



Parsha Overview

The *parsha* of V'Zot Haberacha, the final *parsha* in the Torah, is read on Simchat Torah. The name of the *parsha* means "and this is the blessing" because in this *parsha*, Moses blesses the tribes of Israel before he passes away. Each tribe get its own blessing, just like Jacob blessed each tribe individually.

Reuven is blessed with life, Judah with success in battle. Levi with serving in the Temple and being teachers of Torah, Benjamin is "beloved" by G-d. Joseph is blessed with sweet fruits on his land, Zebulun with success in trade. Issachar is blessed with success in Torah study, Gad with a lot of land. Dan is blessed with the might of a lion, Naftali with fertile land and sea, and Asher with sons and olive oil.

After Moses finishes blessing the people of Israel, he goes up Mount Nebo and G-d shows him the whole Land of Israel. Then Moses, at the age of 120, passes away. He is buried by G-d, and until today, nobody knows his burial place. The Jews mourned Moses for thirty days, and then Joshua became the new leader, and all the Jews followed and respected him, just as they did Moses.

The *parsha*, and the entire Torah, ends by telling us what a great person Moses was: "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom God knew face to face... and in all the mighty hand and the great awesome things which Moses did before the eyes of all Israel."

As soon as we finish reading the *parsha*, we immediately begin again from the beginning, reading from Bereishit about how God created the world.

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Parsha Questions

- 1) What was the gift did Moses give each of the tribes? [A blessing]
- 2) After Moses finished blessing the people, where did he go? [Mount Nebo]
- 3) What did God Show him there? [The entire Land of Israel]
- 4) How old was Moses when he passed away? [120]
- 5) The Torah tells us that Moses was the greatest _____ of all times. [Prophet]
- 6) What do we do right after we finish reading the Torah? [Start reading it again from the beginning]

Focus of the Week: Simchat Torah

Today is Simchat Torah, when we celebrate finishing the Torah.

Discussion Questions

Why do we start the Torah again right after we finish it?
Why are we happy that we finished the Torah?

Note to Leaders: Discuss with the children how we start the Torah again to show that we are never done with Torah and there is always more to learn. Talk about how the Torah is the book that God, Himself, gave to us. It tells us how we should live our lives and what is important. Now that we have finished, we can start incorporating these ideas into our lives. Use this story to show how there is more to the Torah than just reading it.

Activity

Children's Hakafot

What you will need: Toy Torahs

Let the children have their own special Hakafot. Teach them songs and let them dance in a circle as they sing. For a list of popular Simchat Torah songs in Hebrew, English and transliteration, with accompanying audio recording to help you learn the songs beforehand, visit: www.jewishpathways.com/simchat-torah-1.

Story

"Naftali! NAF-TA-LI! Oh, there you are." Binyamin entered his younger brother's room. "I've been calling you and calling you. Abba wants you to come help me with the sukkah. What are you doing up here?" Binyamin watched his brother. Naftali was holding a toy Torah as he danced around and around a chair in the middle of the room. "Wait. Don't tell me. Let me guess...."

"Yes, I am practicing for Simchat Torah." Naftali smiled, and danced around the chair once more.

I should have known," sighed Binyamin. "Don't you ever get tired of dancing?"

"Not me," Naftali shook his head. "I am not called Naftali- as swift as a deer- for nothing, you know. I loooove dancing." Naftali held the toy Torah high and jumped gracefully in the air.

"Well, you better put the brakes on. Abba wants us to help with the sukkah. Pronto!" Five minutes later, Binyamin and Naftali were downstairs in their yard, among the boards, nails and tools. The boys picked up a big board. As they carried it across the yard, Binyamin asked, "You really like dancing, don't you, Naftali?"

"Oh, yes," Naftali said.

"You can't like it more than hiding the *Afikoman* on Passover," said Binyamin.

"I do," Naftali replied over the edge of the board.

