

## Deuteronomy Chapter 33

### Verses 1-29

The final words of Moses to the people were a listing of the blessings of each of the tribes of Israel, Simeon excluded (verses 6-25).

These blessings were introduced and then concluded with passages which praise God (see verses 2-5, 26-29).

That these blessings of Moses are presented in this chapter as recorded by someone other than Moses is clear because (in verse 1), Moses was viewed as already being dead, and as the words of Moses were presented, the clause “he said” (verses 2, 7-8, 12-13, 18, 20, 22-24), was used.

This chapter contains the blessing of Moses and has many features of ancient war hymns, such as are found in (Judges chapter 5, Psalm 68, and Habakkuk chapter 3).

The poem commences with an emphasis on the majesty of God (verses 2-5).

Then there is a lengthy section relating the blessings on the various tribes (verses 6-25), although the tribe of Simeon is not mentioned.

The poem closes with a section of praise to Yahweh accompanied by reflections on the favor bestowed on Israel (verses 26-29).

### Verses 1-5

The statement “this is the blessing” evokes memories of the blessings the aged Jacob gave his 12 sons shortly before his death (Gen. 49:1-28).

Moses was acting like the “new father” of the 12 tribes.

A poetic name for Israel, “Jeshurun” (32:15; 33:26; Isa. 44:2), means “Uprightness”.

To all his precepts, warnings, and prophecies, Moses added a solemn blessing.

He begins with a description of the glorious appearances of God, in giving the law.

His law works like fire.

If received, it is melting, warming, purifying, and burns up the dross of corruption.

If rejected, it hardens, sears, pains, and destroys.

The Holy Spirit came down in cloven tongues, as of fire; for the gospel also is a fiery law.

The law of God written in the heart, is a certain proof of the love of God shed abroad there: we must reckon His law one of the gifts of his grace.

**Deuteronomy 33:1 "And this [is] the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death."**

“Man of God”:

The first use of this phrase in Scripture.

Subsequently, some 70 times in the Old Testament, messengers of God (especially prophets) are called “a man of God” (1 Sam. 2:27; 9:6; 1 Kings 13:1; 17:18; 2 Kings 4:7).

The New Testament uses this title for Timothy (1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 3:17).

Moses was viewed among such prophets in this conclusion to the book (see 34:10).

This is Moses' farewell message to the people, just before his death.

He speaks a blessing on the people he had led for forty years.

**Deuteronomy 33:2 "And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand [went] a fiery law for them."**

The activity of Yahweh as He led His people from “Sinai” is here recalled (compare Judges 5:4-5; Hab. 3:3 for identical terms).

One may perhaps translate *saints* as “myriads of holy ones” and the last sentence, “at his right hand were warriors of God”.

Note Paul’s reference to angels who mediated the law in (Acts 7:53; and Gal. 3:19, see also Hebrews 2:2).

“Sinai ... Seir ... Paran”:

These are mountains associated with the giving of the law, Sinai on the south, Seir on the northeast and Paran on the north.

These mountains provide a beautiful metaphor, borrowed from the dawn.

God, like the morning sun, is the Light that rises to give His beams to all the Promised Land.

“Of saints”:

Probably a reference to the angels who assisted God when the law was mediated to Moses at Mt. Sinai (see Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2).

This is a show of the magnificence of God, when He came to give His law to Israel.

Sinai was where the law was given.

Mount Paran and Seir were near, and the glory of God filled them along with Sinai.

Moses would know the extent of the glory of the LORD, because he was allowed in close proximity of the LORD.

Jesus sits at the right hand of God in heaven.

He not only sits at the right hand, but is in fact, the Right Hand of God.

He is the Doer part of the Godhead.

It was the finger of God that wrote the law on the tables of stone.

Whether the ten thousand saints appeared with Him or not, I cannot say.

We know that is what this Scripture indicates.

The holiness of God is around the saints in heaven.

**Deuteronomy 33:3 "Yea, he loved the people; all his saints [are] in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; [every one] shall receive of thy words."**

"He loved the people":

Notwithstanding the awe-inspiring symbols of majesty displayed at Sinai, the law was given in kindness and love to provide both temporal and eternal blessing to those with a heart to obey it.

Compare (Rom. 13:8-10).

In this Scripture, the Israelites are spoken of as the saints.

God first spoke the Ten Commandments from a fire and smoke on the mountain.

The Israelites were as if they were at His feet.

These Words from God were for the entire congregation.

"God loved the world so much, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall receive eternal life" (John 3:16).

**Deuteronomy 33:4 "Moses commanded us a law, [even] the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob."**

The law was of God; it came forth from his right hand (Deut. 33:2).

It is of his enacting, a declaration of his will, and has his authority stamped upon it, who is the lawgiver, and which lays under obligation to regard it.

But it was delivered to Moses, and by him to the children of Israel, on whom he urged obedience to it.

And so it is said to come by him, and sometimes is called the law of Moses (see John 1:17).

"Even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob":

Which either describes the persons who were commanded to keep the law, the tribes of Jacob or congregation of Israel, who were the LORD's people, portion, and inheritance (Deut. 32:9).

Or the law commanded, which was to be valued, not only as a peculiar treasure, but to be considered a possession, an estate, an inheritance, to be continued among them, and to be transmitted to their posterity (see Psalm 119:111).

