DEUTERONOMY

Chapter 33

*Moses Blesses the Tribes*

**This is the blessing that Moses the man of God pronounced on the Israelites before his death. 2 He said: “The Lord came from Sinai and dawned over them from Seir; he shone forth from Mount Paran. He came with myriads of holy ones from the south, from his mountain slopes.3Surely it is you who love the people; all the holy ones are in your hand. At your feet they all bow down, and from you receive instruction, 4the law that Moses gave us, the possession of the assembly of Jacob. 5 He was king over Jeshurun when the leaders of the people assembled, along with the tribes of Israel. 6“Let Reuben live and not die, nor his men be few.” 7 And this he said about Judah: “Hear, O Lord, the cry of Judah; bring him to his people. With his own hands he defends his cause. Oh, be his help against his foes!” 8 About Levi he said: “Your Thummim and Urim belong to the man you favored. You tested him at Massah; you contended with him at the waters of Meribah. 9 He said of his father and mother, ‘I have no regard for them.’ He did not recognize his brothers or acknowledge his own children, but he watched over your word and guarded your covenant. 10He teaches your precepts to Jacob and your law to Israel. He offers incense before you and whole burnt offerings on your altar. 11Bless all his skills, O Lord, and be pleased with the work of his hands. Smite the loins of those who rise up against him; strike his foes till they rise no more.” 12 About Benjamin he said: “Let the beloved of the Lord rest secure in him, for he shields him all day long, and the one the Lord loves rests between his shoulders.” 13 About Joseph he said: “May the Lord bless his land with the precious dew from heaven above and with the deep waters that lie below; 14 with the best the sun brings forth and the finest the moon can yield; 15with the choicest gifts of the ancient mountains and the fruitfulness of the everlasting hills; 16with the best gifts of the earth and its fullness and the favor of him who dwelt in the burning bush. Let all these rest on the head of Joseph, on the brow of the prince among his brothers. 17In majesty he is like a firstborn bull; his horns are the horns of a wild ox. With them he will gore the nations, even those at the ends of the earth. Such are the ten thousands of Ephraim; such are the thousands of Manasseh.” 18 About Zebulun he said: “Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out, and you, Issachar, in your tents. 19They will summon peoples to the mountain and there offer sacrifices of righteousness; they will feast on the abundance of the seas, on the treasures hidden in the sand.” 20 About Gad he said: “Blessed is he who enlarges Gad’s domain! Gad lives there like a lion, tearing at arm or head. 21He chose the best land for himself; the leader’s portion was kept for him. When the heads of the people assembled, he carried out the Lord’s righteous will, and his judgments concerning Israel.” 22 About Dan he said: “Dan is a lion’s cub, springing out of Bashan.” 23 About Naphtali he said: “Naphtali is abounding with the favor of the Lord and is full of his blessing; he will inherit southward to the lake.” 24 About Asher he said: “Most blessed of sons is Asher; let him be favored by his brothers, and let him bathe his feet in oil. 25The bolts of your gates will be iron and bronze, and your strength will equal your days. 26“There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, who rides on the heavens to help you and on the clouds in his majesty. 27 The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemy before you, saying, ‘Destroy him!’ 28 So Israel will live in safety alone; Jacob’s spring is secure in a land of grain and new wine, where the heavens drop dew. 29Blessed are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord? He is your shield and helper and your glorious sword. Your enemies will cower before you, and you will trample down their high places.”**

**33:1–5** Moses’ blessing takes the hearers back to the moment when God gave them the Law at Sinai. (TLSB)

**33:1** *blessing.* See Ge 12:1–3; 22:15–18; 27:27–29; 28:10–15; 49:1–28. Moses’ blessings on the tribes (vv. 6–25) should be compared particularly with Jacob’s blessings on his sons in Ge 49. (CSB)

*man of God.* The first occurrence of this title. It appears next in Jos 14:6 (also of Moses; see Ps 90 title). Later it designates other messengers of God (see note on 1Sa 2:27). (CSB)

**33:2** *Sinai … Seir … Paran.* Mountains associated with the giving of the law (see Ge 21:21 and note; Jdg 5:4–5; Hab 3:3). (CSB)

*holy ones.* Angels. (CSB)

Angels cf Is 6:1–7). (TLSB)

