is not yet.*

*For nation will rise against nation,
and kingdom against kingdom;
and there will be famines, plagues, and earthquakes in various places.
But all these things are the beginning of birth pains.*

- [A] Where did this week's *torah* [instruction; teaching] of the Master take place?
[B] List the three questions the *talmidim* [disciples; full-time students and followers of the ways of the Master] asked that prompted Yeshua to teach on the subject of the 'Latter Days'.
[C] List the things that the Master prophesied [in verses 4-8] will come to pass.
[D] What did the Master caution His *talmidim* to "watch out" for?
[E] What did the Master prophesy would happen to many of those who had/have followed Him?
[F] What should be our response to "wars and rumors of wars"?
[G] What words did the Master use to describe the increasing frequency of revolutions, coups, ethnic conflicts, famines, and earthquakes?

*May you find true meaning and purpose for your life
In the shelter of the Holy One's Tabernacle of Shalom.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Yonah [Jonah] 3:1-5

The word of the Holy One came to Yonah the second time, saying,

***"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city,
and declare to it the message that I give you."***

*So Yonah arose, and went to Nineveh,
according to the word of the Holy One.*

Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey across.

*Yonah began to enter into the city a day's journey,
and he cried out, and said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"*

*And the people of Nineveh believed God;
and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth,
from the greatest of them even to the least of them.*