These are the words of the people of Israel, and therefore are thus prefaced in the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem, the children of Israel said, "Moses commanded", etc.

They were represented by Moses

The greatest inheritance that Israel had, even above the Promised Land, was God's law.

**Deuteronomy 33:5 "And he was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people [and] the tribes of Israel were gathered together."**

"King in Jeshurun" (see note on 32:15).

Since Moses is nowhere else in Scripture referred to as king, most interpret this as a reference to the LORD as King over Israel.

However, Moses is the closest antecedent of the pronoun "he" in this clause, and the most natural understanding is that Moses is being referred to as a king.

Moses certainly exercised kingly authority over Israel and could be viewed as a prototype of the coming king.

Thus, united in the figure of Moses, the coming prophet like unto Moses (18:15) would be the prophet-king.

We remember from a previous lesson, that Jeshurun has to do with righteousness.

The people gathered at the foot of the mountain and the LORD appeared in the smoke and fire, and gave them the ten commandments.

He appeared to them as their King.

The law was absolute.

God did not want them to have an earthly king.

He would be their King.

Verses 6-23

The order in which the tribes are here blessed, is not the same as is observed elsewhere.

The blessing of Judah may refer to the whole tribe in general, or to David as a type of Christ.

Moses largely blesses the tribe of Levi.

Acceptance with God is what we should all aim at, and desire, in all our devotions, whether men accept us or not (2 Cor. 5:9).

This prayer is a prophecy, that God will keep up a ministry in his church to the end of time.

The tribe of Benjamin had their inheritance close to mount Zion.

To be situated near the ordinances, is a precious gift from the Lord, a privilege not to be exchanged for any worldly advantage, or indulgence.

We should thankfully receive the earthly blessings sent to us through the successive seasons.

But those good gifts which come down from the Father of lights, through the rising of the Sun of righteousness, and the pouring out of his Spirit like the rain which makes fruitful, are infinitely more precious, as the tokens of his special love.

The precious things here prayed for, are figures of spiritual blessing in heavenly things by Christ, the gifts, graces, and comforts of the Spirit.

When Moses prays for the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush, he refers to the covenant, on which all our hopes of God's favor must be founded.

The providence of God appoints men's habitations, and wisely disposes men to different employments for the public good.

Whatever our place and business are, it is our wisdom and duty to apply thereto.

And it is happiness to be well pleased therewith.

We should not only invite others to the service of God, but abound in it.

The blessing of Naphtali.

The favor of God is the only favor satisfying to the soul.

Those are happy indeed, who have the favor of God.

And those shall have it, who reckon that in having it they have enough, and desire no more.

**Deuteronomy 33:6 "Let Reuben live, and not die; and let [not] his men be few."**

“Reuben”:

Here is the prayer that this tribe would survive in large numbers (compare Num. 1:21; 2:11).

(Compare Gen. 49:3-4):

Moses may have discerned some weakness in him and referred to it; he was “unstable as water”, and later the tribe was criticized for its lack of participation in Israel’s battles (Judges 5:5-15).

Moses has begun speaking his blessings with Reuben, the oldest.

Reuben had sinned, when he slept with his father's wife, and Jacob had said he would not excel.

The blessing of Moses is a promise that Reuben's tribe will continue.

**Deuteronomy 33:7 "And this [is the blessing] of Judah: and he said, Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people: let his hands be sufficient for him; and be thou a help [to him] from his enemies."**

“Judah”:

Moses prayed that this tribe would be powerful in leading the nation to be victorious in battle through the help of the LORD.

The phrase “bring him unto his people” may indicate when he goes to battle, bring him back in peace.

According to (Num. 2:9), Judah was to march at the head of the army as the vanguard.

Jacob had promised Judah rule over his brothers.

Jesus was from the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

He would be King of all.

#### Verses 8-11

“Levi”:

Moses prays for the Levites to fulfill their tasks, God granting to them protection from their enemies.

Moses omitted Simeon, but that tribe did receive a number of allies in the southern territory of Judah (Joshua 19:2-9), and did not lose their identity (compare 4:34-38).

Levi's blessing indicated the priestly role of the tribe, in contrast to the more secular tone of (Gen. 49:5-7).

The tribe is characterized representatively in Moses and Aaron in (verse 8).

They were to have an educational role in teaching (verse 10a); and they were to be responsible for Israel's formal system of worship (verse 10b).

#### Verses 8-9

The “Thummim and thy Urim” refer to the stones in the high priest's breastplate that were used to determine God's will (Exodus 28:30; Lev. 8:8).

Moses prayed that the Levites would be guided by God and would judge according to His will.

**Deuteronomy 33:8 "And of Levi he said, [Let] thy Thummim and thy Urim [be] with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, [and with] whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah;"**

That is, Moses said of the tribe of Levi; as both the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem.

"Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy Holy One":

With Aaron, as the same Targums interpret it, who was of the tribe of Levi, and was a holy good man, a saint of the LORD, as he is called (Psalm 106:16).

Of the Urim and Thummim, which were with him and with every high priest (see note on Exodus 28:30).

And though they were not in use under the second temple, yet had their fulfilment in Christ the antitype of Aaron, who may be chiefly here intended.

