
DEUTERONOMY 33:1 This is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death.

Moses delivers a prophetic blessing to the children of Israel, Deu 33:1. The introduction, Deu 33:2-5. Prophetic declarations concerning Reuben, Deu 33:6; concerning Judah, Deu 33:7; concerning Levi, Deu 33:8-11; concerning Benjamin, Deu 33:12; concerning Joseph, Deu 33:13-17; concerning Zebulun, Deu 33:18, Deu 33:19; concerning Gad, Deu 33:20, Deu 33:21; concerning Dan, Deu 33:22; concerning Naphtali, Deu 33:23; concerning Asher, Deu 33:24, Deu 33:25. The glory of the God of Jeshurun, and the glorious privileges of his true followers, Deu 33:26-29.

Verse 1

And this is the blessing wherewith Moses - blessed, etc. - The general nature of this solemn introduction, says Dr. Kennicott, is to show the foundation which Moses had for blessing his brethren, viz., because God had frequently manifested his glory in their behalf; and the several parts of this introduction are disposed in the following order: -

1. The manifestation of the Divine glory on Sinai, as it was prior in time and more magnificent in splendor, is mentioned first.
2. That God manifested his glory at Seir is evident from Jdg 5:4 : Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the fields of Edom, the earth trembled and the heavens dropped, etc.
3. The next place is Paran, where the glory of the Lord appeared before all the children of Israel, Num 14:10.

Instead of he came with ten thousand saints, by which our translators have rendered מרבת קדש meribeboth kodesh, Dr. Kennicott reads Meribah-Kadesh, the name of a place: for we find that, towards the end of forty years, the Israelites came to Kadesh, Num 20:1, which was also called Meribah, on account of their contentious opposition to the determinations of God in their favor, Num 20:13; and there the glory of the Lord again appeared, as we are informed Num 20:6. These four places, Sinai, Seir, Paran, and Meribah-Kadesh, mentioned by Moses in the text, are the identical places where God manifested his glory in a fiery appearance, the more illustriously to proclaim his special providence over and care of Israel.

DEUTERONOMY 33:2 He said, "The LORD came from Sinai, and rose from Seir to them. He shone from Mount Paran. He came from the ten thousands of holy ones. At his right hand was a fiery law for them.

DEUTERONOMY 33:3 Yes, he loves the people. All his saints are in your hand. They sat down at your feet. Each receives your words.

Verse 3

Yea, he loved the people - This is the inference which Moses makes from those glorious appearances, that God truly loved the people; and that all his saints, קדושיי kedoshaiv, the people

whom he had consecrated to himself, were under his especial benediction; and that in order to make them a holy nation, God had displayed his glory on Mount Sinai, where they had fallen prostrate at his feet with the humblest adoration, sincerely promising the most affectionate obedience; and that God had there commanded them a law which was to be the possession and inheritance of the children of Jacob, Deu 33:4. And to crown the whole, he had not only blessed them as their lawgiver, but had also vouchsafed to be their king, Deu 33:5.

Dr. Kennicott proposes to translate the whole five verses thus: -

Verse 1

And this is the blessing wherewith Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death - And he said Deu 33:2. Jehovah came from Sinai, And he arose upon them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, And he came from Meribah-kadesh: From his right hand a fire shone forth upon them. Deu 33:3. Truly, he loved the people, And he blessed all his saints For they fell down at his feet, And they received of his words. Deu 33:4. He commanded us a law, The inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. Deu 33:5. And he became king in Jeshurun; When the heads of the people were assembled, Together with the tribes of Israel.

