

Vezot Ha'Bracha "This is the blessing"
Devarim 33:1-34:12

With this portion we come to the end of the earthly life of Moses and the book of Deuteronomy. It is important that we understand, however, that we are not at the end of the Torah. The Torah is the image and Word of YHWH ELOHIM, and as such, it is eternal.

Exodus 3:15 *And Elohim said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, YHWH the Elohim of your fathers, the Elohim of Abraham, the Elohim of Isaac, and the Elohim of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is My name for ever, and this is My memorial unto all generations.*¹

Exodus 15:18 *YHWH shall reign for ever and ever!*

Deuteronomy 32:40 *For I lift up My hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever.*

Malachi 3:6 *For I am YHWH, I change not.*

Hebrews 1:10-12 *And Thou, YHWH, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands: ¹¹they shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; ¹²and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail.*

1 Peter 1:25 *But the word of YHWH endureth for ever.*

James 1:17 *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*

Since YHWH is eternal and the Torah is the image of YHWH, the Torah likewise is eternal. Since YHWH does not change, the Torah cannot change. We should realize from the Word of YHWH itself that it is impossible for "Jesus" to do away with the Torah without changing the Word and image of YHWH.

To celebrate the eternal nature of the Torah, a tradition was developed in the synagogue using two Torah scrolls placed one on top of the other. The bottom scroll was rolled to the very first words of Genesis, while the top scroll was rolled to our portion "Vezot Ha'Bracha." As the reader comes to the very last sentence of the portion, a breath is taken, and the last sentence of Deuteronomy is read in the same breath as the first sentence of Genesis. By reading it in one breath, the cycle seamlessly begins again without end. So it is that we shall return to the beginning in our study and continue to build upon the wisdom, knowledge, and understanding that we have gained through our past studies.

This final portion of Deuteronomy is considered to be one of the most complicated to understand. There are numerous grammatical inconsistencies and ambiguities as well as unique and archaic words that are used that make this particular portion a true challenge for the biblical scholar. Jeffrey H. Tigay, the author of the JPS commentary on Deuteronomy, describes the portion this way:

This poem is one of the most difficult texts in all of ancient literature. It is full of rare words, syntactic difficulties, grammatical inconsistencies, and opaque allusions. Some of these difficulties are probably due to its rare vocabulary and poetic forms; others, to the poem's aphoristic style, which expresses things in a

terse, symbolic way and is filled with allusions no longer understandable to us. Another possible source of confusion is that the first copy of the poem was probably written in the early Hebrew spelling system, which had no vowel signs and did not even use the letters aleph, heh, vav, and yod as vowels. This would have made it very easy for the scribe who transcribed it into the later standard biblical spelling to misconstrue certain words.²

One of the first challenges to confront us in this portion is the question of authorship. In the opening verses of this passage there is a great deal of ambiguity. The portion begins in a third person narrative describing what Moses did. The author even calls Moses a "man of Elohim," a title that Moses, the most humble man in the world, would hardly give himself. Confirming the idea that Moses could not be the author of this passage is the use of the statement found in the following verse:

Deuteronomy 33:4 *Moses commanded us a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob.*

Surely if Moses were the speaker and author of this portion he would have said, "I commanded **you**," or possibly, "Moses commanded **them**"; but it is unlikely that he would have written "Moses commanded **us**." Adding to the argument against Moses' authorship of this portion is also the fact that it describes Moses' death and mysterious burial.

Deuteronomy 34:5-9 *So, Moses the servant of YHWH died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of YHWH. ⁶And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. ⁷And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. ⁸And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended. ⁹And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as YHWH commanded Moses.*

There are those among the sages who argue that Moses wrote even these final words from the perspective of prophetic revelation.

The Tanna R' Meir says: Is it possible that the sefer Torah that existed during Moses' lifetime was lacking anything? But it says, "Take this book of the Torah" which implies that the Torah was complete. Rather, the Holy One, Blessed is He, said, the verses which speak of Moses' death, --and he wrote them with tears.³

The majority of sages, however, feel that it was Joshua, who had been filled with the spirit of wisdom by the laying of Moses' hands, who penned these final words of the Torah. Thus this final chapter, describing not only the death and burial of Moses but also his life, may be the final eulogy declared by Joshua and the wailing children of Israel.

