

V'Zot HaBerachah וזאת הברכה

Expanded Commentary

Deuteronomy 33:1-34:12

Deuteronomy 33:1

- וְזָאת הַבְּרָכָה אֲשֶׁר בֵּרַךְ מֹשֶׁה אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְנֵי מוֹתוֹ: 1 This is the blessing with which Moses, God's agent, (agent Lit. "participant whose involvement defines the depicted situation"; trad. "man"; cf. Exod. 3:10; Num. 12:6–8; 20:16. See the Dictionary under 'ish; Agent.) bade the Israelites farewell before he died.

Midrash

God face to face, and my eyes did not dim.' From where is it derived? It is as it is stated: "Face to face" (Deuteronomy 34:10). Another matter, Jacob said to Moses: 'I am greater than you, as I was called an upright man.' Moses said to him: 'I am more exalted than you, as the Divine Presence would speak with me, but it would not speak with you.' From where is it derived? It is as it is stated: "Face to face" (Deuteronomy 34:10). The Holy One blessed be He says to Moses: 'The Divine Presence would not speak with Moses face to face' – except for Moses. David said to Moses: 'I am greater than you, as I would compose songs.' Moses said to him: 'I am more exalted than you, as the song was only composed due to Israel. Moreover, when they sinned with the [Golden] Calf, with what did they provoke you? As it is stated: "He occupied the faithless with gold" (Psalms 56:12). The song was only composed for the sake of the penitents. Therefore, not for the pious man, but for the sinner and the penitent.'

Chasidut

Chasidut teachings from various commentaries explore themes such as the importance of devekus, fervent worship, and Torah study in attaching oneself to God, the significance of prophets, especially Moses, in conveying divine messages, and the necessity of maintaining a higher level of reverence and connection to God in order to resist the temptation of physical desires and achieve true holiness. The commentary also discusses the unique nature of the relationship between God and Moses, highlighting the regularity and authenticity of his connection to the divine compared to other prophets.

Quoting Commentary

The text from Bartenura on Mishnah Megillah outlines the Torah portions read on each day of Passover and Sukkot, including the Haftarah readings. Additionally, it discusses the Torah readings for Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Shemini Atzeret, emphasizing the specific portions relevant for each holiday. Additional commentaries highlight the nature of Moses as a role model rather than a deity, emphasizing his humility, modesty, and the evolution of his character from a man to a servant of God. Moses' blessings to each tribe and his intimate connection with God are explored, and his eternal inspiration is discussed.

Commentary

Moses switches from admonishing the people to blessing them [Chizkuni]. The title "man of God" indicates Moses was instructed by God to give these blessings [Daat Zkenim]. Before his death, Moses blessed the tribes, subduing the Angel of Death to do so [Ibn Ezra]. Another commentator suggests the blessing is a prophetic one [Ibn Ezra]. The conjunctive letter "ו" at the beginning of the verse is debated for its significance [Or HaChaim]. Moses' role as the man of God is praised as he blessed Israel prophetically [Or HaChaim]. The Torah's purpose was to praise Moses as the man of God, who blessed the people despite his imminent death [Or HaChaim]. Moses' blessings are seen as superior to those of the patriarchs Jacob and others [Or HaChaim]. Moses' blessings are considered precious and important, especially since he

blessed Israel just before his death [Or HaChaim]. Moses blesses Israel with all of his heart, making his blessings considered a continuation of those of the patriarchs [Tur HaArokh].

Tanakh

In Exodus 3:10, God sends Moses to free the Israelites from Egypt. In Numbers 12:6-8, God distinguishes Moses as a trusted servant with whom He speaks directly, unlike other prophets who receive messages through visions or dreams, rebuking those who speak against him.

Responsa

The text argues against the belief that Mohammed is alluded to in the Torah, refuting claims made by apostates and Muslims with evidence from Scripture and traditional interpretations. It emphasizes the exclusivity of the Divine covenant with the descendants of Isaac and Jacob, highlights the criteria for a true prophet according to Jewish tradition, and warns against heretics who seek to corrupt the faith. The importance of adhering to the Laws of Moses, both written and oral, is emphasized as a fundamental principle of the Jewish religion.

Talmud

In Talmud Megillah 31a:15, it is explained that during Sukkot, different Torah portions are read each day, with special emphasis on helping the poor and reading about firstborns on the Eighth Day of Assembly. The haftarah readings are also specified for each day. In Talmud Sotah 14a:2, it is discussed how even Moses himself did not know where he was buried, and it is suggested that his burial near Beth Peor served as a form of atonement for a previous incident that occurred there.

Mishnah

The Mishnah describes which portions of the Torah are read by the congregation on various holidays throughout the year, such as Leviticus on Passover and Sukkot, Deuteronomy on Shavuot, Leviticus on Rosh Hashana, and Numbers on Yom Kippur. The readings are specific to each holiday and are outlined in detail within the text [Mishnah Megillah 3:5].

Halakhah

During Sukkot, specific Torah readings and haftarot are designated for each day of the festival. On the final day, Kol hab'chor is read, followed by Vay'hi k'chalot Shlomo as the haftarah. The Order of Simchat Torah includes specific guidelines on Torah readings and customs for rejoicing in the finishing of the Torah, such as circling the Bimah with Torah scrolls and inviting all children to participate in the reading. In places where two Torah scrolls are available, specific sections are read and reused accordingly. [Halakhah | Mishneh Torah, Prayer and the Priestly Blessing 13:12; Halakhah | Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chayim 668:2; Halakhah | Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chayim 669:1]

Kabbalah

All Israel is connected to a world of worthy souls under the throne of God, as a blessing from Moses Cordovero to purify thoughts and establish wisdom. This connection is essential for entering the life of the coming world, receiving blessings, and is emphasized by Moses when blessing the Jewish people. It is through this blessing that Moses was able to effect miracles and lead Israel into the Promised Land.

Second Temple

The prophet Moses is known by various names in different contexts: when interpreting oracles he is called Moses, when blessing the people he is a Man of God, and when Egypt is being punished he is seen as a god of Pharaoh (Second Temple|On the Change of Names 22:1). This shows a glorious and holy exchange where Moses, in return for God's protection, gives himself to God (Second Temple|On the Change of Names 3:12).

Targum

Before his death, Moshe, the man of God and prophet, blessed the children of Israel with a benediction, according to the Targum commentaries on Deuteronomy 33:1 from Onkelos, Targum Jerusalem, and Targum Jonathan.

Musar

In various commentaries from the Musar tradition on the Torah, it is explained that the titles and descriptions given to figures such as Moses, Rabbi Menachem, and Noah all serve to illustrate their relationships with G-d and their roles as judges or representatives of Divine justice and authority. Moses, in particular, is shown to have evolved from being a regular man to becoming a representative of G-d's will and eventually reaching a level of closeness to G-d that set him apart as truly exceptional. These insights underscore the importance of humility and understanding one's place within the divine order.

Deuteronomy 33:2

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה מִסִּינִי בָּא וְזָרַח מִשְׁעִיר לְמוֹ הוֹפִיעַל מִהָר פָּאֵרָן וְאַתָּה מִרְבַּת קִדְשׁ מִיִּמִּינוֹ (אֲשֶׁרֶת) לְמוֹ: 2 He said: הוהי came from Sinai, And shone upon them from Seir; [God] appeared from Mount Paran, And approached from Ribebboth-kodesh, (Ribebboth-kodesh Cf. Meribath-kadesh, 32.51.) Lightning flashing at them from [God's] right. (Lightning flashing ... from [God's] right Meaning of Heb. mi-ymino 'esh dath uncertain, perhaps a place name.)

Midrash

shekels, filled with incense" is a symbol of Israel being chosen by God for their willingness to receive the Torah and follow His commandments, unlike the other nations.

Jewish Thought

The text explains the symbolic significance of Joseph as representing the Jewish people through various parallels in biblical stories and narratives. It also discusses the fierce and aggressive nature attributed to the Jewish people, likened to a leopard, as seen in Daniel's vision of the third empire. This fierceness is associated with their readiness for wisdom and possession of the Torah, making them powerful and respected among other nations. The text draws connections between Jewish attributes and historical events to highlight the chosen status and strength of the Jewish people.

