

Deuteronomy 33:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words.

Analysis

Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words.

The opening af chovev amim ("indeed/yea, he loved the people") declares covenant love (chovev from root chavav, to cherish or love) as foundational to Yahweh's relationship with Israel. This isn't sentimental affection but covenant commitment—God's electing love precedes and grounds all covenant stipulations. Amim ("peoples/tribes") is plural, emphasizing the twelve tribes' distinct identities united under one covenant God.

Kol-qedoshav beyodekha ("all his saints in your hand") uses qedoshim (holy ones/saints) to describe Israel—not morally perfected but set apart for covenant service. God's yad (hand) signifies protective power, sovereign control, and covenant security. Being "in God's hand" means divine preservation despite enemies, wandering, or judgment. This echoes Jesus' language: "Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28).

The imagery tokhu leraglekha ("they sat at your feet") depicts disciples learning from a master teacher—Israel as students of Torah with Yahweh as divine instructor. Yissa midabrotekha ("receive of your words") means lifting/carrying divine speech, implying responsible stewardship. Israel doesn't merely hear but bears God's words as covenant witnesses to the nations. This establishes Israel's

pedagogical mission: learning Torah, embodying it, and ultimately mediating it to all peoples through Messiah.

Historical Context

This verse reflects the covenant relationship established at Sinai where Israel became Yahweh's 'treasured possession' (Exodus 19:5), a 'kingdom of priests and holy nation' (19:6). The 'sitting at feet' imagery parallels ancient educational contexts where disciples literally sat at teachers' feet to receive instruction (cf. Acts 22:3, Paul 'at the feet of Gamaliel'). Moses himself 'sat' to judge Israel (Exodus 18:13), but here Israel collectively sits at Yahweh's feet.

The designation 'saints' (qedoshim) for Israel emphasizes their consecrated status despite frequent failures. Old Testament holiness is primarily positional (set apart for God) rather than behavioral perfection, though moral transformation should follow consecration. The protective 'hand' imagery recurs throughout Deuteronomy and the prophets, assuring Israel of divine preservation despite exile and dispersion (Isaiah 49:16; 62:3).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does understanding God's electing love as the foundation of covenant relationship affect your view of obedience and law-keeping?
2. What does Israel's identity as 'saints' (holy ones by divine calling, not moral perfection) teach about New Testament believers' sanctification?

Interlinear Text

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|-------------------|-------------|-------------------------|---------|----------------|-----------------|------------|-------|
| וְאֵת | חָבֵב | עַמִּים | כָּל | קָדוֹשׁ | בָּנָה | בְּיַד | וְהַ |
| Yea | he loved | the people | H3605 | all his saints | are in thy hand | | |
| H637 | H2245 | H5971 | | H6918 | | H3027 | H1992 |
| וְהַיְתָה | לְבָנָה | אֶל | לְבָנָה | אֶל | מִזְבְּחַת | מִזְבְּחַת | |
| and they sat down | at thy feet | every one shall receive | | of thy words | | | |
| H8497 | H7272 | H5375 | | H1703 | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Luke 10:39 (Word): And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

Malachi 1:2 (Love): I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob,

Acts 22:3 (Word): I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

Luke 8:35 (Parallel theme): Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

1 Peter 1:5 (Parallel theme): Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.