

Finally, there is one interesting connection to all this in John 21:18-23. After Jesus had spoken about the way Peter would die, Peter then asked about John, "what shall this man do?". Note the answer of Jesus: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me". The disciples thought that Jesus meant that John

would not die, but in writing his Gospel John pointed out that "Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?". John was the only one still alive when Jesus came in A.D. 70.

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## Moses' last words to Israel

### 6. Blessings for Benjamin and Joseph

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#### BENJAMIN

##### Deuteronomy 33

**v. 12.** The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by Him,  
Who shelters him all the day long;  
And he shall dwell between His shoulders.\*

**T**HIS SHORT BLESSING speaks of the Benjamites dwelling safely in their inheritance, being protected and supported by Yahweh. The figures used are those of a bird sheltering her chicks under her wing and a father carrying his young child on his shoulders. Moses uses similar pictures in the previous chapter (v. 11) and in the concluding section of the blessings (v. 27).

For the fulfilment of this blessing we look to the time when ungodliness is turned from Jacob and all the tribes enjoy the same care and protection (Rom. 11:26,27). It has been suggested that dwelling "in safety by Him" refers to the future tribal inheritance for Benjamin being adjacent to the south side of "the district . . . set apart for the LORD" (Ezek. 48:9,23).

Benjamin, whose name means 'son of the right hand', was the greatly loved son of Jacob's old age (Gen. 44:20). It is natural, therefore, for the ideas of 'beloved' and a father caring for his small child to enter into the wording of this blessing.

As with the other blessings, we can see a Messianic application. Jesus is 'the Beloved of

Yahweh', now elevated to the position of honour at God's right hand after being "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53:3). Rachel's name for Benjamin was Ben-Oni, which means, 'Son of my sorrow' (Gen. 35:18).

Some translators take the view that the subject of the latter part of the blessing is Yahweh and the object Benjamin. "He [God] encompasses him [Benjamin] all the day long, and makes His [God's] dwelling between his [Benjamin's] shoulders" (RSV). The Jerusalem Bible paraphrases the passage as follows: "The Most High protects him day after day and dwells between his hill-sides". This is then seen as a prophecy that the temple where God would make His Name to dwell (1 Kgs. 14:21) was to be established on Mount Moriah in the territory of Benjamin. Since we look for a future fulfilment when the house of prayer for all nations is set prominently above all the surrounding hills (Isa. 2:2), this interpretation seems unlikely.

#### JOSEPH

##### Deuteronomy 33

**v. 13.** Blessed of the LORD is his land,  
With the precious things of heaven,  
with the dew,  
And the deep lying beneath,  
**v. 14.** With the precious fruits of the sun,  
With the precious produce of the months,  
**v. 15.** With the best things of the ancient mountains,  
With the precious things of the everlasting hills,

\* All quotations from the NKJV unless stated otherwise.

v. 16. With the precious things of the earth  
and its fullness,  
And the favour of Him Who dwelt in  
the bush.  
Let the blessing come 'on the head of  
Joseph,  
And on the crown of the head of him  
who was separate from his  
brothers'.

v. 17. His glory is like a firstborn bull,  
And his horns like the horns of the  
wild ox;  
Together with them  
He shall push the peoples  
To the ends of the earth;  
They are the ten thousands of  
Ephraim,  
And they are the thousands of  
Manasseh.

**A blessing of great bounty**

The first nine lines of this blessing are concerned with the fruitfulness of the inheritance of the descendants of Joseph. The produce of both land and water, the latter referred to in verse 13 as "the deep", is "precious" to the inhabitants because it represents their living. The land assigned to Joseph is extremely fertile, but the crops, each according to its month, depend not only on the sun, rain and dew, but also on the favour and lovingkindness of God in pouring out a rich blessing on the people of His love.

The dew is a great blessing in the land of Israel, particularly in areas of low rainfall. It is largely responsible for the growth of grapes in summer when there is little or no rainfall, mainly watering the coastal areas and western slopes of the mountains.<sup>1</sup> Dew is mentioned again by Moses in the penultimate verse of his blessings:

"the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew" (v. 28, AV). These words more or less reiterate the words with which Isaac blessed Jacob: "therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine" (Gen. 27:28, AV).

