

VeZot HaBrachah
“And this is the blessing”

Torah Reading: Deuteronomy 33:1 - 34:12

Haftarah Reading: Joshua 1:1-18

Study Notes

Moshe - The Unique Prophet (34:10)

1. A biblical prophet actually held a two-fold function.
 - 1.1. First and foremost, a prophet spoke the words of God regarding a specific contemporary situation in Israel. Sometimes these were words of rebuke, sometimes these were words of comfort. He was essentially God's spokesman.
 - 1.2. Second, a prophet spoke not only to the contemporary situation but he also spoke regarding the future. In this he may not even understand the things about which he spoke.

The King's Love for Israel

1. The comments in chapter 33 are prefaced by reminding Israel of the profound love their God had for them.
 - 1.1. He did so, first of all, by simply telling them so!
 - 1.2. He confirmed His love to them by reminding them of His gift to them of the Torah.
 - 1.3. Finally, God confirmed His relationship to Israel by stating He became a king over them. This affirms the view that God intended to be Israel's king.

Predictions of Goodness

1. Here we will look at each tribes blessing as pronounced by Moses.
2. Reuven - A Promise of Life. They left their families behind and spearheaded the invasion force. Many might die but they would not die out.
3. Judah - Victory in Battle. Their inheritance was surrounded by their enemies. Also, in the future they would be the leaders of Israel.
4. Levi - Service for the Lord. This reversed the curse Jacob put on them (Gen. 49:5-7). Not in a contradictory way but to indicate they had redeemed themselves. They also had special roles.
 - 4.1. First, they were entrusted to use the Urim and Tummin.
 - 4.2. Second, they were caretakers and ministers in the Mishkan.
 - 4.3. Third, they had the honor of teaching the Torah to Israel.

5. Benjamin - Security. The Lord choose the territory of Benjamin as the place in which to build the Temple.
6. Joseph - Choice Things from God. Most of this blessing has to do with the land given to Ephraim and Menashe.
7. Zebulun and Issachar - Rejoicing. The abundance of the sea and agricultural commerce would result in much rejoicing.
8. Gad - Strength. They were a border tribe and would be called on to repulse attacks.
9. Dan - A Young Lion. Not easy to interpret.
10. Naphtali - Favor and Blessing. Given the area around the Sea of Galilee. His land was full of everything that its inhabitants could desire.
11. Asher - Happiness. Interesting that oil is mentioned here. It had an abundance of olive groves but in modern times it has been the location of many recent explorations for oil.

Moshe's Final Resting Place

1. The Lord Himself buried Moshe and to this day no one knows where he is buried.
2. Many rabbis felt this was "...so that generations to come should not go astray and worship him as a deity."
 - 2.1. For an interesting take of this read Jude 9.