

Midrash *VeZot Ha Brachah* (“And This is the Blessing”)
Deuteronomy 33:1 – 34:12

HaAzinu (Last week’s Portion) described Israel’s punishments for disobedience
“These Blessings” describe Israel’s ultimate destiny determined by God!

Moses’ Final Blessing of the Sons of Israel

Deuteronomy 33:1-29

Reuben: “*Let Reuben live and not die*” -- Long live Reuben!
Earlier, Jacob had chastised Reuben for his sin with Bilhah
Verse 6

Judah: “*Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah.*”
As the leader of the tribes, may Judah be victorious over Israel’s enemies
Verse 7

Simeon: Missing from Moses’ Blessing
Included in Judah’s blessing?? (Since Simeon is dispersed among Judah)
...Or deliberately excluded – possibly due to actions at *Ba’al Pe’or*??

Levi: May Levi always be the Tribe of Priests because:
They were tested (and passed) at *Masseh & Meribah* Verse 8
They make no distinction as they carry out God’s covenant Verse 9
They were the Torah teachers Verse 10
They bless his work & provide for him as he serves Verse 11

Benjamin: “*The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him*” Verse 12
Benjamin was favored by Jacob and is favored by God
Temple was located in Benjamin’s territory
Tabernacle in Shiloh (Ephraim – Joseph’s son) for 200+ years

Joseph: Blessings of a fertile land & bountiful crops verses 13-17
“*Let the blessing come on the head of Joseph*”
The same blessing Jacob gave to Joseph (Gen 49:26)

Ephraim (& Manasseh) shall be dispersed to the ends of the earth

Zebulun: “Going out” as mariners verses 18-19

Issachar: Dedicated his time to “tents” of Torah study I Chron 12:32
“*Treasures hidden in the sand*” possibly referring to oil??

Gad: “*Blessed is he who enlarges Gad; he dwells as a lion*” verses 20-21
Largest area east of Jordan & was first defender of western tribes from attack
“*He administered the justice of the LORD*”
Fought alongside of the other Tribes in conquest of the Land

Dan: “*Dan is a lion’s whelp*” - on the coast – defender of Israel verse 22
Compared to Jacob’s prophecy of Dan as a serpent (Gen 49:17)

Naphtali: “*satisfied with favor, and full of the blessing of the LORD*” verse 23
In the Galilee Region, the most fertile farmland

Asher: “*most blessed of sons....and let him dip his foot in oil*” verses 24-25
Oil could be olives or petroleum; in either case, leading to prosperity

The Death of Moses

Deuteronomy 34:1-12

God allows Moses to see all the Land but not enter into it

Moses died at age 120: full of energy & with perfect eyesight (no wonder he could see all the Land)
And was buried east of the Jordan in an unknown grave

As we finish reading these final verses of Deuteronomy, we say:

“Chazak, chazak, ve-nitchazek!” Be strong, be strong, and let us be strengthened!”

Haftarah: Joshua 1:1-18 God Commissions Joshua to Cross the Jordan

Brit Chadashah: John 17:1-26 Yeshua Blesses His Disciples