

Deuteronomy 33:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof, and for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush: let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren.

Analysis

And for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof, and for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush: let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren. Moses concludes Joseph's blessing with comprehensive scope —meged eretz ūmelōâh (מְגֵד אֶרֶץ וּמְלֹאת, "precious things of the earth and its fullness") encompasses all terrestrial blessing, paralleling Psalm 24:1. This universal language elevates Joseph's blessing to cosmic proportions.

The stunning phrase **the good will of him that dwelt in the bush** invokes the Exodus burning bush theophany (Exodus 3:2-6), where YHWH revealed Himself to Moses. Ratzon (רצון, "good will/favor/acceptance") emphasizes God's gracious disposition, not merely provision but divine pleasure. The bush reference recalls God's covenant name ("I AM"), His promise to deliver Israel, and the holy ground of divine presence. Joseph's blessing flows from the same covenant God who commissioned Moses.

Him that was separated from his brethren (nezir echayv, נְזִיר אֲחֵי) uses nezir—same root as "Nazirite," meaning "consecrated/separated." Joseph's separation from brothers through betrayal paradoxically fulfilled divine purpose, positioning him to save the family (Genesis 45:5-8). His crown (qodqod, קָדָק, "head/crown") receives blessing, acknowledging his preeminence among brothers. This

typologically points to Christ, rejected by His own yet exalted to save them (John 1:11, Philippians 2:9-11).

Historical Context

The blessing's reference to the burning bush connects Joseph's blessing to Exodus deliverance and covenant identity. Moses grounds tribal blessing in foundational redemptive history—Joseph's descendants receive favor from the same God who delivered Israel from Egypt. This theological grounding prevents treating blessing as natural entitlement rather than covenant grace.

Joseph's historical "separation" included literal exile to Egypt, slavery, imprisonment, and finally exaltation to Pharaoh's right hand. His experience paradigmatically displayed God's providence turning evil to good (Genesis 50:20). The theme of suffering before glory, humiliation before exaltation, became central to biblical theology, finding ultimate expression in Christ's crucifixion and resurrection.

Joseph's tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh, dominated the Northern Kingdom politically and territorially. Unfortunately, Jeroboam (an Ephraimite) established idolatrous calf worship at Bethel and Dan (1 Kings 12:25-33)—bitter irony given Joseph's blessing invoking the burning bush theophany. This apostasy eventually caused the Northern Kingdom's destruction. The warning persists: greatest blessing creates greatest responsibility; to whom much is given, much is required (Luke 12:48). Covenant privilege demands covenant faithfulness.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does Joseph's experience of separation and suffering before exaltation prefigure Christ's redemptive pattern?
2. What does it mean that blessing flows from 'the good will of him that dwelt in the bush'—God's gracious favor rather than earned reward?
3. In what ways can believers be 'separated' for God's purposes through difficult circumstances?
4. How should receiving comprehensive blessing ('precious things of the earth and fulness thereof') shape our stewardship responsibilities?
5. What lessons emerge from comparing Joseph's blessing with Ephraim's later apostasy regarding the relationship between privilege and responsibility?

Interlinear Text

וְרָצָן וְמִמְּנָעָן אֶל כָּל אֶתְּנָהָר וְמִלְאָה
And for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof and for the good will
H4022 H776 H4393 H7522

לְרַאשׁ שָׁכְנָה תְּבִרְכֵת אֶת שְׁכַנְתִּי
of him that dwelt in the bush let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph
H7931 H5572 H935 H7218 H3130

אֶל קְרַבְתָּךְ תְּבִרְכֵת יְהִי רָצָן אֶל בְּנֵי
and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren
H6936 H5139 H251

Additional Cross-References

Acts 7:35 (Parallel theme): This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.

Psalms 24:1 (Parallel theme): The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