Who is after called the Lord's Holy One, as he is, both as God and man.

Holy in both his natures, divine and human, and in his life and actions.

And with him are the true Urim and Thummim, lights and perfections.

And the light of nature, grace and glory, and all perfections, both divine and human (see notes on Exodus 28:30).

"Whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah":

Which, as it may respect Aaron, may be understood either of the LORD's proving him and contending with him.

By suffering the children of Israel to murmur against him and Moses, at the said places.

When, according to the three Targums, he stood in the temptation, and was perfect and found faithful.

Or of Levi, who, with the rest of the tribes, tried him, and strove with him at the same places.

Though Jarchi says they did not murmur with the rest that murmured.

As it may refer to Christ the antitype of Levi.

The sense is, that the Urim and Thummim should be with the Holy One, the Messiah, whom thou, O Levi, with the rest of the tribes, tempted and strove with at the places mentioned.

For it is expressly said, they tempted the LORD (Exodus 17:7).

And which is interpreted of Christ (1 Cor. 10:9).

The Levitical tribe was to minister.

The Urim and the Thummim were worn by the high priest.

God spoke to the people through this.



Massah and Meribah were where the Rock was struck by Moses, and brought forth water to satisfy the thirst of the multitude.

**Deuteronomy 33:9 "Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant."**

Which some understand of the high priests who were of this tribe, and according to the law were not to defile themselves, or mourn for a father or mother (Lev. 21:11).

Or rather, as others, of their having no respect to them in judgment, but determining all causes that came before them according to the law of God.

And the rules of justice and equity, in the most impartial manner, without having any regard to the nearest relations to them.

With this compare what Christ the antitype of Levi says (in Matthew).

Matt. 12:49 "Neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children":

Had no respect to persons in judgment, though ever so nearly related.

Many restrain this to the affair of the golden calf.

When the tribe of Levi gathered together, girded their swords on their thighs, and slew every man his brother, companion, and neighbor, guilty of that idolatry (Exodus 32:26).

"For they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant":

The law of God, spoken by him, and had the nature of a covenant with the people of Israel.

This the tribe of Levi observed, not only what respects the worship of God, and the contrary to it, idolatry, but all other moral and religious duties.

Christ fulfilled the whole law, and did always and all things what pleased the Lord (John 8:29).

The Levites had come to Moses, when Moses asked for all on God's side to come to him.

The Levites went through the camp, and killed their own relatives at the command of God.

Exodus 32:26-28 "Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who [is] on the LORD'S side? [let him come] unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him." "And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, [and] go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor." "And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men."

**Deuteronomy 33:10 "They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar."**

The priests and Levites, being dispersed among each of the tribes, having cities in them allotted to them.

Taught the people the laws, statutes, and ordinances of the LORD, moral, civil, and ceremonial (see Mal. 2:6).

"They shall put incense before thee":

Upon the altar of incense, which none but a priest might do. As the case of Uzziah shows; and which, the Jews say, he might do but once. The same priest might not offer incense twice. A new priest was always employed. In this they were typical of Christ, the only Intercessor who is always at the golden altar, to offer up the prayers of all saints with his much incense (Rev. 8:3).

"And whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar":

The altar of burnt offering, typical of Christ, who is both altar, sacrifice, and priest.

This is speaking of the Levites teaching the tribes of the law and judgements of God.

The Levites were to care for the worship in the tabernacle.

They cared for the temple, sacrifices, and kept oil burning in the incense continuously.

**Deuteronomy 33:11 "Bless, LORD, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again."**

Which lay in tithes, firstfruits, etc.

For the priests and Levites had no share in the division of the land.

Unless this can be understood of the cities and suburbs which were given them, or of houses and fields devoted, which fell unto them.

Or rather of their cattle, for the use of which they had suburbs appointed them.

For otherwise in husbandry and merchandise they were not employed.

Some render it "a host" or army, their service being a militia, or warfare (Num. 4:3).

Jarchi refers this to the Hasmonaeans or Maccabees, which were of this tribe.

"And accept the work of his hands":

In offering incense and sacrifices, and all other administrations of the office of priests and Levites.

Thus, the righteousness and sacrifice of Christ are of a sweet smelling savor, and very acceptable to God.

And all the spiritual sacrifices of the saints who are priests unto God, as of prayer and praise, are acceptable to him through Jesus Christ.

"Smite through the loins of them that rise against him":

Such as were the companies of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

And in all ages faithful ministers of the word meet with many enemies.

Whom they would not be able to withstand were not the Lord to appear for them, and protect them from them, and smite them thoroughly.

"And of them that hate them, that they rise not again":

Destroying them with an utter destruction, so that they are not able to make any other efforts upon them.

For such who are enemies to the priests of the Lord are enemies to him, and to true religion.

Enemies to God and Christ, to the law and to the Gospel, to the word of God and to the ordinances of it.

And therefore, to be severely handled and thoroughly punished.

Christ's enemies shall all be subdued under him (see Psalm 110:1).

This is still speaking of the Levites.

They would live of the offerings of the people and their work would be dedicated to God.

Those who rose against the Levites, were really attacking the God whom the Levites served.

