



**“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, ⁴⁶ and upon finding a single pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.
Mathew 13:45**

**Parashah 54: V’Zot HaBrachah (This is the blessing) 33:1–34:12
28th September 2018 – 19th Tishrei 5779**

Shabbat Shalom Talmadim, and welcome to this week’s final Parsha Pearl for reading of the Torah for 5778

Key Points

Blessings of Moses to the tribes
Moses ascends Mount Nebo
Moses dies aged 120 years old
Joshua becomes the new leader of Israel

This week we come to the end of the Torah cycle for 2018 -5778. We begin as if it were at the end of Moses life as he blesses Israel. The people are about to enter the land signifying the end of their journey in the wilderness. The surprising outcome is of course; Moses does not enter with them. As the people begin their new lives, so we begin the reading of the Torah cycle again. Before releasing the people into their destiny, Moses declares his blessings over them which echoes similar blessings given by Jacob to his son’s. We will look at these later in our study. As we conclude the study, we shall bid fair well to Moses in his one hundred and twentieth year, and we will also declare as did Israel, **34:¹⁰ Since that time there has not arisen in Isra’el a prophet like Moshe, whom Adonai knew face to face.**
¹¹ What signs and wonders Adonai sent him to perform in the land of Egypt upon Pharaoh, all his servants and all his land! ¹² What might was in his hand! What great terror he evoked before the eyes of all Isra’el!

Let us begin.

33 This is the blessing that Moshe, the man of God, spoke over the people of Isra’el before his death:

**² “Adonai came from Sinai;
from Se’ir he dawned on his people,
shone forth from Mount Pa’ran;
and with him were myriads of holy ones;
at his right hand
was a fiery law for them.**

**³ He truly loves the peoples —
all his holy ones are in your hand;
sitting at your feet,
they receive your instruction,**

**⁴ the *Torah* Moshe commanded us
as an inheritance for the community of Ya'akov.**

**⁵ Then a king arose in Yeshurun
when the leaders of the people were gathered,
all the tribes of Isra'el together.**

At first glance, we read this passage through the speaker's voice, Moses. But then in v4, we depart from it, Moses is the second person. What we are reading is a poetic prelude to the blessings. Jeshurun is also a poetic term for Israel. It means 'upright' and found in Numbers 23:10 and Isaiah 43:2, Deut 32:15.

In last weeks study, we read how Moses was instructed by YHVH to go up to Mount Nebo in the land of Moab. If we consider the geography for the moment, we must understand that from this viewpoint Moses would see all the allotted land.

32:48. ⁴⁸ That same day *Adonai* said to Moshe, ⁴⁹ "Go up into the 'Avarim Range, to Mount N'vo, in the land of Mo'av across from Yericho; and look out over the land of Kena'an, which I am giving the people of Isra'el as a possession.

This final passage also sees YHVH declare that Moses will not enter the land. The declaration of YHVH is quite startling because the tone is commanding. Moses does not have a choice. He has reached the end of his allotted lifespan. YHVH will not it seems, grant to him a day longer. The moment signifies to us that Moses has reached an appointed time, but let us not forget his successor Joshua.

Consider Moses' life for a moment. From the waters of the Nile, he was taken in a basket by Pharaoh's daughter adopting him as her son. He was brought up in Pharaoh's house as a Prince educated in the art of war and law. The call of YHVH upon him saw him exiled in another land for some 40 years until he was instructed to return to Egypt to deliver the Israelites from enslavement. 40 years of traveling with an unruly and stubborn people, he brings to them the written Torah and builds the tabernacle of the LORD. He becomes a King, leader and prophet, considered to be Israel's greatest, to the nation, and despite the little hiccup of the golden calf incident his son's Gershom and Eliezer and his brother Aaron are given the priesthood. It may also be because of this reason Moses, who was also a Levite, was not allotted any portion in the land.