We have already seen that Dr. Kennicott reads מריבה קדש Meribah-Kadesh, the name of a place, instead of מרבת קדש meribebboth kodesh, which, by a most unnatural and forced construction, our version renders ten thousands of saints, a translation which no circumstance of the history justifies. Instead of a fiery law, אש דת esh dath, he reads, following the Samaritan version, אש אור esh ur, a fire shining out upon them. In vindication of this change in the original, it may be observed,

1. That, though דת dath signifies a law, yet it is a Chaldee term, and appears nowhere in any part of the sacred writings previously to the Babylonish captivity: תורה torah being the term constantly used to express the Law, at all times prior to the corruption of the Hebrew, by the Chaldee.
2. That the word itself is obscure in its present situation, as the Hebrew Bibles write it and esh in one word אשדת eshdath, which has no meaning; and which, in order to give it one, the Massorah directs should be read separate, though written connected.
3. That the word is not acknowledged by the two most ancient versions, the Septuagint and Syriac.
4. That in the parallel place, Hab 3:3, Hab 3:4, a word is used which expresses the rays of light, קרנים karnayim, horns, that is, splendours, rays, or effulgence of light.
5. That on all these accounts, together with the almost impossibility of giving a rational meaning to the text as it now stands, the translation contended for should be adopted.

Instead of All his saints are in his hand, Dr. Kennicott reads, He blessed all his saints - changing בידך beyadecha, into ברך barach, he blessed, which word, all who understand the Hebrew letters will see, might be easily mistaken for the other; the ד dalet and the ר resh being, not only in MSS., but also in printed books, often so much alike, that analogy alone can determine which is the true letter; and except in the insertion of the י yod, which might have been easily mistaken for the apex at the top of the ב beth very frequent in MSS., both words have the nearest resemblance. To this may be added, that the Syriac authorizes this rendering. Instead of לרגלך leraglecha, and מדברתיך middabberotheycha, Thy feet, and Thy words, Dr. Kennicott reads the pronouns in the third person singular, לרגליו leraglaiv and מדברותיו middabberothaiv, His feet, His words, in which he is supported both by the Septuagint and Vulgate. He also changes ישא yissa, He shall receive, into יסשו yisseu, They shall receive. He contends also that משה Mosheh, Moses, in the fourth verse, was written by

mistake for the following word מורשה morashah, inheritance; and when the scribe found he had inserted a wrong word, he added the proper one, and did not erase the first. The word Moses, he thinks, should therefore be left out of the text, as it is improbable that he should here introduce his own name; and that if the word be allowed to be legitimate, then the word king must apply to him, and not to God, which would be most absurd. See Kennicott's first Dissertation, p. 422, etc.

DEUTERONOMY 33:4 Moses commanded us a law, an inheritance for the assembly of Jacob.

DEUTERONOMY 33:5 He was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people were gathered, all the tribes of Israel together.

DEUTERONOMY 33:6 "Let Reuben live, and not die; Nor let his men be few."

Verse 6

Let Reuben live, and not die - Though his life and his blessings have been forfeited by his transgression with his father's concubine, Gen 49:3, Gen 49:4; and in his rebellion with Korah, Num 16:1-3, etc., let him not become extinct as a tribe in Israel. "It is very usual," says Mr. Ainsworth, "in the Scripture, to set down things of importance and earnestness, by affirmation of the one part, and denial of the other; Isa 38:1 : Thou shalt die, and not live; Num 4:19 : That they may live, and not die; Psa 118:17 : I shall not die, but live; Gen 43:8 : That we may live, and not die; Jer 20:14 : Cursed be the day - let not that day be blessed; 1Jn 2:4 : He is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 1Jn 2:27 : Is truth, and no lie; Joh 1:20 : He confessed, and denied not; 1Sam 1:11 : Remember me, and not forget thy handmaid; Deu 9:7 : Remember, forget not; Deu 32:6 : O foolish people, and unwise. In all these places it is evident that there is a peculiar emphasis in this form of expression, as if he had said, Let him not only not die, but let him live in great and increasing peace and prosperity. Do not only not forget me, but keep me continually in remembrance. He denied not, but confessed Fully and Particularly. O foolish people - silly and stupid, and unwise - destitute of all true wisdom."

