



Deuteronomy 33

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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Deuteronomy 33.

(A brief overview of the main topics).

INTRODUCTION: this is a continuation of the previous chapter; Israel is soon to cross over the River Jordan and enter into the Promised Land. The primary focus of all the following chapters is upon Moses re-telling to the new generation about to cross the River Jordan all the covenant laws the LORD originally gave to Israel at Mount Sinai so that the new generation would renew the covenant with the LORD before they enter the Promised Land. The final chapter finishes with the LORD burying Moses and Joshua being ready to lead Israel over the River Jordan and into the Promised Land (see also the introduction to chapter one).

NOTE: for information of people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

DEUTERONOMY 33 (ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION)

- **Deuteronomy 33:1-29** This is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the people of Israel before his death. ² He said, "The LORD came from Sinai and dawned from Seir upon us; he shone forth from Mount Paran; he came from the ten thousands of holy ones, with flaming fire at his right hand." ³ Yes, he loved his people, all his holy ones were in his hand; so they followed in your steps, receiving direction from you, ⁴ when Moses commanded us a law, as a possession for the assembly of Jacob. ⁵ Thus the LORD became king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people were gathered, all the tribes of Israel together. ⁶ "Let Reuben live, and not die, but let his men be few." ⁷ And this he said of Judah: "Hear, O LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring him in to his people. With your hands contend for him, and be a help against his adversaries." ⁸ And of Levi he said, "Give to Levi your Thummim, and your Urim to your godly one, whom you tested at Massah, with whom you quarreled at the waters of Meribah; ⁹ who said of his father and mother, 'I regard them not'; he disowned his brothers and ignored his children. For they observed your word and kept your covenant. ¹⁰ They shall teach Jacob your rules and Israel your law; they shall put incense before you and whole burnt offerings on your altar. ¹¹ Bless, O LORD, his substance, and accept the work of his hands; crush the loins of his adversaries, of those who hate him, that they rise not again." ¹² Of Benjamin he said, "The beloved of the LORD dwells in safety. The High God surrounds him all day long, and dwells between his shoulders." ¹³ And of Joseph he said, "Blessed by the LORD be his land, with the choicest gifts of heaven above, and of the deep that crouches beneath, ¹⁴ with the choicest fruits of the sun and the rich yield of the months, ¹⁵ with the finest produce of the ancient mountains and the abundance of the everlasting hills, ¹⁶ with the best gifts of the earth and its fullness and the favor of him who dwells in the bush. May these rest on the head of Joseph, on the pate of him who is prince among his brothers. ¹⁷ A firstborn bull—he has majesty, and his horns are the horns of a wild ox; with them he shall gore the peoples, all of them, to the ends of the earth; they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh." ¹⁸ And of Zebulun he said, "Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out, and Issachar, in your tents. ¹⁹ They shall call peoples to their mountain; there they offer right sacrifices; for they draw from the abundance of the seas and the hidden treasures of the sand." ²⁰ And of Gad he said, "Blessed be he who enlarges Gad! Gad crouches like a lion; he tears off arm and scalp. ²¹ He chose the best of the land for himself, for there a commander's portion was reserved; and he came with the heads of the people, with Israel he executed the justice of the LORD, and his judgments for Israel." ²² And of Dan he said, "Dan is a lion's cub that leaps from Bashan." ²³ And of Naphtali he said, "O Naphtali, sated with favor, and full of the blessing of the LORD, possess the lake and the south." ²⁴ And of Asher he said, "Most blessed of sons be Asher; let him be the favorite of his brothers, and let him dip his foot in oil. ²⁵ Your bars shall be iron and bronze, and as your days, so shall your strength be. ²⁶ "There is none like God, O Jeshurun, who rides through the heavens to your help, through the skies in his majesty. ²⁷ The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms. And he thrust out the enemy before you and said, 'Destroy.' ²⁸ So Israel lived in safety, Jacob lived alone, in a land of grain and wine, whose heavens drop down dew. ²⁹ Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD, the shield of your help, and the sword of your triumph! Your enemies shall come fawning to you, and you shall tread upon their backs."

THE KING OF ISRAEL

In this chapter the LORD is pictured as the King of Israel who loves His people and is seen coming from Sinai and Seir (Esau's land; Jacob's brother) and Mount Paran (a poetic name for Mount Sinai) with Israel in His hand and receiving direction from Him and following in his steps. The law of God that Moses commanded Israel is pictured as the possession of Israel (Deut. 33:1-5).

BLESSINGS TO THE TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL

Prior to entering the Promised Land and just before Moses death he gives the following blessings to each tribe of Israel.