"Do you like it even more than eating cheesecake on *Shavuot*?"

"I love dancing on Simchat Torah even more than delivering *mishloach manot* on Purim or watching the bonfire on *Lag Ba'omer*," Naftali said, putting down his end of the board.

"And this year, I'm going to dance even longer than I ever have before. I have it all planned out, Binyamin."

"You know, Naftali," Binyamin said picking up a hammer, "dancing on Simchat Torah isn't just about physical exercise. It has a deeper meaning."

Just thinking about Simchat Torah brought a smile to Naftali's lips. "Right, sure," he said, ignoring Binyamin's words. Naftali held the board while his brother banged in the nails.

"This Sukkot, I'm going to get to sleep at a decent hour- not like last year, when I was too tired to make the last *hakafot* (dancing around with the Torahs)..."

Binyamin tried again. "Do you understand...." he started, but Naftali wasn't listening.

"...and I'm going to practice every day, just like you saw me doing in my bedroom, and...."

Binyamin let Naftali explain his plans until the boys finished the sukkah.

One week later, Naftali and his family were eating lunch in their sukkah. "You boys did a great job on the sukkah," their Abba complimented them.

"And these decorations are just lovely," added their mother. She looked around at the pictures on the wooden wall and the plastic fruit hanging from the *schach* (sukkah covering).

"Thanks Imma," said Naftali. "Now do you want to see my dancing for Simchat Torah? Watch I'm going to go around the *bimah* (table in the middle of the shul) just like this...." Naftali jumped up to demonstrate. He didn't notice that a plastic apple had fallen to the ground. Naftali tripped over the small round decoration.

"Whoa," he shouted as his legs flew out from under him and his arms flailed in the air. He tried to regain his balance, but his left foot couldn't hold the weight of his body, and it twisted -hard! - at the ankle. "Ow, my foot!" Naftali cries as he fell to the ground. "Now I won't be able to dance in shul."

The doctor agreed. Naftali had broken his ankle, and would need crutches to walk. Worst of all: he would not be able to dance in even one *hakafah*."

It was very sad when Naftali hopped to shul on his crutches. His father and brother walked on either side of him. "Oh," Naftali cried, as they approached the shul, "all my practicing and going to bed early, just so I can dance for longer than ever before, was for nothing."

"I'm sorry this happened," Binyamin tried to comfort his brother. "I know how you were looking forward to the dancing. You can still sit and watch, though. And that is what Naftali did. After the prayers, he limped to a chair and sat himself down. "Poor me," he was thinking, when he was distracted by a young boy helping an old man to the chair next to him.

Here you are, Mr. Cohen. You can sit over here and watch the dancing."

"Why, thank you, David. That is so kind of you."

That was very nice, Naftali thought to himself. *I wouldn't have noticed that act of kindness if I hadn't been sitting right here. Sitting here not dancing*, he thought sadly. Then Naftali's thoughts were interrupted again, by another boy, offering him a cup of water. "You looked like you were in pain, so I wanted you to have something to drink. I'm sorry you hurt your foot." The boy handed Naftali the cup and ran back to the dancing. *That was nice of him*, Naftali thought. As he tipped his head back to drink, he saw a little boy climb up on his father's shoulders, laughing as he bounced up and down during the dancing. And there, to the left, was a group of boys who sometimes fought at school, now all dancing together, smiling and singing as they held on to each other. *The beauty of Torah*, Naftali thought, and then he remembered his brothers words: "*Dancing on Simchat Torah isn't just physical exercise, it has a deeper meaning.*" Naftali was starting to understand. Dancing with the Torah brought all the Jews together as one. With a tear sliding down his cheek, Naftali looked at the group of dancers again. Then he saw the Rabbi, his eyes closed in concentration, hugging the holy Torah. His face was filled with light and he seemed to be in another world. *The beauty of Torah*, Naftali thought again. And that night, that Simchat Torah, Naftali's heart danced like his body never had.