And let not his men be few - It is possible that this clause belongs to Simeon. In the Alexandrian copy of the Septuagint the clause stands thus: Καὶ Συμεων εστω πολυς εν αρτιμω, and let Simeon be very numerous, but none of the other versions insert the word. As the negative particle is not in the Hebrew, but is supplied in our translation, and the word Simeon is found in one of the most ancient and most authentic copies of the Septuagint version; and as Simeon is nowhere else mentioned here, if not implied in this place, probably the clause anciently stood: Let Reuben live, and not die; but let the men of Simeon be few. That this tribe was small when compared with the rest, and with what it once was, is evident enough from the first census, taken after they came out of Egypt, and that in the plains of Moab nearly forty years after. In the first, Simeon was 59,300; in the last, 22,200, a decrease of 37,100 men!

DEUTERONOMY 33:7 This is for Judah. He said, "Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah. Bring him in to his people. With his hands he contended for himself. You shall be a help against his adversaries."

Verse 7

And this is the blessing of Judah - Though the word blessing is not in the text, yet it may be implied from Deu 33:1; but probably the words, he spake, are those which should be supplied: And this he spake of Judah, Lord, hear the voice of Judah; that is, says the Targum, receive his prayer when he goes out to battle, and let him be brought back in safety to his own people. Let his hands be sufficient for him - let him have a sufficiency of warriors always to support the tribe, and vindicate its rights; and let his enemies never be able to prevail against him! Three things are expressed here:

1. That the tribe of Judah, conscious of its weakness, shall depend on the Most High, and make prayer and supplication to him;
2. That God will hear such prayer; and,
3. That his hands shall be increased, and that he shall prevail over his enemies. This blessing has a striking affinity with that which this tribe received from Jacob, Gen 49:9; and both may refer to our blessed Lord, who sprang from this tribe, as is noticed on the above passage, who has conquered our deadly foes by his death, and whose praying posterity ever prevail through his might.

DEUTERONOMY 33:8 About Levi he said, "Your Thummim and your Urim are with your godly one, whom you proved at Massah, with whom you contended at the waters of Meribah.

Verse 8

Of Levi he said - Concerning the Urim and Thummim, see Exo 28:30 (note).

Thy holy one - Aaron primarily, who was anointed the high priest of God, and whose office was the most holy that man could be invested with.

Therefore Aaron was called God's holy one, and the more especially so as he was the type of the Most Holy and blessed Jesus, from whom the Urim - all light and wisdom, and Thummim - all excellence, completion, and perfection, are derived.

Whom thou didst prove, etc. - God contended with Aaron as well as with Moses at the waters of Meribah, and excluded him from the promised land because he did not sanctify the Lord before the people.

From the words of St. Paul, 1Cor 10:8-12, it is evident that these words, at least in a secondary sense, belong to Christ. He is the Holy One who was tempted by them at Massah, who suffered their manners in the wilderness, who slew 23,000 of the most incorrigible transgressors, and who brought them into the promised land by his deputy, Joshua, whose name and that of Jesus have the same signification.

DEUTERONOMY 33:9 He said of his father, and of his mother, 'I have not seen him.' He didn't acknowledge his brothers, nor did he know his own children; for they have observed your word, and keep your covenant.

Verse 9

Who said unto his father, etc. - There are several difficulties in this and the following verses. Some think they are spoken of the tribe of Levi; others, of all the tribes; others, of the Messiah, etc.; but several of the interpretations founded on these suppositions are too recondite, and should not be resorted to till a plain literal sense is made out. I suppose the whole to be primarily spoken of Aaron and the tribe of Levi. Let us examine the words in this way, Who said unto his father, etc. The law had strictly enjoined that if the father, mother, brother, or child of the high priest should die, he must not mourn for them, but act as if they were not his kindred; see Lev 21:11, Lev 21:12. Neither must Aaron mourn for his sons Nadab and Abihu, etc., though not only their death, but the circumstances of it, were the most afflicting that could possibly affect a parent's heart. Besides, the high priest was forbidden, on pain of death, to go out from the door of the tabernacle, Lev 10:2-7, for God would have them more to regard their function (as good Mr. Ainsworth observes) and duty in his service, than any natural affection whatever. And herein Christ was figured, who, when he was told that his mother and brethren stood without, and wished to speak with him, said: "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? whosoever shall do the will of my father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother;" Mat 12:46-50. It is likely also that Moses may refer here to the fact of the Levites, according to the command of Moses, killing every man his brother, friend, neighbor, and even son, who had sinned in worshipping the golden calf, Exo 32:26; and in this way the Chaldee paraphrast understands the words.

