

## Vezot HaBrachah | וזאת הברכה

“And this is the blessing”

“Vezot Haberakha is Moses' blessing, delivered in the last days of his life, to the Israelites, tribe by tribe. It concludes poignantly with Moses' death and his burial, seemingly by the hand of God, in the land of Moab, so that ‘to this day no one knows his burial place’ (Deut. 34:6). The closing verses of the Torah are a tribute to the greatest leader and prophet the Israelites ever had, yet the ultimate accolade the Torah gives him is touching in its simplicity. He was ‘the man Moses’ (Num. 12:3), ‘the servant of the Lord’ (Deut. 34:5). The parasha, read not as an ordinary Shabbat portion, but on the festival of Simchat Torah, is a profound commentary on mortality and the human condition. The Moses we encounter in the Torah is simply a human being made great by the task he was set and by the humility that made him supremely one through whom the word and power of God flowed.”

- R'Sacks, *Covenant & Conversation*

### Community Questions:

1. What words similar to the name of this portion do we say when we lift the Torah scroll?
2. Why does the Torah end just before Israel enters the land under Joshua's leadership?
3. What happens when we forget that the story—God's story—is so much bigger than ourselves and our individual abilities to complete?
4. How would you describe the overall tone of Moses' blessings? Putting yourself in the place of the tribes, do these words leave you feeling chastened or hopeful or frightened or encouraged, etc.?
5. Which tribe is missing? If the Rambam is correct in his insight that the order of Moses' blessings reflects the order of taking the Land, under which tribe might the missing tribe's blessing be included (where do they end up in the Land)?
6. The patriarch or leader's spoken blessing carries great weight in the Torah. Connect this idea to the beginning of the Torah, parsha B'reisheet.
7. If the Land represents the physical body of corporate Israel, what does it mean to "inherit the Land?"
8. Moses is the human author of the five books of the Torah, and the name "Moses" becomes synonymous with the Torah. With these ideas and others in mind, how is this portion an appropriate ending to the Torah?
9. Read 34:10-12 and give one idea that encapsulates Moses' uniqueness as a prophet. Why was it important for Israel to have this kind of leader at this stage in the nation's history?

