

וזאת הברכה! Vezot Ha-Berakhah

DeVASH



שְׂמֵחַת תּוֹרָה תִּשָּׁפֵיז

Simhat Torah, October 4, 2026



קה וּפְרָשָׁה • In This Week's Parashah

- Moshe gives a בְּרָכָה (berakhah, blessing) to each שֵׁבֶט (shevet, tribe) of Benei Yisrael. **This DeVash features a commentary for each berakhah!**
- Moshe teaches that the Torah is an inheritance that belongs to all of Benei Yisrael. The last thing he says to the people is: אֲשֶׁרִידָּהּ יִשְׂרָאֵל (ashrekha Yisrael, you are so fortunate, Israel)! This means that we should be really happy about our special relationship with God.
- Moshe climbs up a mountain called Har Nevo. God shows him Eretz Canaan and says that this is the land promised to Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaakov.
- Moshe dies and God buries him on the mountain. Nobody knows where this burial place is.
- Benei Yisrael cry and mourn Moshe's death for 30 days. Yehoshua takes over as leader of Benei Yisrael, and they listen to him because Moshe said to.
- The final pesukim of the Torah say that there never was another נָבִיא (navi, prophet) like Moshe, who knew God "face to face" and performed amazing miracles before all of Benei Yisrael.





שאלות השבוע • Parashah Scavenger Hunt

The aliyot here are divided up as they often appear in a printed humash, but the parashah is divided differently when we read it on Simhat Torah, both in the Diaspora and in Israel. In the Diaspora, there are always only five aliyot, and then an extra one is added for the person finishing the Torah. In Israel, sometimes Simhat Torah falls on Shabbat (like this year), and then there are seven aliyot *plus* an additional one for finishing the Torah.

aliyot:

- 1) Devarim 33:1 to 33:7
- 2) 33:8 to 33:12
- 3) 33:13 to 33:17
- 4) 33:18 to 33:21
- 5) 33:22 to 33:26
- 6) 33:27 to 33:29
- 7) 34:1 to 34:12

haftarah: Yehoshua 1:1 to 1:18

Good luck!

1 When will Yeshurun (Israel) have a king?

2 Who does God protect "all day long"?

3 Which two kinds of animals is Yosef compared to?

4 Who is in tents?

5 Naftali is blessed with inheriting land in which directions?

6 What weapons appear in this aliyah?

7 Where exactly was Moshe buried?

8 Which two tribes are compared to a lion?

9 How was Moshe's prophecy unique?

10 **From the haftarah:** When should Yehoshua recite the Torah?

*
Look for the answers on page 9!



Moshe begins his berakhot for the שְׁבִטִים (shevatim, tribes) with Yaakov's firstborn, Reuven:

Devarim 33:6

Let Reuven live, and not die

דברים לג:

יְחִי רְאוּבֵן וְאֵל לָמָּת

What a strange berakhah! What does "not die" mean? Doesn't everyone die eventually?

Targum Onkelos (Bavel, 1,500 years ago)

Let Reuven live his life in this world and then not die a second time in the world to come.

תרגום אונקלוס

יְחִי רְאוּבֵן בְּחַיֵּי עֲלָמָא וּמוֹתָא תְּבִינָא
לֹא לָמָּת

According to Onkelos, this berakhah is for Reuven to live his life in this world, and then to be in עוֹלָם הַבָּא (olam haba, the world to come), where the righteous live forever.

- What does it mean to live forever in the world to come? What does that teach us about life in this world? What's the connection between them?
- Reuven had made many bad mistakes in his past. Why would this be an important berakhah for him to have?



Bekhor Shor (France, 900 years ago)

"Let Reuven live and not die" – when they cross the Jordan River before the rest of Benei Yisrael to lead them in battle.

"And not die" – none of them should die in the war.

בכור שור

"יְחִי רְאוּבֵן וְאֵל לָמָּת" – כְּשִׁיעֲבֹר אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּי לִפְנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲלוּץ לְמִלְחָמָה (במדבר לב:כה-כז).

"וְאֵל לָמָּת" – בְּמִלְחָמָה אֶחָד מֵהֶם.

In Bemidbar 32:25, the shevet of Reuven promised to lead Benei Yisrael into battle in exchange for being allowed to live just outside the Land of Israel afterward. The Bekhor Shor believes that this berakhah is to protect them in these battles.

- ♦ Why does leading Benei Yisrael in battle deserve a berakhah? What's risky or dangerous about being the first one into battle?
- ♦ One of these answers sees Moshe's berakhah as being physical, and one sees it as spiritual. Which is which? As you read the many berakhot in the parashah, can you think of both physical and spiritual ways of interpreting them?