Adapted from Olomeinu October 2005

Halacha of the week

On Shemini Atzeret we no longer shake the lulav. There are different customs about eating and sleeping in the sukkah. Each person should do whatever his/her family's custom is. In Israel the custom is not to eat and sleep in the sukkah. Similarly, on Simchat Torah we do not sit in the sukkah.

Riddle of the Week

On Simchat Torah we take out three Torah scrolls. When are the two other times during the year, when we take out 3 Torah scrolls?

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PARSHA NATION



GRADES 3-4

Parsha Overview

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The following is a brief summary of the blessing that Moses gave to each tribe:

Reuven: You shall live on this world and the next, and you should be counted amongst your brothers. This was in response to the curse that Jacob placed on Reuven for a sin he committed against his father.

Judah: You shall have success in battle and destroy all your enemies.

Levi: You shall be the teachers of the Jewish people, and bring their sacrifices for them in the Holy Temple.

Benjamin: God's presence shall dwell in your midst. This was a reference to the Temple which was built in Benjamin's portion in the Land of Israel.

Joseph: You shall have land that is blessed. Your fields will have plenty of water and your crops will grow quickly. You will have strength like an ox to defeat your enemies.

Zebulun: You will have success in your business endeavors.

Gad: You will have the strength of a lion and you will use that to lead the nation into battle.

Dan: You will have the strength of a lion cub in war.

Naftali: You will have a portion in the Land of Israel that is very fertile and can grow anything you desire.

Asher: You will have blessed children and you will have a lot of oil in your land. This oil could be sold to the rest of the Jewish people and would make the tribe of Asher very rich.

After Moses finished blessing the people of Israel, he goes up Mount Nebo and G-d shows him the whole Land of Israel. Then Moses, at 120 years old, passes away. He is buried by G-d, and until today, nobody knows his burial place. The Jews mourned Moses for thirty days, and then Joshua became the new leader, and all the Jews follow and respect him, just as they did Moses.

The Torah concludes with a eulogy for Moses. He was the greatest prophet ever to live, and he performed incredible and awesome miracles before the eyes of all of Israel.

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Parsha Questions

- 1) What was the gift did Moses give each of the tribes? [A blessing]
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Halacha of the week

On Shemini Atzeret we no longer shake the lulav. There are different customs about eating and sleeping in the sukkah. One custom is not to eat or sleep in the sukkah at all. Another custom is to eat in the sukkah but not sleep in the sukkah. A third custom is to eat and sleep in the sukkah. Each person should do whatever his/her family's custom is. In Israel, the custom is to not eat and sleep in the sukkah. Similarly, on Simchat Torah we do not sit in the sukkah.

Riddle of the Week

On Simchat Torah we take out three Torah scrolls. When are the two other times during the year, when we take out 3 Torah scrolls?

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PARSHA NATION



GRADES 5-6

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Naftali: You will have a portion in the Land of Israel that is very fertile and can grow anything you desire.

Asher: You will have blessed children and you will have a lot of oil in your land. This oil could be sold to the rest of the Jewish people and would make the tribe of Asher very rich.

Moses concluded the individual blessings, and addressed the nation as a whole: May your borders be sealed like iron and copper, and the days of your old age will be like the days of your youth. G-d is always ready to come to your assistance. Fortunate are you, Israel! Who is like you, people saved by G-d!"

After Moses finishes blessing the people of Israel, he goes up Mount Nebo and G-d shows him the whole Land of Israel. Then Moses, at 120 years old, passes away. He is buried by G-d, and until today, nobody knows his burial place. The Jews mourned Moses for thirty days, and then Joshua becomes the new leader, and all the Jews follow and respect him just as they did Moses.

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Discussion Questions

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Why do we dance before we even finish the Torah?