**Deuteronomy 33:12 "[And] of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him; [and the LORD] shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders."**

"Benjamin":

That this tribe would have security and peace because the LORD would shield them was Moses' request.

They were given the land in the north of Judah near Jerusalem.

“Benjamin”, in (Genesis 49:27), is given a very warlike and fierce character (Judges 5:14).

“Beloved of the LORD” may reflect that he had been especially loved by his father (Gen. 44:20).

They would dwell in safety due to God’s presence.

God would love and protect Benjamin.

He and Joseph were Rachel's children.

They were beloved of their father and of God.

To be between his shoulders, means that God carried Him on His back, not literally but symbolically.

#### Verses 13-17

“Joseph”: This included both Ephraim and Manasseh (verse 17), who would enjoy material prosperity (verses 13-16), and military might (verse 17), which would compensate and reward them for the Egyptian slavery of their ancestor (see Gen. 49:26).

Ephraim would have greater military success in the future than Manasseh as the outworking of Jacob’s blessing of the younger over the older (see Gen. 48:20).

“Joseph’s” blessing relates to two spheres: to his people’s material prosperity from the produce of the land (verse 13-16), and to their military might.

The firstborn was “Manasseh”, but because of Jacob’s reversal in blessing (Gen 48:8-12), “Ephraim” took precedence.

This is depicted in dramatic poetic form in the last two lines of verse 17.

**Deuteronomy 33:13 "And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the LORD [be] his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath,"**

The tribe of Joseph, as the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem.

"Blessed of the LORD be his land":

As the lands inherited by his sons were extremely fruitful, the countries of Gilead and Bashan by Manasseh, and the fields of Samaria by Ephraim.

Jarchi says, "there was not in the inheritance of the tribes a land so full of all good things as the land of Joseph;" typical of the church of Christ.

The antitypical Joseph, which abounds with all good things through him, or of the better country in heaven.

"For the precious things of heaven":

That is, the pleasant, precious, and excellent fruits, reproduced by the influence of the heavens.

Particularly showers of rain which descend from there; emblems of the grace of God, and Gospel of Christ, which bring spiritual blessings to the sons of men on earth.

And make them fruitful in every good word and work.

For the dew; which descends also from heaven, and is of unspeakable use to the fruits of the earth, and is sometimes used as an emblem of the favor and goodness of God to his people (Hosea 14:5).

"And for the deep that coucheth beneath":

That is, beneath the earth, and breaks out upon it, and waters it, and makes it fruitful.

Which happiness the land of Joseph had, as well as the rain and dew of heaven.

This is to be understood of springs and fountains that flow out of the earth to the enriching of it.

And so the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem paraphrase the words, and may be applied to Christ and to his Gospel (SOS 4:15).

The blessings of God were upon him.

He was also a favorite son of his father.

God would bless him in every endeavor.

He actually received a double portion in his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.

Moses had actually spoken wealth and influence.

**Deuteronomy 33:14 "And for the precious fruits [brought forth] by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon,"**

Which has a wonderful influence upon many and most of the fruits of the earth.

To produce them out of their seeds in it, to bring them forward, to ripen and perfect them.

And to make them rich and excellent.

Jarchi says, "the land of Joseph lay open to the sun, and it sweetened the fruits of it ".

It improved them, and made them more valuable.

And this is spiritually true of Christ the sun of righteousness, to whose influence are owing the blessings of grace, redemption, peace, pardon, and justification.

And the graces of the Spirit, faith, hope, and love.

And by what believers are filled with, the fruits of righteousness (see Mal. 4:2).

"And for the precious things put forth by the moon":

The fruits which the moon helps forward by its coolness and moisture.

And those the above Jewish writer says are cucumbers and gourds.

And as various creatures are affected by the moon.

And Pliny says, that at the increase of the moon all sort of corn grows bigger and larger.

But a late learned writer remarks, that though upon the pressure of the moon on the globe many things depend, as the ebbing and flowing of the sea.

For the word here used is in the plural number, and signifies "months".

And so Onkelos paraphrases the words, "it produces precious fruits at the beginning of every month."

Or ripe fruit at the beginning of every month, as the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem.

For the spiritual meaning (see Rev. 22:2).

This is just saying, the blessings were for night and day.

**Deuteronomy 33:15 "And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills,"**

Which were from the beginning of the world, and for which the land, possessed by the children of Joseph, Manasseh, and Ephraim, were famous.

As the mountains of Gilead and Bashan, inherited by the former, and Mount Ephraim, and the mountains of Samaria, by the latter.

Which produced, besides great quantities of grass and corn, also vines, figs, olives, etc.

"And for the precious things of the lasting hills":

Which will endure as long as the world, the same as before in other words.

And which precious things may be emblems of the spiritual blessings of grace, provided in an everlasting covenant, and given to Christ for his people before the world began.

Or any mountains and hills were formed, and which are as lasting and as immovable as they are (see Prov. 8:22; Isa. 54:10).

This is speaking of the grapes and wonderful things that came from the mountain area.

He was too blessed, wherever he went.

He had suffered much for the LORD, and stayed strong in his faith.

He would be doubly blessed.

**Deuteronomy 33:16 "And for the precious things of the earth and fullness thereof, and [for] the good will of him that dwelt in the bush: let [the blessing] come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him [that was] separated from his brethren."**

Corn of all sorts produced out of the earth, and grass that grows out of it.

