

DEUTERONOMY

Chapter 33

Moses' Final Blessing on Israel

This is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the people of Israel before his death. 2 He said, “The LORD came from Sinai and dawned from Seir upon us; he shone forth from Mount Paran; he came from the ten thousands of holy ones, with flaming fire at his right hand. 3 Yes, he loved his people, all his holy ones were in his hand; so they followed in your steps, receiving direction from you, 4 when Moses commanded us a law, as a possession for the assembly of Jacob. 5 Thus the LORD became king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people were gathered, all the tribes of Israel together. 6 “Let Reuben live, and not die, but let his men be few.” 7 And this he said of Judah: “Hear, O LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring him in to his people. With your hands contend for him, and be a help against his adversaries.” 8 And of Levi he said, “Give to Levi your Thummim, and your Urim to your godly one, whom you tested at Massah, with whom you quarreled at the waters of Meribah; 9 who said of his father and mother, ‘I regard them not’; he disowned his brothers and ignored his children. For they observed your word and kept your covenant. 10 They shall teach Jacob your rules and Israel your law; they shall put incense before you and whole burnt offerings on your altar. 11 Bless, O LORD, his substance, and accept the work of his hands; crush the loins of his adversaries, of those who hate him, that they rise not again.” 12 Of Benjamin he said, “The beloved of the LORD dwells in safety. The High God surrounds him all day long, and dwells between his shoulders.” 13 And of Joseph he said, “Blessed by the LORD be his land, with the choicest gifts of heaven above, and of the deep that crouches beneath, 14 with the choicest fruits of the sun and the rich yield of the months, 15 with the finest produce of the ancient mountains and the abundance of the everlasting hills, 16 with the best gifts of the earth and its fullness and the favor of him who dwells in the bush. May these rest on the head of Joseph, on the pate of him who is prince among his brothers. 17 A firstborn bull—he has majesty, and his horns are the horns of a wild ox; with them he shall gore the peoples, all of them, to the ends of the earth; they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh.” 18 And of Zebulun he said, “Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out, and Issachar, in your tents. 19 They shall call peoples to their mountain; there they offer right sacrifices; for they draw from the abundance of the seas and the hidden treasures of the sand.” 20 And of Gad he said, “Blessed be he who enlarges Gad! Gad crouches like a lion; he tears off arm and scalp. 21 He chose the best of the land for himself, for there a commander's portion was reserved; and he came with the heads of the people, with Israel he executed the justice of the LORD, and his judgments for Israel.” 22 And of Dan he said, “Dan is a lion's cub that leaps from Bashan.” 23 And of Naphtali he said, “O Naphtali, sated with favor, and full of the blessing of the LORD, possess the lake and the south.” 24 And of Asher he said, “Most blessed of sons be Asher; let him be the favorite of his brothers, and let him dip his foot in oil. 25 Your bars shall be iron and bronze, and as your days, so shall your strength be. 26 “There is none like God, O Jeshurun, who rides through the heavens to your help, through the skies in his majesty. 27 The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms. And he thrust out the enemy before you and said, ‘Destroy.’ 28 So Israel lived in safety, Jacob lived alone, in a land of grain and wine, whose heavens drop down dew. 29 Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD, the shield of your help, and the sword of your triumph! Your enemies shall come fawning to you, and you shall tread upon their backs.”

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. (CSB)

33:2 *Sinai ... Seir ... Paran*. Mountains associated with the giving of the law. (CSB)

holy ones. Angels. (CSB)

33:5 *king*. The Lord, not an earthly monarch, was to be king over Israel. (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)

33:9 *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)

they observed your word. The Levites had charge of the tabernacle with its ark, in which the Book of the Law was placed. (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)

33:12 *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 *of Joseph*. Moses included the blessing on the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh (v. 17), Joseph's sons, with that of Joseph himself. (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)

33:19 *abundance of the seas ... treasures hidden in the sand*. References to maritime wealth. (CSB)

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

33:22 *leaps 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)

33:27 *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)

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)