יהודה • Yehudah

Devarim 33:7

And this was for Yehudah:

Hear, O God, the voice of Yehudah
and return him to his people.

דברים לג:ז

וְזֹאת לְיְהוּדָה וַיֹּאמֶר
שְׁמַע ה' קוֹל יְהוּדָה
וְאַל עֲמוֹ תִּבְלֶאָנּוּ

In Vezot Ha-Berakhah, you'll notice that one שבט (shevet, tribe) is missing from Moshe's berakhot. Can you figure out which one? (Spoiler alert: It's Shimon!)

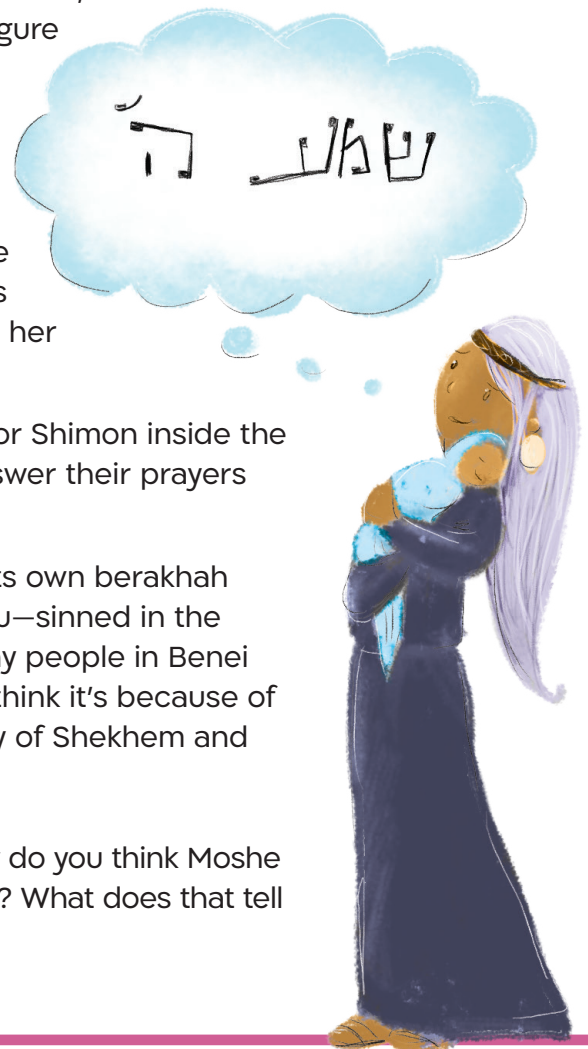
A midrash (Sifrei Devarim 348) teaches that Moshe actually included Shimon here, in the blessing for Yehudah, by using the word שְׁמַע (shema, hear).

Shimon's name is connected to this word; when he was born, his mother, Leah, explained that she was naming him Shimon because God "shama (heard)" her prayers (Bereshit 29:33).

According to the midrash, Moshe hid a berakhah for Shimon inside the berakhah for Yehudah, asking God to hear and answer their prayers any time they cry out for help.

Rashi suggests that Moshe didn't give this shevet its own berakhah because a leader of shevet Shimon—Zimri ben Salu—sinned in the wilderness, and this led to a plague that killed many people in Benei Yisrael (Bemidbar 25). The Daat Zekeinim, though, think it's because of something Shimon himself did by attacking the city of Shekhem and killing many people there (Bereishit 34:25).

- ♦ If Shimon didn't deserve their own berakhah, why do you think Moshe tried to include them in the berakhah of Yehudah? What does that tell us about Moshe's attitude toward Shimon?



לוי • Levi

Devarim 33:8

Your Tummim and your Urim for a person of kindness

דברים לג:ח

תִּמְמִיד וְאוּרִיד לְאִישׁ חֲסִידָה

The **אורים ותמים** (urim ve-tummim) were part of the **חֹשֶׁן** (hoshen, breastplate) that was worn by the **כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל** (kohen gadol, high priest). It seems the urim ve-tummim were used to communicate with God (like in Bemidbar 27:21). Kohanim come from shevet Levi, so it makes sense that this special piece of the **בְּגָדֵי כְהֻנָּה** (bigdei kehunah, priestly clothing) appear in Levi's berakhah.

But what's the connection between the urim ve-tummim and **חֶסֶד** (hesed, kindness)?



Samson Raphael Hirsch (Germany, 200 years ago)

Because Levi is a man of kindness, God gave him the urim ve-tummim.

- Why does doing hesed make you worthy of communicating with God and having the bigdei kehunah in your shevet? What does that tell us about the importance of hesed?