And cattle that feed upon it.

For all which some part of the land of Joseph, particularly Bashan, was famous.

As for the oaks that grew on it, so for the pasturage of it, and the cattle it bred (Deut. 32:14; see Psalm 22:12).

"And for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush":

The angel of the Lord, the Word and Son of God, who appeared to Moses in the bush, and made himself known as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

And expressed his good will to Israel, by sending Moses to deliver them out of their bondage.

And the favor and good will of the same divine Person is here wished for, and which has appeared in his assumption of human nature, obedience, sufferings, and death (Luke 2:14).

The bush was an emblem of Israel, and the state they were then in, and of the church of Christ (of which see note on Exodus 3:2).

And where Christ may be said to dwell, as he did among men, when he was made flesh.

And does dwell in the midst of his churches, and in the hearts of his people by.

Or all these blessings, as the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem, all before mentioned.

Let them come openly and visibly, and in great plenty, upon the posterity of Joseph, who was a type of Christ.

The head of the righteous, on whom all the blessings of grace are, and from whom they descend to all his spiritual offspring (Prov. 10:6).

"And upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren":

When he was sold by them into Egypt.

The Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem are, "and was shining in the glory of his brethren".

That is, when he was a ruler in Egypt, and had honor from his brethren there.

And was beautiful and glorious among them, as a Nazarite, as the word here used signifies (see Lam. 4:7).

And may be applied to Christ, who was chosen from among the people, and separated from sinners, and called a Nazarene (Psalm 89:19).

Moses remembers his encounter with God in the burning bush.

He says the God he saw in the burning bush blesses the tribe of Joseph.

Joseph gets a double portion of blessings, because he was separated from his brothers and taken to Egypt.

He won favor in Egypt, and actually saved the lives of Jacob and his brothers during the famine.

**Deuteronomy 33:17 "His glory [is like] the firstling of his bullock, and his horns [are like] the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they [are] the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they [are] the thousands of Manasseh."**

Such as were in Bashan, a country possessed by the posterity of Joseph (see Psalm 22:12).

And so might be called "his" bullock, or a young bull.

Was reckoned both comely and majestic.



The Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem refer this to the birthright which belonged to Reuben, and was taken from him, and given to Joseph (see 1 Chron. 5:2).

Some will have Joshua intended by the firstling of his bullock, so Jarchi.

Who was of the tribe of Ephraim, and so famous for his strength and courage, his warlike exploits and victories, and the glory, honor, and renown he obtained.

And who was a type of Christ, the first and only begotten Son of God, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person.

This is applied to the Messiah in some ancient Jewish writings.

"And his horns are like the horns of unicorns":

Of the unicorn or rhinoceros; and as the strength of these creatures, as of others, lies in their horns.

These are figures of the power and strength of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph (see Num. 23:22).

"With them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth":

Not to the ends of the world, as if the posterity of Joseph should carry their conquests and spread their dominion over all people to the ends of the world, as the Targum of Jonathan suggests. But to the ends of the land of Canaan, which was done by Joshua, when he smote the thirty one kings of that country.

The word "push" is used in allusion to the horns of creatures, with which they push, drive away from them, or hurt and destroy those that annoy them.

"And they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh.

Though Manasseh was the eldest son of Joseph, fewer are ascribed to him than to Ephraim the younger, according to Jacob's prediction (Gen. 48:19).

This has been in a spiritual sense verified in Christ, the antitype of Joseph, the horn of salvation, who by his great strength has vanquished all his, and the enemies of his people, and even spoiled principalities and powers.

Ephraim and Manasseh are sons of Joseph.

Ephraim received the right hand blessing.

"Horns" in the verse above, symbolize strength.

Joseph caused the family of Jacob to gather in Egypt for safety from the famine.

They multiplied, and the entire mass went to the Promised Land together.

**Deuteronomy 33:18 "And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and, Issachar, in thy tents."**

“Zebulun ... Issachar”:

Moses prayed that these two tribes from the fifth and sixth sons of Leah would receive God’s blessing in their daily lives, particularly through the trade on the seas.

“Zebulun” was assured prosperity in the “seas” (in fishing, maritime commerce, etc.), and at the seashores (in shellfish; purple dye, made from shellfish; and glass, made from sand).

**Deuteronomy 33:19 "They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck [of] the abundance of the seas, and [of] treasures hid in the sand."**

To the mountain of the house of the sanctuary, as all the three Targums.

To the temple built on a mountain, which Moses by a spirit of prophecy foresaw would be.

To which the tribes of Zebulun and Issachar would not only come up themselves, though at the more distant parts of the land.

But call and urge others, both Israelites and Gentiles, to do the same.

Partly by their example, and partly by persuasions and arguments.

Not the tribes of Israel that lay nearest them only, but the Heathens, the Tyrians and Sidonians, on whom they bordered.

And the Gentiles in Galilee of the Gentiles, which were neighbors to them.

A like instance (see in (Isa. 2:2); and perhaps this may have respect to the times of Christ and his apostles.

And to their being in those parts where the Gospel was preached, and many people were called (Matt. 4:13).

