

Deuteronomy 33:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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,

Analysis

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. Moses begins Joseph's extensive blessing (verses 13-17), the longest tribal benediction except Judah. The Hebrew mevorakh YHWH artso (מברך יהוה ארצו) "blessed of the LORD be his land") emphasizes territorial prosperity as divine gift. Joseph's double portion through Ephraim and Manasseh fulfills Jacob's elevation of Joseph's sons to tribal status (Genesis 48:5).

Precious things (meqed, מְקֵד) appears five times in verses 13-16, a unique Hebrew term suggesting choice, excellent, or chief things. **Of heaven, for the dew** invokes shamayim (שָׁמַיִם, "heavens") and tal (תָּל, "dew"), vital in Mediterranean agriculture where summer rain is absent. Dew sustained crops between rainy seasons—its presence or absence marked blessing or curse (Haggai 1:10).

The deep that coucheth beneath (tehom rovetzet tachath, תְּהוֹם רֻבֶּצֶת תָּחַת) pictures subterranean waters "crouching" or "lying down" under the land—springs, aquifers, and water tables blessing agriculture. Genesis 49:25 similarly blessed Joseph with "blessings of the deep that lieth under." This comprehensive blessing—from heaven's dew above to earth's waters below—promises abundant agricultural productivity, fulfilled in Joseph's territories' legendary fertility.

Historical Context

Joseph's tribal territories (Ephraim and Manasseh) occupied the central highlands and valleys of Canaan, the heartland of Israel. Ephraim's allotment included the fertile hill country with Shechem as its center, while Manasseh stretched across both sides of the Jordan, encompassing rich agricultural lands and strategic trade routes (Joshua 16-17).

The blessing's agricultural emphasis proved accurate. The central highlands where Ephraim settled featured diverse microclimates, reliable springs, and fertile valleys producing grain, wine, and oil. The region's prosperity enabled Ephraim's political dominance in the Northern Kingdom—the entire kingdom was often called "Ephraim" by prophets (Isaiah 7:2, Hosea 4:17). Manasseh's trans-Jordan territories included the fertile plains of Gilead, famous for balm (Jeremiah 8:22) and livestock (Numbers 32:1).

Joseph's blessing recalls his own experience of suffering followed by exaltation and fruitfulness. Genesis 49:22 calls Joseph "a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well." The agricultural blessing symbolizes spiritual fruitfulness—suffering producing abundant life, as Jesus taught (John 12:24). Joseph typologically prefigures Christ, rejected by brothers, exalted by the Father, and becoming source of life for many.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does agricultural blessing in Scripture function as metaphor for spiritual fruitfulness in believers' lives?
2. What does it mean to receive blessing "from above" (heaven's dew) and "from below" (deep waters) simultaneously?

3. How should material prosperity be understood as gift rather than entitlement or reward for merit?
4. In what ways does Joseph's life pattern of suffering before fruitfulness parallel Christian experience?
5. How can we maintain dependence on God's provision when living in regions or circumstances of material abundance?

Interlinear Text

וְאֶלְיוֹן	רַבָּת	אֶת	יְהוָה	אֶת												
And of Joseph	he said	Blessed	of the LORD	be his land												
H3130	H559	H1288	H3068	H776												
<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: right; vertical-align: bottom; padding-bottom: 5px;">מִתְּרוֹן</td> <td style="text-align: right; vertical-align: bottom; padding-bottom: 5px;">שְׁמָה</td> <td style="text-align: right; vertical-align: bottom; padding-bottom: 5px;">לְמַטָּה</td> <td style="text-align: right; vertical-align: bottom; padding-bottom: 5px;">וּמִתְּהֵה</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: right; vertical-align: bottom; padding-bottom: 5px;">for the precious things</td> <td style="text-align: right; vertical-align: bottom; padding-bottom: 5px;">of heaven</td> <td style="text-align: right; vertical-align: bottom; padding-bottom: 5px;">for the dew</td> <td style="text-align: right; vertical-align: bottom; padding-bottom: 5px;">and for the deep</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: right; vertical-align: bottom; padding-bottom: 5px;">H4022</td> <td style="text-align: right; vertical-align: bottom; padding-bottom: 5px;">H8064</td> <td style="text-align: right; vertical-align: bottom; padding-bottom: 5px;">H2919</td> <td style="text-align: right; vertical-align: bottom; padding-bottom: 5px;">H8415</td> </tr> </table>					מִתְּרוֹן	שְׁמָה	לְמַטָּה	וּמִתְּהֵה	for the precious things	of heaven	for the dew	and for the deep	H4022	H8064	H2919	H8415
מִתְּרוֹן	שְׁמָה	לְמַטָּה	וּמִתְּהֵה													
for the precious things	of heaven	for the dew	and for the deep													
H4022	H8064	H2919	H8415													
<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: right; vertical-align: bottom; padding-bottom: 5px;">רַבָּת</td> <td style="text-align: right; vertical-align: bottom; padding-bottom: 5px;">פְּתַחַת</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: right; vertical-align: bottom; padding-bottom: 5px;">that coucheth beneath</td> <td style="text-align: right; vertical-align: bottom; padding-bottom: 5px;">H8478</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: right; vertical-align: bottom; padding-bottom: 5px;">H7257</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>					רַבָּת	פְּתַחַת	that coucheth beneath	H8478	H7257							
רַבָּת	פְּתַחַת															
that coucheth beneath	H8478															
H7257																

Additional Cross-References

Micah 5:7 (References Lord): And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the LORD, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.

Isaiah 18:4 (References Lord): For so the LORD said unto me, I will take my rest, and I will consider in my dwelling place like a clear heat upon herbs, and like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest.

Proverbs 3:20 (Parallel theme): By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew.

Proverbs 19:12 (Parallel theme): The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favour is as dew upon the grass.

Hosea 14:5 (Parallel theme): I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org