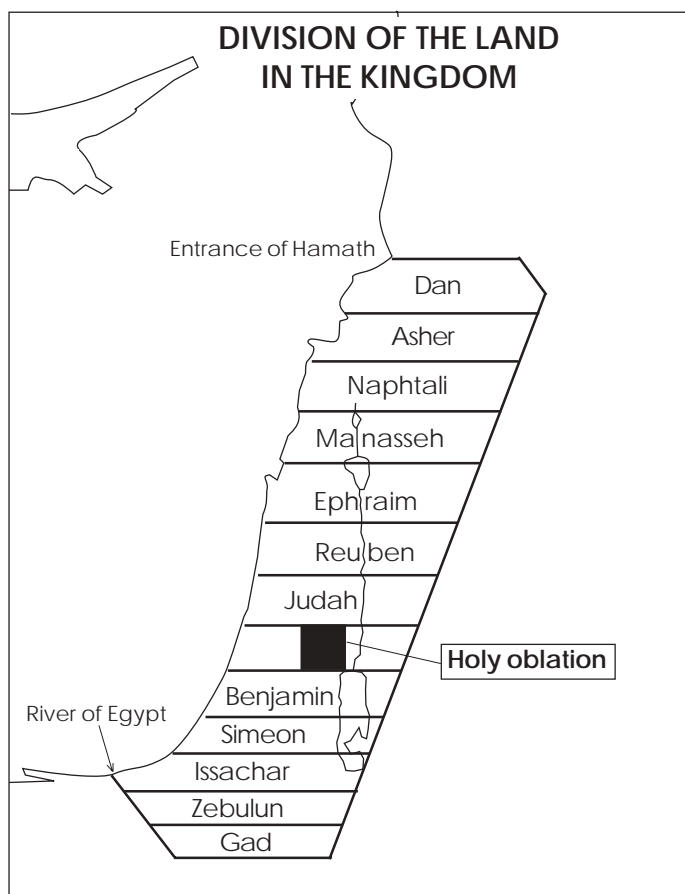
Jacob also used the term 'the deep' in blessing Joseph: "the Almighty . . . will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb" (49:25). A comparison of the words of Jacob and Moses is set out in tabular form below. The Hebrew word translated 'the deep' is used poetically of deep bodies of water such as the sea. For example, the Red Sea is described as the great deep (Isa. 51:10; cf. 63:13).

In a general way the blessing of the deep is in it being the source of the rain and dew produced by the processes of evaporation and condensation: "Whatever the LORD pleases He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deep places [literally, deeps]. He causes the vapours [mg. water vapour] to ascend from the ends of the earth" (Ps. 135:6,7). A more direct blessing from sea or lake would be catches of fish. The reallocation of tribal inheritance described by Ezekiel in chapter 48 means that both Ephraim and Manasseh would have access to the Mediterranean Sea. In addition, Ephraim would border on the Sea of Galilee and Manasseh on Lake Huleh (see map opposite).<sup>2</sup>

As an alternative it has been suggested that "the deep" refers to subterranean waters well-

1. Page 43, *The Geography of the Bible*, Baly, Lutterworth Press, 1957.  
2. See also map in *Speaker's Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 206, 1882 edition.

Gen. 49:25,26 (bold RSV)	Deut. 33:13-16
<p>. . . the Almighty who will bless you With blessings of heaven above, Blessings of the deep that lies beneath, Blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of your father Have excelled the blessings of <b>the eternal mountains,</b> <b>The bounties</b> of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, And on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers.</p>	<p>Blessed of the LORD is his land, With the precious things of heaven, with the dew, and the deep lying beneath . . .</p> <p>With the best things of the ancient mountains,  With the precious things of the everlasting hills . . . Let the blessing come 'on the head of Joseph, And on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers'.</p>



ing up out of the ground as springs.<sup>3</sup> Springs of water are greatly valued in countries with low rainfall and are very important for the irrigation of crops and the watering of flocks and herds. Caleb's daughter considered springs of water to be a blessing (Judg. 1:15).

#### The ancient mountains and the everlasting hills

Moses speaks of "the ancient mountains" and "the everlasting hills" being sources of blessing for Joseph (v. 15). Similar language occurs in Jacob's blessing of Joseph: "The blessings of your father are mighty beyond the blessings of the eternal mountains, the bounties of the everlasting hills" (Gen. 49:26, RSV<sup>4</sup>). See the [table](#) opposite for a comparison of Moses' and Jacob's words. Habakkuk in his prayer also mentions everlasting mountains and perpetual hills: "He stood, and measured the earth: He beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow" (3:6, AV).