"There they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness":

Or true sacrifices, as the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem, in opposition to illegitimate ones, which were not according to the law, that had blemishes and defects in them.

And to such as were gotten by robbery, or in an unlawful way.

And may signify all righteous actions and good works done in faith.

And from right principles, though not to be depended upon for a justifying righteousness before God.

And all spiritual sacrifices, especially the sacrifices of praise for all blessings, and particularly for the righteousness of Christ.

And these are to be offered in the church of God, and upon the altar.

Which sanctifies every gift, and from whence they come up with acceptance to God.

"For they shall suck of the abundance of the seas":

Get a great deal of riches by trading at sea, and therefore under great obligations to offer sacrifices to the Lord, by whom they were prospered.

"And of treasures hid in the sand":

As gold and silver, pearls and corals, and the like, extracted from thence.

Or riches buried there through shipwrecks.

Or it may design the great wealth and riches they got by glass made of sand, taken out of the river Belus, which washed the coast of the tribe of Zebulun, as many historians relate.

The treasures of both seas and lands shall be theirs.

Their going out and their coming in shall be blessed.

These are both sons of Leah.

Verses 20-21

The Gadites were to play an important role in the battle.

Even though they had already possessed their portion of the land east of the Jordan, they would nevertheless cooperate faithfully along with the rest of Israel in the completion of the conquest.

**Deuteronomy 33:20 "And of Gad he said, Blessed [be] he that enlargeth Gad; he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head."**

“Gad”:

This tribe had large territory east of the Jordan and was a leader in gaining the victory in battles in Canaan.

**Deuteronomy 33:21 "And he provided the first part for himself, because there, [in] a portion of the lawgiver, [was he] seated; and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the LORD, and his judgments with Israel."**

That is, the portion of the land of Sihon and Og, as Jarchi rightly interprets it.

Which was the beginning or firstfruits of the subduing of the land that was promised.

This he looked at, chose, and desired it as his inheritance (Num. 32:1).

"Because there, in a portion of the lawgiver, was he seated":

Or in the portion and part of the inheritance of Israel was he placed by Moses the lawgiver, according to the will of God.

Or because there were in it palaces and towers of great personages, lawgivers, kings, and princes, well covered and strongly fortified.

Or here he was "hid", or "protected".

I.e., their families, wives, and children, while they assisted their brethren in subduing Canaan.

"And he came with the heads of the people":

Either "to" them, to Moses, Eleazar, and the seventy elders, and the heads of the tribes of Israel, to ask leave to have his part and portion on the other side Jordan.

Or "with" them, as we supply it.

Came with them over Jordan armed, to assist in the conquest and subduing of the land of Canaan.

"He executed the justice of the LORD, and his judgments with Israel":

That is, either he justly and truly fulfilled all his promises and engagements, on condition of which he was placed on the other side.

Or he, together with the rest of the Israelites, executed the righteous judgment of God upon the Canaanites, in the expulsion and destruction of them.

It seems Gad is strategically located on the east of the Jordan to ward off invaders.

This speaks of their strength in war.

He received the first portion of land on the east side of Jordan, with the tribe of Reuben, and half tribe of Manasseh.

**Deuteronomy 33:22 "And of Dan he said, Dan [is] a lion's whelp: he shall leap from Bashan."**

“Dan”:

Dan had the potential for great energy and strength and leaped from its southern settlement to establish a colony in the north.

Compare (Gen. 49:17-18), where Dan is compared to a serpent.

The phrase “Lion’s whelp” is applied to Judah in (Gen. 49:9).

It implies the timidity of youthfulness, but also indicates that the tribe of Dan would have great strength in the future, when it had grown to maturity.

Jacob had compared Dan to a serpent.

He was fierce in battle.

He is compared to a lion here.

**Deuteronomy 33:23 "And of Naphtali he said, O Naphtali, satisfied with favor, and full with the blessing of the LORD: possess thou the west and the south."**

“Naphtali”:

This tribe would enjoy the favor of God in the fullness of His blessing, having land in the west of Galilee and south of the northern Danites.

Moses is promising the tribe grace and prosperity.

The grace of the LORD would be upon him.

Verses 24-25

All shall be sanctified to true believers.

If their way be rough, their feet shall be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

As thy days, so shall thy strength be.

The day is often in Scripture put for the events of the day.

It is a promise that God would graciously and constantly support under trials and troubles, whatever they were.

It is a promise sure to all the spiritual seed of Abraham.

Have they work allotted?

They shall have strength to do it.

Have they burdens appointed?

They shall have strength, and never be tempted above what they are able to bear.

“Asher”:

Takes the form of an exposition of the name of the tribe, which means “Happy, Blessed”.

They would be the most blessed (the happiest), among the tribes.

They would be secure from their enemies, thus blessed by God with strength to live life to its fullest throughout their lifetime.

The tribe of “Asher” received a particularly rich blessing from Yahweh through Moses.

These words are marked by hyperbole (“shoes” made of “iron and brass”), and beauty (“As thy days, so shall thy strength be”), focusing on the grace of God in the believer’s life.

Truly, all the good anyone has is from God (Gen. 49:20).

**Deuteronomy 33:24 "And of Asher he said, [Let] Asher [be] blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil."**

“Asher”:

The request is that this tribe would experience abundant fertility and prosperity, depicted by reference to a foot-operated oil press.

