

ויֵלֵךְ

VAYELECH/AND HE WENT Devarim/Deuteronomy 31:1-30

The first couple of verses in our parasha this week imply that not only was this the day that **Moses died**, but it was also his **birthday**:

*Devarim 31:1 And Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel.² And he said to them: "I am one hundred and twenty years old **today**. I can no longer go out and come in. Also יהוה has said to me, 'You shall not **cross over** this Jordan.'*

Moses had lived **120 years**, which is **3 periods of 40 years** each. **Forty** is the number that symbolizes **trials, testing, and transition**. Moses' life was neatly divided into 40 year periods. At **age 40 He identified with the Hebrews**, killed an Egyptian and was forced to flee to Midian. From **40 till 80 he was a "shepherd in-training"**. At age **80** he became the **shepherd that led the Israelites out of Egypt**. The last 40 years were definitely times of **testing and trials!** Now at **120**, he is ready to **transition out** of this physical world.

Let's take a closer look at the circumstances surrounding **Moses' birth**. Moses was **born under a death sentence**. In the year of his birth all **newborn baby boys** were to be **killed on the birthing stool**, per instructions given by **Pharaoh** to Shiphrah and Puah (midwives). Next, **Pharaoh** directed that **surviving baby boys were to be thrown into the river**. Instead, we know that **Moses was rescued** by the **Pharaoh's very own daughter**. Yes, **Moses should have died on the day he was born**. And indeed **120 years later**, Moses did die on **that same day**.

So this **baby** grew up to become the **leader of Israel**. A question for you...what was the **real name** given to this leader of Israel **by his Hebrew parents**? It was the **daughter of Pharaoh** who actually named him "**Moses**":

Shemot/Exodus 2:10 And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. So she called his name Moses, saying, "Because I drew him out of the water."

Isn't it odd that it was a **young Egyptian woman** who named him? We don't even know if "**Moses**" is a **Hebrew** name. Etymology books say "**origin unknown**." While Pharaoh's daughter thought his name meant "**drawn from the water**", I have another suggestion for you. Here is the **Hebrew spelling** of "**Moses**":

מוֹשֶׁה

We can split it like this:

מִ From

שֶׁה Lamb (Strong's Number 7716)

Perhaps "**Moses**" was really the **name יהוה chose**. What could be more appropriate for one whose name is **synonymous with Torah** than he who was "**from the lamb**"?!?

Devarim 31:2 mentions what turns out to be the reoccurring theme of "**crossing over**". This Hebrew word, **avar** (עָבַר), is the actual **root word** of "**Hebrew**" (עִבְרִי). To become a **Hebrew**,

one must therefore “**cross over**”. **Abram** was the **first** to be called a “**Hebrew**”. This concept is not hard to grasp. It simply means **to leave one side of the river and go to better soil**. When one “**crosses over**”, a **status change occurs**. Today, if we want to **become a part of the family of the Almighty** we must “**cross over**”. This picture is painted very vividly in **Yeshua’s words in John**:

*John 5:24 " Most assuredly, I say to you, **he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has crossed over from death into life.***

The next verse in our Torah reading also speaks of “**crossing over**”:

Devarim 31:3 "יְהוָה your Elohim Himself crosses over before you; He will destroy these nations from before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua himself crosses over before you, just as יְהוָה has said.⁴ "And יְהוָה will do to them as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites and their land, when He destroyed them.⁵ " יְהוָה will give them over to you, that you may do to them according to every commandment which I have commanded you.

Isn’t this cool? **Elohim** Himself “**crosses over**” **ahead** of the Israelites to identify with being “**Hebrew**”. But look at what happens next...**Joshua “crosses over”**. And what does יהוה say.... יהוה and Joshua cross over “**before you**” (before Moses). But wasn’t Moses told that he wouldn’t be able to “**cross over**”? **Moses will not “cross over” with the Israelites**. But he does “**cross over**” at some point, and this time **the One who crosses over “before you” is Yeshua!** **Moses makes his appearance in the land on the Mt. of Transfiguration:**

Mark 9:4 And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Yeshua.

