



חומש דברים

THE TORAH

*With an Interpolated English Translation
and Commentary Based on the Works of*

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

וצוקללה"ה נבג"מ זי"ע

Chumash Devarim

The Book of Deuteronomy

Parshat Vezot Habrachah



Kehot Publication Society

770 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn NY 11213

5772/2012

THE TORAH - CHUMASH DEVARIM

WITH AN INTERPOLATED ENGLISH TRANSLATION
AND COMMENTARY BASED ON THE WORKS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Copyright © 2006-2012
by
Chabad of California

A project of
Chabad of California
741 Gayley Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024
310-208-7511 / Fax 310-208-5811

Published by
Kehot Publication Society
770 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, New York 11213
718-774-4000 / Fax 718-774-2718
editor@kehot.com

Order Department:
291 Kingston Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11213
718-778-0226 / Fax 718-778-4148
www.kehot.com

All rights reserved, including the right to reproduce this book
or portions thereof, in any form, without permission,
in writing, from Chabad of California, Inc.

The Kehot logo is a trademark
of Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc.

ISBN: 978-0-8266-0193-3
ISBN: 978-0-8266-0195-2 (set)

Published in the United States of America



GENESIS

Bereishit
Noach
Lech Lecha
Vayeira
Chayei Sarah
Toldot
Vayeitzei
Vayishlach
Vayeishev
Mikeitz
Vayigash
Vayechi

EXODUS

Shemot
Va'eira
Bo
Beshalach
Yitro
Mishpatim
Terumah
Tetzaveh
Tisa
Vayakheil
Pekudei

LEVITICUS

Vayikra
Tzav
Shemini
Tazria
Metzora
Acharei Mot
Kedoshim
Emor
Behar
Bechukotai

NUMBERS

Bemidbar
Naso
Beha'alotecha
Shelach
Korach
Chukat
Balak
Pinchas
Matot
Masei

DEUTERONOMY

Devarim
Va'etchanan
Eikev
Re'eh
Shoftim
Teitzei
Tavo
Nitzavim
Vayeilech
Ha'azinu

54 וזאת הברכה *Vezot Habrachah*

Overview

The closing *parashah* of both the Book of Deuteronomy and the entire Torah, *Vezot HaBerachah* (“This is the Blessing”), records Moses’ blessing to his people—the finale of his farewell address to them—followed by the vision that God shows him of the people’s future fortunes in their land, and finally, the account of his death.

Most of the *parashah* is devoted to Moses’ blessing. Just as Jacob’s blessing to his sons closed both the account of his life and the Book of Genesis, so does Moses’ blessing to his people close the account of his life and “his” book, the Book of Deuteronomy.

Also parallel to Jacob’s blessing, Moses blessed the people both collectively and as an aggregate of individual tribes, blessing each one with the unique qualities it would need to fulfill its specific role with regard to the greater good of the nation. In fact, many parallels can be drawn between the blessings of Jacob and those of Moses. This being the case, the natural questions that arise are: Why did God deem it necessary for Moses to bless the people when Jacob had already done so years before? What did Moses’ blessings add to Jacob’s?

Before addressing these questions, we would do well to compare these two sets of blessings with the blessings given in the one other instance in the Torah wherein the central figure of one generation blesses the next: Isaac’s blessings to Jacob (and Esau).¹ Although Isaac’s blessings are shorter than those of Jacob and Moses (since there was no differentiation of his progeny into tribes, which would have occasioned unique blessings for each), they are wholly concerned with the bestowal of material plenty and security, intended to provide the recipients with the physical means to fulfill God’s will unencumbered by worries of earning a livelihood or the threat of war. In contrast, both Jacob’s and Moses’ blessings, although including similar wishes for material plenty and security, comprise a relatively equal amount of prophecy—and even (in Jacob’s case) reproach.

In fact, if we consider all these blessings together, we notice an unfolding progression: the blessings originate in Isaac, pass on to Jacob, and are finally channeled through Moses. In this context, the next natural question is: Why didn’t this progression begin with Abraham?

In a sense, it does. We recall that at the beginning of *parashat Lech Lecha*,² God granted

1. Genesis 27:28-29, 39-40.

2. Genesis 12:2-3.

Abraham the power to bestow blessing, and that in *parashat Chayei Sarah*,³ Abraham bequeathed this power to Isaac. We further recall that Abraham would have blessed Isaac had he not foreseen that one of Isaac's sons would be unworthy of being blessed; for this reason, he left it to God to bless Isaac, which He did immediately after Abraham's death.⁴ In this context, Isaac was the first patriarch who was effectively able to bless his progeny, and indeed, the intrigue surrounding which of his two sons was to receive his blessing is a pivotal element in the drama of his life and the life of his children.

On a deeper level, however, it was Abraham's very nature that prevented him from blessing Isaac, and it was Isaac's nature that made him capable of being the first explicit fount of blessing. Abraham, as we recall, personified *chesed* ("loving-kindness"), concern for the spiritual and material welfare of others. This outwardly-directed involvement with others was reflected in his legendary hospitality, coupled with his successful efforts in disseminating Divine consciousness among the people of his time.

Isaac, in contrast, personified *gevurah* ("restraint, withdrawal"), the inner strength required to consolidate and preserve the great undertaking that Abraham initiated. His life was epitomized by his project of digging wells—externally, in order to facilitate the growth of already-settled communities in which his father's teachings could be put into practice, but more profoundly, expressing his inward orientation, which was aimed at uncovering his hidden essence along with that of those around him.

In this context, *only* Isaac could serve as the wellspring of blessing, for only he embodied the intensity of living necessary to elicit potent and effective blessings. For all his greatness, Abraham did not—and could not—evince this sort of intensity, and therefore could not elicit Divine blessing powerful enough to be efficacious.

Nonetheless, due to of the very intensity of Isaac's *gevurah*, his blessings had to be funneled through *tiferet* ("beauty, harmony"), as personified by Jacob, who therefore had to both receive and transmit Isaac's blessings. Jacob's successful contention with adversity throughout his troubled but ultimately vindicated life revealed him to be the expert in applying the ideals of his grandfather and father to the realities of life. Unlike his almost-hermit-like father, Jacob had a firm grasp on life and knew his sons well, and was therefore eminently capable of dividing up Isaac's blessings, endowing each of his own sons with the gifts their tribes would need in the future.



Once Jacob's family had grown into a nation, however, the blessings needed to be re-articulated, this time in a national context. Thus, the difference between Jacob's and Moses' blessings lies in the difference between their respective roles in the formation of the people. Jacob, the final and consummate patriarch, was the father of the nation; Moses was its first leader. Thus, even if the two sets of blessings are similar in content, they differ in nature by virtue of their source: one is the blessing of a father to his family, the other, the blessing of a leader to his nation.

In his capacity as the nation's leader, Moses was able to elicit God's blessings in a more palpable way than Jacob could as its father, for a leader must invest much more effort and make much greater sacrifices to fulfill his role than a father must in order to fulfill his. Indeed, we see from the Torah's narratives that although Jacob did indeed have to struggle to educate and protect his family, Moses had to contend with much more serious challenges,

3. Genesis 25:5.

4. Genesis 25:11.

even having to put his life on the line for his people on more than one occasion. This being the case, it was only natural that Moses' greater efforts elicited greater consideration from above. The amount of "clout" one has with God is directly proportional to one's selfless devotion to Him, as the sages say, "Make your will accord with His will, so that He may fulfill your will as He fulfills His own will. Nullify your will to His will, so that He may nullify others' wills to your will."⁵

The superior efficacy of Moses' blessings is alluded to by the fact that they open with the heading, "*This* is the blessing..." whereas Jacob's do not. The demonstrative pronoun *this* indicates that the blessing that follows was so palpable that it could virtually be pointed to.



The ultimate reason, however, that the nation's blessings had to be re-articulated by Moses is because Moses is the conduit of the Torah, and the Torah is the source of all blessing. The Torah is our guide to life, and therefore, all physical blessings must be received and utilized according to the Torah's instructions; only thus can they serve their purpose: to enable us to transform the world into God's holy abode. Therefore, despite Moses' relative aloofness from the affairs of life (as contrasted to Jacob's and Aaron's familiarity with them), he was the one to bestow the patriarchs' blessings on the nation.

Moreover, as we will see,⁶ Moses achieved the normally inaccessible fiftieth "gate of understanding"⁷ on the day of his death; this, too, constitutes part of his blessing to the people. This explains why both Moses' vision of the future as seen on Mount Nebo as well as the account of his death are included in this *parashah* (named "blessing")—even though the vision of the future is not a blessing per se, and Moses' death seems the very opposite of blessing. Moses succeeded in transmitting to us his supra-natural Divine perception, which was granted to him only on Mount Nebo on the day of his death; this heightened Divine consciousness is the most sublime blessing possible.

The vision of the nation's future that God granted Moses, up to and including the vision of the final, messianic Redemption, is a fitting conclusion for the Torah, for as we know, the Torah was given to humanity in order to enable us to make the world into God's home, and this goal will ultimately be achieved only upon the advent of the final Redemption. We are taught that Moses, the first redeemer, will also be the final redeemer,⁸ and that a spark of his soul is present in every generation⁹ as the leaders of that generation,¹⁰ as well as in each of us as individuals.¹¹ Thus, Moses' blessings—which provide us with the means, the impetus, and the vision to fulfill our Divine mission and our destiny, bringing the world to its fullest completion—are consummately channeled first through the leaders of our generation and finally through our own selves, as we look to the Torah as our guide to living life to its fullest, to connecting ourselves with God, and to transforming our lives and our world into God's true home.¹²

5. *Avot* 2:4.

6. On 34:1.

7. See on Genesis 18:1.

8. *Shemot Rabbah* 2:4; *Zohar* 1:253a; *Sha'ar HaPesukim, Vayechi*.

9. *Tikunei Zohar* 69.

10. *Tanya*, chapter 2.

11. *Tanya*, chapter 42.

12. Based on *Sidur im Dach* 246b-247a; *Sichot Kodesh* 5724, pp. 6-7; *Sichot Kodesh* 5740, vol. 3, p. 585; *Hitva'aduyot* 5745, vol. 1, p. 89; *Hitva'aduyot* 5750, vol. 1, p. 117.

ONKELOS

33:1 וְזֹאת הַבְּרָכָה אֲשֶׁר בִּרְךְ מֹשֶׁה אֱלֹהִים
אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְנֵי מוֹתוֹ: 2 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה מִסִּינֵי בָא
וְזָרַח מִשְׁעִיר לָמוֹ הוֹפִיעַ מִהָר פֶּאֶרֶן וְאַתָּה מִרְכַּבֶּת
קֹדֶשׁ מִימִינוֹ אֲשֶׁר־דָּת {אֵשׁ דָּת} לָמוֹ: 3 אָף חֲבֹב עַמִּים
כָּל־קֹדְשָׁיו בִּידֶךָ וְהֵם תָּכֹן לְרִגְלֶךָ יֵשׂא מִדְּבָרוֹתֶיךָ:

RASHI

"גוי וקהל גוים יהיה ממך": כל קדשיו בידך. נפשות
הצדיקים גנוזות אתו, כענין שנאמר: "ויהיה נפש
אדני צורה בצרור החיים את ה' אלהיו"; והם
תכו לרגלך. והם ראויים לך, שהרי תוכו עצמן
לתוך תחתית ההר לרגלך בסיני. "תכו" לשון
פעלו — התוכו לתוך מרגלותיך: ישא מדברותיך.
נשאו עליהם על תורתך: מדברותיך. הפ"ם בו
קרוב ליסוד, כמו: "וישמע את הקול מדבר אלי",
"ואשמע את מדבר אלי" — כמו "מתדבר אלי",
אף זה "מדברותיך" — מה שהיית מדבר להשמיעני
לאמר להם. ט"ש שפרפרלידורי"ש בלעז. ואנקלוס
תרגם: שהיו נוסעים על פי דברך, והפ"ם בו שמוש,
משמשת לשון "מן". דבר אחר: "אף חובב עמים",
אף בשעת חבתן של אמות העולם, שהראית
להם פנים שוחקות ומסרת את ישראל בידם: כל
קדושי בידך. כל צדיקהם וטוביהם דבקו בך ולא
משו מאחריך, ואתה שומרם: והם תכו לרגלך. והם
מתמצעים ומתכנסים לתחת צלך: ישא מדברותיך.
מקבלין גורותיך ודתותיך בשמחה. ואלה דבריהם:

1 וְזֹאת הַבְּרָכָה. לִפְנֵי מוֹתוֹ. סמוך למיתתו, שאם
לא עבשו אימתי: 2 וַיֹּאמֶר ה' מִסִּינֵי בָא. פתח
תחלה בשבחו של מקום ואחר כך פתח בצרכיהם
של ישראל, ובשבח שפתח בו יש בו הזכרת וכות
לישראל, וכל זה דרך רצוי הוא, כלומר: כדאי הם
אלו שתחול עליהם ברכה: מסיני בא. יצא לקראתם
כשבאו להתיצב בתחתית ההר, כחתן היוצא להקביל
פני כלה, שנאמר: "לקראת האלהים", למדנו שישא
כנגדם: וזרח משעיר למו. שפתח לבני עשו שיקבלו
את התורה ולא רצו: הופיע. להם: מהר פארן. שהלך
שם ופתח לבני ישמעאל שיקבלוה ולא רצו: ואתה.
לישראל: מרכבות קדש. ועמו מקצת רבבות מלאכי
קדש, ולא כלם ולא רבם, ולא בדרך בשר ודם
שמראה כל כבוד עשרו ותפארתו ביום חפתו: אש
דת. שהייתה כתובה מאז לפניו באש שחורה על גבי
אש לבנה, נתן להם בלוחות כתב יד ימינו. דבר
אחר: "אש דת", בתרגומו, שנתנה להם מתוך האש:
3 אף חובב עמים. גם חבה יתרה חבב את השבטים,
כל אחד ואחד קרוי "עם", שהרי בנימין לבדו היה
עתידי להולד בשאמר הקדוש ברוך הוא ליעקב:

1. שמות יט, יז. 2. בראשית לה, יא. 3. שמואל א כה, כט. 4. במדבר ז, פט. 5. יחזקאל ב, ב. 6. דבוריך (עם עצמך).

