

VeZot ha'Bracha
"And this is the blessing"
Deuteronomy 33:1–34:12
Joshua 1:1–18

The Baton Passes On

This Shabbat's readings mark the end of the Torah cycle. The scriptures we will read are maybe the most bittersweet of all the Torah. Moses finishes his message of Deuteronomy by speaking a blessing over the people he has led for the past forty years. I would imagine that as the words are coming to a close, each one becomes harder to speak than the last. He knows that in a very short time his life will end. Moses has run his race, but has been stopped just short of what he thought his finish line would be. He stands looking into a land he will never enter.

On the surface nothing seems fair. Moses deserves to go in. He made one mistake and it cost him dearly. The Hebrews made many mistakes, but they would soon be enjoying a land they did not deserve. Nothing seems to make sense here. Is there possibly something else to the message of Moses that makes it clearer? Let's consider it.

When we think of Moses, we think of Torah. In fact, it is called the Torah of Moses. Moses would pass the baton of Torah to a man whose name is Joshua. At least that is his English name. In Hebrew, his name would be very close to the name of Messiah, Yeshua. After the death of Moses, Joshua would receive orders to never allow the Torah of Moses to depart from him. He was to meditate on it day and night. He would also meet a man who was referred to as the Captain of The Army of Yah. I believe the scripture is very clear through the actions of Joshua that this man was indeed the Messiah, Yeshua. It would be after Joshua's acceptance of the challenge and revelation of this man that he indeed would enter into the Promised Land with the Hebrews. It would be as he continued in the orders and revelation that he would lead the Hebrews to possess what had been promised to them many years earlier.

So what is the message to us today? Could it be that Yah is telling us that Torah alone will not lead us into the fullness of Yah's promises? Could it be that simply going through Torah year after year will only bring us to the shore of our own Jordan, but never allow us to cross over? Could it be that we are being told through this account to, with a firm grasp of Torah in our heart, move on? We are to look for a person whose name is similar to the successor of Moses, who will lead us on? A man who not only is the Captain of the army of Yah, but in fact is the embodiment of the Torah?

The message that I see as I look at the complete account is this; Torah alone will not lead us into the fullness of His promises, nor will we ever be allowed to enter in without Torah. It will be as we firmly grasp the Living and the Written Torah, never allowing ourselves to lose focus of the two as one, that we will enter in.

As a final thought leading into our new Torah Cycle I would like to share a quote from Barry Phillips. Please read Psalm 40:7 first for the full meaning. “Torah reveals the Redeemer while in itself offering no redemption.” You may need some time to let that one soak in.