What we have in Devarim 31:3 is an awesome **spiritual picture**. **Joshua** is the **shadow picture** of **Yeshua** in many ways. Their **names** both contain the word “**salvation**”. Like Joshua, **Yeshua** will **defeat our enemies and precede us into the Kingdom:**

*1 Corinthians 15:20 But now Messiah is risen from the dead, and has become the **firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep**.²¹ For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Messiah all shall be made alive.²³ But each one in his own order: Messiah the firstfruits, afterward those who are Messiah’s at His coming.*

Do you understand now why **Moses**, who symbolizes **Torah**, **cannot lead the people into the Promised Land**? That task is **reserved for the one who pictures Yeshua!** As we finally take hold of the Torah, we must never, never forget that it is **Yeshua**, not Torah, who **accomplishes salvation** for us and **takes us into the Promised Land**. And yet, **Yeshua was trained by and His authority came from Torah**. So **both** are absolutely **necessary**. In the book of **Revelation** we see a group of people who have **both Yeshua and Torah**, and the dragon is enraged by them!

Revelation 12:17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of Yah and have the testimony of Yeshua the Messiah.

Let's continue on in the parasha:

Devarim 31:6 "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for יהוה your Elohim, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you."

Put yourselves in Moses' sandals. After his **total devotion** to יהוה and **to the Israelites**, he is being **deprived of the opportunity to lead the people into the Promised Land**. Yet in the Biblical account, there appears to be not one iota of **bitterness or resentment**. First of all he wants them to understand that it is יהוה, **not a man**, who will **lead them into the land**. By emphasizing **Elohim (Divine) ahead of Joshua (a man)**, he **attempts to build their confidence in reaching their goal of the Promised Land**. Yeshua also encouraged His followers to **set their sites for the Kingdom**:

*Luke 12:31 "But seek the kingdom of Elohim, and all these things shall be added to you."³²
"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."*

The next verses are the **official appointment of Joshua**:

Devarim 31:7 Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which יהוה has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it."⁸ "And יהוה, He is the one who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed."

The Almighty gives victory to Israel through Joshua's leadership, but they also were participants. In the same way Yeshua will enter the land as a warrior WITH His people. That is the Hebraic concept of **national salvation** – being led to the Promised Land, overcoming its inhabitants, and living in shalom with Messiah as the King!

Revelation 19:11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war...¹⁴ And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.¹⁵ Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations....

Now Moses is instructed to write **"this Torah"** (most believe **"this"** to mean only Devarim) and give it to the Levites and the elders. **Every seven years** it will be read in a **special ceremony**:

Devarim 31:9 So Moses wrote this Torah and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of יהוה, and to all the elders of Israel.¹⁰ And Moses commanded them, saying: "At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles,¹¹ "when all Israel comes to appear before יהוה your Elohim in the place which He chooses, you shall read this Torah before all Israel in their hearing.¹² "Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear יהוה your Elohim and carefully observe all the words of this Torah,¹³ "and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear יהוה your Elohim as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess."

This **special ceremony** is called the **Hakhel** and comes from 31:12 where they are told to “gather” (**hakhel** - הַקְהִיל) the people. The simple form of this word (קָהַל) becomes the **root** of the word for **assembly** (**kahal** - קְהָל). “**Kahal**” is often translated into **Greek** as “**ecclesia**” which ends up as “**church**” in the “**New Testament**”. As we read in these Devarim verses, **the assembly/church (kahal) included all people without any difference in age, sex, or culture**. Their only requirement was that they were “**within the gates**” of Israel, meaning they **identified with the Elohim of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**.

What do you suppose the **purpose** was of this **public Torah reading**? Many commentators suggest that it was an **attempt to recreate and relive the experience of Mt. Sinai**. Remember that this **new generation** at the edge of the Promised Land was not **present at the original Sinai ceremony**. It would become **their duty** to fulfill the **destiny** originally planned for their **parents’ generation**. Therefore, the Hakhel ceremony was an **opportunity for a similar Mt. Sinai experience**. The **commandment of Hakhel** was intended to **recreate that experience for all future generations**.

Notice the **similar phrases** between the **Hakhel** and the **experience on Mt. Sinai**:

Devarim 4:10 "especially concerning the day you stood before יהוה your Elohim in Horeb, when יהוה said to me, 'Gather (hakel - הַקְהִיל) the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'¹¹ "Then you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the midst of heaven, with darkness, cloud, and thick darkness.¹² "And יהוה spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; you only heard a voice.