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

The fundamental reason why God offered the Torah to the nations of the world was in order to prevent them from ever contesting the apparent favoritism He displays toward the Jewish people: they can no longer argue that had God offered them the Torah, they too would have accepted it as readily and as unconditionally as did the Jews. But since, as we know, everything God does He does for a positive reason, there must also be something positive that was accomplished by offering the Torah to the non-Jewish nations.

The positive effect of offering the Torah to the non-Jewish nations was that doing so rendered them receptive to later accepting upon themselves the obligation to observe the Noahide laws, i.e., the seven categories of commandments that are incumbent upon all non-Jews. In order to properly accept this

legal code, the non-Jew must accept its Divine origin and the fact that God gave it to humanity as part of the Torah that He gave through Moses at Mount Sinai. Furthermore, in the messianic future, the non-Jewish nations will be refined and no longer intrinsically oppose the lifestyle and world-vision of the Torah; in the words of the prophets, "I will then transform the nations to speak a pure language, so they will all call upon the Name of God, to serve Him with one accord."⁸ By approaching the nations of the world with the option to accept the entire Torah, God implanted within them the receptivity to both their present obligation to accept the Torah's authority over them, obligating them in the Noahide laws, as well as their future acceptance of the Torah's world-vision, transforming them into active participants in the final Redemption.⁹

8. Zephaniah 3:9. 9. *Hitva'aduyot* 5742, vol. 1, pp. 223-224; *Hitva'aduyot* 5748, vol. 1, p. 92.

Moses' Blessing

33:1 Having concluded his final exhortations, Moses devoted his final moments to blessing the people, realizing that this was his final opportunity to do so. **This is the blessing with which Moses, the man of God, blessed the Israelites just before his death.**

2 He said: “See how worthy this people is of God’s blessing! When they were about to be given the Torah, **God’s presence came from Mount Sinai** to meet them, as a groom goes to greet his bride.¹ **He shone forth to them** at Mount Sinai after having come **from Mount Seir**, where He offered the Torah to the Edomites. **He appeared** at Mount Sinai after having come **from Mount Paran**,² where He offered the Torah to the Ishmaelites; both of these peoples refused to accept it, whereas the Israelites accepted it joyfully.³ However, whereas a groom is customarily accompanied to his wedding by his entire entourage, God **came** to His “wedding canopy” at Mount Sinai to meet His “bride,” the Jewish people, **with only some of the holy myriads** of angels, for this was more than enough to glorify the occasion. **From His right hand**, so to speak, He gave **them** the Torah, **a law** that preexisted creation, when it was written as black **fire** on white fire.⁴ Recalling the Torah’s primordial state, God gave **them** His **law** while speaking **out of the fire** enveloping Mount Sinai.”⁵

3 Addressing God as he continued to demonstrate how worthy the people were of being blessed, Moses continued, **“Indeed, You Yourself showed extraordinary love for the tribes of Israel, considering them individually as important as distinct nations.”**⁶ **All Your holy ones**, i.e., the souls of all the Israelites—both before and after they enter physical bodies in this world—**are in Your hand**, i.e., Your safe-keeping. The people are worthy of this love, for when You suspended Mount Sinai above them, threatening to crush them under it if they did not accept the Torah, **they crowded at Your feet**, under the mountain, willingly undertaking **to bear** the responsibility of fulfilling **Your utterances**, i.e., Your commandments.

Furthermore, **they traveled** through the desert **in accordance with Your utterances**, i.e., Your instructions, no matter where You told them to go.

And in the future, **even when You will show favor to the gentile nations**, enabling them to subjugate and oppress the Jewish people, **all Your holy ones**—the Jews—**will remain ‘in Your hand,’** i.e., loyal to You and reliant on Your protection; **they will ‘crowd at Your feet,’** so to speak, taking refuge in Your shadow and happily **bearing** the responsibility of fulfilling **Your utterances**, i.e., Your commandments, saying,

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

2 Where He offered the Torah to the Edomites... where He offered the Torah to the Ishmaelites: The Edomites and Ishmaelites are the archetypal cultures of non-Jewish civilization. Thus, in offering the Torah to these two peoples, God was in effect offering it to all the non-Jewish nations of the world,

present and future.⁷ Whatever form this procedure actually took, its essence was that God examined the intrinsic nature of every nation and found none of them innately suited to accept the Torah and fulfill its instructions—except the Jewish people.

1. Exodus 19:17. 2. Genesis 21:21; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 237, note 55. 3. Exodus 19:1. 4. Background to Genesis 1:1. 5. Exodus 19:18, 20:1; above, 4:33, 36, 5:4, 19, 21, 23. 6. Genesis 35:11. 7. Cf. *Sifrei*, *Vezot Habrachah* 2; *Avodah Zarah* 2b.

ONKELOS

4 אוריתא יחב לנא משה מורה ירתא לכנשת יעקב: 5 והיה בישראל מלכא באתבנשות רישי עמא כחדא שבטאי דישראל: 6 יחי ראובן לחיי עלמא ומותא תנינא לא ימות ויקבלון בנוהי אחסנהון במנינהון:

4 תורה צוה לנו משה מורה קהלת יעקב: 5 ויהי בישרון מלך בהתאסף ראשי עם יחד שבטי ישראל: 6 יחי ראובן ואלימות ויהי מתיו מספר: 8

RASHI

באגדה אחת ושלום ביניהם הוא מלכם, ולא כשיש מחלוקת ביניהם: 6 יחי ראובן. בעולם הזה: ואל ימות. לעולם הבא, שלא יזכר לו מעשה בלחה: ויהי מתיו מספר. נמנין במנין שאר אחיו, דגמא היא זו, דענין שגמאמר: "וישכב את בלחה ויהיו בני יעקב שנים עשר", שלא יצא מן המנין:

4 תורה. אשר צוה לנו משה, מורה היא לקהלת יעקב — אהונוה ולא נעובדה: 5 ויהי. הקדוש ברוך הוא: בישרון מלך. תמיד על מלכותו עליהם: בהתאסף. בכל התאסף ראשי חשבון אסיפתם: ראשי. כמו: "כי תשא את ראש", ראיון אלו שאברכם. דבר אחר: "בהתאסף", בהתאסף יחד

7. שמות ל, יב. 8. בראשית לה, כ"ב.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

merely an intellectual pursuit.¹⁴

Later on in life, when we begin to study the Torah, we experience it as a "sale" of "merchandise," as it is written, "I have given you good merchandise; do not forsake My Torah."¹⁵ Just as buyers must pay for what they purchase, so must we exert ourselves to learn the Torah. Referring to this aspect of our relationship to the Torah, the sages say, "Prepare yourself to learn Torah, for it is *not* your inheritance."¹⁶ It is in this context that our intelligence, persistence, and available time come into play, determining our individual relationship to the study of the Torah.

In the course of studying the Torah according to our own abilities, we may receive a "gift" from God in the form of understanding aspects of the Torah that our own intellect or spiritual makeup would not allow us to grasp on our own, or in the form of retaining more of what we have learned than our own ability to remember would allow us to. Although this gift is beyond our ability to earn, God will only give it to us if we endear ourselves to Him by refining ourselves to the best of our ability.¹⁷

5 You will be King over Yeshurun when the totality of the people are gathered and the tribes of Israel are together: Unity is achieved not by all constituent elements of a group becoming alike, but by each one fulfilling its unique purpose and acknowledging the necessity and contribution of all the other constituent elements. This inter-relationship is similar to the kind we observe in the body, wherein every limb, organ, bone, etc., performs a unique role that no other component of the body can, thereby making a unique contribution to the complete functioning of the whole. Moreover, each component can function fully only when all the other components are functioning fully: the proper functioning of each

component not only affects its own effectiveness and the overall effectiveness of the body as a whole, but also the effectiveness of every other component individually.

Thus, Jewish unity should ideally be more than the simple dedication to a common goal (although that is a worthy aim in its own right), and ideally more than a symbiotic relationship by which each of us completes each other (although this, too, is a worthy aim); it should be an awareness that all of us, together, form one whole. All aspects of all of us are part of one "body," such that every facet of our individual lives has an impact on every facet of the life of every other Jew.

Conversely, just as the body's completeness is dependent upon the individual completeness of each of its component parts, so is it crucial that each of us fully develop his or her individuality, living up to their unique potential.

Interestingly, it is the second-stage unity, that of our symbiotic relationship with one another, that often requires the most effort to achieve. Self-interest (the first stage) and self-denial (the third stage) are easier to negotiate than the delicate balance between self-awareness and mutual dependence.

The second-stage and third-stage unity are themselves interdependent. Experiencing self-denial takes the edge off the ego, enabling us to acknowledge our symbiotic dependence upon others. In turn, awareness of our interdependence with others paves the way for the further self-denial of viewing ourselves as parts of one greater whole.

Second- and third-stage unities are thus achieved in stages, as each stride we make toward one enables us to take a further stride toward the other, and vice-versa.¹⁸

15. Proverbs 4:2. 16. Avot 2:12. 17. Likutei Sichot, vol. 13, pp. 114-118. 18. Likutei Sichot, vol. 4, pp. 1141-1143.

4 **'The Torah that Moses commanded us is the legacy of the congregation of Jacob.** We took possession of it as a palpable inheritance that remains ours under all circumstances,¹⁰ so we will never let go of it.'

5 Thus, **You will always be King over Yeshurun.** Even **when the totality of the people are gathered and the tribes of Israel are together**, they remain united under Your sovereignty rather than break up into factions. Consequently, they are worthy of blessing.

(The inverse is also true: **God is King over Yeshurun only when the totality of the people are gathered peaceably and the tribes of Israel are together** without strife. But when there is dissension among them, it is clear that they are not then submitting to His sovereignty.)"

6 Moses then blessed each tribe individually, addressing to God his specific requests for each one (see Figure 1). **"May the descendants of Reuben not bear collective onus for his sin of having meddled in his father Jacob's marital affairs,**¹¹ and thus be allowed to both **live** in this world **and not 'die'** spiritually, i.e., be excluded from the afterlife. **And may his people—his tribe—not be denationalized on account of that sin, but be counted among the number of the tribes of Israel."**



Figure 1. The Tribal Territories

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

4 **The Torah that Moses commanded us is the legacy (literally, "inheritance") of the congregation of Jacob:** As has been discussed,¹² of the three forms in which transfer of property can take place—inheritance, sale, and gift—inheritance is the most absolute: its effectiveness and validity are not at all contingent upon the suitability of the inheritor to receive; even a newborn can inherit his father's estate. In fact, an inheritance is so intrinsic to the inheritor that it may be considered to have always belonged to him *in potentia*, as an irrevocable birthright. Thus, by referring to itself as the Jewish people's inheritance, the Torah is informing us that every Jew, even a newborn baby, is a bona fide inheritor of the entire Torah. The Torah becomes ours not only once we have mature sufficiently to study it and understand it, but immediately upon birth.

This being the case, it is clear that the aspect of the Torah that is referred to here is not its intellectual content, for a newborn lacks the tools with which to take possession of that aspect of the Torah. Rather, the aspect referred to here is the essence of the To-

rah—the Torah as the essential bond between God and us—which is the natural corollary of the Torah's being God's will and wisdom. Since intellect is not the "tool" through which the Torah's essence is grasped, its acquisition is not dependent upon the intellectual development of the individual; therefore even a newborn can possess it in its entirety.

It is specifically the awareness of this essential dimension of the Torah that forms the foundation of our approach to it and study of it. The scholar and the novice alike must remain aware at all times that the Torah is our essential connection with God. This awareness inspires us both to endeavor to learn as much of it as we can as well as to encourage and enable others to do the same.

For this reason, this verse is traditionally the first verse we teach our children when they begin to speak.¹³ It is crucial that children internalize this awareness *before* beginning to study the Torah, both in order that their subsequent study be based on this realization and in order that they not form the erroneous impression that the study of the Torah is

10. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 29, pp. 229-231. 11. Genesis 33:22. 12. On Genesis 15:18 and Numbers 26:53. 13. *Sukkah* 42a; *Shulchan Aruch*, *Yoreh Deah* 245:5; *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*, *Hilchot Talmud Torah* 1:1. 14. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 4, pp. 1165-1167.