Mountains and hills are prominent, permanent features of the landscape, and 'ancient' and 'everlasting' are apt adjectives for use in descriptive, poetic language. In the age to come they will be productive areas, so much so that "There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon" (Ps. 72:16, AV).

#### A spiritual application

A deeper level of meaning may be sought in the words of this blessing. Spiritual fruitfulness will glorify God when the Sun of Righteousness shines on Israel and the teaching of righteousness is poured on the people like rain on fields of wheat and barley. Such is the idea underlying Moses' words in the previous chapter: "Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. Let my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distil as the dew, as raindrops on the tender herb, and as showers on the grass" (Deut. 32:1,2).

The last words of David contain similar ideas: "He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be like the light of the

morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, like the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain" (2 Sam. 23:3,4).

Even hills and mountains are referred to with this kind of application: "The mountains will bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness" (Ps. 72:3). In this passage the hills and mountains symbolise the immortal ruling powers of the future age. They are powers of varying authority because they are above the valleys representative of the mortal subjects of God's Kingdom.

#### Separate from his brothers

From the [table](#) opposite it can be seen that in Deuteronomy 33:16 Moses quoted the exact

3. *The Christadelphian Expositor: Deuteronomy*, p. 395, H. P. Mansfield, Logos publications.
4. Based on the Greek (Septuagint) and the Samaritan Pentateuch. The Hebrew text is difficult as it uses the word *hourim*, 'progenitors', instead of *horim*, 'mountains'.

words of Jacob in Genesis 49: "on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers". The reference to the head receiving the blessings follows from the practice of blessings being bestowed by the laying on of hands (Gen. 48:14).

The separateness of Joseph from his brothers was the result of a number of factors. He was the most favoured son of Jacob, who appears to have accorded him the status of first-born (indicated by the special coat). He was blessed with dreams of prophetic import that increased the jealousy of his brothers, and he reported to Jacob on the evil behaviour of some of them (37:2). Also, he was very spiritually minded, and no sin is recorded of him. In all these ways Joseph was a type of Jesus, the only one ever to have been separate from sinners, holy, harmless and undefiled (Heb. 7:26).

The Hebrew word used of Joseph for "separate" is *nazir*, which is translated 'Nazarite' in Numbers 6 to describe those who "separate themselves unto the LORD" (v. 2, AV). During the days of his separation the Nazarite let his hair grow (v. 5), and at the end of that period he shaved "the head of his separation" (v. 18, AV). However, it seems unlikely that there is a connection between the Nazarite's head of separation and the words of Moses and Jacob concerning blessings on the crown of the head of Joseph. Jacob would not have known about Nazarites as ordained under the Law of Moses, and later on Moses uses the same Hebrew word of the enemies destroyed when Israel is enlarged (Deut. 33:20).

### The burning bush

In blessing the tribes of Israel and viewing prophetically their eventual greatness, Moses' thoughts went back to the wonderful manifestation of God through the angel in the bush which he had experienced and which commenced the process of deliverance from Egypt. He speaks of "the favour [AV, good will] of Him Who dwelt in the bush" (v. 16). In speaking about His memorial Name Yahweh, "My memorial to all generations" (Ex. 3:15), and describing Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (v. 6), there is implied the favour of God in bringing about the complete fulfilment of all the promises made to the patriarchs. Moses' blessings apply to this time when the patriarchs themselves will be made perfect and receive the promise (Heb. 11:39,40).

### The glory of Joseph

In the last verse of the blessing for Joseph his glory is spoken of in terms of a strong bull or wild ox, probably the aurochs, a magnificent animal with long forward-pointing horns, but extinct since 1627. The twin horns of these powerful male beasts symbolise the two tribes Ephraim and Manasseh, which came from Joseph and represented the first-born's double portion, the birthright lost by Reuben that came to Joseph: "he [Reuben] was indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph" (1 Chron. 5:1). Presumably this giving of the birthright to Joseph is the reason for likening him to a "first-born bull" in Deuteronomy 33:17. Alternatively, the first-born bull refers to Ephraim, who was given first-born status in place of Manasseh (Gen. 48:17-19).