The **effects** on the people of this **public reading of Devarim** are described in the book of **Nehemiah** as **Ezra reads to the people after their return from the first exile**:

Nehemiah 7:73 ... When the seventh month came, the children of Israel were in their cities. 8:1 Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Torah of Moses, which יהוה had commanded Israel.² So Ezra the priest brought the Torah before the assembly (kahal) of men and women and all who could hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month.³ Then he read from it in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Torah....⁵ And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up.⁶ And Ezra blessed יהוה, the great Elohim. Then all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped יהוה with their faces to the ground.⁷ Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiiah, and the Levites, helped the people to understand the Torah; and the people stood in their place.⁸ So they read distinctly from the book, in the Torah of Elohim; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.⁹ And Nehemiah, who was the

governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to יהוה your Elohim; do not mourn nor weep." For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Torah.¹⁰ Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our יהוה. Do not sorrow, for the joy of יהוה is your strength."¹¹ So the Levites quieted all the people, saying, "Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved."¹² And all the people went their way to eat and drink, to send portions and rejoice greatly, because they understood the words that were declared to them.

Shortly we will be celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles. Many have incorporated the reading of Devarim into their festivities. I pray that this year as we hear it we are able to respond with appropriate emotion for "the joy of יהוה is our strength! Upon the return of Messiah, it appears that the reading and teaching of Torah will be the first thing on His agenda!

Zechariah 14:16 And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, יהוה of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

Isaiah 2:3 Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of יהוה, to the house of the Elohim of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the Torah, and the word of יהוה from Jerusalem.

Unfortunately, יהוה tells Moses that after his death the people will not remain faithful to the Almighty. As a result His Presence will be hidden from them:

Devarim 31:16 And יהוה said to Moses: "Behold, you will rest with your fathers; and this people will rise and play the harlot with the gods of the foreigners of the land, where they go to be among them, and they will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them."¹⁷ "Then My anger shall be aroused against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured. And many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say in that day, 'Have not these evils come upon us because our Elohim is not among us?'"¹⁸ "And I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they have done, in that they have turned to other gods.

יהוה's response to His people's unfaithfulness is to "hide His face" from them. This is the opposite of what we long for in the Aaronic blessing:

Bemidbar/Numbers 6:24 "יהוה bless you and keep you;²⁵ יהוה make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;²⁶ יהוה turn his face toward you and give you peace."

When the Almighty "hides His face" from His people, they are exposed and unprotected. This idea is expressed in the song that we will study next week:

Devarim 32:20 And He said: 'I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end will be, For they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faith.

Yet, **Isaiah** tells us that the “**hiding of His face**” is only for a **brief moment** in **comparison** with His **everlasting kindness**:

*Isaiah 54:8 With a little wrath **I hid My face** from you for a moment; But with everlasting kindness I will have **mercy** on you," Says יהוה, your Redeemer.*

What is so interesting about this is the **result** of the “**hiding of His face**” that we read of in the **end of Devarim 31:17**:

Devarim 31:17 ...they will say in that day, 'Have not these evils come upon us because our Elohim is not in our midst?'

Suddenly His people realize that **they NEED Him to be “in their midst”**. His **original desire** was to be “**in their midst**” in the **Garden**.

Bereshit/Genesis 3:8 And they heard the sound of יהוה Elohim walking in the garden in the cool of the day...

The **building of the tabernacle** was a way He made for them to enjoy **His Presence**:

Shemot/Exodus 25:8 "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.

Of course **Isaiah** prophesies of One **by Name** who would be “**in our midst**”:

*Isaiah 7:14 "Therefore Adonai Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name **Immanuel**.*

*Matthew 1:23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name **Immanuel**," which is translated, "**El with us**."*

*John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and **dwelt among us**, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Until **teshuvah** (repentance) occurs, **He is not able to “dwell in our midst”**. **Devarim 31:17** expresses **regret**, but **stops short of repentance**. For this reason, we see in **Devarim 31:18** that He **continues to “hide His face”**. **Nehemiah** shows the **way of return**:

Nehemiah 1:9 'but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.'

Continuing on in **Devarim**, we read of the **613th commandment**...the **last instruction of Torah**:

Devarim 31:19 "Now therefore, write down this song for yourselves, and teach it to the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for Me against the children of Israel....²¹ "Then it shall be, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify against them as a witness; for it will not be forgotten in the mouths of their descendants, for I know the inclination of their behavior today, even before I have brought them to the land of which I swore to give them."