Deuteronomy 34:10-12 *And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom YHWH knew face to face, ¹¹in all the signs and the wonders, which YHWH sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, ¹²and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel.*

Here we must recognize the contradiction between these words and the unquestionable words of Moses as he prophesied earlier concerning the Prophet YHWH would raise up in Israel.

Deuteronomy 18:15 *YHWH thy Elohim will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, **like unto me**; unto him ye shall hearken.*

Clearly these final words of our portion belong on the lips of Joshua, who received the spirit of humility from Moses and would therefore not allow himself to be compared to Moses in any way. This statement of Joshua made its way into the Rabbinic Jewish prayer book in the prayer "Yigdal/Exalted Be," in part as a defense against the teaching of Christianity on incarnation.

*Exalted be Elohim Who lives, and may He be praised. He exists, and there is no time limitation for His existence. He is One and there is no unity like His Oneness. He is inscrutable and indeed there is no limit to His Oneness. He has no semblance of a body, nor is He corporeal, nor can we compare to Him in His holiness. He preceded every entity that was created – the First, and nothing precedes His precedence. He is Master of the universe to every creature; every creature teaches His greatness and His sovereignty. The abundance of His prophecy did He grant to the people of His choosing and of His splendor. **There did not arise in Israel anyone like Moses ever again, a prophet who gazes at His image.**⁴*

While the intention of this later Rabbinic Jewish prayer may have been to define Jewish faith as distinct from Yeshua as the Messiah, we should realize the original context and intention of these words and not forget Moses' own prophecy of a coming prophet **like unto himself** that we and all Israel are to listen to.

So it is that our portion this week begins with controversy and confusion. In spite of all these difficulties and challenges we shall do our best to glean some meaning from these final words of the book of Deuteronomy and Moses. We may break this portion down into three simple sections. The first section is a historical recounting and allusion to the grace and mercy of YHWH and the merit of Israel to deserve the blessings about to be given. The second section is the actual blessing as declared by Moses; and the final section, which we have already alluded to, is the eulogy spoken over Moses at his departure.

Let us begin our study with the first section, the historical recounting of YHWH'S interaction with Israel and Israel's response to YHWH.

***Deuteronomy 33:1-5** And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of Elohim blessed the children of Israel before his death. ²And he said, YHWH came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; He shined forth from mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of saints: from His right hand went a fiery law for them. ³Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in Thy hand: and they sat down at Thy feet; every one shall receive of Thy words. ⁴Moses commanded us a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. ⁵And He was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together.*

As we have already stated, this passage is filled with ambiguity and confusion. This is especially evident in the Hebrew, which allows for a number of varying translations and understandings. For the sake of our study we will work with the existing translation. Before we delve into the meaning of these verses, let us see if we can simply give them some order and direction. The passage begins with the voice of the narrator:

***Deuteronomy 33:1** And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of Elohim blessed the children of Israel before his death.*

Again I believe this is Joshua speaking and not Moses. I also believe that it is Joshua's voice we hear again when the narrative continues:

Deuteronomy 33:3b-4 *And they sat down at Thy feet; every one shall receive of Thy words. ⁴Moses commanded us a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob.*

The final verse contains a number of challenges.

Deuteronomy 33:5 *And He was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together.*

If Joshua is the speaker of this verse, then the "He" that becomes king over Israel could well be Moses, as some scholars suggest. We may remember how Dathan and Abiram accused Moses of seeking political power and position over the children of Israel.

Numbers 16:12-13 *And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab: which said, We will not come up: ¹³is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us?*

But we should also realize that the title "king" was never applied to Moses in the Torah. If it is Moses who is speaking (though this could also be true even if it is Joshua speaking), then the "He" that becomes King would be YHWH. This certainly would be more consistent with the rest of the testimony of the Scriptures. We may remember that Moses did prophesy that there would come a time when Israel would ask to have an earthly, human king placed over them. While YHWH conceded to their wishes and set boundaries to their desire, He clearly declared it to be a rejection of His own reign over Israel.

