

Into the Promised Land • Joshua's Story

Lesson #42 - "A Blessing For Each Tribe" • Part I - Deuteronomy 33:6-19

• H A N D O U T •

► This lesson • Moses shifts from his general blessing, his summary of Israel's history since leaving Egypt, along with his final warnings to Israel, and begins to address each individual tribe. There is an intimacy in his words. He sees each tribe as having a separate personality. He writes about them much like a father talking about his beloved sons, all of whom are so very different from each other. In many ways I am sure Moses has begun thinking of these people as his children. Moses is certainly aware of the differences in opinions and attitudes between the tribal leaders. After all, he has been dealing with them, face to face, for some forty-two years. These Blessings express Moses' deep desires of hope for Israel's future.

As we study these prophetic blessings, it is imperative that we see them as a kind of conclusions to the individual prophetic blessings that Jacob spoke over each of his sons before his death. That is a span some 450 years. Yet, what Jacob prophesied to each son is the basis that Moses uses to summarize the status of each tribe which Jacob's sons began.

Note: Reuben, Jacob's first born son, whose mother was Leah, received the first individual Blessing. But the rest of the Blessing do not occur in any particular order.

THE TRIBE OF REUBEN:

► Deuteronomy 33:6 • "Let Reuben live and not die, nor his men be few."

Q: How are we to understand this request for "Reuben to live and not die?"

THE TRIBE OF JUDAH:

► Deuteronomy 33:7 • Moses said this about the tribe of Judah: "O Lord, hear the cry of Judah and bring them together as a people. Give them strength to defend their cause; help them against their enemies!"

Q: What is Judah's lineage?

Q: What is significant about the blessing to Judah?

► Genesis 49:8-10 • "Judah, your brothers will praise you. You will grasp your enemies by the neck. All your relatives will bow before you. Judah, my son, is a young lion that has finished eating its prey. Like a lion he crouches and lies down; like a lioness -- who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from his descendants, until the coming of the one to whom it belongs, the one whom all nations will honor.

THE TRIBE OF LEVI

► Deuteronomy 33:8-11 • Moses said this about the tribe of Levi: "O Lord, you have given your Thummim and Urim -- the sacred lots -- to your faithful servants the Levites. You put them to the test at Massah and struggled with them at the waters of Meribah. The Levites obeyed your word and guarded your covenant. They were more loyal to you than to their own parents. They ignored their relatives and did not acknowledge their own children. They teach your regulations to Jacob; they give your instructions to Israel. They present incense before you and offer whole burnt offerings on the altar. Bless the ministry of the Levites, O Lord, and accept all the work of their hands.

Hit their enemies where it hurts the most; strike down their foes so they never rise again."

Q: What is the lineage of Levi?

Q: Since Moses was basing his individual blessings for Israel's Tribes on Jacob's blessings which he gave each of his sons before he died, what did Jacob say about Levi?

Q: What Moses said about the Tribe of Levi differed from what Jacob said about this son, Levi. Thus Moses deviated from the pattern he had established for these blessings. On what did Moses base his prophetic blessing?

Q: What is the test that occurred at Massah and how is it connected to Meribah?

Q: What words of praise does Moses give the Levites – words that ultimately sets them apart from the rest of the Tribes?

Q: How were they as a tribe rewarded?

Q: How did Moses conclude this prayer-blessing for the Tribe of Levite?

Q: How vastly different were the words of blessings Moses' wrote for the Levites then from Jacob?

THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN

► Deuteronomy 33:12 • 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."

Q: Considering how Moses described the blessings of honor bestowed on both the Tribes of Judah and the Levites, why would Moses now refer to Benjamin as the "beloved of the LORD?"

Q: How does Moses' description of Benjamin compare to Jacob's prophetic Blessing?

► Genesis 49:27 • "Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; In the morning he shall devour the prey, And at night he shall divide the spoil."

Q: What was the eventual outcome for the tribe of Benjamin?

THE TRIBE OF JOSEPH [EPHRAIM & MANASSEH]

► Deuteronomy 33:13-17 • 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; with the best the sun brings forth and the finest the moon can yield; with the choicest gifts of the ancient mountains and the fruitfulness of the everlasting hills; with 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. In 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."

Q: Why does Moses refer to the Tribe of Joseph? When the tribal inheritance of land is given, it won't be to the Tribe of Joseph, but rather the inheritance will be split evenly between Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh and thereafter, they will be referred to as "Half-Tribes." How are we to understand this reference?

Q: The Blessings for Joseph are in what two distinct parts?

1.

2.

Q: What is the significance of the last sentence: "Such are the ten thousands of Ephraim; such are the thousands of Manasseh."

▶ We have now covered six of the twelve tribes and their blessing which Moses has written for them as his final legacy, and which Joshua inserted into the record following Moses' death. We will complete the record of this legacy in the next study.



Next Time • Lesson #43
"A Blessing for Each Tribe"
Part 2
Deuteronomy 33:20-29