Note to Leaders: Discuss with the children how the Torah is the book that God Himself gave to us. It tells us how we should live our lives and what is important. Now that we have finished we can start incorporating these ideas into our lives. This is why we begin the Torah again right after we finish it. This shows us that we are not done with Torah, we are just beginning. Perhaps this is the reason why we dance even before we finish reading the Torah. This emphasizes the fact that we are happy about how much we have accomplished, but not that we are done studying torah. Use this story to show how it is important, not only to read the Torah, but to live by the Torah as well.

Activity

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Halacha of the week

Shemini Atzeret is a new holiday and there is no obligation to shake lulav and sit in the sukkah. However since there is a doubt which day Sukkot began, the custom is to keep an extra day of Sukkot. Even so we can not do things we openly show that it might still be sukkot because that might take away from the specialness of Shemini Atzeret. Therefore, we no longer shake the lulav. There are different customs about eating and sleeping in the sukkah. Each person should do whatever his/her family's custom is.

Riddle of the Week

Although we now finish the Torah every year, it was not always like that. How long did it used to take to finish reading the Torah?

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PARSHA NATION



Teen Minyan Kol Haniarim

Note to Leaders:

This program is made to enhance your teen minyan. Let your teens take turns give the Drasha and Dvar Halacha. Try to get them the texts as early as possible so then can practice it before they say it on Shabbat. You can also invite parents to watch their child live in action.

Drasha

Terms of Endearment

One might assume that G-d's eulogy for Moses should consist of the most poetic words that can describe a man who fulfilled every wish and command that is imaginable of mortal beings. In summarizing Moses's life's achievements, He should choose words that describe his remarkable humility, his unstinting devotion, and his amazing powers of calm and sensibility.

He doesn't.

"And Moshe, the eved Hashem (servant of G-d) died" (Deuteronomy 34:5). Eved Hashem are the two words chosen to encapsulate the life of the greatest living legend in biblical history. Just two simple words – servant of G-d. Do those words truly do Moses justice? How could the simplest and lowest of compliments, calling the greatest prophet, a "simple servant" help us understand G-d's admiration for His greatest follower?

Fredrick the Great, King of Prussia during the late 1700s, was reviewing his troops when he noticed a middle-aged soldier wearing an interesting ornament. Dangling from what appeared to be an heirloom watch-chain was the spent casing of a bullet. It had been polished and shined, as it replaced a watch that the soldier obviously was unable to afford.

The king, in a playful mood, pulled his diamond-studded pocket watch from his vest and held it in the sunlight. As the rays glinted off the diamonds that surrounded its face he stared at his piece intently. Then he looked at the soldier. "My dear soldier," he said in mock concern as he tugged on the exquisite piece attached to its chain. "My timepiece says that it is half past one. What time does yours tell?"

The soldier looked down at the bullet.

"Your honor," he declared with sincere humility. "The ornament that dangles from my watch chain, does not tell me the time. Rather it is a bullet."

"A bullet!" scoffed the king. "Why on earth would you wear a bullet instead of a watch?"

"To me your honor, there are no hours, minutes nor seconds. My watch tells me that every moment I am willing to take a bullet – even if it means my life – for your Majesty."

King Fredrick was so impressed with the soldier's reply that he promptly removed his exquisite royal watch and presented it to the soldier.

Mortals look for accolades that personify their own wisdom, wealth, and accomplishment. The Torah looks for accolades to identify the accomplishment of man's reason for being.

The greatest praise that the Creator of all things can reap upon his beloved are two Hebrew words — Eved Hashem — Servant of G-d. Moses was totally subservient to the will of his Creator, making him a mortal extension of His immortal existence. Those two words – eved Hashem — say a lot. They say more than hundreds of pages of eulogy could ever say. They tell the sole purpose of mortal man – to serve God. As we ponder our existence, as we enter the new year, it's wonderful to know those words. They help us focus on the meaning of life while keeping it's complexities quite simple. All we have to yearn for, is to reach that great level of simplicity.

Chag Samayach!