בנימין • Binyamin



Devarim 33:12 describes Binyamin as a **יְדִיד** (yedid, beloved) of God. What does this mean? Why does Binyamin get described this way?

Bzzzz
A lot of midrashim are bugged by something unusual in the Torah text

A midrash (Sifrei Devarim 352:5) says that "six were called yedidim." They are:

- | | |
|-------------|------------------------|
| 1) God | 4) Benei Yisrael |
| 2) Binyamin | 5) The Beit Ha-Mikdash |
| 3) Shlomo | 6) Avraham |

The midrash explains:



יְבֹא יָדִיד וַיְבַנֶּה בֵּית יָדִיד לְיָדִיד!

Let the **yedid** (Shlomo) come and build the **yedid** house (Beit Ha-Mikdash) for the **Yedid** (God)!

וַיְבֹאוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁנֵקְרָא יָדִידִים,
בְּנֵי אָב שְׁנֵקְרָא יָדִיד

And let Benei Yisrael who are called **yedidim**, the children of the person called **yedid** (Avraham)



וַיְבִנוּ בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ שְׁנֵקְרָא יָדִיד

build the Beit Ha-Mikdash which is called **yedid**

בְּחֵלֶק בְּנִימִן שְׁנֵקְרָא יָדִיד, לְקֹדֶשׁ
כְּרוֹךְ הוּא שְׁנֵקְרָא יָדִיד!

in the portion of Binyamin who is called **yedid**, for the Holy Blessed One who is called **Yedid**!



- ♦ Can you summarize how all the yedidim are connected to each other according to the midrash?
- ♦ What do the Beit Ha-Mikdash, the people who built it, the people who come there, the person they descend from, and the place where it's built all have to do with being loved by God? What does God have to do with being loved?
- ♦ What's special about having the Beit Ha-Mikdash in your property?

יִוֶּסֶף • Yosef

The shevet of Yosef (which includes both Menasheh and Efrayim) gets many berakhot. Most are connected to nature, like having rich land and crops. In addition, Moshe blesses Yosef with:

Devarim 33:16

The favor of the One Who dwells in the bush.

דברים לג:טז

וְרִצּוֹן שֶׁכֵּנִי סִנֵּה

"The One Who dwells in the bush" is a description of God, Whose first revelation to Moshe took place in a burning bush (Shemot 3:4).

You might wonder: Why did God speak to Moshe from a bush?

A midrash explains that bushes are low to the ground. They don't seem very important. God's revelation in this place shows that God's presence is absolutely everywhere, even in the most low places where you might least expect it. (Shemot Rabbah 2:9)



- ♦ What does this have to do with Yosef? Remember, there was a time when Yosef was thrown into a pit, then sold into slavery, and finally locked in prison. How might it be a berakhah for Yosef to know the idea of God being everywhere, even in low places?
- ♦ How do you connect to the idea of God "dwelling in a bush"? How can this idea help you in your life?

זְבוּלֹן וַיִּסָּכָר • Zevulun and Yissakhar

Devarim 33:18

And to Zevulun he said: Rejoice, Zevulun, on your journeys, and Yissakhar, in your tents.

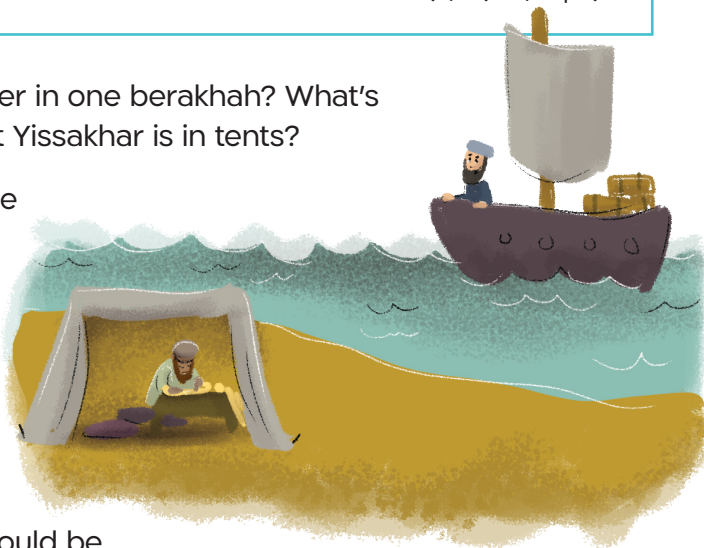
דברים לג:יח

וְלִזְבוּלֹן אָמַר שִׂמְחָה זְבוּלֹן בְּצִאָתָהּ
וַיִּשָּׁכֶר בְּאֹהֲלָיָהּ:

Why are Zevulun and Yissakhar paired together in one berakhah? What's Zevulun's journey, and what does it mean that Yissakhar is in tents?