Talmud

The Gemara discusses the offering of the Torah to the nations, explaining that even though the Torah was presented to them, they did not accept it. The Gemara also touches on the character of the Jewish people, stating that the Torah was given to them because they are impudent and require its discipline and guidance to humble them. Additionally, the Gemara mentions customs related to the Torah, such as not wiping oneself with the right hand, as the Torah was given with the right hand, and rolling the Torah scroll from the outside in accordance with practices observed during the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

Quoting Commentary

The texts quote various commentaries discussing the connection between the Torah and God's commandments, emphasizing the importance of the Torah in Jewish tradition. References from Deuteronomy 33:2 highlight the giving of the Torah, with implications of fiery law, angelic beings, and the relevance of the Torah in guiding Jewish laws and practices. These interpretations underscore the significance of the Torah, its permanence, and the necessity of following its teachings in Jewish faith and practice, particularly in relation to Mount Sinai and the commandments given to the Israelites.

Commentary

The Lord, emanating from Sinai, appeared to the Israelites and shone forth as light traveled from Seir to Paran before arriving at Sinai, according to Chizkuni. Ibn Ezra argues that these references indicate the Lord favoring the Israelites and rejecting the Esau and Ishmaelites. Or HaChaim and commentators like Ramban connect this journey of the Lord to the transmission of divine law with fiery symbolism and angelic presence. Rashi and Siftei Chakhamim delve into

linguistic nuances to elucidate the textual meanings and contextual relevance of these descriptions, which underline the divine favor shown to the Israelites.

Responsa

The text argues against the belief that Mohammed is alluded to in the Torah, refuting claims made by apostates and Muslims with evidence from Scripture and traditional interpretations. It emphasizes the exclusivity of the Divine covenant with the descendants of Isaac and Jacob, highlights the criteria for a true prophet according to Jewish tradition, and warns against heretics who seek to corrupt the faith. The importance of adhering to the Laws of Moses, both written and oral, is emphasized as a fundamental principle of the Jewish religion.

Chasidut

In the text from Chasidut | Kedushat Levi, it discusses how God's essence had to be concealed to make use of His input in the physical universe, with Ari zal explaining that God's brilliance is subdued as it reaches the physical world. It also mentions the importance of material benefits as encouragement for enthusiastic service to the Lord. In Chasidut | Mei HaShiloach, the excerpt discusses the different attributes associated with God's presence in various locations, representing anger, lust, and Divine assistance. Furthermore, the text from Chasidut | Tanya explains the Torah as a source of strength and might, with the commandments declared from the Mouth of Gevurah and emphasizing the importance of fulfilling the precepts.

Mishnah

The Mishnah states that when an ox of a Jew gored a consecrated ox or an ox of a gentile, the owner of the ox is exempt from liability; however, if a consecrated ox gored a non-sacred ox belonging to a Jew, the owner must pay compensation. The distinction is based on the interpretation of the phrase "the ox of another" in Exodus 21:35. Regardless of whether the goring ox belonged to a Jew or gentile, the owner of the ox that caused the damage must pay for it.

Halakhah

In Mishneh Torah, it is recommended to take leave from the left first during prayer, as one's left is considered to be to the right of God's countenance, similar to taking leave from a king. This practice was established by The Sages of the Great Assembly to mirror proper etiquette when leaving before a king. Sefer Chasidim advises taking a book in the right hand, as the Torah was given with the right hand, as stated in Deuteronomy 33:2.

Targum

The Targum commentaries on Deuteronomy 33:2 describe the revelation of the Lord at Sinai to give the law to the people of Israel, with His glory appearing on various mountains to offer the law to the sons of Esau and Ishmael as well. Despite initial reluctance from these groups, the Israelites ultimately accepted the law from the Lord's hand amid a display of divine presence and angelic beings.

Kabbalah

In the text from "Kabbalah | Reshit Chokhmah," humility is highlighted as a key quality that allows one to connect with the Creator. The text emphasizes that even the most exalted beings practice humility, as exemplified by Hashem. In a related text from "Kabbalah | Sha'arei Orah," the balance between the names E'l and Elohi'm is discussed, with E'l representing merit and Elohi'm representing guilt. In the texts from "Kabbalah | Tikkunei Zohar," the significance of the

right hand, representing mercy and the law, is explored further. Overall, these texts emphasize the importance of humility, balance, and connection with the divine in spiritual practice.

Musar

The Torah is compared to a light that enlightens and a fire that can harm those who approach too closely to its secrets, as seen with the death of Nadav and Avihu. The Ten Commandments correspond to G-d's directives when creating the universe, and the revelation at Mount Sinai was supported by twenty thousand angels. The mystical dimension involves the sanctity of Israel and the dominion of Edom. The construction of the Tabernacle symbolizes G-d now speaking to Israel from within its privacy. The Torah demanded the destruction of the seven Canaanite nations due to their complete spiritual decline, whereas other nations were spared due to retaining vestiges of holiness. Lastly, G-d first offered the Torah to the descendants of Esau and Ishmael before offering it to Israel.

Tosefta

The text discusses the concept that Divine punishment is meted out measure-for-measure, while Divine beneficence is rewarded five hundred times greater. This is illustrated through examples from Abraham's actions and how God reciprocated with his descendants, such as providing manna in the desert, quail from the sea, and protection in Egypt. Through these examples, it is emphasized that God's generosity far outweighs any punishment, as seen in the actions of both Abraham and God towards their respective beneficiaries.

Deuteronomy 33:3

אֵף חָבֵב עַמִּים כָּל־קֹדְשָׁיו בְּיָדְךָ וְהֵם תָּכֹן לְרִגְלְךָ יִשְׂאֵל
מִדְּבַרְתֶּיךָ:

3 (The meaning of vv. 3–5 is uncertain. An alternative rendering, with v. 3 apostrophizing Moses, is: “3 Then were, O lover of the people, / All [God’s] worshipers in your care; / They followed your lead, / Accepted your precepts. / 4 Moses charged us with the Teaching / As the heritage of the congregation of Jacob. / 5 Thus was he king in Jeshurun....”) Lover, indeed, of the people, Their hallowed are all in Your hand. They followed in Your steps, Accepting Your pronouncements,

Jewish Thought

In Shemot Rabbah 25, it is interpreted that Isaiah 33:16 refers to a table in the garden where God sits at the head and the righteous sit at His feet, receiving fruit from the garden of Eden and the tree of life. The honor of reciting grace is passed down from Michael to Gabriel, then to the ancestors, and finally to King David who proclaims the blessing for the King of Kings while lifting the cup of salvation (Akeidat Yitzchak 41:1:3).

Talmud

According to Talmud Bava Batra 8a:3, Torah scholars should be exempt from paying taxes as they are considered holy and belong exclusively to God, as seen in the verse "Even when He loves the peoples, all His holy ones are in Your hand." This exemption is justified by the scholars' dedication to studying Torah and discussing the words of God, as indicated in the continuation of the verse.

Commentary

Moses describes G-d's fondness for all the tribes of Israel, as well as mentioning the special care taken of the Levites who were uniquely close to G-d. Throughout the verses, the commentators highlight G-d's protection and love for the Israelites, emphasizing their unique relationship with Him as a treasured and holy people.

Quoting Commentary

The first two essays in Deuteronomy explore the themes of "the love of nations" and the Torah as an inheritance, while the remaining essays focus on the life lessons from Moses, the extraordinary structure of the Mosaic books, and the message conveyed by the Torah seeking to not end abruptly. The commentary on Leviticus discusses the treatment of the Jewish people in exile by Edom, emphasizing a distinction between the common people and the spiritual elite. Yehudah's leadership transition to Moses as a king is highlighted with numerical allusions, and the role of the Jewish people as nations is examined in reference to blessings and prophecies. The commentary on Genesis disputes Rashi's interpretation of Esau's role in the covenant and instead emphasizes the unique status of the Jewish people as nations. Rashi's commentary on Psalms and Ezekiel further explores the relationship of the Jewish people with other nations and their predisposition to fighting. Tur HaArokh contrasts Rashi and Nachmanides' views on the descendants of Yishmael and Esau as nations versus the Jewish people as a nation.

Midrash

Resh Lakish argues that the righteous deeds should be more numerous than the sands, providing protection similar to a wall, which could possibly refer to Torah or the congregation of Israel according to different interpretations. R. Nachman b. Isaac rebukes R. Huna b. R. Chisda for taxing the rabbis, citing various verses to show that the saints of Israel should be guarded by God and that all kinds of taxes should not be imposed. Israelites, although beaten, are expected to remain steadfast and uphold the Torah. The text emphasizes the importance of engaging with the Torah, which can protect from enslavement and elevate individuals. Moses is said to have placed two yokes upon children - the yoke of Torah and the yoke of enslavement to empires. Israel is depicted as being raised above everything by God, promising good things for those who fear Him and follow His will. Ultimately, the text highlights the love God shows towards Israel as a nation above all others.

