

# וְזֹאת הַבְּרָכָה

## V'ZOT HABRACHAH/AND THIS IS THE BLESSING Devarim/Deuteronomy 33:1-34:12

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Our Torah reading begins:

*Devarim 33:1 And this is the blessing (וְזֹאת הַבְּרָכָה) with which Moses the man of Elohim blessed the children of Israel before his death.*

This is the **only place** in the **Torah** where **Moses** is referred to as the “**man of Elohim**”. It is a common phrase that is found elsewhere in the **Hebrew Scriptures** as a title for **prophets**:

*1 Kings 13:1 And behold, a **man of Elohim** went from Judah to Bethel by the word of הַיְיָ, and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense.*

*1 Kings 17:18 So she said to **Elijah**, "What have I to do with you, O **man of Elohim**? Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to kill my son?"*

As far as I can see there is only one **Psalm** that is **attributed to Moses**, the “**man of Elohim**”, i.e. a **prophet**:

*Psalm 90:1 A Prayer of **Moses the man of Elohim**. הַיְיָ, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.*

A well known and **prophetic verse** is found in this **Psalm from Moses**:

*Psalm 90:4 For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.*

Continuing on, **Devarim 33:4** really jumps out at me:

*Devarim 33:4 Moses commanded Torah for us, a possession of the congregation of Jacob.*

Let those words sink in. The **Torah** is a **possession** of the “**congregation**”! **Torah** was not meant to be given to **individuals**. Is this what the **writer of Hebrews** was thinking about?

*Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,<sup>25</sup> not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

**Devarim 33** continues with **Moses’ blessings** over the **individual tribes**. **Prior to his death, Jacob** had **blessed each of his sons** according to that **son’s individual potential and destiny**. Now we read of **Moses** as he **blesses the descendents of Jacob’s sons** by their **respective tribes**. These **tribes** have been **given the Torah** and are being **sent across the Jordan to the Promised Land** which they will **conquer and occupy**. Each tribe is **blessed according to its personality** and its **responsibilities**. The **translations of these blessings vary substantially**. Even **Hebrew language scholars** are **challenged** as there are **Hebrew words and phrases** in these blessings that appear **nowhere else** in the Bible. It is one of the rare places in the Hebrew Scriptures where there are

some differences between the oldest Hebrew manuscripts. Jeffrey Tigay puts it like this: it is full of rare words, syntactic difficulties, grammatical inconsistencies and opaque allusions. With that said, let's take a look at a few of the tribal blessings.

**Reuben** receives the first blessing:

*Devarim 33:6 "Let Reuben live, and not die, nor let his men be few."*

Seems pretty short and sweet, but what does it mean? **Moses** blesses the tribe of **Reuben** with "life". There's a bit of **grace** in this blessing as it was **Reuben** who took his father Jacob's concubine and lay with her. Here is what **Torah** had to say about that:

*Vayikra/Leviticus 20:11 "The man who lies with his father's wife has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them."*

Now perhaps the reason why he was **pardoned** for this offense was that **Torah had not yet been given from Mt. Sinai**. There also may be **other reasons for blessing Reuben with "life"**. Remember that **Reuben** had already been given **territory on the east side of the Jordan**. Was Moses concerned that the **Reubenites** would therefore **not survive** as an **official tribe outside of the Promised Land**? Or, Jewish sages offer a **military explanation**. In return for the land on the east of the Jordan, the **Reubenite men** had **promised to take the front line in the battles to conquer the Promised Land**. Moses prays a **blessing of "life"** over them in light of this **dangerous mission**.

**Judah** was next to be **blessed**:

*Devarim 33:7 And this he said of Judah: "Hear, יהודה, the voice of Judah, and bring him to his people; Let his hands be sufficient for him, and may You be a help against his enemies."*

**Judah**, of course, is the **main tribe** of the **Jews**. It seems that **Moses** is asking for **help in war-time** for **Judah**. "**Hear**"...that is, **shema**, the voice of **Judah**. Is this **Judah** sending up **prayers**? We can certainly see that יהודה has **blessed the Jews** with **military strength** since gaining **statehood in 1948**. Their numerous **stories of battles** are nothing short of **miraculous**. Have you ever taken a good look at a **Middle East map** and noticed the **size of Israel** relative to the **surrounding sea of unfriendly Muslim nations**? יהודה's **help** has been the **reason** for their **survival**.

I am also intrigued by the phrase "**bring him to his people**". **Daily, Jews pray** for the **regathering of ALL of Israel**. The **Kibbutz Galuyot** (gathering of exiles) is the **tenth blessing** of the **daily Amidah prayers** wherein they make the **appeal to the Almighty to return Israel from the affliction of the exile**:

"Sound the great shofar for our freedom and raise a banner to **gather our exiles and unite us together from the four corners of the earth**. Blessed are You, **Adonai**, who regathers the scattered of His people Israel."