Deut 32 tells us that YHVH was displeased with both Aaron and Moses for breaking faith with Him at the waters of Meribath – Kadesh. The reason within this narrative is not all clear. Whatever happened is not expounded upon. We can only surmise that Moses disobeyed YHVH and struck the rock instead of speaking to it. Thus, ignoring YHVH's command and disrespecting His authority. However, there must be something far more important to the event. Let us read what happened. Exodus 17 Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)

Exodus 17 1The whole community of the people of Isra'el left the Seen Desert, traveling in stages, as *Adonai* had ordered, and camped at Refidim; but there was no water for the people to drink. ²The people quarreled with Moshe, demanding, "Give us water to drink!" But Moshe replied, "Why pick a fight with me? Why are you testing *Adonai*?" ³ However, the people were thirsty for water there and grumbled against Moshe, "For what did you bring us up from Egypt? To kill us, our children and our livestock with thirst?"

⁴ Moshe cried out to *Adonai*, "What am I to do with these people? They're ready to stone me!" ⁵ *Adonai* answered Moshe, "Go on ahead of the people and bring with you the

leaders of Isra'el. **Take your staff in your hand, the one you used to strike the river; and go.** ⁶**I will stand in front of you there on the rock in Horev.** You are to strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so the people can drink." Moshe did this in the sight of the leaders of Isra'el. ⁷ The place was named Massah [testing] and M'rivah [quarreling] because of the quarreling of the people of Isra'el and because they tested *Adonai* by asking, "Is *Adonai* with us or not?"

Massah means 'testing.' and Meribah means 'quarreling.' In conjunction with the word Kadesh, we have what becomes a Holy quarrel. The clues are in the highlighted text.

⁶ **I will stand in front of you there on the rock in Horev.**

It tells us that YHVH was stood on the rock and thus Moses' action in striking the rock resulted in striking YHVH. By simply speaking to the rock, Moses would have shown faith because he was speaking to YHVH directly.

Before we get to the pearl of this study, I want us not to leave our moment with Moses the man too prematurely. Moses was a man who spoke with YHVH face to face on a regular basis. He was familiar with the Lord as a friend and as a Sovereign God. But why did YHVH choose to begin the Israelite nation with Abram and not Moses? Why does YHVH make the promise to Abram and not Moses? Why does YHVH change Abram's name and not Moses? Little account of personal conversations between YHVH and the patriarchs are given. From the book of Exodus onwards, we have been privy to the relationship between Moses and YHVH. Having witnessed all that Moses had to contend with, the reference to the breaking of faith with YHVH seems to bring an extraordinary response from YHVH. The action of YHVH can only be because of the level of Moses' calling.

Now let us approach the blessings of Moses to the tribes. As we read the blessing upon the tribes, we also notice that Moses is not recorded as giving his own son's any blessing at all. Let us also look at the blessings of Jacob to his son's in comparison. I don't want to present a full parallel comparison but only where we can find differences. In the Genesis account ch49, Jacob is to prophesy the future of the tribes. Judah and Joseph, including Ephraim and Manasseh, are protracted. In comparison, Moses blessing to Judah is only a couple of lines. Levi and Joseph receive the longest followed by the Gad, the tribal judges. Moses ends the blessing referring to Israel once again a Yeshurun (upright). In the midst of all these blessings, we come to one that can quickly miss. It is a significant and unusual one. It refers to the tribe of Asher.

34:⁴ Of Asher he said:

**"May Asher be most blessed of sons,
may he be the favorite among his brothers
and bathe his feet in oil.**

²⁵ May your bolts be of iron and bronze
and your strength last as long as you live

Why does Moses call Asher 'the most blessed of sons'?

Asher was the eighth son of Jacob. His mother was Zilpah, handmaid of Leah. His name means 'happy.' Rabbinic accounts differ in opinion to who Zilpah and her sister, Bilhar, were. The general opinion is that the sisters are the daughters of Laban, which make them the sisters of Leah and Rachel. Laban, Asher's grandfather, was a direct descendant of Abraham. Asher settled in Canaan and his tribe was allotted the area north on the western coast.

