



## Parshas V'zos Habracha

For 5 October 1996/22 Tishrei 5757 in Israel  
6 October 1996/23 Tishrei 5757 Outside Israel

### Overview

**T**he Torah draws to its close with *V'zos Habracha*, which is the only Parsha in the Torah not read specifically on a Shabbos. Rather, *V'zos Habracha* is read on *Shmini Atzeres/Simchas Torah*, when everyone in the synagogue gets called up to the Torah for an *aliyah* – even boys who are not yet Bar Mitzvah. The Parsha is repeated until everyone has received an *aliyah*. Moshe continues the tradition of Yaakov by blessing the Tribes of Yisrael before his death. Similar to the blessings bestowed by Yaakov, these blessings are also a combination of the description of each Tribe's essence, together with a definition of its role within the nation of Israel. The only Tribe that does not receive a blessing is Shimon, because they were central to the mass immorality of worshipping the idol *ba'al pe'or*. Another explanation is that this Tribe's population was small and scattered throughout the south of the Land of Israel, and would therefore receive blessings together with the host Tribe amongst whom they would live; i.e., Yehuda. Moshe's last words to his beloved people are of reassurance that Hashem will more than recompense His people for all of the suffering they will endure. Moshe ascends the mountain and Hashem shows him prophetically all that will happen to *Eretz Yisrael* in the future, both in tranquillity and in times of oppression. Hashem also shows him all that will happen to the Jewish People until the time of the Resurrection. Moshe dies there by means of the "Divine Kiss." To this day, no one knows the place of his burial, in order that his grave should not become a shrine for those who wish to make a prophet into a god. Of all the prophets, Moshe was unique in his being able to speak to Hashem whenever he wanted. His centrality and stature are not a product of the Jewish People's "blind faith," but are based on events that were witnessed by an entire nation – at the Red Sea, at Mount Sinai and constantly during 40 years of journeying through the desert.

### Insights

#### WHAT GOES AROUND

**"And this is the blessing that Moshe, the man of G-d, blessed the children of Yisrael" (33:1)**

The perfect circle. Complete. The circle unites the beginning and the end. There is no beginning to a circle nor no end. If you take one point and call it its beginning, when you get to the end you will find yourself back where you started.

On the *Simchas Torah*, we finish reading the Torah and immediately start again from the beginning.

In our joy at having completed the Torah, we dance with it in a circle. *Specifically* in a circle. The Torah is endless. When we reach its end, we are already back at its beginning.

The final words of the Torah are: "*In the eyes of all Yisrael.*" And its first words: "*In the beginning.*" The circle dance of *Simchas Torah* joins the end to the beginning, that "*the eyes of all Yisrael*" should be fixed on the "*beginning.*"

*Adapted from Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin*

#### SPENDING AND SAVING

**"The Torah that Moshe commanded us is the heritage of the Congregation of Yaakov" (33:4)**

There is a great difference between an *inheritance* and a *heritage*.

An inheritance is the sole possession of the one who inherits it – it is his to do with as he pleases – to consume, to invest or to squander. However, a heritage must be cherished and preserved and passed on to the next generation intact.

The Torah is our heritage, *not* our inheritance. We must pass it on to the next generation as we found it, and not abridged, altered or adulterated.

*Heard from Rabbi Nachman Bulman*

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## SEEING AND BELIEVING

### "...before the eyes of all Yisrael." (34:12)

These are the final words of the Torah. The entire Jewish People were witnesses to all the miracles that were wrought through Moshe *Rabbeinu*. With their own eyes they saw, and "seeing is believing."

In other words, their *believing* came from *seeing*; their faith in Moshe came from daily contact with miracles. These miracles were witnessed not by a small group who then convinced others through charisma or coercion. Rather, the entire nation — *the eyes of all Yisrael* — were witnesses to the miracles. They *all saw* the dividing of the Red Sea, The Voice at Sinai, and the *mon* (manna).

*Mon* was the miraculous food that the Jewish People ate every day for 40 years. Forty years, day-in and day-out; they saw it with enough regularity for it to have become mundane...

This was the seeing that founded the rock-like faithfulness of the Jewish People throughout the long night of exile. With their own eyes they saw that Moshe, the prophet of Hashem, was authentic — and his Torah, the Torah of the Living G-d was Truth.

*Based on the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*

## Haftorah for Shmini Atzeres/Simchas Torah Yehoshua 1:1

Immediately we finish reading the Torah, we start again "In the beginning of Hashem creating the heavens and the earth..." In this way we remind ourselves that immersing ourselves in the Truths of the Torah is an eternal task, with neither beginning nor end. The Haftorah says "And Hashem spoke to Yehoshua bin Nun, Moshe's lieutenant saying "Moshe my servant is dead. You arise and cross over the Jordan..." to remind us that the work of the Torah is not that of a human being, not even the highest, but it is Hashem's work that began with the revelation on Sinai, and its accomplishment is not dependent on the personality and life of any man, however great and sublime he may be.

*Adapted from Dr. Mendel Hirsch, based on the words of his father, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch*

Due to the Holiday of Succos and the completion of the cycle of reading the Torah, the order of the Torah readings is slightly more complicated than normal. The chart below will hopefully help clarify matters.

- ✧ On the Shabbos of the first day of Succos (28 Sept. 1996), we read Shemos 33:12-34:26. This is part of Parshas Ki Sisa.
- ✧ On the following Shabbos, we read one of the following:
  - ✧ **In Israel**, we read Parshas V'zos Habracha and the first few verses of Bereishis (1:1-2:3) on Shemini Atzeres/Simchas Torah, on both the evening of the 4th and the morning of the 5th of October 1996.
  - ✧ **Outside of Israel**, we read Devarim 14:22-16:17 on Shemini Atzeres (5 October 1996). This is part of Parshas Re'eh. On Simchas Torah we read V'zos Habracha and the first few verses of Bereishis (1:1-2:3) on both the evening of the 5th and the morning of the 6th of October 1996.
- ✧ On Shabbos, 12 October 1996, we read the entire Parshas Bereishis. Look for *OhrNet* on this Parsha next week.

Most *Chumashim* and *Siddurim* list these special readings and the special accompanying *Maftir* and *Haftorah* portions.

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*For the week ending 5 October 1996/22 Tishrei 5757 in Israel,*

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