The **Levites**, who are the **set-apart priests and teachers**, are given a rather **long blessing** focused on their **ability to provide spiritual leadership**. The tribe of **Levi** would be **scattered among the various tribes** in order to **serve as teachers** throughout the country:

*Devarim 33:8 And of Levi he said: "Let Your Thummim and Your Urim be with Your holy one, Whom You tested at Massah, And with whom You contended at the waters of Meribah,<sup>9</sup> Who says of his father and mother, 'I have not seen them'; Nor did he acknowledge his brothers, Or know his own children; For they have observed Your word And kept Your covenant.<sup>10</sup> They shall teach Jacob Your judgments, And Israel Your Torah. They shall put incense before You, and a whole burnt sacrifice on Your altar.<sup>11</sup> Bless his substance, אלהים, And accept the work of his hands; Strike the loins of those who rise against him, And of those who hate him, that they rise not again."*

**Verse 9** is referring to the **golden calf incident in Shemot/Exodus 32**. **Without regard for family ties, the Levites slew those who worshipped the golden calf:**

*Shemot/Exodus 32:26 then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, "Whoever is on אלהים's side -- come to me." And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him.<sup>27</sup> And he said to them, "Thus says אלהים Elohim of Israel: 'Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.' "<sup>28</sup> So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day.<sup>29</sup> Then Moses said, "Consecrate yourselves today to אלהים, that He may bestow on you a blessing this day, for every man has opposed his son and his brother."*

**Yeshua** seems to be addressing this kind of **loyalty** in the book of **Luke**:

*Luke 14:25 Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them,<sup>26</sup> "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.*

“**Hate**” is an **intense word** and probably makes you squirm a bit, but its **meaning is different** than our **usual interpretation**. It is used in this verse in a **comparative sense**, where **your loyalty to Yeshua** should make **everything else pale in comparison**. If your **parents, wife, or children insist** that you have **nothing to do with your Master**, then you must **disregard their wishes (not them)**. It is **not an excuse for walking away from family responsibilities**, but rather **remaining faithful to the One who has called you**.

Next is the  **blessing over Benjamin**:

*Devarim 33:12 Of Benjamin he said: "The beloved of אלהים shall dwell in safety by Him, Who shelters him all the day long; And he shall dwell between His shoulders."*

**Benjamin** was the only one of the 12 who was **actually born in the land of Israel**. The **Temple in Jerusalem** would later be **located in Benjamin's territory**.

We will stop here with the tribes, except to mention the **absence of the tribe of Simeon**. We have discussed **Simeon's troubles** before. Remember **Jacob's negative deathbed blessing** over his sons **Simeon and Levi** because of the **slaughter of the men of Shechem**:

*Bereshith/Genesis 49:5 "Simeon and Levi are brothers; Instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place. <sup>6</sup> Let not my soul enter their council; Let not my honor be united to their assembly; For in their anger they slew a man, And in their self-will they hamstrung an ox. <sup>7</sup> Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.*

**Simeon and Levi** are both the recipients of what reads as more of a **curse** than a **blessing**, but **Levi**, as mentioned previously, **redeemed himself** after the **golden calf incident**. Both tribes were **“scattered” in Israel** as verse 6 indicates. **Levi did not receive any tribal territory**, but they were **rewarded for their faithfulness in standing by Moses** after the **golden calf**:

*Devarim 18:1 "The priests, the Levites -- all the tribe of Levi -- shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel; they shall eat the offerings of אלהים made by fire, and His portion. <sup>2</sup> "Therefore they shall have no inheritance among their brethren אלהים is their inheritance, as He said to them.*

But the tribe of **Simeon**, however, **continued** to make **mistakes**. They **suffered** as a result of **one of their leaders** who took a **Midianite woman** into the **tabernacle to have sex with her** (Bemidbar/Numbers 25:6-14). A **resultant plague killed many** from their tribe as **indicated by a census in Bemidbar 26**. So...as we follow **Simeon through the Scriptures**, they will end up with **a circle of territory completely surrounded by Judah**. Eventually they were **absorbed by Judah** and pretty much **vanished as an identifiable tribe**.

Now I would like to **quote** several paragraphs from **Thomas Bradford** concerning the **tribe of Simeon** (emphasis mine):

“Here is what I find interesting: we have Moses’ last words in Deuteronomy 33 as spoken to the 12 tribes, but **one of the tribes (Simeon)** had been **cursed** and so is left out, **leaving 11 tribes**. It has always been noticed that just as there were **12 original tribes of Israel**, there were the **12 original disciples of Jesus**. One of these disciples was an **infamous man** named **Judas Iscariot**. There is some argument over what **“Iscariot”** means; some say it is referring to a **geographical region called K’riot**. Others say it is a play on the word **“Sicarri”**. Recall that **Judas was a fundamentalist militant** who was trying to foment **another Jewish rebellion against its oppressor, Rome**. **Judas’ actions** show just how **radical** he was **in turning in Yeshua** when **he decided that Yeshua was not going to be the Savior of Israel** Judas had **hoped for**, because **Jesus simply was not a military leader with insurrection on His mind**.