Deuteronomy 17:14-15 *When thou art come unto the land which YHWH thy Elohim giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; ¹⁵thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom YHWH thy Elohim shall choose.*

Judges 17:6 *In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.⁵*

1 Samuel 8:4-7 *Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, ⁵and said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. ⁶But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto YHWH. ⁷And YHWH said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.*

Psalms 47:1-3 *O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto Elohim with the voice of triumph. ²For YHWH Most High is terrible; He is a great King over all the earth. ³He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet.*

Psalms 47:6-7 *Sing praises to Elohim, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. ⁷For Elohim is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding.*

Zechariah 9:9 *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.*

Zechariah 14:16 *And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, YHWH of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.*

Malachi 1:14 *But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith YHWH of hosts, and My name is dreadful among the heathen.*

This proclamation of YHWH becoming King over Israel is directly tied to YHWH coming from the mountains (Deuteronomy 33:2) and the leaders of the tribes gathering together (Deuteronomy 33:5). The reference to YHWH coming from the mountains is the basis for the teaching that YHWH offered the Torah to the Ishmaelites, the Edomites (the descendants of Esau), and to the Moabites prior to offering it to the children of Israel. We should remember that Ishmael and Esau are the firstborn of Abraham and Isaac respectively. Moab is likewise the firstborn son of Lot and his eldest daughter.

When the Omnipotent revealed Himself in giving the Torah to Israel He not only revealed Himself to Israel but to all the nations. First He repaired to the sons of Esau and said to them, Will ye accept the Torah? They answered Him: What is written therein? Said He to them: "Thou shalt not murder." Whereupon they answered: Lord of the universe, the basic commitment of our ancestor was to be a murderer, as it is written: "And the hands are the hands of Esau." Regarding that, his father promised him: "By the sword shalt thou live." He repaired to the sons of Ammon and Moab and said to them, Will ye accept the Torah? They replied: What is written therein? Said He to them: "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Whereupon they exclaimed before Him: Lord of the universe, our whole essence is committed to immorality, as it is written: "And the two daughters of Lot conceived from their father." The Almighty then went and found the sons of Ishmael and said unto them, Will ye accept the Torah? Said they to Him: What is written therein? Said He to them: "Thou shalt not steal." Whereupon they exclaimed before Him: Lord of the universe, the basic commitment of our father lay in brigandage, as it is written: "And he will be a wild man." There was no nation He did not go and speak to and knock at their door to see whether they would be willing to accept the Torah. You might have thought that as soon as they actually heard the Torah that they accepted it? It is therefore stated: "They hear Thy words but they will not do them." (Ezekiel 33:31)⁶

So it is taught that YHWH went first to the nations, and only after repeated rejection went finally to the children of Israel as they gathered at Mount Sinai. When they heard the voice of YHWH they agreed to do all that He commanded. With this agreement YHWH became King or Ruler over Israel. The allusions to the events at Sinai give credence to this concept. The first allusion to Sinai is hidden in a peculiar Hebrew word *ayshdat* (ALEPH, SHIN, DALET, TAV), which can be interpreted as "pouring," "teaming," "spring," or even "waterfall." This word causes some difficulties for the translators because none of these words truly fit the context of the passage. If, however, the word *ayshdat* is broken into two words, then it may be read as *aysh dat*, a "fiery law." This certainly could describe the scene at Mount Sinai when Israel received the Torah.

Exodus 19:16-18 *And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. ¹⁷And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with Elohim; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. ¹⁸And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because YHWH descended upon it in fire.*

Deuteronomy 4: 9-13 Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons; ¹⁰ specially the day that thou stoodest before YHWH thy Elohim in Horeb, when YHWH said unto me, Gather Me the people together, and I will make them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children. ¹¹ And ye came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness. ¹² And YHWH spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice. ¹³ And He declared unto you His covenant, which He commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and He wrote them upon two tables of stone.

A second and even more subtle allusion to Sinai is found in the expression:

Deuteronomy 33:3 Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in Thy hand.

Once again it is difficult to know to whom the words are referring. The word "saints" points to the noun "people," referring to either the nations or the people of Israel. If it is YHWH that approaches from the mountains, then it would also be likely that the possessive pronoun "Thy" is referring to YHWH'S hands. In other words, this verse would indicate that the set apart-ones or holy ones of the nations are in the hand of YHWH. Let us now return to Sinai and see if this translation is indeed justifiable. In extending the unique calling and invitation to the children of Israel, YHWH declares:

Exodus 19:5-6 Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: ⁶ and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.

Note that all the nations belong to YHWH. Even the calling extended to Israel, while it is unique to them, is for the purpose of being a priesthood or mediator for all nations. Thus we see that YHWH is indeed a lover of the nations. Beyond this single point, however, is yet another significant tie-in. YHWH declared to Israel that if they would accept this calling, they would be His "treasured possession." In Hebrew the word is *segulah* (SAMECH, GIMMEL, LAMED, HEY). *Segulah* is the Hebrew word for personal property – the name for a treasure so special that the king entrusts its guarding to no one but himself. The key to the *segulah* treasure is kept in the king's own hand. Here we see that Israel is indeed the set-apart treasure in the hand of YHWH for the purpose of demonstrating YHWH'S love for the nations.