Shoes of hard metal suited both country people and soldiers.

**Deuteronomy 33:25 "Thy shoes [shall be] iron and brass; and as thy days, [so shall] thy strength [be]."**

Either they should have such an abundance of these metals, that they could if they would have made their shoes of them.

But that is not usual.

Though it is said of Empedocles the philosopher, that he wore shoes of brass, which was very singular.

And some think that this tribe, because of the abundance of these metals, used to stick their shoes with iron and brass nails at the bottom of them.

As country people, soldiers, and travelers in various nations do.

But the true sense seems to be, that the land that fell to this tribe, and on which they trod, should yield much iron and brass.

As in Carmel, a mountain on the borders of it, brass was taken, as says Hesychius.

And Zidon is by Homer said to abound with brass, which belonged to this tribe.

And Sarepta, another city in it, had its name from which signifies to melt, from the melting of these metals in it (see Deut. 8:9).

Though some Jewish writers take the sense to be, that the land of Asher was so strongly fortified as if it had been enclosed with walls of brass and iron.

Or the gates of its cities were shut up with bolts and bars of iron and brass, as Jarchi, Kimchi, and Ben Melech observe.

So the Arabic:

"And as thy days, so shall thy strength be".

The same in old age as in youth.

Which is the sense of the Latin Vulgate version, and all the Targums.

Such were the vigor and strength of Moses himself (Deut. 34:7).

And so, may denote a renewal of youth, like that of eagles.

And, in a spiritual sense, a revival of the graces of the Spirit of God.

As to the exercise of them, and an increase of spiritual strength.

So that the inward man is renewed day by day.

And may also denote such a measure of strength given, as is proportioned to the events that daily befall.

Or to the services and sufferings men are called unto (see 1 Cor. 10:13).

"Dipping his foot in oil" could be olive oil, or any other oil that would make him rich.

The Hebrews thought it a great blessing to have many children.

This was part of his blessing from Moses.

He was to be favored among his brethren.

The shoes of iron speak of their solid foundation.

Verses 26-29

None had such a God as Israel.

There is no people like the Israel of God.

What is here said of the church of Israel is to be applied to the spiritual church.

Never were people so well seated and sheltered.

Those who make God their habitation, shall have all the comforts and benefits of a habitation in him (Psalm 91:1).

Never were people so well supported and borne up.

How low whatsoever the people of God are at any time brought, everlasting arms are underneath them, to keep the spirit from sinking, from fainting, and their faith from failing.

Divine grace is sufficient for them (2 Cor. 12:9).

Never were people so well commanded.

Thus, believers are more than conquerors over their spiritual enemies, through Christ that loved them.

Never were people so well secured and protected.

Israel shall dwell in safety alone.



All who keep close to God, shall be kept safe by him.

Never were people so well provided for.

Every true Israelite looks with faith to the better country, the heavenly Canaan, which is filled with better things than corn and wine.

Never were people so well helped.

If in danger of any harm, or in want of any good, they had an eternal God to go to.

Nothing could hurt those whom God helped, nor was it possible the people should perish who were saved by the LORD.

Never were people so well armed.

Those in whose hearts is the excellency of holiness, are defended by the whole armor of God (Eph. Chapter 6).

Never were people so well assured of victory over their enemies.

Thus shall the God of peace tread Satan under the feet of all believers, and shall do it shortly (Rom. 16:20).

May God help us to seek and to set our affections on the things above.

And to turn our souls from earthly perishing objects.

That we may not have our lot with Israel's foes in the regions of darkness and despair, but with the Israel of God, in the realms of love and eternal happiness.

These verses form the glorious conclusion of the blessings to the 12 tribes.

The work of Yahweh that had begun in Genesis was still in full operation at the end of Deuteronomy.

Poetic images come from Ugaritic (the poetic corpus of far-north Canaan), in the words “who rideth upon the heaven in thy help;”.

This description was usually associated with Baal but is used here to demonstrate the LORD's superiority.

The LORD is “eternal God” with “everlasting arms”; His people Israel “shall dwell in safety” in a land of abundant “corn, wine”, and “dew” from the heavens.

“Enemies shall be found liars”, as Israel will be “saved by the LORD” (Psalms 68:33-34; 86:8; Jer. 10:6).

Verses 26-27

The God of Jeshurun”:

Moses concluded his blessings with a reminder of the uniqueness of Israel’s God.

For “Jeshurun” (see note on 32:15).

**Deuteronomy 33:26 "[There is] none like unto the God of Jeshurun, [who] rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky."**

Or Israel, as all the three Targums.

For this is one of the names of the people of Israel (See notes on Deut. 32:15).

And the LORD was their God in a special sense, having chosen, redeemed them, and made a covenant with them.

And there is no God like him for the perfections of his nature, his purity and holiness, his goodness, wisdom, power, faithfulness, etc.

And for the wonderful works of nature, providence, and grace, done by him.

And for the blessings of goodness, temporal and spiritual, he bestows on men.

The tribes being particularly blessed, the whole body of the people are pronounced happy, and whose happiness is enlarged on in (Deut. 33:26).

"Who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky":

Which he has the sovereign rule and disposal of.