1. **Reuben:** Reuben would live, but he would only have a few men.
2. **Judah:** the LORD is asked to hear the prayers of Judah and bring Judah in to Israel and that the LORD would be a help to Judah against his adversaries.
3. **Levi:** is called the LORD'S holy ones whom the LORD tested at Massah and whom He quarrelled with at the waters of Meribah. Levi disowned and ignored their father and mother, their brothers, and their children because Levi observed the LORD'S word and kept His covenant. Levi is told they will teach Israel the LORD'S rules and law and put incense and whole burnt offerings on the Altar of Israel. The LORD is asked to bless Levi and accept the work of their hands and crush the loins of Levi's adversaries and those who hate them so that they would not rise again and to give Levi the LORD'S Thummim and His Urim. For information concerning the Thummim and Urim see the notes titled: Thummin and Urim (below).
4. **Benjamin:** is spoken of as the beloved of the LORD who dwells in the safety of the High God. The LORD is seen as dwelling between Benjamin's shoulders and surrounding Benjamin all day long.
5. **Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh):** the LORD is asked to bless all the land of Joseph with the abundance and finest produce and choicest gifts of heaven and of the fish in the sea and with the choicest fruits of the sun. Joseph is spoken as the prince among his brothers.
6. **Ephraim and Manasseh:** are pictured as two horns of a wild and majestic bull or ox. The bull is pictured as using its two horns to gore all the peoples that cover the earth. The two horns are the ten thousands of Ephraim and the thousands of Manasseh and Joseph is the bull.
7. **Zebulun:** is similar to Issachar, Zebulun is told to rejoice in their going out, they would call peoples to their mountain and there they would offer right sacrifices. Zebulun would draw from the abundance of the seas and the hidden treasures of the sand.
8. **Issachar:** is similar to Zebulun, Issachar is told to rejoice in their tents, they would call peoples to their mountain and there they would offer right sacrifices. Issachar would draw from the abundance of the seas and the hidden treasures of the sand.
9. **Gad:** is pictured as crouching like a lion that tears off arm and scalp, Gad chose the best of the land for himself, a commander's portion was reserved for Gad because he came with the heads of Israel and executed the justice of the LORD and His judgments for Israel, those who enlarge Gad would be blessed.
10. **Dan:** is pictured as a lion's cub that leaps from Bashan.

11. **Naphtali:** is spoken of as being salted with flavour and full of the blessing of the LORD because they possess the lake and the south.
12. **Asher:** is spoken of as being most blessed and his sons being the favourite of Asher's brothers, he is pictured as dipping his foot in oil (wealth and fruitful) and his bars (shoes meaning strength) would be as iron (warrior strength) and bronze (meaning a base or lesser tribe than the other tribes).

Jeshurun: is a poetic name for the nation of Israel the LORD is Israel's shield of help and the sword of their triumph. He is pictured as a Majestic warrior riding through the heavens to Israel's help and thrusting out the enemy before them. The LORD is seen with everlasting arms that are holding Israel and as the eternal God who is their dwelling place. They are seen as a victorious people defeating their enemies and pictured as a happy people saved by the LORD and living alone in safety in a land of grain and wine, whose heavens would give rain in their seasons.

THUMMIN AND URIM

Give to Levi your Thummim, and your Urim: (v8) it is important to note, the Urim and Thummim were not the jewelled breastplate of judgment, but something that was placed into it as the following verse shows:

- And in the breastpiece of judgment you shall put the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be on Aaron's heart, when he goes in before the LORD. Thus Aaron shall bear the judgment of the people of Israel on his heart before the LORD regularly. (Exodus 28:30).

The meaning of Urim and Thummim: since it is not known exactly what the Urim and Thummin were, it has been suggested Urim and Thummim carry the following ideas:

How the Urim and Thummim functioned: following are the two most common ways various commentators suspect the Urim and Thummin may have been used:

1. They were placed in the breastplate, so that whenever the high priests entered the presence of the LORD they would be over his heart. In this way the high priest would always bear the means of making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before the LORD."
2. The high priest carried in his breastplate the Urim and Thummin perhaps two sticks or two stones, one white and the other black. When Israel was preparing for battle, and desired to know God's will, they would shake or toss the sticks or stones, if they turned up black, they would not go to battle, and if they turned up white, they would proceed into battle with the knowledge that they were in the will of God.

However, the following verse:

- And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets. (1 Sam. 1 28:6).

Makes clear a definite answer was not always obtainable, so it may not have been as simple as tossing two stones on ground, and Moses never used them, which would indicate that they were given for a certain time in Israel's history for the high priest to aid those who could not find God's will and guidance any other way.

The Urim and Thummim faded from use: The Old Testament indicates that the Urim and Thummin faded from use during the early days of Israel's monarchy, this may be due to the following fact: During the monarchy God installed prophets to communicate God's messages to the courts in Jerusalem and Samaria. It seems that prophets who revealed God's word to the king replaced the Urim and Thummin, by which God

previously revealed His mind to the priest. The only mention of the Urim and Thummin after the Babylonian exile is the following verse showing that Ezra was still using the Urim and Thummin to determine the ancestry of the priests who returned from the exile:

- The governor told them that they were not to partake of the most holy food, until there should be a priest to consult Urim and Thummim. (Ezra 2:63).

After this the Bible never mentions the Urim and Thummin again, they were a gift from God to assist His people during a certain time in their history.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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