Rashi (based on a midrash) explains that these two tribes were partners. Zevulun would go on journeys out to sea to do business, and Yissakhar would stay home and study Torah in their tents. Zevulun would share the money they earned with Yissakhar, and in exchange Yissakhar's reward for learning Torah would be shared with Zevulun.

The berakhah here is that this partnership should be successful, and that each shevet should be happy with its task!



דְּבָרָה שֶׁל דִּיּוּן • One-Minute Debate

Debate: Zevulun and Yisachar made a good deal.

How to play:

- ◆ Here are some arguments to get you started, but try to come up with your own. Then debate someone!
- ◆ For a true one-minute debate, give each side 30 seconds to make its best case.

Agree!

- ◆ Yissakhar could really develop their learning skills because they didn't have to worry about earning a living. They must have become expert Torah learners.
- ◆ Not everyone is cut out for every job or activity. It's best to focus on what you're good at and partner with others for the things you're not.



Disagree!

- ◆ What if you're part of Zevulun, but you really want to learn Torah all day? And what if you're part of Yissakhar, and you really want to go on a sea adventure?
- ◆ Maybe this deal worked for them, but if it was such a good deal why didn't the other shevatim do it?



Devarim 33:20

And of Gad he said:
Blessed be the One who **enlarges** Gad!
He is poised like a lion
To tear off arm and scalp.

דברים לג:

וּלְגַד אָמַר
בָּרוּךְ מַרְחִיב גָּד
כְּלָבִיא שָׁכֵן וְטָרַף זְרוּעַ
אֵף קִדְקֵד:

= הֶרְחָבָה
Expansion
(like when
someone
builds an
addition to
their house)
(harhavah)

לְהַרְחִיב (שָׁרַשׁ ר.ח.ב.)

- ◆ To expand or widen
- ◆ To go into detail (leharhiv)

= רְחוּב
Street
(rehov)

= מִדְרְחוּב
A pedestrian-
only street
(usually in a
shopping area)
(midrehov)

= רָחֵב
Wide (rahav)

= רְחָבָה
Square or plaza
(rehavah)

= מִשְׁפָּחָה מְרֻחֶבֶת
Extended family
(mishpahah murhevet)

Find the Word!

In Sefer Bereishit, Yitzhak's shepherds and Gerar's shepherds fight over some water wells. Yitzhak's shepherds dig up one well, and that well gets a name that is related to our שָׁרֵשׁ (shoresh, root). Later, the name of that well became the name of a city in Israel! Can you find our shoresh twice in Bereishit 26:22?

Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. When the heads of the nation gather together with the שְׁבָטִים (shevatim, tribes) of Israel (33:5)
2. Binyamin (33:12)
3. שׁוֹר (shor, ox); רֵאִים (re'eim, oryx) (33:17)
4. Yissakhar (33:18)
5. West and south (33:23)
6. Sword and shield (33:29)
7. Nobody knows! (34:6)
8. Gad (33:20) and Dan (33:22) (In Yaakov's blessings to his children in Parashat Vayehi, Yehudah is compared to a lion, see Bereishit 49:9)
9. It was פָּנִים אֶל פָּנִים (panim el panim, face to face) (34:10)
10. Day and night (Yehoshua 1:8)



דן • Dan

Moshe calls the tribe of Dan a גִּיּוֹר אֲרִיָּה (gur aryeh, lion cub).

Back in Parashat Vayehi, when Yaakov was blessing his children, Yaakov called Yehudah a gur aryeh (Bereishit 29:9)!

A midrash thinks these two mentions of lion cubs creates a connection between these two berakhot. It suggests that the Torah is telling us that the future מָשִׁיחַ (mashiah, king of Israel) will be descended from these two tribes; the mashiah will have one parent from Yehudah and one from Dan (Midrash Aggadah Buber Bereishit 49:9).



- ♦ Why would a young lion symbolize the future leader of the Jewish people? What's special about a lion? And why not an adult lion?
- ♦ Are there other animals that can symbolize leadership? How so?
- ♦ Yehudah played a major role in the story of the shevatim, but Dan did not. What can we learn from the fact that the mashiah will come from both of them? What does this teach us about where leaders can come from?

נַפְתָּלִי • Naftali

Devarim 33:23

And of Naftali he said:
Naftali is full of ratzon and full of God's blessing.