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Dvar Halacha

(To be said right after Davening)

Shemini Atzeret is a new holiday and there is no obligation to shake lulav and sit in the sukkah. However since there is a doubt which day Sukkot began, the custom is to keep an extra day of Sukkot. Even so, we cannot do things we openly show that it might still be Sukkot, because that might take away from the specialness of Shemini Atzeret. Therefore, we no longer shake the lulav. There are different customs about eating and sleeping in the sukkah. One custom is not to eat or sleep in the sukkah at all. Another custom is to eat in the sukkah but not sleep in the sukkah, because eating in the sukkah is not an open sign that it is sukkot, as people sometimes eat outside when the weather is nice. A third custom is to eat and sleep in the sukkah. Each person should do whatever his/her family's custom is. In Israel, where there is no doubt to when the start of Sukkot was, one does not eat or sleep in the sukkah. Similarly, on Simchat Torah, which is definitely not Sukkot, we do not sit in the sukkah.

Kiddush Activity

Dance your hearts out! One thing to keep in mind.....

A lot of the songs we sing on Simchat Torah have very powerful meaning and important lessons. Try to learn the meaning of some of the songs, and think about them when you sing them. Here are some common songs explained below:

Ashrei Ha'am

אַשְׁרֵי הָעָם שֶׁכָּחָ לוֹ Ashrei hâ'am she'kâchâ lo.
אַשְׁרֵי הָעָם שֶׁה' אֱלֹהָיו. Ashrei hâ'am she'Hashem Elokâv.

Praiseworthy is the people for whom this is so.

Praiseworthy is the people who Hashem is their God.

Psalms 144:15

Ashreinu

אַשְׁרֵינוּ מַה טוֹב חֵלְקֵנוּ Ashreinu ma tov chel'keinu,
וּמַה נְעִים גּוֹרְלֵנוּ u'ma nâ'im gorâ'leinu,

We are fortunate – how good is our portion,
how pleasant our lot!

Daily Morning Prayer

David Melech

דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי וְקַיָּם. Dâvid melech Yisrâel chai v'kayâm.
סִמָּן טוֹב וּמַזָּל טוֹב Simân tov u'mazâl tov
יְהֵא לָנוּ (וּלְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל). אָמֵן. ye'hay lânu (ul'chol Yisrâel. Āmen.)

David, Kind of Israel, is alive and enduring. May there be a
good sign and a good fortune – for us, and for all Israel. Amen.

Kiddush Levana; based on Talmud - Rosh Hashana 25a

Moshe Emes

מֹשֶׁה אֱמֶת וְתוֹרָתוֹ אֱמֶת. Moshe emet, v'torato emet.

Moses is true, and his Torah is true.

Midrash Tanchuma – Parshat Korach 11

S'oo Sh'arim

שָׂאוּ שְׁעָרִים רָאשֵׁיכֶם S'oo sh'arim rashay'chem

וְהִנָּשְׂאוּ פִתְחֵי עוֹלָם v'hinass'oo peet'chay olam,

וַיָּבֹא מֶלֶךְ הַכְבוֹד. v'yavo Melech Hakavod.

Raise up your heads, O gates, and be uplifted, you
everlasting entrances, so that the King of Glory may enter.

Psalms 24:7

Torat Hashem Temima

תּוֹרַת ה' תְּמִימָה Torat Hashem temima,

מְשִׁיבַת נֶפֶשׁ m'shivat nafesh.

עֵדוּת ה' נֶאֱמָנָה Aidut Hashem ne'emana,

מַחְכִּימַת פֶּתִי. mach'kimat pe'tee.

The Torah of God is perfect, restoring the soul.

The testimony of God is trustworthy, making the simple one wise.

Psalms 19:8

Riddle of the Week

Although we now finish the Torah every year, it was not always like that. How long did it used to take to finish reading the Torah?

Send you answer to youth@youngisrael.org for a chance to win a great prize.