ONKELOS

7 וְזֹאת לַיהוּדָה וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמַע יְהוָה קוֹל יְהוּדָה וְאַל־
עִמּוֹ תְּבִיאֵנוּ יָדָיו רַב לוֹ וְעֶזֶר מִצָּרָיו תַּהֲיֶה: פ
שְׁנֵי 8 וּלְלוֹי אָמַר תַּמִּיד וְאוֹרִיךְ לְאִישׁ חֲסִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר
נָסִיתוֹ בְּמִסָּפָה תִּרְיָבֵהוּ עַל־מִי מְרִיבָה: 9 הָאֹמֶר
לְאָבִיו וּלְאִמּוֹ לֹא רֵאִיתִיו וְאֶת־אָחִיו לֹא הִכִּיר וְאֶת־
בְּנָיו {בְּנָיו} לֹא יָדַע כִּי שָׁמְרוּ אִמְרֹתֶךָ וּבְרִיתֶךָ יִנְצְרוּ:

RASHI

עצמו? שהיה בלבו עליו על מה שעשה בשטים, כן
כתוב באגדת תהלים: 8 וּלְלוֹי אָמַר. ועל לוי אמר:
תמיד ואורכי. כלפי שכינה הוא מדרב: אשר נסיתו
במספה. שלא נתלוננו עם שאר המלינים: תריביו
וגו'. בתרגומו. דבר אחר: "תריביו על מי מריבה",
נסתקפת לו לבא בעלילה, אם משה אמר: "שמעו
נא המרים", אהרן ומרים מה עשו: 9 האומר לאביו
ולאמו לא ראיתיו. בשקטאו בעגל ואמרתי: "מי לה'
אלי", נאספו אלי כל בני לוי, וצויתים להרוג את
אבי אמו והוא מישראל, או את אחיו מאמו, או
את בן בתו, וכן עשו. ואי אפשר לפרש אביו ממש,
ואחיו מאביו, וכן בניו ממש, שהרי לויים הם, ומשפט
לוי לא חטא אחד מהם, שנאמר: "כל בני לוי":
כי שמרו אמרתך. "לא יהיה להם אלהים אחרים":
ובריתך ינצרו. ברית מילה, שאותם שולדו במדבר
— של ישראל לא מלו את בניהם, והם היו מולין
ומלין את בניהם:

7 וְזֹאת לַיהוּדָה. סמך יהודה לראובן, מפני ששניהם
הודו על קלקול שבידם, שנאמר: "אשר חקמים
יגידו וגו' להם לבדם וגו' ולא עבר זר בתוכם". ועוד
פרשו רבותינו, שכל ארבעים שנה שהיו ישראל
במדבר, היו עצמות יהודה מתגלגלין בארון, מפני
נדוי שקבל עליו, שנאמר: "וחטאתי לאבי כל
הימים". אמר משה: מי גרם לראובן שיודה? יהודה
וכו': שמע ה' קול יהודה. תפלת דוד ושלמה, ואסא
מפני הכושים, ויהושפט מפני העמונים, וחזקיה מפני
סנחריב: ואל עמו תביאנו. לשלום מפני המלחמה:
ידיו רב לו. יריבו ריבו וינקמו נקמתו: ועזר מצריו
תהיה. על יהושפט התפלל, על מלחמות רמות גלעד
— ויזעק יהושפט, וד' עזרו: דבר אחר: "שמע ה'
קול יהודה", כאן רמז ברכה לשמעון מתוך ברכותיו
של יהודה, ואף בשחלקו ארץ ישראל נטל שמעון
מתוך גורלו של יהודה, שנאמר: "מחבל בני יהודה
נחלת בני שמעון". ומפני מה לא יחד לו ברכה בפני

9. איובטו, יחידט. 10. סוטה, ב. 11. בראשיתמד, לב. 12. דבהיבית, לא. 13. יהושעט, ט. 14. פרקצ. 15. במדברכ, י. 16. שמותלב, כו. 17. שם. 18. שמותכ, ב.

9 The tribe of Levi also proved faithful to You at the incident of the Golden Calf³⁶ by answering my call to slay the guilty parties, even if they were their close relatives. Each Levite **said of his maternal grandfather** (if the latter was a lay Israelite and guilty of this sin), **'I do not see him** as my relative, but as someone whom it is my duty to execute'; **neither did he recognize his maternal half-brothers, nor did he know his grandchildren**, if any of them were lay Israelites and guilty of this sin: In every such case, the Levites disregarded their familial ties and executed the guilty.³⁷

They are additionally worthy of blessing **because**, at the incident of the Golden Calf, **they observed Your word** by which You commanded us not to make or serve idols, **and** because during the entire trek through the desert, **they kept Your covenant** of circumcision, even though they were legally exempt from doing so.³⁸

36. Exodus 32:1-33:6. 37. Exodus 32:26-28. 38. Exodus 32:14.

7 Concerning Judah, Moses said, “When Judah was trying to convince his father Jacob to let Benjamin accompany the brothers to Egypt, he vowed that if he would not bring Benjamin back alive, then when he would die, he would forfeit his share in the afterlife.¹⁹ Even though Judah did indeed return Benjamin safely to Jacob, his vow could not be annulled until it was possible for it to take effect, i.e., until he died,²⁰ and since then, no one has thought of a legal argument that could annul his vow. We have therefore heard Judah’s bones rolling around in his coffin all these years, indicating that he has been denied entry into the afterlife. But it was Judah, by confessing his sin with Tamar as soon as he was confronted with its consequences, who inspired Reuben to confess his sin,²¹ so if Reuben has been granted entry into the afterlife, all the more so **should this same privilege be granted to Judah.**”²² As soon as Moses uttered this prayer, Judah’s bones reassembled into a complete skeleton and were no longer heard rolling around inside his coffin, indicating that Judah had been admitted to the afterlife.

Moses further said, “**O God, hearken to the voice of the leaders of the tribe of Judah** when they pray in their times of distress.” This request was granted when God answered the prayers of Kings David,²³ Solomon,²⁴ Asa,²⁵ Yehoshafat,²⁶ and Chizkiyah.²⁷ **“Bring their leader home to his people in peace; may his hands do battle successfully for him, and may You be a help against his adversaries.”** This request was granted when God assisted King Yehoshafat in the battle of Ramot Gilad.²⁸

Moses did not bless the tribe of Simeon explicitly, because he felt that since they had played a leading role in the incident at Shitim,²⁹ they were less worthy to be blessed than the other tribes. Nevertheless, he implicitly included the tribe of Simeon in his blessing for the tribe of Judah, in that the word for “hearken” [*Shema*], which opens Judah’s blessing, is the source for the name Simeon [*Shimon*].³⁰ This connection between these two tribes was later reflected in the fact that the land inheritance of the tribe of Simeon was included in that of the tribe of Judah.³¹

- ◆ **Second Reading 8 Referring collectively to the tribe of Levi**, Moses addressed God and said: **“Your *tumim* and *urim***³² (which are worn by the high priest, as the representative of the entire tribe³³) **befit Your pious man, whom You tested at Masah³⁴ and whom You tried at the waters of Merivah,³⁵ and who, in both cases, did not lose faith in You when it appeared that the supply of water was finished.**

The record of the tribe of Levi’s highest-ranking officiant, Aaron, was so impeccable that **You had to find a pretext** against him **at the waters of Merivah** by which to deny him entry into the Land of Israel, for it was only I who actually sinned in that incident, by striking the rock instead of speaking to it, as You had told me to, whereas Aaron’s only fault was that he did not prevent me from doing so. Nonetheless, You implicated Aaron, as well, for You hold the righteous to exceptionally exacting standards.

19. Genesis 43:9, 44:32. 20. Exodus 12:36; *Maskil LeDavid* on Genesis 44:32. 21. Genesis 38:26. 22. *Sotah* 7b; *Bava Kama* 92a. 23. 2 Samuel 21:1; *Ta’anit* 15a. 24. 1 Kings 8:12-61. 25. 2 Chronicles 14:10. 26. 2 Chronicles 20:6-12. 27. 2 Kings 19:15-19. 28. 2 Chronicles 18:31. 29. Numbers 25:1-15. 30. Genesis 29:33. 31. Joshua 19:9. 32. Exodus 28:30. 33. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 14, p. 127. 34. Exodus 17:1-7. 35. Numbers 20:1-13.

— ONKELOS —

10 בשרין אלין דילפון דיניף ליעקב ואורייתך לישראל ישוון קטרת בוסמין קדמך וגמיר לרענא על מדבחה: 11 ברך יי נכסוהי וקרנן ידוהי תקבל ברענא תבר חרצא דסנאוהי ודבעלי דבבוהי דלא יקומון: 12 לבנימן אמר רחמא דיי ישרי לרחצן עלוהי יהי מגן עלוהי כל יומא ובארעה תשרי שכינתא: 13 וליוסף אמר מברכא מן קדם יי ארעה עבדא מגדנין משלא דשמיא מלעלא וממבועי עינן ותהומין דנגדן ממעמקי ארעא מלרע: 14 ועבדא מגדנין ועללן מיבול שמשא ועבדא מגדנין מריש ירח בירח: 15 ומריש טוריא בכיריא ומטוב רמן דלא פסקון:

10 יורו משפטיך ליעקב ותורתך לישראל ישימו קטורה באפך וכליל על מזבחה: 11 ברך יהוה חילו ופעל ידיו תרצה מחץ מתנים קמיו ומשנאיו מן יקומון: 8

12 לבנימן אמר ידך יהוה ישכן לבטח עליו חפף עליו כל־היום ובין כתפיו שכן: 8

◆ שלישי 13 וליוסף אמר מברכת יהוה ארצו ממגד שמים מפל ומתהום רבצת תחת: 14 וממגד תבואת שמש וממגד גרש ירחים: 15 ומראש הררי־קדם וממגד גבעות עולם:

— RASHI —

המקדש בנוי, אלא שנמוך עשרים ושלש אמה מעין עיטם, ושם היה דעתו של דוד לבנותו. כדאיתא בשחיטת קדשים: אמרי, נחתי בה פורתא, משום דכתיב: "ובין כתפיו שכן" — אין לך נאה בשור יותר מכתפיו: 13 מברכת ה' ארצו. שלא היתה בנחלת השבטים ארץ מלאה כל טוב כארצו של יוסף: ממגד. לשון עדנים ומתק: ומתהום. שהתהום עולה ומלחלח אותה מלמטה. אתה מוצא בכל השבטים ברכתו של משה מעין ברכתו של יעקב: 14 וממגד תבואת שמש. שהיתה ארצו פתוחה לחמה, וממקת הפרות: גרש ירחים. יש פרות שהלכנה מבשלתן, ואלו הן: קשואין ודלועין, שהארץ מגרשת ומוציאה מחדש לחדש: 15 ומראש הררי קדם. ומברכת מראשית בשול הפרות, שהרריה מקדימין לבכר בשול פרותיהם. דבר אחר: מגיד שקדמה בריאתן לשאר הרים: גבעות עולם. גבעות העושות פרות לעולם, ואינן פוסקות מעצר הגשמים:

10 יורו משפטיך. ראוין אלו לך: וכליל. עולה: 11 מחץ מתנים קמיו. מחץ קמיו מכת מתנים, כענין שנאמר: "ומתניהם תמיד המעד", ועל המעוררין על הכהנה אמר כן. דבר אחר: ראה שעתידין חשמונאי ובניו להלחם עם היוונים, והתפלל עליהם, לפי שהיו מועטים — שנים עשר בני חשמונאי ואלעזר, כנגד כמה רבבות, לך נאמר: "ברך ה' חילו ופעל ידיו תרצה": ומשנאיו מן יקומון. מחץ קמיו ומשנאיו מהיות להם תקומה: 12 לבנימן אמר. לפי שברכת לוי בעבודת הקרבנות, ושל בנימין בבנין בית המקדש בחלקו, סמך זה לזה. וסמך יוסף אחריו, שאף הוא משכן שילה היה בנוי בחלקו, שנאמר: "וימאס באהל יוסף" וגו', ולפי שבית עולמים חביב משילה, לך הקדים בנימין ליוסף: חופף עליו. מכסה אותו ומגן עליו: כל היום. לעולם. משנבחרה ירושלים, לא שרתה שכינה במקום אחר: ובין כתפיו שכן. בגבה ארצו היה בית

19. תהלים סט, כד. 20. תהלים עח, סז. 21. וזבחים נד, ב.

14 (3) with the delicacies that are the 'produce' of the sun, which ripens them; (4) with the delicacies ripened monthly by the moon;

15 (5) with the first-ripening fruits, which grow on mountains whose produce ripens early relative to that which grows on other mountains (and which, because of their preeminence—evinced by how their fruits ripen earlier than that of all other mountains—were created before all others); (6) with the delicacies of hills that produce fruit perennially, even during periods of little rainfall;

10 They will therefore teach Your ordinances to Jacob and Your Torah to Israel, for their proven zeal for performing Your bidding qualifies them for this task. The priests, the descendants of Aaron, **will place incense before You and ascent-offerings upon Your altar.**

11 If, in the future, anyone contests the exclusive right of the descendants of Aaron to serve as the nation's priests, and this quarrel degenerates into armed conflict, then God, bless their army with the power to resist these contesters, and favorably accept the work of their hands alone in performing the priestly service. Strike the loins of those who rise up against them and their enemies, so they will be prevented from rising against them again.

And if, in the future, a priestly family has to defend the practice of Judaism against an oppressive foreign regime, then **God, bless their army with the power to vanquish them, and favorably accept the work of their hands in defending the faith. Strike the loins of those who rise up against them and their enemies, so they will be prevented from rising up against them again.**" This prayer was answered when the Hasmoneans, a family of priests, valiantly battled the Seleucids, who attempted to restrict the practice of Judaism, resulting in the miracle of Chanukah.