DEUTERONOMY 33:10 They shall teach Jacob your ordinances, and Israel your law. They shall put incense before you, and whole burnt offering on your altar.

Verse 10

They shall teach Jacob, etc. - This was the office of the Levites, to teach, by their significant service and typical ceremonies, the way of righteousness and truth to the children of Israel. And of their faithfulness in this respect God bears testimony by the prophet, "My covenant was with him of life and peace," Mal 2:5; and, "The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity;" Mal 2:6. These words are a sufficient comment on the words of the text.

DEUTERONOMY 33:11 LORD, bless his skills. Accept the work of his hands. Strike through the hips of those who rise up against him, of those who hate him, that they not rise again."

Verse 11

Bless, Lord, his substance - The blessing of God to the tribe of Levi was peculiarly necessary, because they had no inheritance among the children of Israel, and lived more immediately than others upon the providence of God. Yet, as they lived by the offerings of the people and the tithes, the increase of their substance necessarily implied the increase of the people at large: the more fruitful the land was, the more abundant would the tithes of the Levites be; and thus in the increased fertility of the land the substance of Levi would be blessed.

DEUTERONOMY 33:12 About Benjamin he said, "The beloved of the LORD will dwell in safety by him. He covers him all day long. He dwells between his shoulders."

Verse 12

Of Benjamin - the beloved of the Lord - Alluding to his being particularly beloved of his father Jacob, Gen 49:27, etc.

Shall dwell in safety by him - That is, by the Lord, whose temple, which is considered as his dwelling-place, was in the tribe of Benjamin, for a part of Jerusalem belonged to this tribe.

Shall cover him all the day - Be his continual protector; and he shall dwell between his shoulders - within his coasts, or in his chief city, viz., Jerusalem, where the temple of God was built, on his mountains Zion and Moriah, here poetically termed his shoulders.

Some object to our translation of the Hebrew יְדִיד yedid by the term beloved, and think the original should be divided as it is in the Samaritan, יָד יָד yad yad, the hand, even the hand of the Lord shall dwell for safety or protection, אֵלָיו alaiv, upon him. This makes a good sense, and the reader may choose.

DEUTERONOMY 33:13 About Joseph he said, "His land is blessed by the LORD, for the precious things of the heavens, for the dew, for the deep that couches beneath,

Verse 13

Blessed - be his land - The whole of this passage certainly relates to the peculiar fertility of the soil in the portion that fell to this tribe which, the Jews say, yielded a greater abundance of all good things than any other part of the promised land.

The precious things of heaven - The peculiar mildness and salubrity of its atmosphere.

For the dew - A plentiful supply of which was a great blessing in the dry soil of a hot climate. The deep that coucheth beneath - Probably referring to the plentiful supply of water which should be found in digging wells: hence the Septuagint have ἀβυσσων πηγων, fountains of the deeps. Some suppose there has been a slight change made in the word מִטָּל mittal, for the dew, which was probably at first מֵעַל meal, From Above, and then the passage would read thus: For the precious things of heaven From Above, and for the deep that coucheth Beneath. This reading is confirmed by several of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS. The Syriac and Chaldee have both readings: The dew of heaven from above.

DEUTERONOMY 33:14 for the precious things of the fruits of the sun, for the precious things that the moon can yield,

Verse 14

The precious fruits brought forth by the sun - All excellent and important productions of the earth, which come to perfection once in the year. So the precious things put forth by the moon may imply those vegetables which require but about a month to bring them to perfection, or vegetables of which several crops may be had in the course of a year.

