

ANALYSIS:

Pārāshath Wēzō'th Habbērākhā (Deut. 33:1-34:12) contains the following sidrā':

Hundred-and-Sixty-Seventh Sidrā', the blessing of the Tribes of Yisrā'ēl, and the death of Mōshe.

TARGŪM:

Hundred-and-Sixty-Seventh Sidrā' (Deut. 33:1-34:12): The blessing of the Tribes of Yisrā'ēl, and the death of Mōshe.

And this is the blessing wherewith Mōshe the man of God blessed the Children of Yisrā'ēl; before his death. And he said YHWH came from Sīnāi and He rose for them from Sē'ir, and He shone from Mount Pārān, and He has come from the myriads of holy ones; at His right-hand, for them a decree of fire. Also He is loving the peoples, all His holy ones are in your hand; they will subjugate themselves to you, carrying out your words. Mōshe commanded us Tōrā; an inheritance of the Congregation of Ya'ăḳōv. And there was a king in Yēshurūn; when the heads of the people were gathered, all the Tribes of Yisrā'ēl together. (Deut. 33:1-5) Mōshe's blessings of the Tribes of Yisrā'ēl fall within the realms of prophecy, as do so many of the other blessing found in the Miḳrā':

- Rŭ'ūvēn - will survive, but few in numbers.
- Yŭhūdā - *Hear YHWH the voice of Yŭhūdā, and to his people You will bring him; His hands have striven for him, and You shall be a help from his foes.* (Deut. 33:7)
- Lēwî - since they proved their loyalty to YHWH in every test that He put Yisrā'ēl through during their wanderings, even placing YHWH above their own kin, their reward is the priesthood in perpetuity, to teach the Children of Yisrā'ēl YHWH's judgements and Tōrā, and to perform the service of the Mishkān.
- Binyāmin - the beloved of YHWH, Mōshe prophesies that the Temple will be built in his territory, hence the emphasis on the word dwell [יָשַׁב] which is the root of the noun Mishkān [מִשְׁכַּן, literally - dwelling place].
- Yōsēf - YHWH will bless the territory upon which he settles, a land watered by the dew of the heavens and by cisterns deep underground, a land of abundant and excellent produce. Yōsēf will be consecrated amongst the other tribes, and its sub-tribes of 'Efrayim and Mēnashshe will become powerful and victorious.
- Zēvūlun and Yissākhār - are blessed as a unit, they will become wealthy through the natural resources of their land.
- Gād - his territory will be expanded since they performed the righteousness of YHWH by acting as shock troops in the conquest of the Land of Kēna'an.
- Dān - *Dān is a lion cub; who leaps from Bāshān.* (Deut. 33:22)
- Naftālî - YHWH will bless Naftālî fulfilling their wants. They will take possession of the sea and of the south (this is referring to the territory that will be allotted to the tribe of Naftālî after the Redemption, see Yēhezḳē'l chapter 48).
- 'Āshēr - will be strong and secure, the most blessed of the sons since he will immerse his foot in oil. After the conquest, the tribal territory of 'Āshēr ran along the northern coastline of the Land of Yisrā'ēl with the Bay of Ḥaifa together with the coastal ridge of the Karmel Mountains acting as its southern border. The Bay of Ḥaifa and the coastal ridge of the Karmel Mountains form a mini peninsular resembling the toes of a foot jutting out into the Mediterranean Sea; the foot of 'Āshēr. Recently, in the Mediterranean Sea just off the

coast of the State of Yisrā'ēl in the waters surrounding the foot of 'Āshēr, a very large undersea reservoir of natural gas and oil was discovered. The blessing of 'Āshēr is beginning to be fulfilled!

- Shim'ōn - there is no separate blessing for the Tribe of Shim'ōn, why did Mōshe exclude Shim'ōn from the blessings? Upon the conquest of the Land of Kēna'an, the territory allotted to the Tribe of Shim'ōn was situated in the Negev, surrounded on all sides by the Tribe of Yūhūdā. In time, the Tribe of Shim'ōn lost its independent identity, and its members either amalgamated with the Tribe of Yūhūdā or became scattered amongst the other tribes. Thus, the Tribe of Shim'ōn ceased to be a separate entity fulfilling the prophecy of Ya'āqōv's blessing that Lēwī [the priestly tribe] and Shim'ōn will be dispersed amongst their brethren.