Chasidut

True Tzaddikim embody the essence of Jewish faith and serve as leaders for the generation, drawing the Torah's light in various ways to reach all individuals. Those who act out of love and devotion to God are held in His hands, receiving His presence and teachings together as one, like at Mount Sinai where they crowded under the mountain to accept the Torah as a united people. Ultimately, through the study and fulfillment of Torah, Israel is raised up and uplifted.

Second Temple

The commentary explains that Abraham followed all of God's laws, which are seen as divine instructions on what to do and what not to do. Therefore, by doing the law, one is essentially doing the word of God, showing that God's words are the actions of the wise.

Targum

In Deuteronomy 33:3, various Targums express that God cherishes His people, leading them and protecting them under His Cloud, even though they faced challenges and corrections, emphasizing their adherence to His law. The nations' outcomes are tied to God's love for the people of Beth Israel, whom He calls to be saints, guiding them according to His Word.

Musar

The commentary discusses the mystical significance of the verse in Deuteronomy 33:2, highlighting the difference between the sanctity of Israel and other nations. It delves into the concept of attaching oneself to the Jewish people, as exemplified by Yitro, and the perceived lack of sanctity in non-Jewish nations compared to Israel. The celestial and spiritual domains play a crucial role in understanding this distinction, emphasizing the unique relationship between God and the Jewish people.

Deuteronomy 33:4

תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה קהל יעקב: 4 When Moses charged us with the TeachingAs the heritage of the congregation of Jacob.

Halakhah

In the Amidah prayer, asking our Father to return us to His Torah is emphasized so that we may be beloved and return to our inheritance like a son, regardless of how far we have strayed. This concept of Torah as an inheritance for the community of Jacob reinforces the idea that only Jews are its intended recipients, with study by non-Jews likened to theft or adultery. The crown of Torah is seen as the greatest of the three crowns bestowed upon Israel, emphasizing the importance of Torah study as a lifelong endeavor, beginning early in a child's life with the obligation to teach Torah to one's son from a young age through gradual progression to formal education under a teacher. Torah is considered an inheritance for all Jews from birth, and effort must be put into developing one's connection to Torah throughout life. The Torah is for all members of the congregation of Jacob, regardless of status.

Jewish Thought

The Torah emphasizes the importance of remembrance through specific acts like Sabbath observance and Passover celebrations to avoid forgetting commandments. Failing to remember important events, such as Joseph in prison, is considered a sin. Memory aids, like oaths, are encouraged to enforce commandment observance. Rabbi Simlai and Rabbi Hamnuna discuss the number of commandments given to Moses at Sinai, and the significance of the first two commandments being heard directly from God. Simhat Torah symbolizes a joyful wedding between the Jewish people as the groom and the Torah as the bride, reflecting a union of profound importance. The Torah also emphasizes teaching, unity, and tzedakah to create a truly human society.

Talmud

Various parts of the Talmud discuss the importance of Torah study and its symbolism. In Bava Batra, it is debated how many Torah scrolls Rabbi Ami wrote and how vines were planted by Rabbi Yannai. Berakhot mentions dreams and their interpretations related to Torah, wisdom, and the World-to-Come. Makkot relates the 613 mitzvot to the number of days in a year and parts of the body. In Pesachim, Torah study in front of an ignoramus is compared to adultery. Sanhedrin discusses gentiles studying Torah and withholding halakha. Sukkah touches on teaching Torah and Shema to children. These texts emphasize the significance of Torah as an inheritance for the Jewish people.

Commentary

Moses commanded the Torah to the people, with the majority of the commandments being given by Moses himself after the first two from G-d, symbolized by the numerical value of 611 in the word Torah. The Torah is described as an inheritance for the congregation of Jacob, symbolizing how Torah scholars contribute to the spiritual wealth of the entire Jewish community, especially those who support Torah study financially. It is emphasized that the Torah is a heritage exclusive to the Jewish people, emphasizing its importance in maintaining the relationship between the people and the land of Israel, which is intricately connected to their observance of Torah commandments. Torah is described as a source of connection and inheritance for all who join the Jewish people, including proselytes and resident strangers.

Quoting Commentary

Jewish tradition honors Moses as a teacher above all else, emphasizing that he commanded the Torah to be passed down as an inheritance to the congregations of Jacob, marking a connection between heaven and earth that is significant across Jewish generations. Everyone is expected to know and understand the law, as the Torah is considered the heritage of the congregation of Jacob, a crown accessible to all of Israel, with Torah knowledge being a deeply ingrained part of Jewish spirituality that is to be upheld and shared for the benefit of all. Torah is both a cherished possession and a betrothal, with emphasis on democratic access to education, knowledge, and literacy to emphasize the democratization of Jewish traditions and values.

Midrash

name of Jacob," and he will be shamefaced.' 'This one will write with his hand to the Lord," and he will perform acts of loving-kindness.' 'And adopt the name of Israel,' and he will be pleased with the converts."

Musar

The first text emphasizes the importance of teaching children the alphabet and Torah, including ensuring a pure environment for learning and encouraging long-term commitment and reverence for the Torah. The second text discusses the crowns of Torah, Priesthood, and Kingdom, highlighting the superiority of Torah and the significance of Torah study over other forms of leadership. The third text warns against seeking personal gain or pride from Torah knowledge, emphasizing humility and the transformative power of Torah study.

Chasidut

Abraham's unwavering faith and fulfillment in life is contrasted with most people who leave behind unfulfilled aspirations upon death. The question arises of how the ancestral plots in the Land of Israel were given out and whether early Jews like Abraham were included. Avraham's special status as the first convert and how the land of Israel became his inheritance are discussed. God's special relationship with the Jewish people and the significance of the Torah as an inheritance for the community of Yaakov are emphasized, highlighting the interdependence of Torah study and prayer. The Baal Shem Tov's role in opening the gates of wisdom and making the Torah accessible to all is also highlighted. God's desire for humans to earn His goodness through Torah observance is evident in the Torah's universal applicability to all individuals.

Liturgy

The text discusses the morning prayers of Rosh Hashanah, emphasizing the importance of the Torah as a source of blessing and guidance in life. It praises Adonoy as King, both in the present, past, and future, highlighting the eternal nature of His kingship and the role of the Torah in reflecting His righteousness and greatness (Devarim 33:4).

Kabbalah

The 613 commandments given by Moses are connected to the secret of the Torah with a numerical value of 611, emphasizing the importance of the two extreme commandments related to knowing the Name of God. While all other commandments were received through Moses, the first two of the Ten Commandments were directly spoken by God to the people, highlighting their fundamental nature in the Torah and the unique connection to the Almighty. This distinction underscores the significance of following these foundational commandments directly from God's mouth, setting them apart from the rest of the mitzvot. (Kabbalah | Ohr HaSekhel 2:3; Kabbalah | Sha'arei Orach, Sixth Gate, Fifth Sefirah 77)

Targum

In Deuteronomy 33:4, according to Targum Onkelos, the Torah given by Moshe is considered a heritage of the congregation of Yaakov. Similarly, Targum Jerusalem and Targum Jonathan also emphasize that the law was given as an inheritance to the sons of Israel and the tribes of Jakob [1, 2, 3].

Deuteronomy 33:5

וַיְהִי בִישְׁרוּן מֶלֶךְ בְּהַתְאָסֵף רָאשֵׁי לֵם יְחִיד שְׁבֵטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: 5 Then [God] became King (King I.e., one who provides protection and caring help. (This poetic figure takes the ancient Near Eastern status and gender hierarchy as a given.) See further the Dictionary under “king.”) in Jeshurun, When the heads of the people assembled, The tribes of Israel together.

Jewish Thought

In Jewish Thought discussions, it is highlighted that human judges are entrusted by God with the administration of justice on earth. Yitro, in advising Moses, addresses the four potential causes of faulty judgments: bad character, lack of diligence on minor matters, personal biases, and errors in logic or law. Yitro's advice includes selecting God-fearing judges, rejecting unjust gain, and referring difficult cases to Moses, emphasizing fair and impartial judgment. The aim of Yitro's suggestion was to reduce crime through efficient justice, ultimately pointing towards the need for the Lord Himself to be the ultimate judge. The text also explores the dual role of judges and kings in Israel's history, emphasizing the importance of righteous judgment and avoiding legislating beyond what is necessary.