דברים לג:כג

וּלְנַפְתָּלִי אָמַר
נַפְתָּלִי שָׂבַע רָצוֹן וּמָלֵא בְרָכָת ה'

"Ratzon" is a word that can mean a few different things: desire, will, or favor. What does it mean that Naftali is "full of ratzon"? How does this connect to the other fullness in the pasuk, being "full of God's blessing"?

Netziv (Eastern Europe, 150 years ago)

There are two types of wealth:

- 1) Having a lot of money and property as the word is commonly used.
- 2) Being satisfied with what you have, in the way Hazal use it: "Who is rich? One who is satisfied with what they have" (Pirkei Avot 4:1).

... The tribe of Naftali was rich in both these ways. They were "full of ratzon" by being happy with what they had, and "full of God's blessing" by being actually rich.

Some people are never satisfied with the things they have in life. According to the Netziv, shevet Naftali was blessed with the ability to recognize and appreciate their blessings.

- ◆ What's better: having a lot of wealth but never being satisfied, or having very little but being very satisfied?
- ◆ What is Naftali's berakhah teaching us about wealth and happiness?

נצי"ב

הִנֵּה שְׁנֵי אוֹפָנִים בְּעֲשִׂירוֹת: א', עֲשִׂיר הַיָּדוּעַ בְּלִשׁוֹן הָעוֹלָם שֶׁיֵּשׁ לוֹ הוֹן וְעֹשֶׁר בְּבִיתוֹ. הִב', הוּא בְּלִשׁוֹן חֲכָמִים 'אֵיזָהוּ עֲשִׂיר – הַשְׂמִיחַ בְּחֻלְקוֹ' (אֲבוֹת ד':א).

...וְהִנֵּה, נִפְתָּלִי עֲשִׂיר בְּשְׁנֵי הָאוֹפָנִים, הוּא שֶׁבַע רָצוֹן – הִלְבֵּנו שְׂמִיחַ בְּחֻלְקוֹ, וְגַם יִמְלֵא בִּרְכַּת ה' – עֲשִׂיר כְּמִשְׁמְעוֹ.



Ramban (Spain, 800 years ago)

Naftali is full of ratzon – This is connected to God, meaning: Naftali is full of desire for God and God's blessing... God was also part of it.

רמב"ן

נִפְתָּלִי שֶׁבַע רָצוֹן – וְהִנָּכּוֹן שֶׁהוּא נִמְשָׁךְ אֶל הָשֵׁם הַנִּכְבָּד לֵאמֹר שֶׁבַע יִמְלֵא רָצוֹן הָשֵׁם הַנִּכְבָּד וּבִרְכָּתוֹ... אֲפִלּוּ הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא בְּכֻלּוֹ.

Ramban understands ratzon as desire for God. Naftali's blessing is to want to be close to God.

- ◆ Why is it a berakhah to want to be close to God?
- ◆ Another way to read this Ramban is that Naftali always wanted what God wanted. What would be the berakhah in that?
- ◆ Do the Netziv and the Ramban contradict each other, or could both be correct? How so?

Here's part of the berakhah that Asher gets.

Devarim 33:24

May he be the favorite of his brothers
May he dip his foot in oil

דברים לג:כד

יְהִי רְצוּי אָחִיו
וְטָבַל בְּשֶׁמֶן רַגְלוֹ

The Tzeror Ha-Mor (Spain, 500 years ago) points out that Asher wasn't the most oily shevet! Kings and כֹּהֲנִים (kohanim, priests), who come from Yehudah and Levi, get anointed with oil all the time. So why is oil connected with Asher here?

According to the Tzeror Ha-Mor, Asher's oil represents Torah. And that connects to being the "favorite of his brothers" because being kind and peaceful is the key to Torah:



Tzeror Ha-Mor (Spain, 500 years ago)

For he had the foundations of ethics more than any of his brothers... for he was the favorite of the brothers and would speak peacefully to everyone. And everything depends on peace... All of perfection (like the Torah) depends on peace.

צרור המור

שְׁהֵיָה לֹא יְסוּד מוֹסָד מְכַל אָחִיו...
לְפִי שְׁהֵיָה רְצוּי אָחִיו וְדִבַּר שְׁלוֹם
לְכָל זָרְעוֹ. וּבְשָׁלוֹם תְּלוּי הַכָּל...
וּבְשָׁלוֹם תְּלוּיִים כָּל הַשְּׁלֵמִיּוֹת.

- What does speaking peacefully have to do with being the favorite of the brothers?
- Why do all perfections depend on peace? (Notice how the Hebrew words for each - שְׁלוֹם (shalom) and שְׁלֵמוֹת (sheleimut) - share the same shresh!)
- Why would these qualities also make Asher worthy of being anointed with the oil of Torah?

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