Asher became a prosperous merchant area for many people who ventured across the seas. The land was rich and fertile, and one of the most important products that came from the land was olive oil. From her key tradingpost, Asher would support the tribes economically. Asher's relationship with Zebulun, Issachar and Naphtali would be significant. Naphtali would become shipbuilders and according to Moses blessing would have a great presence over the southern seas. Zebulun and Issachar are charged with summoning the people from across the sea. Jacob's blessing to his son's in Genesis 49, differ somewhat but similarities prevail for Asher and Zebulun regarding their wealth and shipping influence. Tyre and Sidon are also on the coastal areas of Asher. In the coming centuries, these two cities would grow and prosper and have many parts to play in the biblical narrative but would eventually fall into idolatry. The prophesie's of YHWH would come true and within a thousand years the coastal areas will be conquered by the Babylonians, Greek and Persian empires. History will record the new inhabitants' the coastal people.'

Judgment on Israel's Enemies

Zechariah 9:1-4

**The oracle of the word of the LORD is against the land of Hadrach
and Damascus is its resting place.**

**For the LORD has an eye on mankind
and on all the tribes of Israel,**

**2 and on Hamath also, which borders on it,
Tyre and Sidon, though they are very wise.**

**3 Tyre has built herself a rampart
and heaped up silver like dust,
and fine gold like the mud of the streets.**

**4 But behold, the LORD will strip her of her possessions
and strike down her power on the sea,
and she shall be devoured by fire.**

Isaiah 23 A prophecy against Tyre:

Wail, you ships of Tarshish!

**For Tyre is destroyed
and left without house or harbor.**

**From the land of Cyprus
word has come to them.**

**2 Be silent, you people of the island
and you merchants of Sidon,
whom the seafarers have enriched.**

**3 On the great waters
came the grain of the Shihor;
the harvest of the Nile was the revenue of Tyre,
and she became the marketplace of the nations.**

**4 Be ashamed, Sidon, and you fortress of the sea,
for the sea has spoken:**

**"I have neither been in labor nor given birth;
I have neither reared sons nor brought up daughters."**

**5 When word comes to Egypt,
they will be in anguish at the report from Tyre.**

**6 Cross over to Tarshish;
wail, you people of the island.**

7 Is this your city of revelry,

**the old, old city,
whose feet have taken her
to settle in far-off lands?
8 Who planned this against Tyre,
the bestower of crowns,
whose merchants are princes,
whose traders are renowned in the earth.**

Despite the occupation from these mighty empires, Asher and its port cities would still remain as an important trading nation. Queen Jezebel was a Sidonian but not all bad came from this location.

The account of the building of the second temple in Ezra tells us how the Sidonian people responded when Cyrus gave the command to rebuild it.

3:7 Amplified Bible (AMP)

⁷ They gave money to the masons and to the carpenters, and gave food, drink, and [olive] oil to the people from Sidon and Tyre, to bring cedar wood from Lebanon to the seaport of Joppa, in accordance with the authorization they had from Cyrus king of Persia.

And the account given by Yeshua in Matthew 15:21 of Syrophenician woman refers to her as coming from the district of Sidon and even the widow that fed Elijah came from Zaraphath a city of Sidon -1Kings17:8-24.

Today, the cities of Tyre and Sidon are in Lebanon. Though Asher is referred to by another name today, the blessings of Jacob and Moses will still play out. Established as a significant port and trading area, Asher along with the brothers, Zebulun, Issachar and Naphtali may well play out their roles in the coming days as YHVH gathers His people back to the land.

Before we leave this study I would like to introduce you to an ancient manuscript called 'The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs.' It is said to record the last words of the sons of Jacob. The literature was considered to have been finally formed in the 2CE and are considered by scholars to be a bridge between the ethics of the old and renewed covenants.