The final verses of the blessing praises YHWH the Ancient and Eternal One, Who drove out our enemies from before us so that we may dwell securely in a fertile and bountiful land - the Land of Kēna'an. Yisrā'ēl will be a happy people, a people saved by YHWH, our protector and helper. Even though our enemies may plot to destroy us as a people in our own land, in the end, it is we who will bring down their false religions, as it is written, *your enemies shall act deceptively to you, but you will tread upon their high places.* (Deut. 33:29)

Mōshe finishes speaking, leaves the Plains of Mō'āv, and ascends Mount Nēvō at the top of the range opposite Yērēhō. From there YHWH shows Mōshe all the land, from the Negev to Dān in the north at the foot of Mount Ḥermōn in the Gōlān Heights, and from Gil'ād in Transjordan to the Mediterranean Sea. *And YHWH said to him this is the land that I swore to 'Avrāhām to Yiṣḥāq and to Ya'āqōv saying, to your seed I will give it; I have let you see it with your eyes, but there you shall not cross.* (Deut. 34:4) At the age of a hundred and twenty years, with the vitality of a young man, Mōshe the servant of YHWH dies on Mount Nēvō in the Land of Mō'āv *by the mouth of YHWH* (Deut. 34:5). YHWH Himself buries Mōshe in a valley in the Land of Mō'āv opposite Bēith Pō'ōr, *and no man knows of his burial place, until this day.* (Deut. 34:6) The Children of Yisrā'ēl mourn the death of Mōshe for thirty days in the Plains of Mō'āv. Once the mourning period for Mōshe was over Yōhōshuwa' son of Nūn, who Mōshe had filled with the spirit of wisdom when he laid his hands upon him, takes his position as the new leader of the Children of Yisrā'ēl. *And there has not arisen another prophet in Yisrā'ēl like Mōshe; whom YHWH knew, face to face. In all the signs and the wonders that YHWH sent him, to perform in the Land of Miṣrāyim; to Par'ō and to all his servants and to all his land. And all with a strong hand, and all with great terror; that Mōshe did, before the eyes of all Yisrā'ēl.* (Deut. 34:10-12)

DISCOURSE:

And no man knows of his burial place, until this day. (Deut. 34:6)

No Great Pyramid of Giza or Taj Mahal enshrines the body of Mōshe ben 'Amrām Hallēwī the Servant of YHWH. No great edifice or ostentatious mausoleum has ever been erected over the grave of the greatest prophet that has ever lived. Not even a grave marker marks the place where his bones rest. Not only that, but nobody knows where Mōshe is even buried! All we do know is that YHWH buried him in a valley in the Land of Mō'āv opposite Bēith Pō'ōr.

But why the silence?

Why the mystery?

Imagine if we did know the whereabouts of Mōshe's grave. First, probably sometime during the Late Second Temple Period, a mausoleum would have been built over his grave; as was built by King Herod over the graves of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs. Then you can imagine Jews coming to the Grave of Mōshe and praying there, as they do today at the tomb of the Patriarchs and

Matriarchs. There at the Grave of Mōshe they would request that he intercede to YHWH on their behalf, just as many do at the graves of Rabbis, even though YHWH requests that we petition Him directly; *is it not because there is no God in Yisrā'ēl, that you go, to inquire, of Ba'al-Zēvūv, the god of 'Ekrōn.* (II Kings 1:3) You can imagine Jews holding vigils at the Grave of Mōshe, as they do at the graves of the Rabbis, even though YHWH said through the mouth of the Prophet Yēsha'yāhū; *I have spread out My hands all the day to a rebellious people; who walks in the way that is not good, after their own thoughts. A people who provoke Me to My face continually; who sacrifices in gardens, and burns incense upon altars of brick. Who sit on the graves, and spend the night in vaults* (Isa. 65:2-4).

It is for these reasons that the site where Mōshe's corpse is buried remains a secret that no man knows - so as to prevent it from becoming a place of pilgrimage detracting from the true and pure worship of YHWH. Those who argue in favour of holding vigils, sending requests to, as well as praying, at the graves of Rabbis and the Righteous Ones, should heed the words of the Prophet Yēsha'yāhū spoken to the people of his own time who held the same opinion. *And when they shall say to you seek to the ghosts and to the familiar spirits, that chatter and that mutter; should not a people seek to their God, on behalf of the living to the dead. For Tōrā and for testimony; surely those who speak after this manner, there is to him no Dawn [Redemption].* (Isa. 8:19-20)