In essence, what we witness in this opening narrative is a historical explanation as to why Israel would merit the blessings that Moses is about to declare upon the children of Israel. As for these blessings, we should understand them to be in partnership with the blessings which Jacob spoke over his children prior to their leaving the land of Egypt.⁷ Rambam and others point out the use of the word "vezot/this" in the final verse of Jacob's farewell blessings, and the use of the same word "vezot" in the opening words of Moses' farewell address and blessing.⁸ So it would appear that these blessings are like bookends supporting the children of Israel in their walk through the wilderness and into the promised land.

Let us now turn our attention to the heart of this portion – the blessings of Moses upon the children of Israel. The first thing that we should note about these blessings over the tribes is that there is a tribe missing. The Torah always lists just twelve tribes. Since Jacob adopted Ephraim and Manasseh as his own sons, there are truly fourteen tribes. When the Torah lists Levi as one of the tribes, it usually lists Joseph as well. But if the Torah is including Ephraim and

Manasseh in the count, then it is customary to omit Levi and Joseph. In both of these situations the final count is always twelve.

Some have stated that another tribe was omitted to keep the count at twelve, for it would not have been appropriate to omit Ephraim from the count since it was Joshua, an Ephraimite, who would replace Moses and lead the children of Israel into the promised land. This argument does not hold up since Levi, Joseph, and his sons Ephraim and Manasseh are mentioned, bringing the count of the tribes to thirteen in this portion. Therefore there must be another explanation for the absence of the tribe of Simeon from the count. Some teach that Simeon is included in the blessing of Levi, as was the case when Jacob blessed his sons.

Genesis 49:5-7 *Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. ⁶O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall. ⁷Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.*

There are several important clues given to us in these few verses. Jacob points out the rashness, brazenness, fierceness, anger, wrath, and violence that seem to be the natural inclination of these two brothers. This evil inclination was seen most clearly in the murdering of the men of Shechem after the rape and kidnapping of their sister Dinah,⁹ so Jacob in his blessing makes clear reference to the evil inclination of Simeon and Levi. Moses, however, describes a different picture of Levi, declaring:

Deuteronomy 33:9 *Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed Thy word, and kept Thy covenant.*

This is an allusion to several incidents in the history of Israel. The first is that of the golden calf. We should note that after the making of the golden calf it was the tribe of Levi who once again acted in fierceness, wrath, and violence, strapping on their swords and killing everyone who had worshipped it.

Exodus 32:26-28 *Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on YHWH'S side? Let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. ²⁷And he said unto them, Thus saith YHWH ELOHIM of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. ²⁸And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.*

In doing this, the people of the tribe of Levi demonstrated that they loved YHWH their Elohim with all of their hearts, souls, and beings; even with their evil inclination. Thus by using even their weakness to serve Elohim, they had truly demonstrated their repentance and fulfilled the mitzva of loving YHWH with all of their beings. We should likewise remember that when the men of Israel fell to fornicating with women of Moab, that it was Aaron and Pinchas, both Levites, who acted quickly, zealously, and even violently to stop the plague from destroying Israel.¹⁰ We should also remember that Zimri, the man who brought the Moabite woman into the tent of meeting to fornicate with her, was a descendant of Simeon.¹¹

So at the incidents of the golden calf and the fornication in Moab, the tribe of Simeon had not yet learned to love YHWH even with their evil inclination. Because of this weakness the tribe of Simeon was greatly reduced over the journey. At the first census Simeon had 59,300 men of war.¹² At the time of the second census their numbers had been reduced to 22,200, a reduction

of 37,100 men.¹³ Just as Jacob prophesied, Simeon was scattered among his brethren. When it came time to inherit the land, Simeon did not receive a territory, but nineteen unconnected cities in the territory of Judah.¹⁴ So it is in our portion that Simeon is blessed in the success of the other tribes, but merits no blessing of its own.