12 Having mentioned the Temple service in his blessing for the tribe of Levi, Moses proceeded to bless the tribes of Joseph and Benjamin, for the priestly service would be performed in their territories: first in the Tabernacle, which was situated at Shiloh—in Joseph's territory, and then in the permanent Temple, which was situated at Jerusalem—in Benjamin's territory. Although Joseph was the older of these two brothers, and therefore his blessing should rightfully have come first, Moses first blessed Benjamin, the younger brother, since the status of the permanent Temple was superior to that of the temporary Tabernacle.

He said of the tribe of Benjamin, "God's beloved one will dwell securely beside Him; He hovers above him all day long, i.e., once the Temple will be built, the Divine Presence will rest above the Temple site forever, and never relocate to anywhere else. He dwells between his shoulders, i.e., the Temple will be situated on the next-to-highest point in Benjamin's territory, just as the shoulders are situated high up on the body but still just below the head." Jerusalem, the site of the Temple, is lower than the nearby location of Ein Eitam (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Jerusalem and Ein Eitam

- ◆ **Third Reading 13** Moses **said of the tribe of Joseph, giving it ten distinct blessings:**³⁹ **"May his land be blessed by God (1) with the delicacies produced by the rains of heaven and by dew; (2) with the water of the deep that lies below and rises to the surface to moisten the soil;**

³⁹. See Genesis 37:1.

ONKELOS

16 ומטוב ארעא ומלאה ורעי לה דשכינתה בשמיא ועל משה אתגלי באסנא יתון כל אלץ לרישא דיוסף ולגברא פרישא דאחיה: 17 רבא דבנויה זינא לה וגבורן אתעבידא לה מקדם דתקפא ורומא דילה בגברתה עממיא יקטל פחדא עד סיפי ארעא ואנון רבותא דבית אפרים ואנון אלפיא דבית מנשה: 18 ולזבולן אמר חדי זבולן במפקד לאגחא קרבא על בעלי דבקר ויששכר במהכר למעבד זמני מועדיא בירושלם:

16 וממנו ארץ ומלאה ורצון שכני סנה תבואתה לראש יוסף ולקדך נזיר אחיו: 17 בכור שורו הדר לו וקרני ראם קרניו בהם עמים ינגח יחדו אפסי ארץ והם רבבות אפרים והם אלפי מנשה: ם רביעי 18 ולזבולן אמר שמח זבולן בצאתך ויששכר באהליך:

RASHI

מנשה. הם האלפים שהרג גרעון במדין, שנאמר: "וזבח וצלמנע בקרקר" וגו': 18 **ולזבולן אמר.** אלו חמשה שבטים שברך באחרונה, זבולון גד דן נפתלי ואשר, כפל שמותיהם לחזקם ולהגבירם, לפי שהיו חלשים שבכל השבטים, הם הם שהוליו יוסף לפני פרעה, שנאמר: "ומקצה אחיו לקח חמשה אנשים", לפי שנראים חלשים ולא ישים אותם לו שרי מלחמתו: **שמח זבולן בצאתך ויששכר באהליך.** זבולון ויששכר עשו שתפות — "זבולון לחוף ימים ישכן", ויוצא לפרקמטיא בספינות, ומשכר ונותן לתוך פיו של יששכר, והם יושבים ועוסקים בתורה. לפיכך הקדים זבולון ליששכר, שתורתו של יששכר על ידי זבולון היתה: **שמח זבולן בצאתך.** הצלח בצאתך לסחורה: **ויששכר.** הצלח בשיבת אהליך לתורה, לישוב ולעבר שנים ולקבע חדשים, כמו שנאמר: "ומבני יששכר יודעי בינה לעתים וגו', ראשיהם מאתים" ראשי סנהדראות היו עוסקים בכך, ועל פי קביעות עתיהם ועבוריהם:

16 **ורצון שכני סנה.** כמו "שוכן סנה". ותהא ארצו מברכת מרצונו ונחת רוחו של הקדוש ברוך הוא הנגלה עלי תחלה בסנה: **רצון.** נחת רוח ופיוס, וכן כל "רצון" שבמקרא: **תבואתה ברכה זו** "לראש יוסף: **נזיר אחיו.** שהפרש מאחיו במכירתו: 17 **בכור שורו.** יש "בכור" שהוא לשון גדלה ומלכות, שנאמר: "אף אני בכור אתנהו". וכן: "בני בכרי ישראל": **בכור.** מלך היוצא ממנו, והוא יהושע: **שורו.** שכחו קשה כשור לכבש במה מלכים: **הדר לו.** נתון לו, שנאמר: "ונתתה מהדרך עליו": **וקרני ראם קרניו.** שור — כחו קשה ואין קרניו נאות, אבל ראם — קרניו נאות ואין כחו קשה, נתן ליהושע כחו של שור ויופי קרני ראם: **אפסי ארץ.** שלשים ואחד מלכים אפשר שכלם מארץ ישראל היו, אלא אין לה כל מלך ושלטון שלא קנה לו פלטרינ ואחזה בארץ ישראל, שחשובה לכלם היא, שנאמר: "נחלת צבי צבאות גוים": **והם רבבות אפרים.** אותם המנגחים הם הרבבות שהרג יהושע שבא מאפרים: **והם אלפי**

22. תהלים פט, כח. 23. שמות ד, כב. 24. במדבר כז, כ. 25. ירמיה ג, יט. 26. שופטים ח, י. 27. בראשית מז, כב. 28. דב"א יב, לג.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

18 Rejoice, Zebulun, in your departure, and Issachar, in your tents: In addition to Zebulun's merit in Issachar's Torah study, Zebulun is mentioned first by virtue of the intrinsic merit of working for a living over full-time Torah study. As we know, our Divine mission consists of making this physical and materialistic world into God's home. Although both studying the Torah and sanctifying the material world accomplish this goal, it is mainly achieved by the latter, and therefore, those who work for a living have a far greater opportunity to fulfill life's purpose than do those who study full time. There is, of

course, an advantage to full-time study, as has been mentioned⁴⁷ — and Jewish law insists that those who are both capable of full-time study and who do not have to work for a living devote themselves to full-time study⁴⁸ — but with respect to refining the world and thereby transforming it into God's home, pride of place belongs to work. It is for this very reason that Divine providence has arranged that throughout most of our history, most of us have worked for our living.

This idea is alluded to in Zebulun's name, which is derived⁴⁹ from the word for "abode" (*zevul*).⁵⁰

47. On Leviticus 23:40. 48. Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 245:22; Shulchan Aruch HaRav, chapters 3-4. 49. Genesis 30:20. 50. Likutei Sichot, vol. 30, pp. 136-137.

16 (7) **with the delicacies produced by the land and its fullness; and (8) with the favor of God, who dwells in** and who first revealed Himself to me in a **thorn bush.**⁴⁰ **May these blessings of agricultural fertility figuratively rest upon Joseph's head,**⁴¹ **upon the crown of the one who was separated from his brothers** when they sold him."⁴² Indeed, the regions of the Land of Israel that were allotted to the descendants of Joseph are its most fertile.

17 (9) **Glory has been given to Joshua,**⁴³ **his pre-eminent** descendant, who will be **his 'ox,'** blessed with sufficient military prowess to subdue all the nations presently occupying the Land of Israel. (10) **May his horns be as beautiful as the horns of an aurochs.** Oxen and aurochs are similar in appearance, but oxen are stronger and aurochs' horns are more beautiful (see Figures 3a & 3b). I therefore bless him with the strength of an ox and the beautiful horns of an aurochs. **With these horns, he will gore at once** nations from all **the ends of the earth,** each of whom acquired territory in the Land of Israel, due to its desirability and prestige. The ones who will be 'gored' **are the myriads** who will be slain **by Joshua,** who is descended from Joseph's son **Ephraim,** and the ones who will be 'gored' **are also the thousands** that will be slain **by** a future descendant of Joseph's son **Manasseh."** This prophecy was fulfilled in Gideon, who slew 120,000 Midianite soldiers.⁴⁴



Figure 3a. Ox

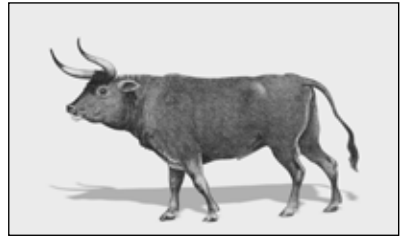


Figure 3b. Aurochs

- ◆ **Fourth Reading 18** Moses then blessed the five tribes, which, according to certain criteria, were the weakest.⁴⁵ **He said to** the tribes of **Zebulun** and **Issachar:** "The two of you have forged a partnership, in which Zebulun plans to engage in commerce and share his profits with Issachar, who will thus be free to study the Torah unhindered by financial worry. I am therefore blessing Zebulun before Issachar, even though Issachar is older, since the merit of Issachar's Torah study will be ascribed to Zebulun.

Therefore, **rejoice, Zebulun, in your successful departure** from your homes as you set sail to engage in commerce, **and Issachar,** be successful **in your tents,** where you will study the Torah." This prayer was fulfilled in the Torah scholars from the tribe of Issachar who became astronomical experts, performing the complicated calculations necessary for sanctifying the new moon each month and intercalating the calendar when necessary.⁴⁶

40. Exodus 3:2-4. 41. Cf. Genesis 48:14. 42. Genesis 37:12-28. 43. Numbers 27:20. 44. Judges 8:10. 45. Genesis 47:2; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, p. 396. 46. Leviticus 23:2; above, 16:1; Cf. 1 Chronicles 12:33.

ONKELOS

19 שבטא דישראל לטור בית מקדשא
יתבנשון תמן יבסון נכסת קדשין
לרענא ארי נכסי עממא יכלון וסימא
דמטמון בחלא מתגליא להון: 20 ולגד
אמר בריה דאפתי לגד בלייתא שרי
ויקטול שלטוני עם מלכין: 21 ואתקבל
בקדמיתא דילה ארי תמן באחסנתה
משה ספרא רבא דישראל קביר והוא
נפק ועל בריש עמא זכון קדם יי עבד
וידוהי עם ישראל:

19 עמים הר־יקראו שם יזבחו וזבחי־צדק כי שפֿע
ימים יינקו ושפני טמוני חול: ם
20 ולגד אמר ברוך מרחיב גֵּד בלביא שכן וטרף
זרוע אף־קדקד: 21 וירא ראשית לו כי־שם חלקת
מחלק ספון ויתא ראשי עם צדקת יהוה עשה
ומשפטיו עם־ישראל: ם

RASHI

אין אמה כשרה כזו, ומתגירין שם, שנאמר: "שם
יזבחו וזבחי צדק": **כי שפֿע ימים יינקו**, ויכלון ויששכר,
הים נותן להם מומן בשפע: 20 **ברוך מרחיב גֵּד**,
מלמד שהיה תחומו של גֵּד מרחיב והולך כלפי
מזרח: **בלביא שכן**, לפי שהיה סמוך לספר, לפיכך
נמשל באריות, שכל הסמוכים לספר צריכים להיות
גבורים: **וטרף זרוע אף קדקד**, הרוגיהם היו נגרין,
חותכים הראש עם הזרוע במכה אחת: 21 **וירא**
ראשית לו, ראה לטול לו חלק בארץ סידון ועוג,
שהיא ראשית כבוש הארץ: **כי שם חלקת מחלק**, כי
ידע אשר שם בנחלתו חלקת שדה קבורת מחלק,
והוא משה: **ספון**, אותה חלקה ספונה וטמונה מכל
בריה, שנאמר: "ולא ידע איש את קברתו": **ויתא**,
גד: **ראשי עם**, הם היו הולכים לפני החלוץ בכבוש
הארץ, לפי שהיו גבורים, וכן הוא אומר: "חלוצים
תעברו לפני אחיכם" וגו': **צדקת ה' עשה**, שהאמינו
דבריהם ושמרו הבטחתם, לעבור את הירדן עד
שכבשו וחלקו. דבר אחר: "ויתא" משה "ראשי עם",
צדקת ה' עשה על משה אומר:

19 **עמים**. של שבטי ישראל: **הר יקראו**. להר המריה
יאספו, כל אסיפה על ידי קריאה היא, ו"שם יזבחו"
ברגלים "וזבחי צדק": **כי שפֿע ימים יינקו**. יששכר
וזבולון, ויהא להם פנאי לעסוק בתורה: **ושפני טמוני**
חול. כסויי טמוני חול: טרית וחלוץ וזוכית לבנה,
היוצאים מן הים ומן החול. ובחלקו של יששכר
וזבולון היה, כמו שאמור במסכת מגילה: "וזבולון
עם חרף נפשו למות" — משום ד"נפתלי על מרומי
שדה", שהיה מתרעם וזבולון על חלקו: לאחי נתת
שדות וכרמים וכו': **ושפני**. לשון כסוי, כמו שנאמר:
"ויספן את הבית", "וספון בארז", ותרגומו: "ומטלל
בכיורי ארזא". דבר אחר: "עמים הר יקראו", על ידי
פרקמטיא של זבולון, תגרי אמות העולם באים אל
ארצו, והוא עומד על הספר, והם אומרים: הואיל
ונצטערנו עד כאן, נלך עד ירושלים ונראה מה
יראתה של אמה זו ומה מעשיה, והם רואים כל
ישראל עובדים לאלוה אחד ואוכלים מאכל אחד,
לפי שהגוים אלהות של זה לא באלהות של זה
ומאכלו של זה לא במאכלו של זה, והם אומרים:

29. א. 30. מלכיא, ט. 31. מלכיא, ז. 32. דברים לד, ו. 33. דברים ג, יח.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

pouring into the world is such that the former orderliness of existence—in which all processes had to proceed according to a pre-established order—has been long overridden. We must take advantage of any opportunity that comes to hand to refine ourselves or the world.