**33:3** *holy ones.* Israelites (see 7:6; 14:2; 26:19; 28:9). (CSB)

**33:5** *king.* The Lord, not an earthly monarch, was to be king over Israel (see Jdg 8:23 and note). (CSB)

*Jeshurun.* See NIV text note; see also Isa 44:2 and note. (CSB)

**33:6–25** Moses blesses the tribes. Cf Gn 49, the blessing pronounced by Jacob upon his sons, which incorporated an acknowledgment of their transgressions. Moses’ blessing on the tribes hints at their inheritance of land and the manner in which they would use or perhaps misuse their inheritance. Although Moses did not mention the tribe of Simeon by name, Simeon was not excluded from the inheritance of land in Nu 26. Jsh 19:1–9 explains how the tribe of Simeon received land in the territory of Judah. Jgs 1:1–20 records how Simeon joined with Judah to fight their adversaries. Consequently, the name exclusion may indicate the future association with Judah, participation in fighting the adversaries (33:7), and a share in Judah’s blessing. (TLSB)

**33:8** *Thummim and Urim.* See note on Ex 28:30. (CSB)

*Massah.* See 6:16; 9:22; see also note on Ex 17:7. (CSB)

*Meribah.* See 32:51; see also note on Ex 17:7. (CSB)

**33:9** *I regard them not*. Cypr: “Being redeemed and quickened by the blood of Christ, we ought to prefer nothing to Christ” (*ANF* 5:500). (TLSB)

*he watched over your word.* The Levites had charge of the tabernacle with its ark, in which the Book of the Law was placed (see note on 31:9). (CSB)

Ambr: “His trusty ones … have no deceit in their hearts, hide no treachery within them, but guard His words and ponder them in their heart, as Mary pondered them [Lk 2:19]” (*NPNF* 2 10:43) (TLSB)

**33:10** *teaches your precepts to Jacob.* See note on 31:11. (CSB)

**33:12** *dwells between his shoulders*. May denote hilly slopes; in this case, may also point to the temple, which would stand on Benjamin’s rocky border and would be the final place to serve as God’s dwelling among His people. (TLSB)

**33:13** *About Joseph.* Moses included the blessing on the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh (v. 17), Joseph’s sons, with that of Joseph himself. (CSB)

*dew from heaven … deep waters.* See note on Ge 49:25. (CSB)

**33:15–16** See Ge 49:26 and note. (CSB)

**33:16** *best gifts of the earth.* Under the Lord’s blessing, Joseph’s land in the central part of Canaan was to be unusually fertile and productive. (CSB)

*who dwelt in the burning bush.* See Ex 3:1–6. (CSB)

**33:19** *abundance of the seas … treasures hidden in the sand.* References to maritime wealth (see note on Ge 49:13). (CSB)

**33:21** *He chose the best land.* For his livestock (see 3:12–20). (CSB)

**33:22** *springing out of Bashan.* The lion’s cub, not Dan, is the subject. Another possible translation is “keeping away from the viper.” Although someday he would be like a viper himself (see Ge 49:17), the early history of Dan pictured him as being somewhat more timid. (CSB)

**33:23** *lake.* The Sea of Galilee. Naphtali’s area extended from north of the Waters of Merom to south of the Sea of Galilee. (CSB)

**33:24** *oil*. Strategic and abundant natural resource for Asher that would allow this tribe to protect its borders as if it had bars of iron and bronze (v 25). (TLSB)

**33:26** *Jeshurun.* See note on 32:15. (CSB)

*rides … on the clouds.* See note on Ps 68:4. (CSB)

**33:27** *underneath are the everlasting arms*. No enemies would be able to rob Israel of the blessings God had in store for them, the instrument of His choice to bring salvation to a sin-cursed world. (TLSB)

**33:29** *shield.* See note on Ge 15:1. (CSB)

*high places.* See note on 1Ki 3:2. (CSB)

**Ch 33** While Moses’ final blessing hints at Israel’s future in the Promised Land, it ultimately points Israel beyond the physical Promised Land to the eternal promised land made possible through the Messiah. The Messiah, unlike Moses, kept faith (cf 32:51) and lived in perfect obedience to the Father. He secured the eternal promised land to prepare a place for all (Jn 14). • Father, bless me and make me a blessing to others so that I proclaim Your Word of salvation through Christ in this broken world. Amen. (TLSB)