DEUTERONOMY 33:15 for the best things of the ancient mountains, for the precious things of the everlasting hills,

Verse 15

The chief things of the ancient mountains - ומראש הררי קדם umerosh harerey kedem, and from the head or top of the ancient or eastern mountains, the precious things or productions being still understood. And this probably refers to the large trees, etc., growing on the mountain tops, and the springs of water issuing from them. The mountains of Gilead may be here intended, as they fell to the half tribe of Manasseh. And the precious things of the lasting hills may signify the metals and minerals which might be digged out of them.

DEUTERONOMY 33:16 for the precious things of the earth and its fullness, the good will of him who lived in the bush. Let this come on the head of Joseph, on the crown of the head of him who was separated from his brothers.

Verse 16

The good will of him that dwelt in the bush - The favor of him who appeared in the burning bush on Mount Sinai, who there, in his good will - mere love and compassion, took Israel to be his people; and who has preserved and will preserve, in tribulation and distress, all those who trust in him, so that they shall as surely escape unhurt, as the bush, though enveloped with fire, was unburnt.

The top of the head, etc. - The same words are used by Jacob in blessing this tribe, Gen 49:26. The meaning appears to be that God should distinguish this tribe in a particular way, as Joseph himself was separated, נזיר nazir, a Nazarite, a consecrated prince to God, from among and in preference to all his brethren. See the notes on Gen 49:25, etc.

DEUTERONOMY 33:17 The firstborn of his herd, majesty is his. His horns are the horns of the wild ox. With them he will push all of the peoples, to the ends of the earth. They are the ten thousands of Ephraim. They are the thousands of Manasseh."

Verse 17

His glory is like the firstling of his bullock - This similitude is very obscure. A bullock was the most excellent of animals among the Jews, not only because of its acceptableness in sacrifice to God, but because of its great usefulness in agriculture. There is something peculiarly noble and dignified in the appearance of the ox, and his greatest ornament are his fine horns; these the inspired penman

has particularly in view, as the following clause proves; and it is well known that in Scriptural language horns are the emblem of strength, glory, and sovereignty; Psa 75:5, Psa 75:10; Psa 89:17, Psa 89:24; Psa 112:9; Dan 8:3, etc.; Luk 1:69; Rev 17:3, etc.

His horns are like the horns of unicorns - דַּרְךָ reem, which we translate unicorn, from the μονοκερως monokeros of the Septuagint, signifies, according to Bochart, the mountain goat; and according to others, the rhinoceros, a very large quadruped with one great horn on his nose, from which circumstance his name is derived. See the notes on Num 23:22; Num 24:8. Reem is in the singular number, and because the horns of a unicorn, a one-horned animal, would have appeared absurd, our translators, with an unfaithfulness not common to them, put the word in the plural number.

To the ends of the earth - Of the land of Canaan, for Joshua with his armies conquered all this land, and drove the ancient inhabitants out before him.

They are the ten thousands of Ephraim, etc. - That is, The horns signify the ten thousands of Ephraim, and the thousands of Manasseh. Jacob prophesied, Gen 48:19, that the younger should be greater than the elder; so here Tens of thousands are given to Ephraim, and only thousands to Manasseh. See the census, Num 1:33-35 (note).

DEUTERONOMY 33:18 About Zebulun he said, "Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out; and Issachar, in your tents.

Verse 18

Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out - That is, Thou shalt be very prosperous in thy coasting voyages; for this tribe's situation was favorable for traffic, having many sea-ports. See Gen 49:13 (note).

And, Issachar, in thy tents - That is, as Zebulun should be prosperous in his shipping and traffic, so should Issachar be in his tents - his agriculture and pasturage.

DEUTERONOMY 33:19 They will call the peoples to the mountain. There they will offer sacrifices of righteousness, for they will draw out the abundance of the seas, the hidden treasures of the sand."

Verse 19

They shall call the people unto the mountain - By their traffic with the Gentiles (for so I think עַמִּים ammim should be understood here) they shall be the instruments in God's hands of converting many to the true faith; so that instead of sacrificing to idols, they should offer sacrifices of righteousness.

They shall suck of the abundance of the seas - That is, grow wealthy by merchandise.

