POCKET PARSHA GUIDE

V'Zot HaBerachah: Devarim (Deuteronomy)

What's it all about?

In the Torah's last parsha, Moses echoes Jacob's blessings to his children and blesses each of the tribes of Israel. He then climbs Mount Nebo to see the Promised Land before passing. The Torah concludes by telling us that "there arose not a prophet since in Israel like Moses." I**mmediately after concluding the Torah, we begin reading it again** with the first chapter of Genesis, describing God's creation of the world.



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"There never arose another prophet in Israel like Moses, whom God knew face to face."

Take a deeper dive

As we bid farewell to the great Moses, this week's parsha, the Torah's last, gives us one more bit of wisdom, this one answering a question with which we all obsess—**how to stay young.**

"Moses," the parsha tells us, "was 120 years old when he died, yet his eyes were undimmed and his natural force unabated."

How can that be? The older we get, the more frail we grow, which would've been especially true for someone like Moses, who had spent decades **carrying the heavy burden of leadership** and who had guided his people through **some of the most stressful moments in their history.** How could he have remained so youthful and virile?

"I used to think," explained the late Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, "that 'his eyes were undimmed' and 'his natural force unabated' were simply two descriptions, until it dawned on me that the first was an explanation of the second. Why was his energy unabated? Because his eyes were undimmed. **He never lost the vision and high ideals of his youth.** He was as passionate at the end as he was at the beginning. His commitment to justice, compassion, liberty and responsibility was unyielding, despite the many disappointments of his forty years as a leader. The moral is clear: *If you want to stay young, never compromise your ideals.*"

So often, as we go through life, we're met with those who, disguising their cynicism as the wisdom that comes from experience, tell us that idealism is only for the young and foolish, and that growing older means learning to compromise the things you hold most dear. Moses's last lesson is that the opposite is true. It is, as Rabbi Sacks put it, this: "Never compromise your ideals. Never give in to defeat or despair. Never stop journeying merely because the way is long and hard." Amen to that.

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