Midrash

The text discusses the crafting of two silver trumpets to summon the congregation and for the camps to travel. When Solomon brought the Ark into the Temple, he called the gates to lift up their heads, and a dialogue ensued between the gates and Solomon. The importance of honoring and according glory to those who fear God is emphasized, with references to Moses, Elijah, and the messianic king. The significance of elders, gathering righteous individuals, and honoring kings, particularly in relation to the fear of God, is highlighted through various Biblical verses and interpretations from midrashic commentaries. The importance of living and acting with reverence and respect toward authority figures, elders, and God Himself is also a key theme throughout the texts.

Halakhah

The commentary discusses the connection between lashon hara, specifically the sin of the spies, and the subsequent exile and suffering of the Jewish people as well as the importance of correcting this sin for redemption to take place. It also highlights specific verses and topics that should be avoided in prayers on Rosh Hashanah to avoid any negative repercussions, emphasizing the need to concentrate prayers on the welfare of the Jewish people as a whole. Finally, it mentions the requirements for expanding the city of Jerusalem and the Temple Courtyard, requiring consent from various authorities including the king, a prophet, the Urim V'Tumim, and the Sanhedrin of 71 judges, all based on the design of the Sanctuary as shown to Moses.

Commentary

Various commentaries offer interpretations on Deuteronomy 33:5, with some explaining that Moses became like a king when the people assembled to hear the Torah, others suggesting that God became King over Israel when the people were united, and still others indicating that the Torah itself was seen as the sole authority over the nation unless a king was appointed by the people. The coming together of the heads of the tribes and the people is seen as a critical factor in ensuring that God's sovereignty is firmly established, with the need for unity among the tribes emphasized for Israel to thrive under God's rule, whose place as King is acknowledged when true brotherhood and unity prevail among the

people.

Quoting Commentary

In these commentaries, it is discussed how Moses was likened to a king due to his leadership role in taking the Israelites out of Egypt and being appointed as king over them, negating the need for another appointed king (Chizkuni, Derekh Chayyim). Moses served as both a priest and a king, as evidenced by his actions and achievements, such as his appointment during the inauguration of the Tabernacle and the reference to him becoming King in Jeshurun (Moses, Or HaChaim). Additionally, various commentaries explore the significance of Moses being unable to forgive an insult as a king, the role of the elders in guiding the community, and the sacred nature of the Hebrew language and Torah (Or HaChaim, Rabbeinu Bahya). The importance of Moses in the redemption of the Israelites is emphasized along with his leadership in the constructions of significant sacred artifacts, and the consequences of the people's behavior in relation to sacred texts and legislation are discussed as well (Rabbeinu Bahya).

Chasidut

The concept of Malkhut is established through the people's leaders, securing the kingdom through a love for the wise man. The rise of MaLKhut to its source is represented by a humble inheriting the earth, with the advantage of a king being that inhabitants do not transgress state decrees. The kingdom of God, however, remains advantageous even if all act with truth and righteousness, as explained through the concepts of Iggulim and Yosher. Korach's lack of true unity is contrasted with the power of unity among Bnei Yisrael to awaken holiness. True unity requires the unique assistance of Moshe and the Kohen Gadol.

Liturgy

The texts emphasize that unity and harmony among the tribes of Yisrael enhance the kingdom of Hashem (Devarim 33:5). Additionally, they highlight the unique status and relationship of Yisrael with Hashem, as seen through their covenant with Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, emphasizing the importance of fulfilling God's will and righteousness in their lives (Bamidbar 23:21, Devorim 33:5, Yeshaya 41:8).

Targum

In Deuteronomy 33:5, it is predicted that a king will arise in Israel from the house of Jacob, and the tribes of Israel will be obedient to him when the leaders of the people are gathered together.

Talmud

The Gemara discusses the verses from the Torah that can be used to conclude Remembrances and Shofarot, finding many options for the former but only three for Kingship. Rabbi Yosei believes that four verses from the Torah should be recited for Kingship, including the first three and the concluding one (Talmud | Rosh Hashanah 32b:15).

Musar

In Musar, it is explained that those who separate from the ways of the community are seen as opposing the agreement to serve God, and are considered to be included in those who profane the service, scorn God's word, and do not have a share in the world to come. On the other hand, peace is emphasized as a powerful force that the Holy One blessed be He values greatly, as it brings blessing, reward, and draws near converts and penitents to Him. The need for both Royalty and Priesthood, along with Torah, is also highlighted in order to encourage diligence in observing God's law and performing duties.

Kabbalah

The People of Israel and Moses are considered deserving of the kingdom because they have guarded the covenant, as indicated by the statement "All of Israel are the children of Kings" and "Worthy is he who guards the covenant" (Kabbalah | Tikkunei Zohar 31a:2). In another commentary, it is suggested that the Holy One, blessed be He, was among the People of Israel but was caused to depart by their actions, resulting in a bad odor (Kabbalah | Zohar, Shemot 34:282).

Deuteronomy 33:6

יְהִי רְאוּבֵן וְאֵל-יָמָת וְיִהְיֶה מִתִּיּוֹ מִסְפָּר: {ס} 6 May Reuben live and not die, Though few be his numbers.

Midrash

The Midrash commentary discusses the topic of Reuben from the Book of Genesis. Reuben is praised for saving Joseph and then repenting for his sin, ultimately ensuring a blessing in both the world and the World to Come. Moses intercedes for Reuben and blesses him. Reuben's impetuosity is compared to water and his fate is likened to the importance of teaching Halacha to a disciple. The commentary also includes references to Moses, Joshua, and the resurrection of the dead.

Talmud

Rabba bar Mari explains the connection between the blessings of Reuben and Judah in Moses' final blessings to the tribes, questioning the use of the conjunction "and" in the verses (Talmud | Bava Kamma 92a:21, Talmud | Makkot 11b:1, Talmud | Sotah 1:4:4, Talmud | Sanhedrin 92a:5, Talmud | Sotah 7b:9). Additionally, Rabbi Berekhiah, Rabbi Yose ben anina, Rabbi Samuel bar Naman, Rabbi Joshua ben Levi, and Hannah are mentioned as having prayed for various individuals or groups (Talmud | Jerusalem Talmud Sanhedrin 10:1:19, Talmud | Jerusalem Talmud Sanhedrin 10:4:4).

Commentary

Moses blesses the tribe of Reuben that they may live and not die, referencing their vanguard role in crossing the Jordan and battling the Canaanites. The prayer includes a wish for their military count to not decline to avoid casualties. This blessing also alludes to the need for forgiveness for past sins involving idol worship and a desire for the tribe to remain numerous and prosper in the future battles and inheritances to come.

Quoting Commentary

The commentaries highlight various aspects of the relationships, actions, and implications involving Judah, Reuben, and their descendants. The texts explore themes of confession, judgment, mercy, guilt, blessings, curses, conditional vows, levirate marriage, reincarnation, and the divine significance of specific names and events within Jewish scripture, shedding light on the kabbalistic interpretations and moral lessons embedded in these narratives [Daat Zkenim on Genesis 38:26:1, Daat Zkenim on Genesis 49:4:2, Or HaChaim on Genesis 43:9:2, Rabbeinu Bahya, Bereshit 2:17:5, Rabbeinu Bahya, Bereshit 38:1:3, Rabbeinu Bahya, Bereshit 49:12:2, Rabbeinu Bahya, Vayikra 16:1:8, Radak on Genesis 43:9:1, Ramban on Numbers 17:17:1, Redeeming Relevance; Numbers, CHAPTER 1 The Titleless Torah 28, Tribal Lands, Chapter 10; Gad 39, Tribal Lands, Chapter 1; Reuven 41].

Tanakh

In Genesis 49:3, Jacob praises his first-born son, Reuben, as his might and first fruit of vigor, surpassing in rank and honor [Tanakh | Genesis 49:3].

Chasidut

In Mei HaShiloach Volume I, it is discussed how Moshe Rabeynu's blessing to Reuven in Devarim 33:6 healed the blessing Yaakov had withheld from him, with "Reuven shall live" representing vivacity and joy, and "let his men be numbered" corresponding to increase through exaltation. This blessing was a response to Yaakov's blessings that mentioned Reuven's shortcomings. Another commentary in the same volume explains how Moshe Rabeynu's blessing ensured that Reuven would draw life-force constantly and be an essential member of the community. In Sefer HaMiddot, it is suggested that reciting certain Torah sections can mitigate harsh judgments.