In all the testaments, attributes are distributed in much the same way as the blessings of Jacob and Moses. Asher, remember, brought to light the indiscretion of his brother Reuben who slept with Bilhar, Gen35:22. The blessing of Jacob toward Reuben, Gen 49:4. Asher is regarded as the example of a virtuous man who strives only for the general good. This same virtue is reflected in the 'Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs'. Asher's attribute admonishes the people to live with single minded resolve to keep faith and truth at its focus.

In essence, this embodies the message of our faith. We are called to be focused on the race we must run and to keep our gaze and commitment on YHVH. Combined, faith and truth make the kindling and the spark that lights up the beacon we are to carry to the world. Symbolically, Asher, became a coastal beacon, a lighthouse directing the nations across the seas but also highlights the dangers when we lose the energy of our faith to keep the flame burning.

As we reach the end of this final study, we also reach the end of Moses' life. Moses stands on a point of the earth where he can see all the land promised to the nation he has led for so long.

Under his feet is Mount Nebo, east of the Jordan in the land of Moab. Moses will die here.



Today that land is in Trans Jordan. Biblically, we know that the land markers of the tribes still exist and the tribes in their final return will inhabit their allotted portions once again. The blessing of Moses was an impartation for the tribes to live united and prosperous in a land that would know the shalom of YHVH. The ending of the journey brings us once again to the beginning. Simcha Torah is celebrated, and the cycle starts again. It is a time to celebrate all that YHVH has provided. The feast of Sukkot is a command to celebrate that Israel made it to the land and dwelt under the sukkah the covering of YHVH. Deut 16. Living under the canopy of the protection of the Lord provides us with all that we need. We are given success through the work of our hands: the land prospers and blooms, and as a result, we are happy.

Let us resolve this new year to reflect on the admonishment of Asher. Let us keep faith and truth at the focus of our lives. Let us stand for what is right and expose what is wrong. The goodness of the LORD will overtake us as we pursue Him and as He promised Joshua the new leader of Israel, He will go with us. Whatever journey the LORD has called you on, may you remain strong and not be discouraged.

Friends, When YHVH brought Israel into their land, He declared that it was holy. That's why it would prosper. Joshua 5 recounts the time when the commander of the Lord's army appears to him. Joshua's action is to prostrate himself and worship Him. Friends, this was no ordinary angel. It was YHVH, that's why He received worship. The reference to Gilgal in v9 not only represents the rolling off of the foreskin but also the stigma of Egypt. A new relationship is formed. While in the wilderness, YHVH, so to speak, worked for Israel. Now that Israel is in the land they must work for themselves. They must build and put their hand to the plough. They must keep to the covenant. The Passover is celebrated at this time too, representing the covering of YHVH. His promise to them is that He will surround them like a circle of stone. We draw from this relationship that YHVH is near us. YHVH is not far so that He can only be heard, but He is close, so that we can listen to Him.

Last week we ended the study on the message of faith. This week will do the same. **Heb 11:6 tells us 'without faith it is impossible to please God!** This statement must attract our attention. Let us apply it to the present state of the church and the nation. It gives us many questions and provides us with sobering and challenging answers. In Joshua, the nation is punished by defeat by Ai, ch7, because two men break the prohibition from the LORD not to take booty from their victory in Jericho. In this episode, the whole of the tribes is

summoned, interrogated and dwindled down until the perpetrators found. Their confessions and dispatch mend the relationship with YHVH, and Israel's army goes on the win the next battle over Ai.