The horns of wild oxen are very effective weapons for pushing or goring and overcoming the objects of their wrath: "with them he [Joseph] will gore the nations, even those at the ends of the earth" (Deut. 33:17, NIV). Balaam, in vision, described in the following words the strength of Israel when blessed by God: "he has strength like a wild ox" (Num. 23:22). The strength of Israel when Christ returns will be more than sufficient to overcome all opposing nations, for Christ and the saints will be at their head leading them to victory: "Ask of Me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance . . . You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel" (Ps. 2:8,9).

Continuing the figure of the descendants of Joseph being like a victorious wild ox, Moses says: "Together with them [the horns] he shall push the peoples to the ends of the earth" (Deut. 33:17). In its future scope this is a prophecy of world conquest involving not only the descendants of Joseph but also members of all the tribes, together with the antitypical Joseph and his spiritual seed.

Using a different figure, the prophet Isaiah speaks of Israel as a threshing-sledge that will destroy the hills and mountains (nations) by reducing them to chaff: "Behold, I will make you into a new threshing sledge with sharp teeth; you shall thresh the mountains and beat them small, and make the hills like chaff. You shall winnow them, the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them" (41:15,16).

### The ten thousands of Ephraim and the thousand of Manasseh

The tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh have been very numerous in the past, and the power of Ephraim was such that it became the leading tribe for the northern kingdom after the division in the days of Rehoboam son of Solomon. All this was in fulfilment of Jacob's prophecy to Joseph at the time he blessed Ephraim and Manasseh: "the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth" (Gen. 48:16, AV). Jacob went on to say of Manasseh, Joseph's first-born: "he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations . . . In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh" (vv. 19,20, AV).

In spite of Ephraim being the more powerful of the two tribes in later history, it should be noted that Manasseh was much more numerous than Ephraim at the second numbering shortly before Moses blessed the tribes. As a consequence the tribe of Manasseh required the greater allotment of territory, with portions on either side of the Jordan. At the second numbering Ephraim's men of war amounted to 32,500, whilst Manasseh at 52,700 was more than half as much again (Num. 26:34,37), whereas the reverse was the case at the first numbering (Ephraim 40,500 and Manasseh 32,200).

In fact, the meanings of the names Joseph (He will add) and Ephraim (Twofold increase)<sup>5</sup> are themselves prophetic of the numerical fruitfulness of the two tribes which descended from

Joseph. From Moses' prophecy, "they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh" (Deut. 33:17), we can conclude that, in the Kingdom age, Ephraimites will be more numerous than Manassites.

As well as that, the blessing of Moses on Joseph should also be seen as being applicable in the millennial age to all Israel, both natural and spiritual. Perhaps the two horns at this level of interpretation can be seen to apply to natural Israel and spiritual Israel. If so, Manasseh (Forgetting) could be representative of spiritual Israel, who, as the bride of Christ, is instructed to "forget [her] own people . . . and [her] father's house" (Ps. 45:10). However, from another point of view, Ephraim could represent spiritual Israel because of spiritual fruitfulness (Mk. 4:20), and Manasseh natural Israel who needs to forget past rebelliousness when entering into the new covenant.

An alternative view concerning the thousands of Manasseh and the ten thousands of Ephraim is that these numbers refer to the enemies destroyed when the peoples are pushed to the ends of the earth, and so indicate the relative power of the two tribes in battle. Similar words are used of Saul and David to describe their success in battle: "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Sam. 18:7, AV). In the past, notable leaders, such as Joshua, an Ephraimite, and Gideon, a Manassite, have been blessed with great success in battle; likewise it will be the same in the future under the leadership of the greater Joshua.

[\(To be continued\)](#)

5. *The Proper Names of the Old Testament expounded*, Alfred Jones, Samuel Bagster, 1856.

## A living sacrifice\*

W. G. Higginson

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER of Romans obviously commences a fresh section of the epistle. As in his other epistles, Paul first sets forth the doctrine, and upon that he bases practical words of exhortation.

The expression, "by the mercies of God" (v. 1), gives the key to the previous teaching; it speaks of the mercy of God manifested in His grace, which was revealed in His redemptive work centred in His Son. It is upon this basis

that Paul exhorts the believers to present their bodies as living sacrifices. The word "present" is a proper term for bringing an offering to the Lord.

In the phrase "living sacrifice" we have something of a paradox, an apparent contradiction in terms, for we usually associate a sacrifice with something that is dead. Under the Law, however,

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