Jewish Thought

In Jewish Thought, Rava supports the belief in the resurrection of the dead by referring to Moses' blessing to Reuben in Deuteronomy 33:6, where it is said that Reuben will live and not die (On Resurrection of the Dead 1:4:3).

Second Temple

Jacob, known as the Man of Practice, prays for the preservation of natural goodness, not to avoid death and corruption, as it is impossible for a man to do so.

Targum

The three Targums on Deuteronomy 33:6 all emphasize the desire for Reuvein to live and not die a second death like the wicked in the world to come. They also mention the hope for his children to receive their inheritance according to their numbers and to be counted among the men or young men of Israel.

Musar

Rashi's commentary on Deuteronomy 33:5 explains that G-d is perceived as Israel's king when all parts of Israel gather in peace and harmony, but when strife prevails, G-d is not recognized as their king.

Deuteronomy 33:7

וַיֹּאמֶר לִיהוּדָה וְיִשְׁמַע יְהוָה קוֹל יְהוּדָה וְאֶל־עַמּוֹ תְּבַיְּאֵנוּ יְדִיו 7 And this he said of Judah: Hear, הוהי, the voice of JudahAnd restore him to his people. Though his own hands strive for him, (Though his own hands strive for him Better (vocalizing rab with patha) “Make his hands strong for him.” Cf. rabbeh, Judg. 9.29.) Help him against his foes.

Midrash

In Psalms 121:1, God instructs David to look to Judah for help, mentioning his descendants like Moses and the tribe of Judah would be blessed. The Philistines stood against the Israelites at one point, reflecting the relationship between the Devil and ministering angels aiding different sides. Judah's importance was emphasized through his lineage, including David and ultimately Moses, who played key roles in Israel's history. Moses filled figures like Joshua with wisdom and spirit, highlighting the tribal connections and their significance. Judah's line was praised for its righteousness, with the tribe's ability to rely on prayer for help amidst challenges being underscored.

Jewish Thought

The text discusses the significance of Joseph providing for his father Jacob during the years in Egypt and Jacob's insistence on being buried outside of Egypt. It also highlights the blessing and naming of Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and the importance of Jacob crossing his hands when blessing them. Additionally, it contrasts David's actions with Goliath to Saul's decisions, emphasizing the importance of obeying divine guidance. Finally, it explains the structure and meaning of the eighteen benedictions in Jewish prayers, outlining how they relate to physical and spiritual needs and the ultimate goal of peace.

Talmud

Rabbi Elazar interprets the book of Yashar in Deuteronomy, referencing Judah's need to use a bow. Reuben and Judah's blessings are connected through their confessions of sin, with Moses praying for Judah to be able to engage in scholarly discussion, have opposing views considered, and receive help against adversaries. Additionally, Judah's hands are mentioned in various contexts throughout the Torah, causing Rabbi Elazar to be silent in response to Reish Lakish's objections. Moses prayed for Judah's bones to be reunited, to be able to engage in Torah discussions, and to have help against adversaries. Rabbi Yoanan also contemplates the connection between Reuben and Judah's blessings with the conjunction "and."

Kabbalah

True Torah scholars must constantly seek and maintain a connection to the Unification above through uninterrupted listening, which is revitalized by observing Torah and commandments without pause. This dedication to Torah perpetuates the Unification, symbolizing that it does not pause or cease. This quality of Kingship, exemplified by Judah, must be guarded zealously and conducted with purity. This Divine quality warns against shameful behavior and requires comprehension and wisdom to understand its significance.

Commentary

Moses's blessing for Yehudah paralleled that of Reuven, both having admitted sins, with Reuven admitting privately until Yehudah confessed publicly (Chizkuni, Deuteronomy 33:7:1). Yehudah's prominence in battle led to a prayer that his voice be heard in times of need, especially in warfare (Chizkuni, Deuteronomy 33:7:2). The blessing of Yehudah also alludes to his military leadership and successful warfare, with a prayer for Divine assistance in battle (Chizkuni, Deuteronomy 33:7:3). Moses prayed for Yehudah's success in battle and for his return unharmed, emphasizing his strength and efficacy in combat (Ibn Ezra on Deuteronomy 33:7:1). Yehudah's role in war, leadership, and prayer for success in battle are highlighted in the blessings given to him (Ramban on Deuteronomy 33:7:1-3). Yehudah was blessed for military prowess and success in battle, with prayers for his protection and victory over adversaries (Or HaChaim on Deuteronomy 33:7:1-2). The blessings for Yehudah included prayers for military strength, victory over enemies, and safe return from battle (Siftei Chakhamim, Deuteronomy 33:7:2). Yehudah's blessing emphasized victory in battle, the effectiveness of his military hands, and God's assistance in warfare (Sforno on Deuteronomy 33:7:1-3).

Tanakh

Judah admits Tamar is more righteous than he is for not giving her to his son Shelah and refrains from being intimate with her again. In a later passage, Judah is praised as a strong leader, likened to a lion. The scepter will not depart from Judah and tribute will come to him. In another text, someone expresses a desire to challenge and overthrow Abimelech from leadership.

Quoting Commentary

In Haamek Sheilah on Sheiltot d'Rav Achai Gaon, the commentator explains that the apparent contradiction between Yoma and Bava Kamma is reconciled by Moshe praying for Judah's ability to decide halachah. Rabbeinu Bahya's commentary highlights the significance of Yehudah's role in determining Halacha, emphasizing the strength and justice associated with the tribe. Radak explains that Yehudah had a significant impact on the destiny and leadership of the Jewish people. Rashi's comments focus on the nuances of Judah's actions and personal characteristics, including moments of repentance and redemption. Simchat HaRegel elaborates on praise and blessings, focusing on the significance of the servants of the Lord in offering expansive praises. This highlights the importance of expertise and devotion in praising God.

Chasidut

In the commentary on Moses' final blessing, it is explained that Shimon was included in Yehudah's blessing due to his involvement in the sale of Joseph, as Shimon and Levi had intended to ensure Yehudah would become king. Moses directly blessed Levi for their loyalty to God during the golden calf incident. The essence of the rule in Likutei Moharan is to awaken hearts to serve God by shining the tzaddik's radiance into the hearts of the people, as seen in Deuteronomy 33:7. Mei HaShiloach discusses the relationship between Yehuda and Shimon, emphasizing the need for refinement within Shimon. The Sefat Emet points out the distinct missions of Yosef and Yehuda, with Yosef representing holiness and Yehuda bringing holiness into the mundane world. Yehuda's belief in spreading holiness throughout contrasts with Yosef's preference for staying in one place of holiness.

Targum

In Deuteronomy 33:7, the Targums Onkelos, Targum Jerusalem, and Targum Jonathan all convey a similar blessing for the tribe of Judah, asking for God's assistance in battle, protection against enemies, and a safe return to his people.

Musar

During the Israelites' time in the desert, the bones of Judah turned in his coffin until Moses prayed for his restoration to the Heavenly synod, as Judah had not progressed in his studies and was excommunicated due to the ban on revealing the sale of Joseph. This exemplifies the importance of Torah study and financial support for Torah scholars, as seen in the cases of David and Zevulun, respectively, highlighting the pillars that uphold the world according to Jewish wisdom (Musal).

Deuteronomy 33:8

8 וַלְלֵוִי אָמַר תְּמִיךְ וְאוֹרֶיךָ לְאִישׁ חֲסִידֶךָ אֲשֶׁר נִסִּיתוֹ בְּמַסָּה
תְּרִיבָהוּ עַל־מֵי מֶרִיבָה:
And of Levi he said: Let Your Thummim and Urim Be
with Your faithful one, Whom You tested at
Massah, Challenged at the waters of Meribah;

Chasidut

The Ba'al Shem Tov in Chasidut explains that the name Levi means being attached to God, emphasizing that Torah study does not require excessive effort. In another commentary in Chasidut, the oil of the Chanukah lights symbolizes revealing truth through kindness, likened to the light of truth represented by oil.

Midrash

King He tell them regarding His feast, to roast the paschal offering and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, as a symbol of redemption from their distress. He required all participants to be circumcised, leading to all Israel quickly circumcising themselves and their slaves. The exception was the tribe of Levi, who maintained whole-heartedness and obedience to the covenant during their time in Egypt, as described in Deuteronomy 33:8-9. The urgency to circumcise all participants to partake in the paschal offering is likened to a king's feast that required all attendees to bear the king's emblem.