As a nation, we are entering a pivotal point in our history. Like the nation of Asher, we too, were blessed in being a trading nation. Our ancient past chronicles our land as one visited by nations from across the seas. We became rich and prospered in our relationships with our neighbour's from faraway places. But in our lifetime, our nation has been taken over sublimely by another empire. As long as Asher and the tribes of Israel obeyed the word of the LORD, they would remain prosperous and defended by Him. Returning to Him is the only way we can defeat those who want to keep us under subjection to another set of laws. YHVH, speaks to Israel constantly reminding them of who they are. He tells them that they have a peculiar identity. The book of Joshua shows us that we work alongside YHVH as we take the land. The relationship is different to when Israel journeyed to it. The hearts of the people had to be circumcised as a sign that they had been prepared and would now live by the covenant. The coming months will challenge us as believers and as a nation. We have much to think and pray about don't we? As consider the new phase of the reading of the Torah, may the Lord grant us a new beginning too.

Haftarah V'zot HaBrachah: Y'hoshua (Joshua) 1:1-18 ; 1:1-9

B'rit Hadashah : Mattityahu (Matthew) 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-10; Luke 9:28-36; Y'hudah (Jude) 3-4, 8-10



Numbers 6:22 Adonai said to Moshe, 23 "Speak to Aharon and his sons, and tell them that this is how you are to bless the people of Isra'el: you are to say to them,

24 'Y'varekh'kha Adonai v'yishmerekha.

[May Adonai bless you and keep you.]

25 Ya'er Adonai panav eleikha vichunekka.

[May Adonai make his face shine on you and show you his favour.]

26 Yissa Adonai panav eleikha v'yasem l'kha shalom

[May Adonai lift up his face toward you and give you peace.]

Until next time.

Shabbat Shalom

Grant Marshall: Co-founder Arrows of Ephrayim Ministries

Reference

Midrash: In Judaism, the **Midrash** is the genre of rabbinic literature which contains early interpretations and commentaries on the Written Torah and Oral Torah (spoken law and sermons), as well as non-legalistic rabbinic literature (*Aggadah*) and occasionally the Jewish religious laws (*halakha*), which usually form a running commentary on specific passages in the Hebrew Scripture (*Tanakh*)

Targum: **Targum Onkelos** (or **Onqelos**), is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum (Aramaic translation) to the Torah. However, its early origins may have been western, in Israel. Its authorship is attributed to Onkelos, a famous convert to Judaism in Tannaic times (c. 35–120 CE)

Targum Jonathan: **Targum Jonathan**), otherwise referred to as **Targum Yonasan/Yonatan**, is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum to the Nevi'im/Prophets. Its early origins, however, are western (i.e. from the Land of Israel), and the Talmudic tradition attributes its authorship to Jonathan ben Uzziel of Jerusalem in the time of King Herod

Tannaim: Tannaim were the Rabbinic sages whose views are recorded in the Mishnah, from approximately 10-220 CE. The period of the Tannaim, also referred to as the Mishnaic period, lasted about 210 years.

Talmud: The **Talmud** means "instruction, learning", "teach, study") is a central text of Rabbinic Judaism. The term "Talmud" normally refers to the collection of writings named specifically the **Babylonian Talmud** (*Talmud Bavli*), although there is also an earlier collection known as the Jerusalem Talmud (*Talmud Yerushalmi*) or Palestinian

The Talmud has two components:

1. The Mishnah (c. 200 CE), the first written compendium of Judaism's Oral Law;
2. The Gemara (c. 500 CE), an elucidation of the Mishnah and related Tannaitic writings that often ventures onto other subjects and expounds broadly on the Hebrew Bible

Jubilees: The Book of Jubilees claims to present "the history of the division of the days of the Law, of the events of the years, the year-weeks, and the jubilees of the world" as revealed to Moses (in addition to the Torah or "Instruction") by angels while he was on Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights. The chronology given in Jubilees is based on multiples of seven; the jubilees are periods of 49 years, seven "year-weeks", into which all of time has been divided

Vulgate: This is the Latin Bible. Translated from the Hebrew and Aramaic by Jerome between 382 and 405 CE, this text became known as the 'versio vulgata', which means 'common translation'.