

Deuteronomy 33:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death.

Analysis

And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death.

The designation ish ha-Elohim ("man of God") appears only here and Psalm 90:1 for Moses in the Pentateuch, emphasizing his unique prophetic authority. This title connects Moses to later prophets (Samuel, Elijah, Elisha) who bore divine authority, yet Moses remains preeminent as covenant mediator. Berakah ("blessing") parallels Jacob's blessing of his sons (Genesis 49), establishing patriarchal continuity—Moses functions as covenant father blessing covenant sons before his departure.

The phrase lifnei moto ("before his death") heightens drama and theological significance. Like Jacob's deathbed blessings, Moses' final words carry prophetic weight for Israel's tribal futures. The blessing format follows ancient Near Eastern testamentary patterns where dying patriarchs pronounce destinies over descendants, but here divine inspiration guarantees fulfillment. Moses speaks not merely hopeful wishes but prophetic declarations of each tribe's covenant role in the land.

Chapter 33's structure mirrors Genesis 49: opening theophany (vv. 2-5), individual tribal blessings (vv. 6-25), and concluding doxology (vv. 26-29). This literary parallelism reinforces covenant continuity from Abraham's family to the twelve

tribes of Israel. Moses blesses, but Yahweh ultimately fulfills—human mediation serves divine sovereignty.

Historical Context

Moses' blessing occurs immediately before his death on Mount Nebo (chapter 34), likely the same day or within days. At 120 years old, Moses knows his death is imminent (31:2, 14) and provides final prophetic direction for Israel's tribal identities in Canaan. The 'man of God' title emphasizes Moses' prophetic office—he speaks God's word, not personal opinion.

Deuteronomy 33 parallels Genesis 49 (Jacob's blessing) in structure and function, but with key differences: Moses blesses all Israel including Levi (priestly tribe) but omits detailed mention of Simeon (likely absorbed into Judah). The blessings reflect circa 1406 BC realities and anticipate tribal experiences during the conquest and settlement periods. Some tribal prophecies (like Judah's leadership, v. 7) are fulfilled centuries later in David's reign.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does Moses' identity as 'man of God' inform our understanding of prophetic authority and biblical inspiration?
2. What does the blessing genre (similar to Genesis 49) teach about God's sovereign purposes for His people across generations?

Interlinear Text

וְזַאת בָּרוּךְ הַבָּרוּךְ רַאשֵּׁךְ בְּבָנֶךָ מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר אָשֶׁר
H2063 And this is the blessing H1293 H834 blessed H1288 wherewith Moses H4872 the man H376

מֹתָתוֹ לִפְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֹתָתוֹ
of God H853 the children H1121 of Israel H3478 before H6440 his death H4194

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 14:6 (References God): Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the LORD said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea.

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