Commentary

Moses spoke praises of Levi, specifically the High Priest (Aaron), noting his piety and loyalty. Although the Levites were tested, their faith remained steadfast, and their loyalty was commended. Aaron's testing at Massah and Meribah is highlighted, where he remained faithful and devout despite the challenges he faced, such as the incident with the Golden Calf. Aaron's role as the High Priest, wearing the Thummim and Urim, is emphasized, showcasing his closeness to God and the ability to communicate with Him effectively. Aaron's sincerity is supported by the fact that his intentions were considered honorable, specially in the incident involving the Golden Calf. The Levites, as a tribe, were praised for their piety and faithfulness, with Moses emphasizing their loyalty and steadfastness over the ages, despite their historical trials like the Massah and Meribah.

Quoting Commentary

Moses blesses the Levites in Deuteronomy 33, Future blessings as a result of volunteerism in conquering Canaan; Moses blesses Reuven because Jacob did not, explaining why both miracles were considered the same, the Levites bless aimed at Moses taking place in chapter 20 - both Aaron and Moses addressed the people before the miracle happened. Aaron's reaction concerning the golden calf stems from lack of belief despite pure intentions, differently than what some perspectives have said - the Levites not enslaved due to religious commitment, learned in the Egyptian academies and preserved within the tribe; women prevented from persecution contrast with the males due to different advisors' jealousy, Yitro, Bilaam, and Job; Jacob blesses his sons somewhat differently since Moses reached higher insight levels, highlighting the importance of Jacob's final blessings. Aaron not free from punishment despite good intentions, due to seriousness of a minor deviation affecting the reputation of the Jewish people - remembering displeased G'd, the Baal's words are indirectly called an insult, resulting in proof of a great sin for Aaron. Aaron's meeting with Moses represents brotherly love according to Psalms and Song of Songs - one representing kindness, the other truth, and G'd's righteousness can be seen in them depending on the context and actions. Simeon and Levi drank from the same cup, but Levi repaid his debt in the wilderness, lending to God being an important factor, Simeon failed to do so, leading to different blessings for Levi and Simeon.

Liturgy

The text describes the greatness of God's creation and the history of mankind's relationship with Him, from the formation of the world to the establishment of rituals in the Temple. It highlights the importance of purification rituals for the High Priest before the Day of Atonement, emphasizing the meticulous preparations required for this sacred day (source: Liturgy | Machzor Yom Kippur Ashkenaz, Musaf for Yom Kippur, The Avodah Service 1).

Tanakh

The text in Malachi 2:6 praises the speaker for speaking proper rulings, being loyal, and preventing others from committing iniquity. This is emphasized by references to other biblical passages such as Hag. 2.10–13, Lev. 10.8–11, and Deut. 33.8, 10.

Second Temple

In Second Temple commentary, Simeon and Levi are viewed as champions united in will, with Moses blending them together to form a single entity that combines hearing and action, symbolizing their concord and harmony of purpose.

Targum

In Deuteronomy 33:8, the Targum commentaries explain that Moses blessed the tribe of Levi, mentioning their faithful priest Aaron who was found to be pious, steadfast in temptation, and proved faithful at the Waters of Merivah or Contention in Rekem. The different Targum versions highlight Aaron being clothed with Urim and Tumim, Perfections and Lights, or Uraia and Tummaia, emphasizing his virtue and devotion.

Musar

Two perspectives are presented regarding the connection to the Ineffable Name, with one focusing on G-d's use of the Name in the creation of the world and the other warning against providing "left" side forces with ammunition by misusing sacred tools. The Tabernacle is seen as a microcosm of creation and a means of rehabilitating man's relationship with G-d, with Aaron symbolizing this renewal through his representation of the attribute of loving-kindness. An explanation is provided for the anomaly in the order of letters forming the answer in the High Priest's consultation with G-d.

Kabbalah

This text from the Zohar discusses how only those found to be fit are given the stringency of serving in the Temple, with Aaron being an example of one who merited this honor due to his loyalty and commitment. Once someone is found to be on the proper level, they are able to teach laws, offer incense, and bring peace. Ultimately, this leads to blessings and enrichment in all worlds, as seen in the verse "Bless, Lord, his substance."

Deuteronomy 33:9

9 הָאֵמֶר לְאָבִיו וּלְאִמּוֹ לֹא רָאִיתִיו וְאֶת־אֶחָיו לֹא הִכִּיר וְאֶת־בָּנָיו לֹא יָדַע
כִּי שָׁמְרוּ אֶמְרֹתָיִךְ וּבְרִיתְךָ יִנָּצְרוּ: Who said of his father and mother, "I consider them
not." His brothers he disregarded, Ignored his own
children. Your precepts alone they observed, And
kept Your covenant.

Midrash

The text discusses the importance of the covenant and how it impacts God's relationship with Israel. It emphasizes the role of circumcision and the tribe of Levi's loyalty. The Levites were chosen by virtue of their righteousness and willingness to sacrifice for God's honor during the incident with the golden calf. This loyalty and faithfulness to God were instrumental in their selection as protectors of the Tabernacle. The text also highlights the importance of passing tests and remaining faithful to God's commandments, as demonstrated by Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph in the Bible. Ultimately, the Levites' commitment to God's covenant led to their selection and elevation by God.

Second Temple

In several commentaries from the Second Temple period, the figure of Levi is highlighted for forsaking earthly ties in pursuit of God. Levi renounces his family and material possessions to make the Lord his portion, choosing wisdom over mortal connections. This renunciation is seen as a noble act that leads to full salvation, with Levi symbolizing a model of devotion and commitment to God as demonstrated through his abandonment of worldly attachments.

Commentary

The Levites were praised for their faithfulness to God and His covenant, demonstrated notably by their actions during the incident of the Golden Calf. They showed unwavering devotion, willingness to execute even close family members who transgressed, and strict observance of commandments like circumcision, symbolizing their commitment to divine service throughout the generations. (Chizkuni, Ibn Ezra, Or HaChaim, Rabbeinu Bahya, Rashi, Sforno, Sifte Chakhamim, Steinsaltz)

Quoting Commentary

When Moses called on all the Israelites to join him after the sin of the golden calf, only the tribe of Levi showed complete loyalty to God, while the others were divided in their acceptance or rejection of the idol. The Levites were consecrated to serve as a result, taking the place of the first-born who did not rally to Moses. With a deep understanding of the covenant with Hashem, the Levites were seen as meticulous observers and transmitters of God's word, reflected through their actions such as circumcising their sons and displaying loyalty above all else. This loyalty and commitment to God's instructions were recognized by Moses, praising their preservation of the covenant and blessing their resources and works. Additionally, Zevulun's role in providing for scholars is highlighted, showing the importance of supporters in enabling Torah study.

Chasidut

In the text from Chasidut | Kedushat Levi on Exodus, the author explains that the visions experienced by the elders and nobles paralleled those of Ezekiel and Amos, symbolizing a closeness to the Creator before color existed in creation. G'd did not punish the elders for eating and drinking during their vision, as they lacked the necessary level of awe. The tribe

of Levi emerged as spiritually superior, able to overcome mortal limitations and giving rise to the 12 tribes of Israel. In the text on Genesis, Shimon and Levi were not initially blessed due to their involvement in Joseph's sale, but Moses included their blessings under Yehudah to show their intentions were noble. Levi was blessed separately for their loyalty during the golden calf incident. The author suggests a systematic commentary may be missing from the text due to unknown reasons.

Halakhah

The text discusses the significance of circumcision in Egypt, highlighting how Moses circumcised the people after they neglected the covenant of circumcision, with the exception of the tribe of Levi. The tribe of Levi, due to their role in serving God and their known virtues, were praised for upholding the covenant and were chosen to dwell in sanctified lands. This select tribe was deemed worthy of providing refuge for unintentional killers, showing compassion and adherence to the proper path. (Halakhah | Mishneh Torah, Forbidden Intercourse 13:2; Halakhah | Sefer HaChinukh 408:2)

Targum

The three Targums on Deuteronomy 33:9 highlight the tribe of Levi's loyalty to God's commandments and covenant above all else, as they did not show mercy to guilty family members and prioritized their religious duties over familial relationships. The tribe of Levi demonstrated their commitment to God's word by separating themselves from their families to serve the tabernacle and the holy covenant.