And of treasures hid in the sand - Jonathan ben Uzziel has probably hit upon the true meaning of this difficult passage: "From the sand," says he, "are produced looking-glasses and glass in general; the treasures - the method of finding and working this, was revealed to these tribes." Several ancient writers inform us that there were havens in the coasts of the Zebulunites in which the vitreous sand, or sand proper for making glass, was found. See Strabo, lib. xvi.; see also Pliny, Hist. Nat. l. xxxvi., c.

26; Tacitus, Hist. l. v., c. 7. The words of Tacitus are remarkable: Et Belus amnis Judaico mari illabatur; circa ejus os lectae arenae admixto nitro in vitrum excoquuntur. "The river Belus falls into the Jewish sea, about whose mouth those sands, mixed with nitre, are collected, out of which glass is formed," or which is melted into glass. Some think that the celebrated shell-fish called murex, out of which the precious purple dye was extracted, is here intended by the treasure hid in the sand: this also Jonathan introduces in this verse. And others think that it is a general term for the advantages derived from navigation and commerce.

DEUTERONOMY 33:20 About Gad he said, "He who enlarges Gad is blessed. He dwells as a lioness, and tears the arm, yes, the crown of the head."

Verse 20

Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad - As deliverance out of distress is termed enlarging, (see Psa 4:1), this may refer to God's deliverance of the tribe of Gad out of that distress mentioned Gen 49:19, and to the enlargement obtained through means of Jephthah, Jdg 11:33, and probably also to the victories obtained by Gad and Reuben over the Hagarites, 1Chr 5:18-20.

He dwelleth as a lion - Probably the epithet of lion or lion-like was applied to this tribe from their fierce and warlike disposition. And on this supposition, 1Chr 12:8, will appear to be a sufficient comment: And of the Gadites there were men of might, men of war for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were Like The Faces Of Lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains. Tearing the arm or shoulder with the crown of the head seems simply to mean that no force should be able to prevail over them, or stand against them; as the arm or shoulder signifies dominion, and the crown of the head, sovereign princes.

DEUTERONOMY 33:21 He provided the first part for himself, for the lawgiver's portion reserved was reserved for him. He came with the heads of the people. He executed the righteousness of the LORD, His ordinances with Israel."

Verse 21

He provided the first part - That is, he chose for himself a very excellent portion, viz., the land of Sihon and Og, in which this tribe had requested to be settled by the lawgiver, viz., Moses, from whom they requested this portion, Num 32:1-5.

He came with the heads of the people - Notwithstanding this portion fell unto them on the east side of Jordan, yet they proceeded with the heads of the people, the chiefs of the other tribes.

To execute the justice of the Lord - To extirpate the old inhabitants of the country, according to the decree and purpose of the Lord. See on Numbers 32 (note).

DEUTERONOMY 33:22 About Dan he said, "Dan is a lion's cub that leaps out of Bashan."

Verse 22

Dan is a lion's whelp: he shall leap from Bashan - The Jewish interpreters observe that Bashan was a place much frequented by lions, who issued thence into all parts to look for prey. By this probably Moses intended to point out the strength and prowess of this tribe, that it should extend its territories, and live a sort of predatory life. It appears from Jos 19:47, that the portion originally assigned to this tribe was not sufficient for them; hence we find them going out to war against Leshem and taking it, adding it to their territories, and calling it by the name of the tribe. Jacob, in his prophetic blessing of this tribe, represents it under the notion of a serpent in the path, Gen 49:17. The character there, and that given here, constitute the complete warrior-stratagem and courage. See the note on Gen 49:17.

DEUTERONOMY 33:23 About Naphtali he said, "Naphtali, satisfied with favour, full of the LORD's blessing, Possess the west and the south."