The two weapons of war in ancient times were the arrow and the spear (plus its variant, the sword); lopping off the head and arm in one fell swoop is possible only with a sword, not with an arrow. The "sword" in our spiritual arsenal is our submission to God's will, which we affirm whenever we recite the *Shema*. This is alluded to by the fact that the numerical value of the word for "spear" (רמח, 248) is

the same as the number of letters in the three paragraphs of the *Shema*.⁵⁶ When we submit to God's will, no mental or material obstacle to fulfilling it can faze us.⁵⁷

We must emulate the valor exhibited by the tribe of Gad not only when we set out to conquer the physical world; it is required of us as well if we hope to succeed in learning the Torah as we should. Rousing ourselves to self-sacrifice is the required preparation for studying the Torah,⁵⁸ and the mentality of self-sacrifice must inform our study.

In this latter context, self-sacrifice means relinquishing thoughts of any other pursuit during the entire time that we have devoted to studying. Just

56. Tikunei Zohar, Introduction (11a), 21 (49a); Zohar 3:272a; Likutei Torah 4:38a; Sefer HaMa'amarim 5659, pp. 152 ff; Sefer HaMa'amarim 5704, pp. 83 ff. 57. Hitva'aduyot 5744, vol. 4, pp. 2321-2322. 58. Tanya, chapter 41 (58b).

19 By determining when each month will begin, the scholars of Issachar **will call the tribes** of Israel **to the Temple mountain** to observe the pilgrim festivals at their proper times. Thus, due to their efforts, the Israelites **will there offer up proper sacrifices**—i.e., sacrifices offered up at their proper time. Issachar will be able to achieve such expertise in the knowledge of the Torah **because** Zebulun—and through them, Issachar—**will be nourished by the abundance of the seas and by the caches** of valuable commodities **hidden in the sand** at the seashore.” Zebulun harvested the *chilazon* (used to dye ritual fringes⁵¹) and premium fish from the sea, and manufactured glassware from the sand.⁵²

“Furthermore, as a result of Zebulun’s business contacts with other **nations** abroad, non-Jewish businessmen will visit its territory on the seacoast, and out of curiosity **will be summoned to visit the mountain** where the Temple city is located to observe the Israelites’ religious rites. Impressed by the unity of Jewish practice, centered around the worship of the one God, some of them will convert, and **there they will offer up sacrifices of righteousness.**”

20 **He said of the tribe of Gad:** “Gad’s territory is located on the east side of the Jordan River. **Blessed be He who expands** the territory of **Gad** further eastward. Because he guards the border, **may he dwell like a lion, tearing off the arm** of his prey together **with the head** in one blow.

21 **He saw that the first portion** of our conquest, the area east of the Jordan River, **befitted him, because** he foresaw that **there**, east of the Jordan River, **the burial site of the lawgiver**—i.e., me, Moses—**is hidden** (for no one will know its exact location⁵³), and it would therefore be a privilege to live in this region. This lawgiver **went at the head of the people** to lead them; **he did what God considered righteous and executed His judgments in Israel.**

As the tribe of Gad promised,⁵⁴ **he will certainly go at the head of the people** when they cross the Jordan River to conquer the Land of Israel; **he will thus do what God considers righteous and fulfill his legal obligations** that he has entered into **with the rest of Israel.**”

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

20 **Tearing off the arm with the head:** As has been discussed,⁵⁵ our physical conquest of the seven nations who occupied the Land of Israel alludes to the spiritual conquest of the seven emotions of the human-animal soul. The two major obstacles to this conquest are the “arm” and the “head.”

The “head” in this context is the mental block that results from calculating the odds of success against the dominant material culture of our milieu. Confronted with the overwhelming forces and resources commanded by the agents of materialism, the lone Jew or the tiny Jewish people are tempted to capitulate even before beginning the fight. It is particularly difficult to imagine overcoming materiality when we ourselves are engaged in the struggle

to eke out a living, seemingly subject to the material laws of natural cause and effect.

The “arm” in this context is the battery of physical resources we have at our disposal. We have worked hard to earn these resources, and are therefore loathe to expend them on spiritual pursuits whose material benefits are not at all apparent.

We must therefore “tear off the arm with the head,” i.e., deny the validity of both these suppositions. Furthermore, we must nullify both obstacles “together, in one blow.” There is no time to waste in lopping off the “head” and the “arm” separately, i.e., in an orderly fashion. Nowadays, in the final stages of the preparation of the world for the Redemption, the level and amount of Divine energy

51. Numbers 15:38. 52. *Megilah* 6a. 53. Below, 34:6. 54. Numbers 32:17; Joshua 1:14. 55. On Genesis 15:21.

ONKELOS

22 ולדן אמר דן תקיף כגור אריון
ארעה שתיא מן נחליא דנגדן מן מתנן;
23 ולנפתלי אמר נפתלי שבע רעוא
ומלי ברקן מן קדם יי מערב ים גוסר
ודרומא יירת:

◆ חמישי 22 ולדן אמר דן גור אריה יונק מן הבשן:
23 ולנפתלי אמר נפתלי שבע רצון ומלא ברב
יהוה ים ודרום ירשה: ס

RASHI

של ארץ ישראל, כמו שמפרש בספר יהושע, והוא
שנאמר: "ויצא גבול בני דן מהם, ויעלו בני דן
וילחמו עם לשם" וגו' — יצא גבולם מכל אותו הרוח
שהתחילו לנחול בו: 23 שבע רצון. שהיתה ארצו
שבעה כל רצון יושביה: ים ודרום ירשה. ים בנרת
נפלה בחלקו, ונטל מלא חבל חרם בדרומה, לפרוש
חרמים ומכמורות: ירשה. לשון צווי, כמו: "עלה
רש". והטעם שלמעלה ברי"ש מוכיח, כמו "ירש",
"ידע", "לקח", "שמע", כשמוסיף בו ה"א יהיה הטעם
למעלה — "שמעה", "ידעה", "סלחה", "לקחה", אף
כאן "ירשה" לשון צווי. ובמסורת הגדולה מצינו
באלפא ביתא לשון צווי דטעמיהון מלעיל:

22 דן גור אריה. אף הוא היה סמוך לספר, לפיכך
מושלו באריות: יונק מן הבשן. בתרגומו, שהיה
הירדן יוצא מחלקו ממערת פמיאס והיא לשם,
שהיא בחלקו של דן, שנאמר: "ויקראו ללשם דן",
וזנוקו וקלוחו מן הבשן. דבר אחר: מה זנוק זה יוצא
ממקום אחד ונחלק לשני מקומות, כך שבטו של
דן נטלו חלק בשני מקומות, תחלה נטלו בצפונות
מערבית — עקרון וסביבותיה, ולא ספקו להם,
ובאו ונלחמו עם לשם שהיא פמיאס, והיא בצפונות
מזרחית, שהרי הירדן יוצא ממערת פמיאס והוא
במזרחה של ארץ ישראל, ובא מהצפון לדרום וכלה
בקצה ים המלח, שהוא במזרח יהודה שנטל בדרומה

34. יהושע יט, מז. 35. שם. 36. דברים א, כא.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

Divine mission in life—our personas as members of the other tribal camps—we can sometimes lose our sense of simple, selfless devotion to God. Without this basic sense of simplicity, the over-sophistication of the other parts of our psyche can become enervating or even toxic. In such cases, the solution is to summon our inner camp of Dan, our submission to God's will; this renewed discipline will help us retrieve our lost sense of selflessness before God.

In this context, the camp of Dan traveled at the rear not only because they embodied the least illustrious aspects of the Jewish people, but also because of their selflessness. Their selflessness both inspired them to forgo the advantages of traveling further forward in favor of the opportunity to assist their fellow Israelites and represents the basic foundation of Jewish life, upon which all other facets of Jewish life rest.

Taking our cue from the camp of Dan, this innate self-sacrifice on behalf of our fellow Jews should be the basis of our lives. As Rabbi Akiva taught, loving one's fellow Jew is the general synopsis of the entire Torah.⁶²

The results of devoting ourselves selflessly and lovingly to our fellow Jews are alluded to in Moses' blessing to the tribe of Naphtali:

The west: The sun, the moon, and the stars set in

the west, which is understood to mean that the Divine Presence is principally manifest in the west; the daily westward setting of the heavenly bodies is envisioned as their prostration before the Divine Presence.⁶³ Similarly, the Holy of Holies was the westernmost part of the Sanctuary.⁶⁴

And the south: In the northern hemisphere, the south is associated with the heat of the sun. Allegorically, the sun represents the Name *Havayah*, which signifies transcendent Divinity. Whereas the Divine Presence—immanent Divinity—is manifest within the natural context of time and space, transcendent Divinity is by definition not limited by time and space.

Inherit: As discussed above,⁶⁵ inheriting refers to receiving Divine revelation without regard to the recipient's merit. Selflessly devoting ourselves to our fellow Jew enables us to "inherit" both "the west" and "the south"—immanent and transcendent Divinity—since selfless devotion is not limited, as are intellect and emotions. Although, as stated, the Torah is every Jew's inheritance, our preoccupation with intellect and emotions can obscure this aspect of our relationship with God and His Torah. When that happens, it is time to summon our inner camp of Dan, and, as promised to the tribe of Naphtali, once again inherit "the west and the south."⁶⁶

62. Numbers 2:29-30. 63. Numbers 10:25. 64. *Sifra*, *Kedoshim* 4; *Y. Nedarim* 9:4. 65. *Bava Batra* 25a. 66. Exodus 26:33 67. On v. 4. 68. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, pp. 103-107.

- ◆ **Fifth Reading 22 He said of the tribe of Dan:** “**Dan** also guards the border, and therefore he must be as strong as a **young lion**. His border territory contains one of the four tributaries of the Jordan River, the Hermon stream, which **flows from** Mount Hermon, in **Bashan** (which is in the territory of Manasseh) and passes through the Paneas (Banias) cave (see Figure 4).

Although the tribe of Dan’s original and primary territorial allotment will be in the central west of the land, it will also possess this territory located in the northeast, because it will not be able to conquer all of its southern territory, and will thus need to seek other areas in which to settle. Part of the tribe **will split off** from the rest, who will remain in the south, and conquer the area along the Hermon stream, which descends **from** Mount Hermon, in **Bashan** (see Figure 5).⁵⁹



Figure 4. Tributaries of the Jordan River



Figure 5. Migration of the Tribe of Dan

23 He said of the tribe

of Naphtali, “Naphtali is satisfied by its territory with everything it can possibly desire, and is full of God’s blessing. Go and possess Lake Kinneret together with its south shore, from which you will be able to catch an abundance of fish.”

❧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ❧

like the Israelites in the desert could devote their minds completely to the study of the Torah with no other cares to distract them—since they had manna from heaven to eat, water from the well to drink, and clothes laundered by the clouds to wear—so should we enter a state of complete absorption when we learn the Torah, as if we had not a single care in the world.

This connection between the valor of the tribe of Gad and the study of the Torah is alluded to by the fact that they chose as the territory containing the location of the grave of Moses,⁶⁰ through whom God gave us the Torah.⁶¹

23 Possess Lake...south: The word for “lake” (or “sea”) is also the word for “west,” since the western border of the Land of Israel is the Mediterranean Sea. Thus, this phrase can also be translated: “the

west and the south, inherit.”

The tribe of Naphtali was part of the camp of Dan,⁶² which traveled at the west, i.e., the rear, of the Israelites’ military formation and retrieved all the articles lost by the tribes that preceded them in the march.⁶³ The fact that the camp of Dan traveled at the rear indicates that these tribes were the least noble, the least sophisticated. Thus, they allegorically represent the least illustrious aspect of our psyches, our inner “non-sophisticate,” our simple, selfless submission to God’s will—in the idiom of the sages, our “acceptance of the yoke of the kingdom of heaven.” The “lost articles” that these tribes are uniquely suited to retrieve are our sense of self-nullification before God.