And can and does dispose of all the artillery therein, as illustrious proofs of his glory and excellency.

And for the help of his people, and the destruction of their enemies.

As when he sent forth hail, thunderings, and lightnings, upon the Egyptians, and frightened them":

And cast down hailstones upon the Canaanites, and slew many of them.

And when the stars in their course fought against Sisera (see Psalm 68:4; Judges 5:20).

This is speaking of the God of righteousness.

Moses has returned to speaking of the majesty of God.

God is their very present help.

He wants them to be His people, and Him to be their God.

God defends Israel, when they are faithful to Him.

**Deuteronomy 33:27 "The eternal God [is thy] refuge, and underneath [are] the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy [them]."**

He who was before all worlds, and will be when time shall be no more is thy refuge.

Or, thy habitation, or mansion-house, (so the word signifies).

In whom thou art safe and easy, and at rest, as a man in his own house.

Every true Israelite is at home in God.

The soul returns to him, and reposes in him.

And they that make him their habitation shall have all the comforts and benefits of a habitation in him.

"And underneath are the everlasting arms":

That is, of God, which are the support of his people, and their protection, safety, and security.

Such as the arms of his everlasting love, which encircle them, and compass them about as a shield.

His everlasting covenant, which is immovable, and in which they ever remain.

Eternal redemption and salvation, wrought out by Christ, which secures them from destruction.

And everlasting power, by which they are kept and preserved as in a garrison. And everlasting consolation, which flows from all this.

And so, the arms of Christ, or his almighty power, are under the world, to uphold it in being.

And under his church, to support it, on whose shoulders the government of it is.

And under particular believers, whom he carries in his arms, embraces in his bosom, bears them up under all their afflictions and temptations, trials and exercises.

Nor will he ever suffer them to drop out of his arms, or to be plucked from thence.

"And he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee":

The Canaanites out of the land of Canaan, to make room for Israel, which he was just about to do, and quickly did.

In like manner Christ thrusts out Satan and the spiritual enemies of his people, whom to dispossess is a work of mighty power.

And not only so, but gives orders to destroy them, and does destroy them.

And makes his people more than conquerors over them.

"And shall say, destroy them":

I.e., shall give thee not only command and commission, but also power, to destroy them.

For God's saying is doing, his word comes with power.

God was with them in the fire by night and the smoke by day.

He fought their enemies for them.

He is their shelter and their protection.

He is with Israel, and with all believers in Christ, to help us through the storms of life.

He does not always take us out of the storm, but He is in there with us to protect us.

Verses 28-29

This pledge was only partially fulfilled after they entered the Land, but it awaits a complete fulfillment in the kingdom of Messiah.

**Deuteronomy 33:28 "Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob [shall be] upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew."**

"Fountain of Jacob":

This is a euphemism for Jacob's seed, referring to his posterity.

Their inheritance of the land of promise is here.

It will truly be a land of milk and honey.

The blessings of God are upon it.

As long as they are faithful to God, their enemies will live at peace with them.

They are afraid of Israel's God.

**Deuteronomy 33:29 "Happy [art] thou, O Israel: who [is] like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who [is] the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places."**

“Happy art thou, O Israel” are the words that build on the divine blessing of Asher (meaning “Happy”; in 33:24-25).

What an extraordinary culmination of the prophetic, poetic blessings on each of the 12 tribes (2 Sam. 7:23).

There has never been a people more blessed.

Their happiness should be overwhelming.

Their God shall run their enemy away.

He will protect them, and prosper them in all they put their hands to.

The Christians are blessed like these Israelites.

We are the spiritual house of Israel.

All the blessings bestowed on physical Israel are ours as well.

We are loved of God, what more could we possibly want?

### **Deuteronomy Chapter 33 Questions**

1. This is Moses' \_\_\_\_\_ message to the people.
2. Verse 2 is speaking of what about God?
3. Where was the law given to Israel?
4. Why would Moses be familiar with the glory of God?
5. Besides sitting at the right hand of the Father, what is Jesus?

6. It was the \_\_\_\_\_ of God that wrote the law on the stones.
7. Who are the saints in verse 3?
8. How much did God love the world?
9. Where did God speak the ten commandments from?
10. The Israelites were as if they were at His \_\_\_\_\_.
11. What was Israel's greatest inheritance?
12. Jeshurun has to do with \_\_\_\_\_.
13. Who was Israel's King?
14. Who did Moses speak the first blessing on?
15. What was His sin?
16. Jesus was from the tribe of \_\_\_\_\_.
17. What was the job of the Levite?
18. Who wore the Urim and the Thummim?
19. What were some of the day to day tasks of the Levites?
20. When someone came against a Levite, they were coming against whom?
21. Who did Moses call the beloved of the Lord?
22. Why did Joseph receive a double portion of blessings?
23. What were the names of his two sons who headed tribes?
24. What was Moses remembering, when he spoke of him that dwelt in the bush?
25. What do "horns" symbolize?
26. Where was Gad located?
27. What is meant by dipping his foot in oil?
28. Who is verse 26 speaking of?
29. God defends Israel, when they are \_\_\_\_\_ to Him.
30. Who is God with, to help them through the storms of life?

31. Why will Israel's enemies be at peace with them?

32. We are loved of God, what more could we possibly want?