**Judas was a Zealot; Zealot** was the name of a **Jewish political party**. They might be compared with **Zionists today; people who feel that only Jews should occupy and/or govern the Holy Lands**. One faction of the Zealot party was called the **Sicarri**; these men were **out and out assassins** who **tried to enforce their brand of Judaism and patriotism on everyone else by intimidation...**

**Where did Judas come from, and who was his family?** **Most** of the other **disciples** were **Galileans**, but **not much is known about Judas**; yet we do find a very tantalizing piece of **information in John 13:26**. Yeshua answered, **“It’s the one to whom I give this piece of**

matzah after I dip it in the dish.” So he dipped the piece of matzah and gave it to **Y’hudah Ben-Shim’on (Judas son of Simeon)** from K’riot.

What makes this tantalizing is that we find that **Judas is the son of Simon, or as here in the CJB, Shim’on.** Here’s the thing: **Simon, Shim’on, and Simeon (as in the tribe of Simeon) are all the same Hebrew name,** just transliterated into **variant English spellings.** It was the **norm** in the Bible era to **identify a person by his tribe,** so a Hebrew with the **family name of Shim’on** was usually **attached by heritage to the tribe of Shim’on, Simeon.** You **wouldn’t,** for example, **name a person Levi** if they were of the **tribe of Ephraim, or Manasseh** if they were from **Dan.**

So almost certainly **Judas was from the tribe of Simeon,** long ago **absorbed into the Judah tribe, but still remembering its family heritage by use of the family name Simeon.**

Ok, with that background, watch this: **Moses was giving his final words to the 12 tribes only hours before his death.** And **in his final words** (that amounts to a series of individual prophetic blessings) **Moses mysteriously leaves out Simeon** who had been given a **cursed prophetic future by Jacob.** So the **blessing of Moses was only upon 11 of the 12 tribes.** We **fast-forward 13 centuries** to the time of **Yeshua.** The **night before He is to die,** Jesus is giving His **final words to His disciples, by means of offering blessings** at the Passover table. All **12 disciples are there, but one, Judas, disappears** and fetches the Temple Guard who arrests Jesus and turns him over to the Romans to be tried and killed. **Judas** who is from the tribe of **Simeon** (as his family name implies) is **cursed by his act** then commits suicide, and **now there are 11 disciples.**

Knowing the power of patterns, it is difficult for me not to see the **prophetic pattern** established in the **blessing of Moses over the 12 tribes** carried forward into the **blessings of Jesus over the 12 disciples.** The circumstances are eerily familiar, **the fact that Moses and Jesus were both blessing 12 is the same,** that it was **immediately before their deaths that is the same,** that **one of the 12 was removed is the same,** and that **the one who was removed is associated with the Simeon tribe, the cursed tribe is the same.”** (end of quote)

Now to move on, Jewish commentator **Mordekhai Sabato** points out **two words in Devarim 33:27-28** which **detail the expulsion of the enemy and Israel’s return to reside in the land:**

*Devarim 33:27 The Elohim of old is your refuge, And underneath are the everlasting arms; He will cast out (וַיִּגְרֹשׁ) the enemy from before you, And will say, 'Destroy!' <sup>28</sup> Then Israel shall dwell (וַיֵּשְׁבֶן) in safety, The fountain of Jacob alone, In a land of grain and new wine; His heavens shall also drop dew.*

- וַיִּגְרֹשׁ - He will cast out
- וַיֵּשְׁבֶן - He shall dwell

The **combination of these verbs appears in only one other location** in the **Torah**:

*Bereshith/Genesis 3:24 So He drove out (שׁוּטֵף) the man; and He caused to dwell (יִשְׁכֵּן) cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.*

The **location** of these **two verbs**, in these **two circumstances**, is not **coincidental**. The **Torah** is making an **association** between the **banishment of Adam from the Garden (beginning of the Torah)** and **Israel returning to the land to settle (end of the Torah)**. Thus we see the **Almighty's plan for restoring mankind after his exile**. The **inheritance of the land closes the circle** that began **when man was expelled from the Garden of Eden**.