In other words, in the course of employing our intellects and emotions to the particulars of our

59. Judges 18; Joshua 19:47. 60. V. 21. 61. *Hitva’aduyot* 5749, vol. 1, pp. 128-129.

ONKELOS

24 ולא־אשר אמר ברוך מברכת בניה
אשר יהי רעוא לאחיה ויתרבי בתפנית
מלכין: 25 תקיף כפרולא ונחשא מותבך
וכיומי עולימתך תקפך: 26 לית אלה
כאלהא דישראל דשכינתה בשמיא
בסעדך ותקפה בשמי שמיא: 27 מדור
אלהא דמלקדמין די במימרה אתעבד
עלמא ותרף מקדמך סנאה ואמר שצי:
28 ושרא ישראל לרחצן בלחודיה
כעין ברכתא דברכנן יעקב אביו
לארעא עבדא עבד וחקור אף שמיא
דעלויהון ישמשנן בטלא:

24 וְלֹא־אֲשֶׁר אָמַר בְּרוּךְ מִבְּרָכִים אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה רְצוֹן אֹחִיו
וְטִבֵּל בְּשֵׁמֶן רָגְלוֹ: 25 בְּרוּל וְנַחֲשֶׁת מִנְעֵלָךְ וּכְיָמֶיךָ
דְּבִאָךְ: 26 אֵין כָּאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵן רַבֵּב שָׁמַיִם בְּעֵזְרֶךָ
וּבְגִבּוֹתוֹ שְׁחָקִים:

◆ שִׁשִּׁי 27 מְעַנֶּה אֱלֹהֵי קָדָם וּמַתַּחַת זִרְעַת עוֹלָם וַיַּגְרֵשׁ
מִפְּנֵיךְ אוֹיֵב וַיֹּאמֶר הַשֹּׁמֵד: 28 וַיִּשְׁכֹּן יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּטַח
בְּדָד עֵין יַעֲקֹב אֶל־אֶרֶץ דָּגָן וְתִירוֹשׁ אֶף־שָׁמִי
יַעֲרֹפוּ־טַל:

RASHI

הימנה וממשיכות לה כספם וזהבם, אישקורונ"ט³⁷,
הכסף והזהב פלה מהם, שהם מזיבות אותו
לארצם: 26 אין כאל ישראל. דע לה ישראל, שאין
כאל בכל אלהי העמים, ולא כצורך צורם: רבב
שמים. הוא אותו אלוה ש"בעזרך, ובגאותו" הוא
רוכב "שחקים": 27 מענה אלהי קדם. למען, הם
השחקים. ל"אלהי קדם", שקדם לכל אלהים, וברר
לו שחקים לשבתו ומעונתו, ומתחת מעונתו כל
בעלי זרוע שוכנים: זרעת עולם. סיוחן ועוג ומלכי
כנען, שהיו תקפו וגבורתו של עולם, לפיכך על
פרחם יחרדו ויועזו וכחם חלש מפניו, לעולם
אימת הגבורה על הנמוך, והוא שהכח והגבורה שלו
בעזרך: ויגרש מפניך אויב. ואמר לה "השומד" אותם:
מענה. כל תבה שצריכה למ"ד בתחלתה, הטיל
לה ה"א בסופה: 28 בטח בדר. כל יחיד ויחיד,
איש תחת גפנו ותחת תאנתו, מפורין ואין צריכין
להתאסף ולישב יחד מפני האויב: עין יעקב. כמו:
"ועינו כעין הבדלח", כעין הברכה שברכם יעקב,
לא כבדד שאמר ירמיה⁴¹: "בדד ישבתי", אלא כעין
הבטחה שהבטיחם יעקב⁴²: "והיה אלהים עמכם
והשיב אתכם אל ארץ אבותיכם": יערפו. וטיפו:
אף שמיו יערפו טל. אף ברכתו של יצחק נוספת
על ברכתו של יעקב⁴³: "ויתן לה האלהים מטל
השמים" וגו'.

24 ברוך מבנים אשר. ראיתי בספרי: אין לה בכל
השכטים שנתברך בבנים כאשר, ואיני יודע
כיצד: יהי רצוי אחיו. שהיה מתרצה לאחיו בשמן
אנפיקינון ובקפלאות, והם מרצין לו בתבואה. דבר
אחר: "יהי רצוי אחיו", שהיו כנותיו נאות, והוא
שנאמר בדברי הימים³⁸: "הוא אבי ברזית", שהיו
כנותיו נשואות לכהנים גדולים הנמשחים בשמן
זית: וטובל בשמן רגלו. שהיתה ארצו מושכת שמן
כמעין, ומעשה שנצטרכו אנשי לודקיא לשמן, מנו
להם פולמוסטוס אחד וכו', כדאיתא במנחות³⁹:
25 ברול ונחשת מנעלך. עכשו הוא מדבר נגד
כל ישראל, שהיו גבוריהם יושבים בערי הספר,
ונעלים אותה שלא יוכלו האויבים לפגוע בה,
כאלו היא סגורה במנעולים ובירחים של ברול
ונחשת. דבר אחר: "ברול ונחשת מנעלך", ארצכם
נעולה בחרים שחוצבין מהם ברול ונחשת, וארצו
של אשר היתה מנעולה של ארץ ישראל: וכימיה
דבאך. וכימים שהם טובים לה, שהן ימי תחלתה,
ימי נעוריה, כן יהיו ימי וקנתה שהם דואבים ובים
ומתמוטטים. דבר אחר: "וכימיה דבאך", וכימיה
שהם טובים לה, כמנן ימיה, כל הימים אשר
אתם עושים רצונו של מקום יהיו "דבאך", שכל
הארצות יהיו דובאות כסף וזהב לארץ ישראל,
שהיא מברכת בפרות וכל הארצות מתפרנסות

37. א ז, לא. 38. פה, ב. 39. ישעיהו. 40. במדבר יז, א. 41. ירמיה טו, יז. 42. בראשית מח, כא. 43. בראשית כז, כז.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

particularly important to cultivate this inner selflessness when we venture out to places hostile to Divinity. Just as our general sense of selflessness exemplified by the camp of Dan is retrieved by loving

our fellow Jew, our deep sense of inner selflessness exemplified by the tribe of Asher is summoned by loving our fellow Jew with utter devotion.⁷³

73. Likutei Sichot, vol. 1, pp. 102, 107-109.

24 He said of the tribe of Asher: “May Asher be blessed with sons. He will gratify his brothers by supplying them with oil used for cosmetics and with fruit-delicacies grown in his territory, and in return, they will gratify him with grain grown in their territories. Also, since the young women of his tribe will be exceptionally beautiful, **he will be sought after by his brothers** as they try to marry his womenfolk.

His land will produce so much olive oil that it will seem as if wherever he goes **he will immerse his foot in oil.”**

25 Addressing Asher directly, he continued, “**Your** mountains are the **locks** of the Land of Israel, protecting it from attack from the north, and moreover, they **are** rich in **iron and copper.”**

Moses then addressed the people as a whole: “**Your** valiant soldiers, who reside in the border towns of their respective tribal territories in order to guard their borders, **are like locks of iron and copper**, rendering the land impervious to invasion by its enemies.

The days of your old age will be as idyllic as the days of your youth. And the flow of gold and silver into your land from other nations will be commensurate with your day-to-day faithfulness to your Divine mission.

26 Yeshurun, there is no deity among the nations like God! God, who figuratively rides the heavens, is your assistance, and no other deity can oppose Him, since **with His majesty, He rides on the skies,**

- ◆ **Sixth Reading 27 which are the abode for Him, the God who preceded all these false deities.** Since He ‘rides the heavens,’ all **the world’s mighty ones are** figuratively situated **below** Him, so He always has the upper hand. **He therefore expelled the enemy, Sichon and Og, from before you, and said to you, ‘Destroy them!’**

28 Israel will therefore be able to dwell safely and individually, not needing to congregate together in fear of any enemy, **just as Jacob** blessed them that God would be with them in the land of their fathers,⁶⁹ **in a land of grain and wine.** And not only will Jacob’s blessings come true, but Isaac’s **as well**, which begin with the promise that **their land’s heaven will drip dew.**⁷⁰

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

24 He will immerse his foot in oil. He will gratify his brothers: The foot, the lowest part of the body, allegorically signifies simple submission to the will of God. Oil allegorically signifies *chochmah* (“insight”), the first and most sublime faculty of the intellect. Immersing the foot in oil—using oil in the care of the foot—signifies the recognition of a virtue in submission to God’s will over intellect. As has been explained,⁷¹ the camp of Dan exemplified this recognition—over emotions, as well..

The fact that the tribe of Asher “gratified his brothers” by supplying them with oil and fruit indicates

that it had an influence upon the rest of the tribes, much as, allegorically, the selflessness exemplified by the camp of Dan in general was the foundation of the rest of the nation. In particular, however, the tribe of Asher camped in the middle of the camp of Dan,⁷² and thus allegorically signified the inner dimension of selflessness, the selflessness rooted in the very essence of the soul. This deep sense of selflessness enables us to weather even the most difficult challenges to our faith in God. It is therefore

69. Genesis 48:20. 70. Genesis 27:28. 71. On v. 23. 72. Numbers 2:27-28.

ONKELOS

29 טובך ישראל לית דכותך עמא
דפרקנה מן קדם יי תקיף בסעדר ודמן
קדמוהי נצחון גבורתך ויכדבון סנאיד
לך ואת על פריקת צורי מלכיהון
תדרך: 34:1 וסלק משה ממישרא
דמואב לטורא דנבו ריש רמתא די על
אפי ירחו ואחזיה יי ית כל ארעא ית
גלעד עד דן: 2 וית כל נפתלי וית ארעא
דאפרים ומנשה וית כל ארע יהודה עד
ימא מערבא: 3 וית דרומא וית מישרא
בקעתא דירחו קרתא דדקליא עד צער:

29 אֲשֶׁרִיד יִשְׂרָאֵל מִי כְמוֹד עִם נוֹשֵׁעַ בֵּיהוָה מִגֵּן
עֶזְרָךְ וְאֲשֶׁר־חָרַב גְּאוֹתֶךָ וַיַּכְשׁוּ אִיבֶיךָ לָךְ וְאַתָּה
עַל־בְּמוֹתֵימוֹ תִּדְרֹךְ: ס

◆ שביעי 34:1 ויעל משה מערבת מואב אל־הר נבו
ראש הפסגה אשר על־פני ירחו ויראהו יהוה את־
כל־הארץ את־הגלעד עד־דן: 2 ואת כל־נפתלי
ואת־ארץ אפרים ומנשה ואת כל־ארץ יהודה עד
הים האחרון: 3 ואת־הנגב ואת־הבכר בקעת ירחו
עיר התמרים עד־צער:

RASHI

דבורה וברק מקדש נפתלי גלחמים עם סיסרא
וחילותיו: ואת ארץ אפרים ומנשה. הראהו ארצם
בשלותה ובחרבנה, והראהו יהושע גלחם עם מלכי
כנען, שבא מאפרים, וגדעון שבא ממנשה, גלחם
עם מדון ועמלק: ואת כל ארץ יהודה. בשלותה
ובחרבנה, והראהו מלכות בית דוד ונצחונם: עד
הים האחרון. ארץ המערב בשלותה ובחרבנה, דבר
אחר: אל תקרי "הים האחרון" אלא "היום האחרון",
הראהו הקדוש ברוך הוא כל המאורעות שעתידין
לארע לישראל עד שיחיו המתים: 3 ואת הנגב.
ארץ הדרום. דבר אחר: מערת המכפלה, שנאמר:
"ויעלו בנגב ויבא עד חברון": ואת הבכר. הראהו
שלמה יוצק כלי בית המקדש, שנאמר: "בכבר
הירדן יצקם המלך במעבה האדמה":

29 אֲשֶׁרִיד יִשְׂרָאֵל. לאחר שפרט להם הברכות,
אמר להם: מה לי לפרוט לכם, כלל דבר — הכל
שלכם: אֲשֶׁרִיד יִשְׂרָאֵל מִי כְמוֹד. תשוועתך בה' אשר
הוא 'מגן עזרך וחרב גאותך': וַיַּכְשׁוּ אִיבֶיךָ לָךְ. כגון
הגבעונים, שאמרו: "מארץ רחוקה באו עבדיך"
וגו': וְאַתָּה עַל בְּמוֹתֵימוֹ תִּדְרֹךְ. כענין שנאמר⁴⁵: "שימו
את רגליכם על צוארי המלכים האלה": 1 מערבת
מואב אל הר נבו. כמה מעלות היו, ופסען משה
בפסיעה אחת: אֵת כָּל הָאָרֶץ. הראהו את כל ארץ
ישראל בשלותה, והמציקין העתידין להיות מציקין
לה: עד דן. הראהו בני דן עובדים עבודה זרה,
שנאמר⁴⁶: "ויקומו להם בני דן את הפסל", והראהו
שמשון שעתיד לצאת ממנו למושיע: 2 ואת כל
נפתלי. הראהו ארצו בשלותה וחרבנה, והראהו

44. יהושע ט, 45. יהושע י, 46. שופטים יח, 47. במדבר יג, 48. מלכים א' ז, 49. מו.

INNER DIMENSIONS

1 Moses ascended...to the peak of Mount Nebo:
As has been discussed,⁸⁵ there are 50 "gates" of
understanding, or levels of Divine consciousness
that we can aspire to attain.

The Talmud informs us that of these 50 gates, 49
were given to Moses during his lifetime,⁸⁶ and the
Arizal informs us that he was given the 50th
on the day of his death. This assertion is alluded
to in the name of the mountain where Moses
died, Nebo (נבו), which may be seen as a contrac-
tion of the letter *nun* (נ), whose numerical value
is 50, and the word "is in it" (בו).⁸⁷

The reason why Moses only achieved 49 of the 50
gates during his lifetime is that his life's work, as

we know, was to bring the Torah down into the
world. The world, having been created in seven
days—reflecting the seven *sefirot* of the emo-
tions—is associated with the number 7. Infusing
Divinity into the seven days/*sefirot* of the world
involves rectifying the world such that each *sefi-
rah* cooperates with the other six, producing an
array of seven *sefirot* each inter-included of all
seven, giving a total of 49 sub-*sefirot*.

The 50th gate, in contrast, represents Divine con-
sciousness that transcends the context of the nat-
ural world. It was only on Moses' last day, when,
instead of bringing the Torah down into the
world, he "ascended to the peak of the moun-
tain" that he reached "Nebo," the 50th gate.⁸⁸

85. On Genesis 18:1. 86. Rosh HaShanah 21b. 87. Sefer HaLikutim (Arizal), Va'et'chanan (3:26). 88. Likutei Sichot, vol. 24, pp. 257-258.

