

Torah Talk—מאמרי תורה



The Parasha Letter of The Jewish Primary Day School of the Nation's Capital

Parashat V'zot Habracha
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פרשת וזאת הברכה
כ"ג בתשרי תשע"ז

Torah Reading: *Devarim* (Deuteronomy) 33:1-34:12

In this Torah portion, the final one in the Torah, which we will read on *Simchat Torah*, Moshe gives the tribes of Yisrael a final blessing and dies at the age of 120. The Bnei Yisrael mourn and begin to follow Yehoshua, their new leader.

The last chapter of the Torah give an account of the death of Moshe:

א וַיַּעַל מֹשֶׁה מֵעַרְבַת מוֹאָב, אֶל-הַר נֶבֹו, רֹאשׁ הַפְּסִגָה, אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי יְרִחוֹ; וַיִּרְאֶהוּ ה' אֶת-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ אֶת-הַגְּלִלְעָד, עַד-דָּן. ב וְאֶת, כָּל-נַפְתָּלִי, וְאֶת-אֶרֶץ אֶפְרַיִם, וּמְנַשֶּׁה; וְאֶת כָּל-אֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה, עַד הַיָּם הָאֲחֵרוֹן. ג וְאֶת-הַנֶּגֶב, וְאֶת-הַכֶּכֶר בְּקַעַת יְרִחוֹ עִיר הַתְּמָרִים--עַד-צֶעֶר. ד וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֵלָיו, זֹאת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיַעֲקֹב לֵאמֹר, לְזָרְעֲךָ, אֶתְנַנָּה; הָרְאִיתִיךָ בְּעֵינַיִךְ, וְשָׂמָה לֹא תַעֲבֹר. ה וַיָּמַת שָׁם מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד-ה', בְּאֶרֶץ מוֹאָב--עַל-פִּי ה'. ו וַיִּקְבֹּר אֹתוֹ בְּגִי בְּאֶרֶץ מוֹאָב, מוֹל בֵּית פְּעוֹר; וְלֹא-יָדַע אִישׁ אֶת-קְבֻרָתוֹ, עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה. ז וּמֹשֶׁה, בֶּן-מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה--בָּמֹתוֹ; לֹא-כָהֵתָה עֵינּוֹ, וְלֹא-נָס לַחָה. ח וַיִּבְכּוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-מֹשֶׁה בְּעַרְבַת מוֹאָב, שְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם; וַיִּתְּמוּ, יָמָי בְּכִי אֲבֵל מֹשֶׁה.

1 And Moshe went up from the plains of Moav to mount Nevo, to the top of Pisgah, which is over against Yericho. And Hashem showed him all the land, even Gilead as far as Dan; **2** and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim and Menashe, and all the land of Yehudah until the far sea; **3** and the South, and the Plain, even the valley of Yericho the city of palm-trees, as far as Tzoar. **4** And Hashem said to him: 'This is the land

which I swore to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov, saying: I will give it to your seed; I have caused you to see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there.' 5 So Moshe the servant of Hashem died there in the land of Moav, according to the word of Hashem. 6 And he buried him in the valley in the land of Moav over against Bet-peor; and no one knows his burial place until this day. 7 And Moshe was a hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. 8 And the Bnei Yisrael wept for Moshe in the plains of Moav thirty days; so the days of weeping in the mourning for Moshe were ended.

Who is the "he" who buried Moshe in the valley? The immediate antecedent object can give us only one answer: Hashem.

The Talmud picks up on this fact in *Masechat Sotah* 14b, when it addresses the question of *imitatio Dei* – the human obligation to imitate God's actions as ways of properly conducting ourselves in this world. The Talmud there says:

R. Hama son of R. Hanina further said: What does the text mean when it says: 'You shall walk after Hashem your God?' Is it, then, possible for a human being to walk after the *Shechinah*; for has it not been said: 'For Hashem your God is a consuming fire?' But [the meaning is] to walk after the attributes of the Holy One. Just as Hashem clothes the naked, for it is written: 'And Hashem God made for Adam and for his wife coats of skin, and clothed them,' so you should clothe the naked. The Holy One visited the sick, for it is written: 'And Hashem appeared to him [Avraham] by the oaks of Mamre,' so you should also visit the sick. The Holy One comforted mourners, for it is written: 'And it came to pass after the death of Avraham, that God blessed Yitzchak his son,' so you should also comfort mourners. The Holy One buried the dead, for it is written: 'And He buried him in the valley,' so you should also bury the dead.

The Torah does not just lecture at us; Hashem models proper behavior for us throughout the course of the Torah. What a beautiful example that sets for us. Just as Hashem has done all of the kindnesses listed above and, therefore, we should as well, so too has Hashem shown us that true teaching means modeling behavior

that we would like others to emulate. Talking at people alone does not work; modeling desired behaviors in tandem with didactic lessons is a much better paradigm.

By modeling behaviors for us, Hashem has modeled for us also how to influence others in positive ways. What a wonderful message for us as we take leave of our autumn holidays.

Shabbat Shalom and Chag Same'ach.

For Discussion:

- Name other kindnesses that Hashem does in the Torah. How can we emulate those also?
- Why is modeling behavior more helpful in teaching someone than just speaking with them?
- What acts of kindness have you modeled or would you like to model for those younger than you?