Verse 23

O Naphtali, satisfied with favor - Though this may refer to the very great fertility of the country that fell to this tribe, yet certainly something more is intended. Scarcely any of the tribes was more particularly favored by the wondrous mercy and kindness of God, than this and the tribe of Zebulun. The light of the glorious Gospel of Christ shone brightly here, Mat 4:13, Mat 4:15, Mat 4:16. Christ's chief residence was at Capernaum in this tribe, Mat 9:1; Mar 2:1; and this city, through Christ's constant residence, and the mighty miracles he wrought in it, is represented as being exalted unto heaven, Mat 11:23. And it is generally allowed that the apostles were principally of the tribe of Naphtali, who were to possess the west and the south - to dispense the Gospel through all the other tribes. The word Δ' yam, which we here translate west, literally signifies the sea, and probably refers to the sea of Gennesareth, which was in this tribe.

DEUTERONOMY 33:24 About Asher he said, "Asher is blessed with children. Let him be acceptable to his brothers. Let him dip his foot in oil."

Verse 24

Let Asher be blessed with children - Let him have a numerous posterity, continually increasing.

Let him be acceptable to his brethren - May he be in perfect union and harmony with the other tribes.

Let him dip his foot in oil - Let him have a fertile soil, and an abundance of all the conveniences and comforts of life.

DEUTERONOMY 33:25 Your bars will be iron and brass. As your days, so your strength will be.

Verse 25

Thy shoes shall be iron and brass - Some suppose this may refer to the iron and copper mines in their territory; but it is more likely that it relates to their warlike disposition, as we know that greaves, boots, shoes, etc., of iron, brass, and tin, were used by ancient warriors. Goliath had greaves of brass on his legs, 1Sam 17:6; and the brazen-booted Greeks, χαλκοκνημιδες Αχαιοι, is one of the epithets given by Homer to his heroes; see Iliad. lib. viii., ver. 41.

And as thy days, so shall thy strength be - If we take this clause as it appears here, we have at once an easy sense; and the saying, I have no doubt, has comforted the souls of multitudes. The meaning is obvious: "Whatever thy trials or difficulties may be, I shall always give thee grace to support thee under and bring thee through them." The original is only two words, the latter of which has been translated in a great variety of ways, וכימיך דבאך ucheyameycha dobecha. Of the first term there can be no doubt, it literally means, and as thy days; the second word, דבא dobe, occurs nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible: the Septuagint have rendered it by ισχυς, strength, and most of the versions have followed them; but others have rendered it affliction, old age, fame, weakness, etc., etc. It would be almost endless to follow interpreters through their conjectures concerning its meaning. It is allowed among learned men, that where a word occurs not as a verb in the Hebrew Bible, its root may be legitimately sought in the Arabic. He who controverts this position knows little of the ground on which he stands. In this language the root is found; daba signifies he rested, was quiet. This gives a very good sense, and a very appropriate one; for as the borders of this tribe lay on the vicinity of the Phoenicians, it was naturally to be expected that they should be constantly exposed to irruptions, pillage, etc.; but God, to give them confidence in his protection, says, According to thy days - all circumstances and vicissitudes, so shall thy Rest be - while faithful to thy God no evil shall touch thee; thy days shall increase, and thy quiet be lengthened out. This is an unfailing promise of God: "I will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon me, because he trusteth in me;" therefore "trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength;" Isa 26:4. Some derive it from dabi, he abounded in riches; the interpretation then would be, As thy days increase, so shall thy riches. This makes a very good sense also. See Rosenmuller.

Moses, having now finished what God gave him to predict concerning the twelve tribes, and what he was led in the fullness of his heart to pray for in their behalf, addresses all the tribes collectively under the names Jeshurun and Israel; and in an ode of astonishing energy and elegance describes this wondrous people, and their still more wonderful privileges. The reader will observe that, though the latter part of this chapter appears in the form of prose in our Bibles, yet it is written in hemistichs or short metrical lines in the original, which is the form in which all the Hebrew poetry is written; and as in other cases, so in this, it would contribute much to the easy understanding of the author's meaning, were the translation produced in lines corresponding to those of the original.

DEUTERONOMY 33:26 "There is no one like God, Jeshurun, who rides on the heavens for your help, in his excellency on the skies.