Obviously, **Israel is not yet dwelling in the land in perfect safety, in a Garden of Eden-like existence**. But we see the **patterns** described in **Devarim 33:27-28** and **Bereshith 3:24** **reoccurring in Revelation**. We see our **Deliverer** using that **sword that protected the garden**, to **cast out the enemy**:

*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...<sup>13</sup> He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of Elohim.<sup>14</sup> And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.<sup>15</sup> Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations...*

**Jeremiah** gives us a picture of what it will be like **when the tribes return to the land**. Compare some of the **words** with **Devarim 33:28**:

*Jeremiah 31:11 For יְהוָה has redeemed Jacob, And ransomed him from the hand of one stronger than he.<sup>12</sup> Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, Streaming to the goodness of יְהוָה -- For wheat and new wine and oil, For the young of the flock and the herd; Their souls shall be like a well-watered garden, And they shall sorrow no more at all.<sup>13</sup> "Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, And the young men and the old, together; For I will turn their mourning to joy, Will comfort them, And make them rejoice rather than sorrow.<sup>14</sup> I will satiate the soul of the priests with abundance, And My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, says יְהוָה."*

**Isaiah** mentions the **transformation back to an Eden-like existence**:

*Isaiah 51:3 For יְהוָה will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, And her desert like the garden of יְהוָה; Joy and gladness will be found in it, Thanksgiving and the voice of melody.*

**After the 1,000 year millennium**, we see the **final transformation**. The **Tree of Life** from the **Garden of Eden** once more enters into the picture. And **HalleluYAH** there is **no more curse!**

*Revelation 22:1 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of Elohim and of the Lamb.<sup>2</sup> In the middle of its street, and on either side of*

*the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.<sup>3</sup> And **there shall be no more curse**, but the throne of Elohim and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.*

Now it might seem like we should end there, but let's look at just **“one more thing”**:

*Devarim 34:1 Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is across from Jericho. And **יהוה** showed him all the land of Gilead as far as Dan,<sup>2</sup> all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea (הַיָּם הַאַחֲרֹן),*

Moses saw a **panorama of Israel's future territory from Mount Nebo**. Some parts of the land are **not viewable from this mountain**. The verse actually tells us that **יהוה** showed him, thereby giving him a **perspective that otherwise would have been impossible**. So since **יהוה** was giving him eyes to see, which can also imply a **spiritual vision**, what else might Moses have **actually perceived**? There is an interesting phrase in **Devarim 34:2**:

the western sea - הַיָּם הַאַחֲרֹן (hayam ha'acharon)

That phrase can also be interpreted – **the last day** (see **Nehemiah 8:18**). Insert that interpretation back into the verse and you see that **יהוה** showed him all the land...**as far as the last day**. Hmm...what a vision for Moses! To see the conquest and the ultimate victory of the Messiah – a Messiah who would walk the Promised Land, die and resurrect from the dead. To see the children of Israel return to their land of paradise. To borrow a phrase from **Passover...dayeinu** – it would have been enough.

*Devarim 34:5 So Moses the servant of יהוה died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of יהוה.*

It is no surprise to us that Moses is called the **“servant of יהוה”**. Yet it may be a **surprise to you** that this is the **very first time in the Torah** that he is given this title. The word for servant literally means **“slave”**. Moses was designated to be the property of His Master with **no identity of his own**. He lived his life devoted to the one he loved. It was most likely Joshua (Yeshua type) who penned these final words of the Torah. It was the **highest possible compliment** that could have been paid to Moses to call him a servant of יהוה. The same words were said about Yeshua:

*Philippians 2:6 who, being in the form of Yah, did not consider it robbery to be equal with Elohim,<sup>7</sup> but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.<sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.<sup>9</sup> Therefore Yah also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,<sup>10</sup> that at the name of Yeshua every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,<sup>11</sup> and that every tongue should confess that Yeshua the Messiah is Adonai, to the glory of Yah the Father.*

**Moses was not sick or weak when he died:**

*Devarim 34:7 Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished.*

Yet it was part of the **plan** that **Moses would have to die** before Israel could enter the Promised Land. **Devarim 18:15** promised **another prophet like Moses**:

*Devarim 18:15 "וְהָיָה" your Elohim will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear,*

**This Prophet**, who is our **Adonai and Messiah Yeshua**, also had to suffer **death** before His people would be able to enter the **Promised Land** and claim the promises.

The **first letter of the Torah** is a **ב** (bet). It is a **picture of a “house”**. The **last word of the Torah** is **יִשְׂרָאֵל** (Israel). A **house** is a Hebraic picture of a **family**. **Israel** is that **bride chosen** to dwell in **His house**. That is the **story of Torah**. And there's even more. The **first and last letters of the Torah** spell **לב** (lev). That means **heart**. **Torah is the revelation of the heart of the Father**. And for some unknown reason, He has chosen **us** to **dwell in His House**. Oh, let our own hearts respond to that **undeserved and incredible gift of love!**

Shabbat Shalom!

*Ardelle*

**Be strong! Be strong! And may we be strengthened!**

חֹזֵק חֹזֵק וְנִתְחַזַּק