Talmud

Ravina discussed a halakha about the tribe of Levi, but the sons of Rav Pappa bar Abba challenged him with a verse that implies some Levites engaged in idol worship and were killed by their own relatives (Talmud Yoma 66b:16).

Kabbalah

This text from the Zohar discusses how only those found to be fit are given the stringency of serving in the Temple, with Aaron being an example of one who merited this honor due to his loyalty and commitment. Once someone is found to be on the proper level, they are able to teach laws, offer incense, and bring peace. Ultimately, this leads to blessings and enrichment in all worlds, as seen in the verse "Bless, Lord, his substance."

Deuteronomy 33:10

יִרְדּוּ מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ לְיַעֲקֹב וְתוֹרֹתֶיךָ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁיִמוּ קְטֹרֶת בְּאַפְךָ 10 They shall teach Your laws to Jacob And Your instructions to Israel. They shall offer You incense to savor (They shall offer You incense to savor Lit. "They shall place incense in Your nostril.") And whole-offerings on Your altar.

Midrash

Elkanah was a righteous man who fulfilled his obligations to God through offerings and sacrifices, while Micah atoned for the sins of the Jewish people. Incense offerings were significant, as they enriched and brought blessings, and scholars who decide on questions of law are typically descendants of Levi or Issachar. Aaron used incense to call upon the Shekhinah, showing the importance and beloved nature of incense, which brought forgiveness in this world. Levi, who did not participate in the sin of the Golden Calf, played a crucial role in teaching Torah and offering sacrifices, while the rest of Israel fell short in their offerings.

Jewish Thought

The text discusses the relationship between action and study in Jewish thought, emphasizing that both are important in achieving moral objectives. It highlights the concept of cause and effect in good deeds, the importance of discipline, and the significance of both performance and study in refining one's personality. Additionally, the text explores the sustenance of judges and kings, the authority of Judah's tribe, and the precepts related to assisting the needy. It also connects the priestly blessing to the foundation of blessing over the Torah and the establishment of Torah within the Jewish people through the holiness of the priests.

Quoting Commentary

Nadab and Abihu's sin was offering "strange fire" before the Eternal, not following the proper procedures for incense. They focused on the attribute of justice rather than the perfect Unity of God, resulting in punishment. The incense is meant to counter the attribute of justice, reflecting the burning of incense to halt a plague. It is crucial to direct the incense offering towards the perfect Unity of God. The brothers placed incense on the fire, not in the appropriate manner, leading to the fire consuming them. Their incorrect offering was not a sweet savor fire-offering.

Commentary

The tribe of Levi, particularly the priests, are tasked with teaching and enforcing God's laws to the people of Israel, as they are seen as impartial and dedicated individuals with the time to study and spread Torah. Their role is to educate and guide the Jewish people in matters of religious practice, sacrifices, and social laws, while offering incense on behalf of the nation. This is seen as a reward for their righteousness and dedication to their responsibilities throughout generations.

Halakhah

In biblical times, the Levites were chosen to serve as teachers and ministers in the Tabernacle, dedicating themselves to the spiritual needs of the people and not participating in warfare or inheriting land. This separation from material involvement allowed them to focus on teaching Torah and serving God, leading to a central role in Torah study and the

Jewish world over the years (Halakhah: From Sinai to Ethiopia, Shulhan haOrit; The Halakhah of Ethiopian Jewry, Then and Now, 6 Foundations of the Jewish Home 11:7). This commitment to spiritual service meant that Levites were designated for service in the Temple, required to be free and prepared for Sanctuary service even if unwilling (Halakhah: Mishneh Torah, Vessels of the Sanctuary and Those Who Serve Therein 3:1). The Levites were set apart for their wisdom and dedication to teaching Torah, with their cities serving the needs of all other tribes and boasting cities of refuge, cementing their importance in the eyes of all Israel (Halakhah: Sefer HaChinukh 342:2).

Chasidut

The incense binds the heart's burning with the ruach, bringing joy and nullifying the curse of toil through a connection to God (Likutei Moharan 13:1:6).

Mishnah

In Mishnah Yoma 2:4, it is stated that before the third lottery, only new priests were allowed to participate in the lottery for offering incense. The fourth lottery included both new and experienced priests to determine who would take the limbs from the ramp to the altar [Mishnah].

Targum

The three Targum commentaries on Deuteronomy 33:10 all emphasize the role of certain individuals in teaching the law and Torah to the people of Israel, as well as offering incense and sacrifices on the altar as a form of worship and appeasement to God.

Talmud

In the Talmud Shabbat 114b it is discussed that when Yom Kippur coincides with Shabbat, there are differences in how the sanctity of each day is observed. In Babylonia, it was accepted not to sound the shofar or recite havdalah, while in Eretz Yisrael, Rabbi Akiva's opinion equating the sanctity of Yom Kippur with Shabbat was supported. Additionally, in Talmud Yoma 26a, it is questioned why the one who burns incense becomes wealthy based on Deuteronomy, with Rava later discussing the importance of Torah scholars from the tribes of Levi and Issachar in providing halakhic instruction. The tribe of Judah is also mentioned as producing great scholars, but those capable of translating Torah analysis into legal principles are considered to come from Levi and Issachar.

Musar

The text discusses the importance of supporting those who devote themselves to serving God, similar to the Levites who were separated from worldly affairs. The tribe of Levi was chosen to serve the Lord and teach His laws, receiving their rightful inheritance from God. The text also delves into the significance of the incense offering, demonstrating the mystical union with God in achieving forgiveness and ensuring a harmonious relationship. Lastly, it mentions the correlation between Torah study, Priesthood, and Royalty, highlighting the interconnection of these concepts in serving God.

Kabbalah

This text from the Zohar discusses how only those found to be fit are given the stringency of serving in the Temple, with Aaron being an example of one who merited this honor due to his loyalty and commitment. Once someone is found to be on the proper level, they are able to teach laws, offer incense, and bring peace. Ultimately, this leads to blessings and enrichment in all worlds, as seen in the verse "Bless, Lord, his substance."

Deuteronomy 33:11

11 בִּרְךְ יְהוָה חֵילוֹ וּפְעָל יָדָיו תִּרְצָה מִחֹץ מַחֲנֵיִם קִמְיוּ וּמִשְׁנָאִיו
מִן־יָקוּמוֹן: }ס{ Bless, הוהי, his substance,And favor his
undertakings.Smite the loins of his foes;Let his
enemies rise no more.

Quoting Commentary

The commentaries emphasize the importance and blessing associated with offering incense in the Temple, as highlighted in Deuteronomy 33:10-11, which states that those who offer incense receive favor and blessing from the Lord. Therefore, priests who had not yet performed this task were chosen through a lottery system to ensure they all had the opportunity to be blessed. The text also discusses the significance of applying deep analysis in halachic decisions, as exemplified by David's success compared to Saul's temporary victories. The Torah also stresses the importance of not mistreating the poor, orphans, widows, and proselytes, as G-d Himself stands up for them, with particular emphasis on commiserating and not taking advantage of their vulnerability. Lastly, the intimate relationship between Moses and G-d is highlighted through their dialogue, reflecting the unique connection they shared.

Midrash

The Midrash discusses various pairings between tribes and kingdoms, such as Judah and Babylon, Benjamin and Media, Levi and Greece, and Joseph with Edom. It also touches upon the concept of mercy and faith amidst oppression, with Moses praying for the downfall of the kingdom of Greece and blessings being invoked for strength and protection, all with the goal of making known the might and name of God. In another Midrash, it is mentioned that many priests are wealthy, with their possessions being blessed.

Commentary

In Deuteronomy 33:11, Moses prays for the blessings upon the tribe of Levi, specifically in relation to their resources and work. He asks for their army and temple service to be favored by God. Additionally, he prays for protection against enemies and internal adversaries who may rise against them in battle or challenge their status as priests. The prayers are linked to the sacrifices and priestly duties of the Levites, illustrating their significance in maintaining the spiritual and physical well-being of the community.

Talmud

Rebbi Yannai and Rav discuss the validity of the work of a Cohen who is later found to be disqualified due to lineage, arguing that the work of all Levi descendants is still valid; Rebbi Hanina and Rebbi Yose debate the repetition of the lottery for incense and pan duties at the Temple, citing blessings from Deuteronomy; Shmuel's father interprets a blessing from Deuteronomy to include even the service of those disqualified from Temple service; Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua differ on the voiding of the priesthood retroactively for those with flawed lineage, with Yehoshua allowing their offerings to be accepted after the fact; Rabbi Yehoshua justifies the validity of offerings offered by a disqualified priest based on a verse from Deuteronomy.

