

Welcome to 10 Minute Topics

This week's topic is: Blessings of Moses

Devarim – Chapter 33

The Blessing of Moses

(1) And this is the blessing that Moses the man of G-d blessed the children of Israel before his death. (2) And he said: The L-rd came from Sinai, and rose from Seir unto them; He shined forth from Mount Paran, and He came from the myriads holy, at His right hand was a fiery law unto them. (3) Indeed, You loved the peoples, all His holy ones - they are in Your hand; and they sit down at Your feet, receiving of Your words. (4) Moses commanded us a law, an inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. (5) And there was a king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people were gathered, all the tribes of Israel together.

Rashi's commentary¹

Moses began his blessing by praising G-d before addressing the needs of Israel. This was Moses' way of stating that the Israelites were worthy of a blessing.

G-d rose from Seir because He first offered the Torah to the children of Esau who lived in Seir but they did not want to accept the Torah. G-d shined forth from Mount Paran because He offered the children of Ishmael the Torah but they did not want to accept it.

G-d came to Israel at Sinai as a groom comes to his bride. G-d came to Sinai with some of His holy angels. He brought the fiery law that was written in letters of black fire upon a background of white fire which were inscribed onto tablets with G-d's right hand.

All Israel's righteous and good people clung to G-d. They did not turn away from Him and G-d guarded them. These righteous people centered themselves at G-d's feet and entered into G-d's protection. They gladly accepted G-d's decrees and laws.

G-d is the King for His sovereignty was always upon the Israelites. Whenever Israel is gathered into a unified group and there is peace among them, G-d is their King. However, He is not their King when there is strife among them.

Reuben

(6) Let Reuben live, and not die in that his men become few.

Judah

(7) And this for Judah, and he said: Hear, L-rd, the voice of Judah, and bring him in unto his people; his hands shall contend for him, and You shall be a help against his adversaries.

Levi

(8) And of Levi he said: Your Thummim and Your Urim be with Your holy one, whom You did prove at Massah, with whom You did strive at the waters of Meribah; (9) Who said of his father,

and of his mother: 'I have not seen him'; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew he his own children; for they have observed Your word, and keep Your covenant. (10) They shall teach Jacob Your ordinances, and Israel Your law; they shall put incense before You, and whole burnt-offering upon Your altar. (11) Bless, L-rd, his substance, and accept the work of his hands; smite through the loins of them that rise up against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again.

Benjamin

(12) Of Benjamin he said: The beloved of the L-rd shall dwell in safety by Him; He covers him all the day, and He dwells between his shoulders.

Joseph

(13) And of Joseph he said: Blessed of the L-rd be his land; for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that couches beneath, (14) And for the precious things of the fruits of the sun, and for the precious things of the yield of the moons, (15) And for the tops of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the everlasting hills, (16) And for the precious things of the earth and the fullness thereof, and the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush; let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the crown of the head of him that is prince among his brethren. (17) His firstling bullock, majesty is his; and his horns are the horns of the wild-ox; with them he shall gore the peoples all of them, even the ends of the earth; and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh.

Zebulun and Issachar

(18) And of Zebulun he said: Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out, and, Issachar, in thy tents. (19) They shall call peoples unto the mountain; there shall they offer sacrifices of righteousness; for they shall suck the abundance of the seas, and the hidden treasures of the sand.

Gad

(20) And of Gad he said: Blessed be He that enlarges Gad; he dwells as a lioness, and tears the arm, yea, the crown of the head. (21) And he chose a first part for himself, for there a portion of a ruler was reserved; and there came the heads of the people, he executed the righteousness of the L-rd, and His ordinances with Israel.

Dan

(22) And of Dan he said: Dan is a lion's whelp, that leaps forth from Bashan.

Naphtali

(23) And of Naphtali he said: O Naphtali, satisfied with favor, and full with the blessing of the L-rd: possess you the sea and the south.

Asher

(24) And of Asher he said: Blessed be Asher above sons; let him be the favored of his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil.

According to Ibn Ezra, Simeon is omitted from this blessing for two reasons:

1. Jacob castigated him (Bereishit 49:5)

Simeon and Levi are brethren; weapons of violence their kinship.

2. The sinners at Baal-peor were of the Tribe of Simeon (Bamidbar 25:3)²

And Israel joined himself unto the Baal of Peor; and the anger of the L-rd was kindled against Israel.

Moses Blesses All of Israel

(25) Iron and brass shall be your bars; and as your days, so shall your strength be. (26) There is none like unto G-d, O Jeshurun, who rides upon the heaven as your help, and in His majesty on the skies. (27) That is the abode of G-d immemorial, and below are the world's mighty ones; and He thrust out the enemy from before you, and said: 'Destroy.' (28) And Israel dwells in safety, the fountain of Jacob alone, in a land of corn and wine; even his heavens drop down dew. (29) Happy are you, O Israel, who is like unto you? A people saved by the L-rd, the shield of your help, and that is the sword of your majesty! And your enemies shall dwindle away before you; and you shall tread upon their high places.

Rashi's commentary¹

The strong men of Israel dwelled in the border cities and would protect the land so that the enemies could not enter.

Israel is commanded to remember that there is none like G-d. Israel must acknowledge that there is none like G-d among all the gods of the nations and the rocks of the nations is not like the Rock of Israel. G-d resides in the heavens while all the strong men live below Him. The power of the mighty ones (Sihon, Og, kings of Canaan) will dwindle before G-d and everyone will dwell safely in the Land of Israel.

After Moses specified the blessings to Israel he declared that everything was there's. Their salvation depends upon G-d, Who is the Shield that helps Israel and the Sword of Israel's majesty. Moses stated that the enemies of the Israelites will lie to them but Israel will crush its enemies.

After these blessings, Moses ascended the mountain where he died.

Text based on "The Holy Scriptures" – Jewish Publication Society, 1917

*The usage of G-d and L-rd is in compliance with the command to not take the Name of G-d in vain or to erase His Name. If you print out these pages, please treat them with respect. If you need to get rid of them, please take them to a synagogue and ask that they be reused or placed in a geniza.

¹Rashi's commentary from The Judaica Press Complete Tanach
(http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/9997/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-33.htm)

²Stone Edition Tanach (p. 510)

© Rachel-Esther bat-Avraham, 2009
For Personal Use Only . All Other Uses Must be Pre-Approved
rachel-esther@becomingjewish.org