29 But why should I bother to list all the details of your blessings? You have been blessed with everything! **Fortunate are you, O Israel! Who is like you, O people whose salvation is through God, the shield who helps you, your majestic sword! Your enemies will lie to you,** pretending to be your friends out of fear, **but you will tread upon their heights.**" This prophecy was fulfilled when the Gibeonites tricked the Israelites into making an alliance with them,⁷⁴ and Joshua overcame the Gibeonites' enemies.⁷⁵

Finishing the Torah

Having finished his farewell address to the people, Moses miraculously wrote out 13 complete copies of the Torah, including the following 12 verses—crying as God dictated the last eight, which describe his death—and gave one copy to each tribe and one copy to the Levites, as described above.⁷⁶ (From another perspective, God dictated the final eight verses of the Torah to Joshua, who finished writing the 13 scrolls after Moses' death.)⁷⁷

Moses' Vision of the Future

- ◆ *Seventh Reading 34:1* **Moses then ascended from the plains of Moab to the peak of Mount Nebo, facing Jericho.** He miraculously scaled the entire mountain in a single step. From the mountaintop, **God** prophetically **showed** Moses **all** the future history of **the Land** of Israel, both its periods of independence as well as its periods of subjection to foreign powers, until the Resurrection of the Dead.⁷⁸ He first focused on **the** area from **Gilead to Dan**, showing Moses those individuals of the tribe of Dan who would one day practice idolatry in Dan's northern territory,⁷⁹ as well as Samson, a descendant of Dan who would live in Dan's central territory and battle the Philistines.⁸⁰

2 God then showed him **all** the land of **Naphtali** in its prosperity and its ruin, including Deborah and Barak fighting Sisera and his army.⁸¹ He then showed him **the land of Ephraim and Manasseh** in its prosperity and its ruin, including Ephraim's descendant Joshua fighting the Canaanite kings⁸² and Manasseh's descendant Gideon fighting Midian and Amalek.⁸³ He then showed him **all the land of Judah** in its prosperity and its ruin, including all the kings who would descend from Judah and their victories. He then showed him the area west of Judah **until the western** (Mediterranean) **sea** in its prosperity and its ruin.

3 He then showed him **the** area **south** of Judah, including the Machpelah Cave in Hebron, in its prosperity and its ruin. He then showed him **the plain** of the Jordan River in its prosperity and its ruin, including Solomon fashioning the utensils for the Temple there.⁸⁴ He then showed him **the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, until Tzoar**, in its prosperity and its ruin.

74. Joshua 9. 75. Joshua 10. 76. Above, 31:9, 24-26. 77. Rashi on v. 5, below. 78. Rashi on v. 2, below. 79. Judges 18:30. 80. Judges 13-16. 81. Judges 4-5. 82. Joshua 6-12. 83. Judges 7. 84. 1 Kings 7:46.

ONKELOS

4 ואמר יי לה דא ארעא די קנימית
לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב למימר לבניך
אתננה אחייתך בעיניך ולתמן לא
תעבר: 5 ומית תמן משה עבדא דיי
בארעא דמואב על מימרא דיי: 6 וקבר
יתה בחילתא בארעא דמואב לקבל
בית פעור ולא ידע אנש ית קברתה עד
יומא הדין: 7 ומשה בר מאה ועשרין
שנין בד מית לא כהת עינוהי ולא שגא
זיו יקרא דאפוהי: 8 ובכו בני ישראל
ית משה במישריא דמואב תלתין יומין
ושלימו יומי בביתא אכלא דמשה:

4 ויאמר יהוה אליו זאת הארץ אשר נשבעתי
לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב לאמר לזרעך אתננה
הראיתך בעיניך ושמה לא תעבר: 5 ומית שם
משה עבד יהוה בארץ מואב על פי יהוה: 6 ויקבר
אתו בני בארץ מואב מול בית פעור ולא ידע איש
את קברתו עד היום הזה: 7 ומשה בן מאה ועשרים
שנה במותו לא כהתה עינו ולא נם לחה: 8 ויבכו
בני ישראל את משה בערבת מואב שלשים יום
ויתמו ימי בבי אבל משה:

RASHI

את עצמו. וזה הוא אחד משלשה "אתין" שהיה רבי
ישמעאל דורש כן. וכיוצא בו: "ביום מלאת ימי
נורו יביא אותו" — הוא מביא את עצמו. פיוצא בו:
"והשיאו אותם עון אשמה" — וכי אחרים משיאים
אותם? אלא הם משיאים את עצמם: **מול בית פעור**.
קברו היה מוכן שם מששת ימי בראשית, לכפר על
מעשה פעור, וזה אחד מן הדברים שנבראו בערב
שבת בין השמשות: 7 **לא כהתה עינו**. אף משמת:
ולא נם לחה. לחלוחית שבו, לא שלט בו רקבון
ולא נהפך תאר פניו: 8 **בני ישראל**. הזכרים. אבל
באהרן, מתוך שהיה רודף שלום ונותן שלום בין
איש לרעהו ובין אשה לבעלה, נאמר: "כל בית
ישראל", זכרים ונקבות:

4 לאמר לזרעך אתננה הראיתך. כדי שתלך
ותאמר לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב: שבועה שנשבע
לכם הקדוש ברוך הוא. קנימה, וזהו "לאמר". לך
הראיתך לה, אבל גזרה היא מלפני ש"שמה לא
תעבר", שאלולי כך הייתי מקנימך עד שתראה
אותם נטועים וקבועים בה ותלך ותגיד להם:
5 **וימת שם משה**. אפשר משה מת וכתב "וימת
שם משה"? אלא עד כאן כתב משה, מכאן ואילך
כתב יהושע. רבי מאיר אומר: אפשר ספר התורה
חסר כלום, והוא אומר: "לקח את ספר התורה
הזה?" אלא הקדוש ברוך הוא אומר ומשה כותב
בדמע: **על פי ה'**. בנשיקה: 6 **ויקבר אותו**. הקדוש
ברוך הוא בכבודו. רבי ישמעאל אומר: הוא קבר

49. דברים לא, כו. 50. במדבר ו, יג. 51. ויקרא כב, טו. 52. במדבר כ, טו.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

analysis, according to which Moses did not in fact die, but remains alive to this day.⁹⁷

On the one hand, all righteous people are considered to live on in this world after their physical death (apart from their continued existence in the afterlife),⁹⁸ for their spiritual influence continues. However, we nevertheless refer to them as having died, for their physical presence in this world has ceased. In Moses' case, however, the sages' statement that he did not die implies that his physical presence in this world continues.

Moses' continued existence in this world is embodied in the Jewish religious leaders of each generation, whose bodies house a manifestation of his soul.⁹⁹ In the words of the Midrash, "There is no generation that does not possess someone akin to

Moses."¹⁰⁰ This is similar to how we saw that Jacob lives on in the body of his descendants who remain loyal to his spiritual legacy.¹⁰¹

It is specifically Moses and Jacob who live on even after their "deaths" because they both embodied the attribute of truth,¹⁰² meaning unchanging incorruptibility. We have witnessed how Jacob was able to weather all the vicissitudes of his life unflinchingly and how Moses survived the most difficult trials in the course of his leadership. Furthermore, both Jacob and Moses personified the ideal of devotion to studying and teaching the Torah, which demand uncompromising dedication to truth.¹⁰³ The incorruptibility they expressed in their lives made them both immune to death.¹⁰⁴

8 The male Israelites wept for Moses: Why, in fact,

97. Sotah 13b; Zohar 1:37b. 98. Midrash Tanchuma, Vezot Habrachah 7; Kohelet Rabbah 9:4. 99. Tikunei Zohar 69 (112a, 114a); Tanya chapter 44 (63a). 100. Bereishit Rabbah 56:7. 101. Overview to parashat Vayechi. 102. Moses: Bava Batra 74a; Sanhedrin 110a; Midrash Tanchuma, Shemot 28, Korach 11; Shemot Rabbah 5:10, etc. Jacob: Micah 7:20; Zohar 1:139a, 161a; Tanya, chapter 13. 103. See below, on v. 8. 104. Likutei Sichot, vol. 26, pp. 6-9.

4 God said to him, “This is the land that I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ I have let you see it with your eyes, in order that you report to the patriarchs after your death that I have fulfilled My promise to give it to their descendants. I would let you cross over into the land and eventually see the people fully settled in it, so you could then report this to the patriarchs, as well, after you die, **but**, as you know, I have already decreed that **you must not cross over there.**”

Moses’ Death

5 Moses, the servant of God, then died there, in Moab—figuratively by the mouth of God, i.e., in the same serene manner in which both Aaron and Miriam died, known as “God’s kiss.”⁸⁹

6 God then **buried him** in his preordained gravesite,⁹⁰ located north of Mount Nebo, in the valley, in what was originally Moab but was now the territory of Gad,⁹¹ **opposite Beit Pe’or**. From another perspective, Moses’ soul transported his body down the mountain and buried it. He was buried specifically opposite Beit Pe’or in order that his gravesite atone for the sin that Israelites committed at this very location.⁹² **No person knows the exact place of his burial site unto this very day.**

7 **Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died. His facial color did not pale** after he died, **nor did** his body **lose its natural freshness**—i.e., it did not decompose.

8 Whereas when Aaron died, both the men and women mourned him, since he had exerted himself to promote marital harmony among them,⁹⁴ when Moses died, **only the male Israelites wept for Moses in the plains of Moab for thirty days. The days of weeping over the mourning for Moses came to an end,**

❧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ❧

4 **I have let you see it with your eyes:** Judaism is distinguished from other religions in that whereas all other religions claiming to be of Divine origin allegedly began with a Divine revelation to one individual, Judaism stakes its claim to Divine origin on a simultaneous revelation to millions of people. Thus, Moses does not play the same role in Judaism as the founders of other religions play in theirs; he is indeed the receiver and transmitter of the Torah, but he is not the sole witness to or authority regarding its Divine origin.

Nonetheless, as God’s chosen emissary, Moses was the means through which God accomplished all His objectives for his generation. God redeemed the Israelites, punished their enemies, gave them the Torah, and led them through the desert and to the threshold of the Promised Land, all exclusively through Moses. Moreover, we are taught that all the apparent innovations that were and will be accomplished throughout history, up to and including the messianic future—the possession of the Land of Israel, the ongoing revelation of the Torah, the future

Redemption and the future revelations of hitherto concealed dimensions of the Torah—are and will be nothing more than manifestations of what was initiated and accomplished *in potentia* through Moses.

It is for this reason that, as will be recalled, Moses assigned the territory of Sichon to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the land of Og to part of the tribe of Manasseh, motivated by the knowledge that his involvement in taking possession of the land would strengthen the nation’s hold on it.⁹⁵

It is for this reason, too, that God showed Moses the Land of Israel before he died, even though he was not allowed to enter it. Possessing the land is a fundamental aspect of Judaism, and as such, it had to be accomplished, or at least begun in some degree, by Moses. Moses therefore had to encompass the land in his gaze; by virtue of this gaze, the Israelites were then able to conquer the land in the succeeding generations, and we will ultimately be able to repossess it fully in the messianic future.⁹⁶

5 **Moses, the servant of God, died:** Nonetheless, the Talmud records an opinion, derived from scriptural

89. Numbers 20:1, 26, 33:38. 90. Genesis 1:30. 91. Above, 33:21. 92. Numbers 25. 93. Mizrahi, *Gur Aryeh*. 94. Numbers 20:29; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 24, p. 253, note 6, p. 254, note 13. 95. Numbers 32:1, 33. 96. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 28, pp. 212-213.

ONKELOS

9 ויהושע בר נון אתמלי רוח חכמתא
ארי סמך משה ית ידוהי עלוהי וקבילו
מנה בני ישראל ועבדו כמא די פקיד יי
ית משה: 10 ולא קם נביא עוד בישראל
כמשה די אתגלי לה יי אפין באפין:
11 לכל אתיא ומופתיא די שלחה יי
למעבד בארעא דמצרים לפרעה ולכל
עבדוהי ולכל ארעה: 12 ולכל ידא
תקיפתא ולכל חונוא רבא די עבד משה
לעיני כל ישראל:

9 ויהושע בן־נון מלא רוח חכמה כִּי־סמך משה
את־ידיו עליו וישמעו אליו בני־ישראל ויעשו כְּאִשֶּׁר
צוה יהוה את־משה: 10 וְלֹא־קָם נָבִיא עוֹד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל
כְּמֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר יָדְעוּ יְהוָה פָּנִים אֶל־פָּנִים: 11 לְכָל־
הָאֲתוֹת וְהַמּוֹפְתִים אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַח ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ
מִצְרַיִם לְפָרַעַה וּלְכָל־עַבְדֵּי וּלְכָל־אֲרָצוֹ: 12 וּלְכָל־
יַד הַחֲזָקָה וּלְכָל הַמוֹרָא הַגָּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה מֹשֶׁה
לְעֵינֵי כָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל:

מ"א פסוקים. גאוא"ל סימן. אל"י סימן.

סכום פסוקי דספר הדברים התקנ"ה, הנץ סימן. וחציו ועשית על פי הדבר אשר יגידו לך. ופרשיותיו י"א, אסרו חג בעבותים סימן. וסדריו כ"ז, יפוח אמונה יגיד צדק סימן. ופרקיו ל"ד, אודה ה' בכל לבב סימן. מנין הפתוחות ל"ד, וחסותמות קב"ד, הכל קנ"ח פרשיות, וכסא כבוד ינחילם סימן.
סדריו תורה נ"ד, למען יזמך כבוד ולא ידם סימן. מנין הפרשיות הפתוחות של כל התורה ר"ץ, יבא דודי לגנו ויאכל פרי מגדיו סימן. והסתומות שע"ט, או אסרה אסר על נפשה בשבעה סימן. נמצאו מנין כל הפרשיות הפתוחות והסתומות תרס"ט, לא תחסר כל בה סימן.
סכום הפסוקים של כל התורה ה' אלפים תתמ"ה, ואור החמה יהיה שבעתים סימן. וחציו ושם עליו את החשן ויתן אל החשן את האורים ואת התמים.