Another peculiarity in this portion is the order in which certain tribes are named. Reuben is named first because he is the firstborn. Notice, however, how Levi is located between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Clearly the portion is not following the birth order of Jacob's sons. The city of Jerusalem where YHWH would eventually place His name is in the land of Judah, but the Mount where the Temple would ultimately be erected is actually in the land of Benjamin. So we see Levi serving in the Temple between Judah and Benjamin. Moses declared of Benjamin:

Deuteronomy 33:12 *The beloved of YHWH shall dwell in safety by Him; and YHWH shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between His shoulders.*

It has been noted that the Temple Mount is not built upon the highest hill but on a lower one, as the shoulders are lower than the head. The Hebrew word for shoulder is *katef* (KAF, TAV, FAY), and can mean ridge or slope. Three reasons are given for Benjamin being given the honor of having the Temple rest in his territory: 1) He is the only son of Jacob that was born in the land of Canaan/Israel; 2) He had nothing to do with the sale of Joseph; and 3) He comforted Jacob in his old age.¹⁵ The rabbis teach that the juxtaposition of the phrase "His shoulders" with the name of Joseph is to remind us that before the Temple stood in the land of Benjamin, it stood for 200 years in Shiloh in the land of Ephraim.¹⁶

In the blessing of Joseph we should note the allusions to his earlier dreams.

Deuteronomy 33:13-14 *And of Joseph he said, Blessed of YHWH be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath, ¹⁴and for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon.*

Genesis 37:5-7 *And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. ⁶And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: ⁷for, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.*

Genesis 37:9 *And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.*

In our portion Moses is in essence prophesying that Joseph shall indeed see the fulfillment of these dreams.

Two other significant points I want to make before I conclude this portion concern the prophetic reference to the two houses of the nation of Israel. It should not go unnoticed that Moses prays that Judah will be restored to his people.

Deuteronomy 33:7 *And this is the blessing of Judah: and he said, Hear, YHWH, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people.*

Here we are given a prophetic glimpse that Judah will indeed be separated from his brothers for a season and attacked by enemies. For a season Judah will be singled out and isolated from the protection of his brethren. But in time there shall indeed be a restoration.

Likewise with Ephraim we see the juxtaposition of the words "ends of the earth" with his name.

Deuteronomy 33:17 *With them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh.*

So it is that we see the prophetic foreshadowing of the reconciliation of the two houses of Israel. From the ends of the earth the myriads of the House of Israel shall be gathered and reconciled with their brother Judah.

There is one final comment I want to make concerning this last portion in the book of Deuteronomy. As we have read the history of Israel as recounted by Moses to the generation born in the wilderness, we could not help but to recall the terrible time that Moses had leading this notoriously stiff-necked people. Over and over again Moses was tested, tried, and blamed for every inconvenience the people stumbled over. Repeatedly Moses fell on his face before YHWH ELOHIM to seek mercy and grace for this rebellious and stubborn people. And yet, even at the end, when denied the honor of leading the children of Israel into the promised land, Moses still gathers his spiritual strength and blesses the children of Israel. I cannot help but think of Messiah Yeshua, who from the cross likewise blessed those who cursed him.¹⁷ I pray that like Jacob, Moses, and Messiah, I too may spend my last breaths speaking blessing into the lives of those around me – those who love me as well as those who curse me. Since I do not know when my last breath will be, I ask now for the grace to speak blessings with every breath. May YHWH bless you all with life, health, faith, and zeal for His Torah. Amen.

¹ All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version. I have taken the liberty to restore the names of the Creator and the Messiah.

² The JPS Commentary Deuteronomy, Jeffrey H. Tigaw, The Jewish Publication Society, 1996, Pg. 318

³ The Sapirstein Edition Rashi Devarim, Mesorah Publications, Pg. 400

⁴ The Schottenstein Edition, Siddur for Weekdays, Nusach Sefard, Mesorah Publications, Pp. 20-21

⁵ Judges 18:1, 19:1, 21:25. Some have taught that this meant that the Torah was King, or that it meant that YHWH no longer dwelt among them because they did not keep the Torah, the law of the King.

⁶ Studies in Devarim, Nehama Leibowitz, LAMBDA Publishers, Inc. Pp. 377-378

⁷ Genesis 49:1-28

⁸ Stone Edition Chumash, Mesorah Publication, Pg. 1112

⁹ Genesis 34:1-26

¹⁰ Numbers 25:1-9

¹¹ Numbers 25:14

¹² Numbers 1:23

¹³ Numbers 26:14

¹⁴ Joshua 19:1-9

¹⁵ Stone Edition Chumash, Mesorah Publication, Pg. 1117

¹⁶ Stone Edition Chumash, Mesorah Publication, Pg. 1117

¹⁷ Luke 23:34