

Deuteronomy 33:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills,

Analysis

And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills. Moses shifts from cyclical blessings (seasons, sun, moon) to geological permanence. *Rosh* (רֹאשׁ, "chief/head") modifies *harerê-qedem* (הָרְאֵת קָדֵם, "mountains of antiquity"), while *meqed* (מְקֵדֵד, "precious") again describes *giv'ôth ôlâm* (גִּבְעֹות עוֹלָם, "everlasting hills").

The "ancient mountains" and "lasting hills" convey immemorial stability—geological features predating human history, witnessing God's faithfulness across generations. Practically, mountainous terrain provided:

1. Defensive positions for cities
2. Mineral resources—iron, copper, stone
3. Varied microclimates enabling diverse agriculture
4. Springs from mountain aquifers
5. Terraced hillsides for vineyards and olive groves. *Rosh* ("chief things") may specifically reference mineral deposits or superior products from highland agriculture.

Theologically, ancient mountains symbolize God's eternal covenant faithfulness.

Psalm 90:2 declares, "Before the mountains were brought forth... from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." Habakkuk 3:6 describes God whose "ways are everlasting," causing "perpetual hills" to bow. The blessing promises resources as

enduring as creation itself—not temporary windfall but sustainable inheritance. This points ultimately to believers' "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" (1 Peter 1:4).

Historical Context

Joseph's territories included significant mountainous regions, particularly the central highlands of Ephraim. This terrain, while defensively advantageous, required extensive terracing for agriculture—labor-intensive but producing superior wine and oil. The hill country's stone was excellent for construction, evidenced by substantial Iron Age remains at Samaria, Shechem, and Tirzah.

Manasseh's territory included Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal (blessing and curse mountains, Deuteronomy 27), plus portions of the Gilead highlands east of Jordan. Gilead's mountainous regions produced valuable resources including the famous "balm of Gilead," possibly mastic resin or balsam, exported internationally (Genesis 37:25, Jeremiah 46:11).

The blessing's emphasis on permanence proved ironic given Ephraim's later apostasy and exile. Despite blessed territory, covenant unfaithfulness resulted in dispossession (2 Kings 17:5-23). The "ancient mountains" remained, but inhabitants were removed. This demonstrates that land blessing depends on covenant obedience—God's gifts don't nullify His justice. The principle applies to the church: visible blessings and heritage don't guarantee continued favor without faithfulness. Christ's words to Ephesus, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent" (Revelation 2:5), warn against presuming upon past blessing.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How do 'ancient mountains' and 'lasting hills' serve as metaphors for God's unchanging faithfulness?
2. What's the relationship between receiving enduring blessing and maintaining covenant faithfulness?
3. How can material/geographical advantages become sources of spiritual presumption if divorced from obedience?
4. In what ways does the permanence of creation testify to God's eternal nature and reliable promises?
5. How should believers balance gratitude for physical/material blessings with prioritizing eternal, spiritual inheritance?

Interlinear Text

וּמָרָא אֲשֶׁר	בָּרָא	קָדָם	וּמְמַתְּדָה
And for the chief things	mountains	of the ancient	and for the precious things
H7218	H2042	H6924	H4022
וְתַּחַת גִּבְעָה וְתַּחַת עֲזֹזָם:			
hills	of the lasting		
H1389	H5769		

Additional Cross-References

Habakkuk 3:6 (Parallel theme): He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting.

Genesis 49:26 (Parallel theme): The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.