*Its customary at the end of the public reading of any of
the Five Books of Moses for the congregation (followed by the reader) to say:*

חֹזֶק חֹזֶק וְנִתְחַזַּק!

RASHI

שבמדבר הגדול והנורא: לעיני כל ישראל. שנשא
לבו לשבור הלוחות לעיניהם, שנאמר⁵⁵: "וְאֶשְׁכַּח
לְעֵינֵיכֶם", והספיקה דעת הקדוש ברוך הוא לדעתו,
שנאמר⁵⁶: "אֲשֶׁר שִׁבַּרְתָּ" — יישר כחך ששברת:
חסלת פרשת וזאת הברכה

10 אֲשֶׁר יָדְעוּ ה' פָּנִים אֶל פָּנִים. שהיה לבו גס בו
ומדבר אליו בכל עת שרוצה, כענין שנאמר⁵⁷:
"וְעַתָּה אֶעֱלֶה אֵל ה'", "עמדו ואשמעה מה יצוה
ה' לכם"⁵⁸: 12 וּלְכָל הַיָּד הַחֲזָקָה. שקבל את התורה
בלוחות בידיו: ולכל המורא הגדול. נסים וגבורות

53. שמות לב, ל. 54. במדבר ט, ח. 55. דברים ט, יז. 56. שמות לד, א.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

meet, the first would say to the second, "Forgive me for angering you," and the second would say the same to the first.

When he heard that a couple had an argument, he would approach the husband, saying, "I heard that you are thinking about divorcing your wife. If you divorce her, who's to say that you'll be able to find another one as good as her? And if you do find one, when you get into an argument with her, the first thing she'll say is, 'This is how you behaved with your first wife.'" [And in this way he restored peace between them.]

For this reason, all Israel, men and women, loved him.¹¹³

(Aaron allowed himself to tell each of the arguing

friends that the other wanted to reconcile because he knew that, in truth, all Jews really do want to do the right thing.)

In Moses' psyche, there was no room for the slightest hint of deception. Of course, he knew and taught others that the Torah allows us to present the truth in a slightly altered way to promote peace, but his unswerving devotion to absolute truth did not allow him personally to do this.

The Torah emphasizes this difference between Moses and Aaron in the course of praising Moses in its description of his death for two reasons: (1) to emphasize how devoted he was to the ideal of truth, and (2) to indicate that only toward the end of the final day of his life, when his mission on earth was

113. *Kalah Rabati* 3.

9 and Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands upon him.¹⁰⁵ The Israelites obeyed him, and they did as God had commanded Moses.

10 There never arose another prophet in Israel like Moses, whom God knew face to face, i.e., allowed to communicate with Him whenever he desired to do so.¹⁰⁶

11 Nor did there ever arise another prophet comparable to Moses with regard to all the signs and marvels that God had sent him to perform in Egypt before Pharaoh, all his courtiers, and all his land,

12 nor with regard to the strong hand that Moses needed in order to carry the Tablets of the Covenant, nor with regard to the miracles Moses performed in the great, awesome desert, nor regarding the breaking of the tablets,¹⁰⁷ which Moses did in view of all Israel in order to save them from God's punishment,¹⁰⁸ and for which he earned God's approval.¹⁰⁹

Its customary at the end of the public reading of any of the Five Books of Moses for the congregation (followed by the reader) to say:

Be strong! Be strong! And let us strengthen each other!

The Haftarah for parashat Vezot Habrachah is on p. 262.



CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

did Moses not exert himself to promote harmony among people, including between spouses, as Aaron did? We have seen how Moses loved the Jewish people even to the point of being prepared to give up his life for them, and that he provided for all their spiritual and material needs. Even the protective Clouds of Glory and the well, which were given to the people in the merit of Aaron and Miriam respectively, persisted after their deaths in the merit of Moses. As we will see,¹¹⁰ the Torah itself considers Moses' love of his people his greatest virtue. Why would such a devoted leader not take pains to ensure that his charges behave sociably and lovingly toward each other?

The answer lies in understanding the differences between the respective life-missions—and hence, the innate natures—of Moses and Aaron.

Moses embodied the ideal of truth. His primary task in life was to transmit the Torah from God to the Jewish people, and it is self-understood that properly carrying out this mission requires absolute and

unflinching devotion to truth and accuracy.

Aaron, in contrast, personified loving-kindness (*chesed*). He was aware that although the Torah does not allow us to lie,¹¹¹ it does allow us to present the truth in a slightly deceptive manner in order to foster peace among people.¹¹² Thus, his predisposition toward loving-kindness allowed him to do just that. As the Talmud describes,

Thus were Aaron's methods: When he would hear that two people were arguing, he would approach the first, saying, "So-and-so! Peace to you, my master!" The person would reply, "Peace to you, my master and teacher! What can I do for you?" Aaron would say to him, "So-and-so, your friend, sent me to appease you, for he told me, 'I angered my friend.'" Hearing this, the first person would think, "Such a righteous person [as Aaron] has come to appease me!" and would tell Aaron, "It was actually I who angered him." Aaron would then approach the second person and tell him the same thing. When the two went to

105. Numbers 27:18-23. 106. See Exodus 32:30, Numbers 9:8. 107. Exodus 32:19. 108. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 34, pp. 217-223. 109. Exodus 34:1. 110. Below, on v. 12. 111. Exodus 23:7. 112. *Yevamot* 65b.

completed and he no longer needed to manifest his uncompromising devotion to truth, could he truly appreciate Aaron's willingness to bend the truth for the sake of peace.

The lesson for us here is that although with regard to Torah study, we must aspire to Moses' uncompromising devotion to the truth, when it comes to our relationships with our fellow Jews, the approach we must emulate is that of Aaron:¹¹⁸ "loving peace, pursuing peace, loving all creatures, and drawing them close to the Torah."¹¹⁹

12 Nor regarding the breaking of the tablets: As we have mentioned,¹²⁰ the Torah is here listing Moses' praises, as befits an account of his death. It notes that as his supreme accomplishment, he shattered the precious tablets he had just received from God's hand in order to save the Jewish people from the death penalty.

It will be recalled that Moses had another motive for not giving the Torah to the people: he reasoned that the people in their riotous, rebellious state did not deserve it. Thus, when he saw them worshipping the calf, he was faced with a double challenge: that of taking action to safeguard the Torah's honor and that of taking action to ensure the people's safety. In order to safeguard the Torah's honor, it would have been enough had he simply not given the tablets to the people; breaking them was clearly an act of disrespect toward the Torah, the opposite of safeguarding its honor. But in order to ensure the safety of the people, simply not giving them the tablets would not have sufficed; as long as the "wedding contract" still existed, the "bride" could be accused of unfaithfulness to her "bridegroom." Moses therefore allowed his love for the people to

override his deep respect for the Torah: he smashed the tablets, publicly disgracing the Torah for the people's sake. It is therefore fitting that the Torah's account of Moses' life end with this, the most eloquent expression of his devotion to his people. It is also fitting, for the same reason, that the entire *parashah*, which consists of Moses' blessing to the people, conclude with this incident.

But this verse not only concludes the account of Moses' life; it also concludes the entire Torah. Thus, the lesson it contains is also the summation of the message of the whole Torah. How, then, can Moses' act of disrespect for the Torah be considered the proper finale to the Torah itself?

As we study the Torah and read of the numerous commandments directed at the Jewish people, it is possible to form the impression that the people are secondary to the Torah, a mere instrument God uses in order to accomplish His ends. It is therefore necessary to emphasize that the opposite is the case: the purpose of Creation is the Jewish people, and they preceded the Torah not only chronologically—since Abraham founded the nation generations before the Torah was given—but in God's original plan for creation (in which the Torah also preceded the creation of the world), as well.¹²¹ The Torah, for all its greatness, is the means by which the Jewish people fulfill the purpose of creation. Aware of this, Moses knew that without the Jewish people, there is no Torah; it was for that reason that God approved of his actions when he shattered the tablets. There is no better place to emphasize this point than at the conclusion of the Torah, as the summation of its message to all humanity.¹²²

118. *Avot* 1:12. 119. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 28, pp. 253-258. 120. On v. 8, above. 121. *Tana d'vei Eliahu Rabbah* 14; *Bereishit Rabbah* 1:4. 122. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 34, pp. 217-223.

And so, we have come to the end of the Torah. Or have we?

The narrative of the Jewish people's struggle to fulfill their Divine mission and destiny continues beyond the Five Books of Moses, into the Books of the Prophets and the Writings and beyond, as described in the books that eventually served to record the Oral Torah: the Talmud, the Midrash, the Responsa, the Codes, and all the flowering of Torah literature that followed, until that of the present day. So clearly, there is no end to the study of the Torah.

But more to the point, the Five Books of Moses themselves comprise infinite levels of meaning. Inasmuch as the Torah is God's blueprint for creation, each level of meaning, while building on the previous, embodies an entirely new "world," a new way of understanding reality.

For this reason, it is customary to recommence the study of the Torah immediately upon finishing it. When we read *parashat Vezot Habrachah* in the synagogue—on the holiday of *Simchat Torah*—we immediately begin again from *parashat Bereishit*. In fact, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch said that the *Shehechianu* blessing ("Blessed be You...who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion") that we recite on *Simchat Torah* applies not to the holiday itself, but to the new vistas of the Torah we will be learning the coming year.¹¹⁴ This is the inner reason why the Torah ends by praising Moses for shattering the Tablets of the Covenant.

This may be compared to what happens when a gifted and talented teacher delivers a lecture to his students. Having thoroughly prepared his lecture well beforehand and thought through his topic, he proceeds to present it to his students, who eagerly devour their teacher's pearls of wisdom and relish the new vistas of understanding he is opening up before them.

However, as we all know, the very articulation of an idea brings us to think of it in new ways. When this happens to the teacher while delivering his lecture, he has no choice but to halt his presentation, leaving his students confounded and bewildered. They see in their mentor's facial expressions how the delicate and intricate conceptual edifice he so carefully constructed is now toppling and crumbling. The sudden and unexpected new insight completely undermines the previous construction, and now the entire intellectual world the teacher has built has to be re-evaluated, reworked, and rebuilt from scratch. All the students can do is wait patiently, expectantly, and hopefully, while the teacher searches for the solution.

The one thing they are certain of is that in order to receive the new vision that they are confident their teacher will give them, they must resist the tempta-

tion to hold on to the old one. If they succumb to the temptation of trying to anchor themselves in the past, in their previous conception of reality, they will lock themselves into their previous mode of thinking, thus closing themselves off to the new conception. Rather, they must sustain themselves on their hope and faith in their teacher.

When it seems that things can't get any darker, the light begins to shine: the students see on their teacher's face that he has found the solution to the problem, and he is now seeing the pieces of the puzzle fall into place. The new vision of reality is being prepared and will soon be ready to be articulated. As the teacher works out the resolution in his mind and reconstructs the conceptual model of reality that had been shattered, the students experience profound relief; although they have not yet heard the new lecture, they are comforted by the fact that they see that it is on the way.

Finally, when the teacher is ready to deliver the lecture anew, the students must show him that they are prepared to receive it, which will encourage him to couch his new insights in terms they will be able to understand and assimilate.¹¹⁵

Similarly, having now received the Torah ourselves by studying it beginning to end, we turn to God and say, "The Torah as we have come to know it thus far is indeed beautiful, deep, inspiring, infinite, exquisite, awesome, and challenging. It has led us to a more-perfect understanding of the world, of ourselves, of You. But it is not enough, for we know there is more; we know that the Torah is infinite, since it is Your will and wisdom, and You are infinite. Therefore, for Your honor and for the honor of Your Torah, we must grab hold of this Torah as we know it and smash it. The fact that the Torah as we have understood it and fulfilled its directives has not brought the Messiah means that it is not sufficient for us. We want the Redemption;¹¹⁶ we want to drink the inner wine of Your Torah. We refuse to be lulled into complacency by the captivating splendor of what You have given us so far. We refuse to wait!"

So, now that we have completed the study of the Torah, let us shatter the vision of reality it has helped us form, making way for new, more sublime insights into reality that await us as we begin to study the Torah anew.

At the same time, just as the broken tablets accompanied the people when they went out to war, so will we cherish the memory of our previous conception of reality, of life, of God, and of ourselves, that we formed by studying the Torah this time.¹¹⁷

*Be strong, be strong, and let us
strengthen each other!*

114. *Sefer HaSichot* 5705, p. 55; *Sefer HaSichot* 5704, p. 32; *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5705, p. 69; *Likutei Diburim*, vol. 1, p. 5a; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 19, pp. 371-379. 115. *Pelach HaRimon*, *Ma'amarim uReshimot*, pp. 37-50. 116. Cf. *Hitva'aduyot* 5749, vol. 1, p. 215. 117. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 9, pp. 237-243, etc.

Dedicated in honor of our children

**Nathan, Yitzchok,
Moshe Lev,
and Gilana**

*May you continue to grow in the ways
of our holy Torah*

Yuri and Deana Pikover

