

# Zera Shimshon

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## Chapter LIV: Vezot haBracha (Deut. 33:1–34:12)

### Essay 9. “His eyes were undimmed and his vigor unabated”

**"לא-כהתה עיניו ולא-נס לחה" פי בשעה ששעלה למרום לא נמרק החומר אלא בענו, ולחיותו שהיה לו מכת חיות הנשמה נשאר עמו. ואף בשעת מיתתו הנשמה לא פירשה מהגוף מעט מעט כדרך בני אדם, פי היה הגוף טהור ומזוקק שלא היה בו שום מותר. ועד אותה הרגע לא יצאה נשמתו כלל, פי כך יפה לה לישב בגופו הטהור והקדוש כמו לישב בגן עדן בעולם העליון. ואפשר שזו היא פוננת רז"ל כשאמרו משה רבינו לא מת.**

**“Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eyes were undimmed and his vigor unabated” (Deut. 34:7), for at the hour that he ascended to Heaven at Mount Sinai, the physical body was cleansed by the Cloud of Glory,<sup>1</sup> and the vigor that he had by the power of the spiritual soul remained with him. Even at the hour of his death, i.e., as death became imminent, the soul did not retire from the body little-by-little as is the way of man, for his body was pure and refined in which there was no remainder that was not pure. Until that very moment of death, his soul had not left his body at all. For it is as pleasant for [the soul] to rest in such a pure and holy body, as it is to rest in the Garden of Eden in the uppermost world. It is possible that this is the intent of the rabbis, of blessed memory, when they said that our rabbi Moses did not die.<sup>2</sup>**

**ועל דרך זאת אפשר לפרש נמי מה שאמרו יעקב אבינו לא מת, לפי שאף הוא היה גופו טהור וקדוש שלא ראה קרי מימיו וסבל כמה ייסורין ונמרק גופו הטהור לגמרי. ואף על פי שיצאתה נשמתו לא נקראת מיתה, ולא קשה תו וכי בכדי ספדו ספדנייא וכו'. ואפשר שמשעם זה אף מיתת שאר הצדיקים נקראת דוקא בלשון גויעה ואסיפה.**

**In this way, it’s possible to also explain what they said: That our patriarch Jacob didn’t die, as it is written:**

After they had eaten, [Rabbi Yitzchak] said to [Rav Nachman] that Rabbi Yochanan said as follows: Our patriarch Jacob did not die. [Rav Nachman] asked him in surprise: And was it for naught that the eulogizers eulogized him and the embalmers embalmed him and the buriers buried him? [Rabbi Yitzchak] replied to

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<sup>1</sup> Ex. 24:18: “Moses went inside the Cloud and ascended the mountain; and Moses remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights.”

<sup>2</sup> Zohar I:37b.

[Rav Nachman]: I am interpreting a verse, as it is stated: “Therefore do not fear, Jacob My servant, says the L-rd, neither be dismayed, Israel, for I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity” (Jer. 30:10). This verse juxtaposes Jacob to his seed: Just as his seed is alive when redeemed, so too, Jacob himself is alive. *See also* Chapter XII: Vayechi, essay 15.

- Taanit 5b<sup>3</sup>

This can be explained, **because even regarding [Jacob], his body was pure and holy, for he never saw any seminal emission in his life,<sup>4</sup> and he suffered several torments, and his pure body was completely cleansed. Even though his soul departed his body, it’s not called “death,” and it’s also not difficult, “for was it in vain that the eulogizers eulogized him,” etc.? It’s possible that for this reason, even the death of the other righteous is specifically called by the language of *gevia* [falling away] and *asifa* [being gathered (in this context, being gathered to one’s ancestors)], instead of specifically saying “dying.”**

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<sup>3</sup> *See also* Chapter XII: Vayechi, essay 15.

<sup>4</sup> Yevamot 76a: “Abaye said: Is that to say that everyone is like our Patriarch Jacob, with regard to whom it is written: ‘[Reuben, you are my firstborn,] my might and the first fruits of my strength’ (Gen. 49:3), [implying] that [Jacob] never experienced an emission of semen in all his days, [so that his eldest son Reuben was conceived from his first drop of seed, i.e., ‘the first fruits of my strength.’]”