Verse 26

There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun - We have already seen the literal meaning of Jeshurun, Deu 32:15; but besides its literal meaning, it seems to be used as an expression of particular affection: hence Calmet understands it as a diminutive of the word Israel. We know that τεκνοι,

sons, in the mouth of St. John, signifies much less than τέκνια, which, properly translated, would be beloved children, a term which at once shows the helplessness of the offspring, and the tender affection of the parent. So Jeshurun may be understood here: and hence the Septuagint seem to have apprehended the full force of the word by translating it του ηγαπημενου, the beloved one, the object of God's especial delight.

Israel's God, and God's Israel, have no fellows. What were all the gods of the nations, even supposing they were real beings, in comparison of the Almighty? And what nation under heaven could be compared to the Israel of God? It was, however, from God's excellence that they derived theirs.

Rideth upon the heaven, etc. - Unites heaven and earth in thy defense and support, and comes with irresistible velocity to succor and defend thee, and to discomfit thine adversaries.

DEUTERONOMY 33:27 The eternal God is your dwelling place. Underneath are the everlasting arms. He thrust out the enemy from before you, and said, 'Destroy!'

Verse 27

The eternal God - אלהי קדם elohey kedem, the former God; He who was of old. Not like the gods which were lately come up. He who ever was and ever will be; and He who was, is, and will be unchangeably holy, wise, just, and merciful. See the note on Gen 21:33.

Everlasting arms - As the arm is the emblem of power, and of power in a state of exertion, the words here state that an unlimited and unconquerable power shall be eternally exerted in the defense of God's Church, and in the behalf of all those who trust in Him.

Thrust out the enemy - He will expel all the ancient inhabitants, and put thee in possession of their land.

DEUTERONOMY 33:28 Israel dwells in safety; the fountain of Jacob alone, In a land of grain and new wine. Yes, his heavens drop down dew.

Verse 28

Israel then shall dwell - alone - This people shall not be incorporated with any other people under heaven. A prophecy which continues to be fulfilled to the very letter. Every attempt to unite them with any other people has proved absolutely ineffectual.

The fountain of Jacob - His offspring, shall possess a most fertile land; such was Palestine.

DEUTERONOMY 33:29 You are happy, Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD, the shield of your help, the sword of your excellency? Your enemies will submit themselves to you. You will tread on their high places."

Verse 29

Happy art thou, etc. - אֲשֶׁר־י ashrey. O the happiness of Israel! it is ineffable, inconceivable, because they are a people saved by the Lord - have such a salvation as it becomes the infinite perfections of God to bestow; he is their help - their never-failing strength, and the shield of that help - he defends their defense, saves them and preserves them in the state of salvation.

Sword of thy excellency - Or whose sword - his all-conquering Word, is thine excellency, in its promises, threatenings, precepts, etc., etc. St. Paul, in his exhortation to the Christians at Ephesus, uses the same metaphor, Take unto you the Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Thine enemies shall be found liars - Who said thou shouldst never be able to gain the possession of this good land; for thou shalt tread on - subdue, their high places - even their best fortified cities.

The blessings contained in this chapter belong also to the spiritual Israel of God, who, according to the Divine promise, shall have a complete victory over all their spiritual foes, shall have all their inward enemies, the whole of the carnal mind, destroyed, (for the blood of Jesus Christ, applied by the energy of the eternal Spirit, shall not only blot out all their sin, but purify their hearts from all unrighteousness); and thus, being delivered from their enemies, they shall love God with all their heart, and serve him in righteousness and true holiness, without fear before him all the days of their life. There are many circumstances and expressions in this ode similar to several in the prophetic blessing pronounced by Jacob on his twelve sons, Gen. 49, for the subject is the same in both chapters, the reader is therefore requested to compare the two places, and to consider the notes on each, as they have some tendency to cast light on each other. Both these chapters constitute a part of those Scriptures which, according to St. Paul, Rom 15:4, were written for our learning; and, as to instruct the reader and make him wise unto salvation was the gracious design of God, we should particularly beg of him "that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that, by patience and comfort of his holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life which he has given us in our Savior Jesus Christ" - Collect for the second Sunday in Advent.