There is something very **beautiful** about a **song**. It is said that **words are the language of the mind**, but **music is the language of the soul**. A **song** becomes even **more beautiful** when **scored for many voices interwoven in complex harmonies**. The purpose of this song is to be a **witness** and is meant to **remain with the Israelites** even during their periods of **sinning and punishment**. It is to **span the generations**. Now a bit later in the parasha, we see that the people will have another “**witness**”:

Devarim 31:24 So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this Torah in a book, when they were finished,²⁵ that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of יהוה, saying:²⁶ **"Take this Book of the Torah, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of יהוה your Elohim, that it may be there as a witness against you;**²⁷ **"for I know your rebellion and your stiff neck. If today, while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against יהוה, then how much more after my death?**

Thus “**this Book of the Torah**” (Devarim) also becomes a “**witness**” against the children of Israel **because of their rebellion**. It appears that Moses understood that **both the song and the Torah** would have to serve as **witnesses**, since it is **by the word of two witnesses that a matter stands**. The book of **Devarim** reminds them that as יהוה’s special nation they have **accepted** upon themselves the **Covenant of Torah with its blessings and its curses**. The **song** reminds them to **turn back to Torah**. So why is the **song** singled out as its **own witness**?

The book of **Devarim** is to be kept in a **special spot**:

Devarim 31:26 **"Take this Book of the Torah, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of יהוה your Elohim, that it may be there as a witness against you;**

The **song** has a **more active role**. Look where the **song will be kept**:

Devarim 31:19 **"Now therefore, write down this song for yourselves, and teach it to the children of Israel; put it in their mouths...**

The phrase “**put it in their mouths**” means to have them **memorize** it. A **song** is generally **easier to memorize than a written text**. I learned the aleph/bet to the tune of “London Bridges”, and I have to sing it when I’m looking up Hebrew words in a dictionary. By **memorizing the song**, it **became engraved in the inner consciousness of the children of Israel**, even during their years of sin and exile. The **reason** for this is that **SOME DAY, this song will burst forth** from the **collective subconscious of the sinful nation**. At this point the **song becomes a witness**. The **song** is a **guarantee that some day the Israelites will arrive at their intended goal**.

The **Song of Moses** is the **experiential aspect** of the **Torah** that **ensures the Torah’s continuity throughout the ages**. For **His Words to be placed in our mouths** is a very **powerful concept**:

Devarim 8:3 **"So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of יהוה.**

Joshua 1:8 "This Book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Isaiah gives us a wonderful **promise**:

Isaiah 59:21 "As for Me," says יהוה, "this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants' descendants," says יהוה, "from this time and forevermore."

The Almighty almost makes it sound easy:

*Psalms 81:10 I am יהוה your Elohim, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt; **Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.***

In conclusion, we read that there are **additional witnesses**:

*Devarim 31:28 "Gather to me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call **heaven and earth to witness against them.**"²⁹ "For I know that after my death you will become utterly corrupt, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, because you will do evil in the sight of יהוה, to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands."*

Why does He now make the **heavens and earth witnesses against them**? The **heavens and earth** are **unique in their witness**. We read previously about the **blessings and the curses**. If the **Israelites** are **obedient**, the **witnesses** will come and **reward them... the earth will yield its produce and the heavens will give rain**. If they are **guilty**, the **heavens** will **not provide rain** and the **earth** will **not give of its fruit**.

Our special parasha next week is the **Song of Moses**. Since this song is **sung by the servants of Yah** in the **end times according to the book of Revelation**, it should be of **particular interest to us**. Maybe even worth **memorizing**. Remember that the **purpose for the song** is that so when **prophetic events begin to occur**, Israel will know that it is of יהוה Elohim and **not some natural disaster or manmade event**. The song is a **teaching tool** meant to give **hope**. Thus we will be able to see the **positive element of discipline** in the **Almighty's wrath**.

The **Song of Moses** is more than simply **words of Torah**. It is meant to be a **melody sung by His people, His choir**. **Unity** brings **beautiful harmony**. Have **you** begun to learn **your part**?

Shabbat Shalom,
Ardelle