Halakhah

The Mishneh Torah explains that if an unknowingly "desecrated" priest serves in the Sanctuary, his previous service is accepted but he cannot continue serving in the future. However, if he does continue, his service is not considered a

desecration. Levites did not receive an inheritance in Eretz Yisrael because they were dedicated to serving God and teaching His ways, hence set apart from worldly pursuits, but God promises to provide for their material needs as their share.

Targum

These three Targums from Deuteronomy 33:11 all ask for blessings on the tribe of Levi and for the destruction of their enemies, specifically mentioning Elijah and Ahab. They all include prayers for acceptance of their offerings and for their adversaries to be defeated. (Targum | Onkelos, Targum Jerusalem, Targum Jonathan)

Liturgy

The Siddur Edot HaMizrach includes a post meal blessing in which one may also include a personal prayer.

Chasidut

May the Lord bless and accept the substance and work of their hands, encouraging them among the valiant, with the noble persisting in noble deeds to influence others and be accounted for righteousness.

Kabbalah

This text from the Zohar discusses how only those found to be fit are given the stringency of serving in the Temple, with Aaron being an example of one who merited this honor due to his loyalty and commitment. Once someone is found to be on the proper level, they are able to teach laws, offer incense, and bring peace. Ultimately, this leads to blessings and enrichment in all worlds, as seen in the verse "Bless, Lord, his substance."

Deuteronomy 33:12

12 לְבִנְיָמִן אָמַר יְהוָה יִשְׁכֵּן לְבֶטֶח עָלָיו חֲפָף עָלָיו כָּל־הַיּוֹם
וּבֵין כְּתֻפֵּי שֵׁכֶן: {ס} 12 Of Benjamin he said: Beloved of הוהי, He rests
securely beside [God], Who protects him always, As
he rests between God's shoulders. (As he rests
between God's shoulders Or "He dwells amid God's
slopes.")

Jewish Thought

Esau believed Jacob had offered all his wealth as atonement, but Jacob corrected this by explaining it was just a gift. The subsequent battles and defeats inflicted on Esau's descendants were administered by Benjamin's descendants, Saul and Mordechai, showing the importance of material values and spiritual balance. Divine help only came after exhausting natural means.

Commentary

Moses' blessing on the tribe of Benjamin lacked the word "and" at the beginning of the verse since Benjamin was considered the beloved of the Lord and lived securely on his land where the Temple was located [Alshekh, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Siftei Chakhamim]. The presence of God dwelled in the territory of Benjamin, providing protection and security, and the lack of worms consuming the body of Benjamin in the grave is said to indicate his elevated status [Chizkuni, Rabbeinu Bahya, Tze'edah Ure'edah]. Benjamin's unique blessing is connected to the location of the Temple in his land and the profound connection to the Shechinah that was present there [Chizkuni, Steinsaltz, Tur HaArokh].

Halakhah

The concept of "upah" is derived from the idea of covering and separating individuals, symbolizing honor and distinguishing them from others. The act of standing together under a "upah" during a wedding ceremony signifies marriage, with the recitation of the seven blessings solidifying the union. The presence of witnesses or others during this ceremony is not necessary, as it culminates in intimacy between the newly married couple. The opinion of the Rambam emphasizes the importance of physical proximity and the recitation of the benedictions for a valid marriage through "yiud". There is some disagreement among Halakhic authorities regarding the specific requirements for a complete "yiud", but ultimately, it is understood that the act of bringing the bride into the groom's house for the purpose of marriage is the defining moment of the union.

Talmud

The text discusses the privilege of the tribe of Benjamin in hosting the Divine Presence due to the Temple being built within their territory, particularly focusing on the significance of the Holy of Holies being located in Benjamin's portion. This is based on various verses and blessings from the Bible, emphasizing how Benjamin's land intersecting with Judah's resulted in their desire to own the site of the altar. This aspect of the Talmud highlights the centrality of Benjamin in the location of the Temple and the Divine Presence throughout different commentaries.

Midrash

The Midrash explores the significance of the order of the tribes and their banners in the encampment of the Israelites. Judah is given prominence for various attributes: leadership, Torah knowledge, and wealth. Benjamin is noted for the

eventual presence of the Shechinah in his territory. Additionally, the tribes are seen as corresponding to various directions: east, south, west, and north. This text also discusses the idea that certain individuals and tribes, such as Benjamin and Judah, are beloved and hold significance in the eyes of the Lord, ensuring their safety and prominence.

Quoting Commentary

Moses began pacifying the people after taking several actions, including breaking the Tablets, purifying the people, and conversing with G-d about leadership; Saul's and Benjamin's connections to the Temple are highlighted, as well as the eventual building of the third Temple by G-d Himself; Benjamin receives blessings due to past actions, and Yehudah's speech underscores the importance of family history; the significance of the number 600,000 in relation to revelation and the presence of G-d is explained; the tribal standards and their placement around the Tabernacle are detailed, emphasizing the symbolism and significance of each tribe's position. Rachel's burial location raises questions about tribal land ownership in relation to the ancestral connection.

Chasidut

Yaakov's focus on Rachel allowed his sons, Yosef and Binyamin, to possess unique qualities symbolized by the references to them in the Torah. This suggests that by first understanding the concept of Leah, one can then attain the concept of Rachel, represented by Yosef and Binyamin. These references hint at the *luz*, an important concept in this understanding. (Likutei Moharan, Part II 85:3:1)

Targum

In Deuteronomy 33:12, Moses blesses the tribe of Benjamin, declaring that they will live securely with God, who will protect them and have His presence dwell among them [Targum | Onkelos; Targum Jerusalem; Targum Jonathan].

Deuteronomy 33:13

13 וַיֹּסֶף אָמַר מְבֹרָכַת יְהוָה אֲרֶצוֹ מִמֶּגֶד שְׁמַיִם מִטֵּל וּמִתְהוֹם רִבְצָת תְּהִי:
And of Joseph he said: Blessed of יהוה be his land With the bounty of dew from heaven, (With the bounty of dew from heaven Targum Onkelos and two Hebrew manuscripts: "With the bounty of heaven above," reading me'al ("above") for mial (lit., "from dew"), cf. Gen. 49.25.) And of the deep that couches below;

Commentary

Moses blessed the land of Joseph, highlighting its fertility and abundance. The blessings of heaven above and the deep waters below were mentioned as sources of this abundance. Joseph's land, awarded for his righteousness, would be especially blessed, with both dew and rainfall contributing to its fertility. Other blessings upon the tribe of Joseph were based on the merit of Joseph's righteous actions and the sustenance he provided during the time of famine in Egypt, ultimately leading to the enlargement of their land according to circumstances.

Tanakh

In Genesis 49:25, it describes how God provides blessings from above and below to the Israelites, promising to support and bless them abundantly in all aspects of life [Tanakh | Genesis 49:25].

Jewish Thought

In the blessing of Yosef, it is said that "his land is blessed by the Lord," representing the quality of Chesed on the right side, in opposition to the left side's Din. This is seen as a matter of balanced measures and has a gematria value of 985 [Jewish Thought | Kol HaTor 2:85].

Targum

In Deuteronomy 33:13, Moses blesses the tribe of Joseph, stating that his land is blessed by the Lord with the abundance of dew and rain from the heavens, and the deep waters that flow from the depths of the earth. This blessing emphasizes the prosperity of Joseph's land due to the blessings from above and below. (Targum | Onkelos, Targum Jerusalem, Targum Jonathan)

Quoting Commentary

The Torah emphasizes the punitive nature of the flood by mentioning the waters below the earth before the waters from the heavens, avoiding associating God with initiating evil. The blessing of the tribe of Joseph in Deuteronomy highlights the abundant irrigation from below, ensuring crops can grow even in times of drought. The blessing of Asher being blessed with children specifically is explained by Ramban, suggesting that Asher would be blessed with many children in a similar way to being blessed with precious things from heaven, showcasing the tribe's richness and prosperity.

Midrash

The commentary on Deuteronomy 33:13 in Midrash Sifrei Devarim 353:1 states that Joseph's land was the most blessed of all lands, pointing to a special blessing from God on Joseph's portion of land.

Deuteronomy 33:14

14 וּמִמֶּנֶּה תְּבוּאָת שֶׁמֶשׁ וּמִמֶּנֶּה נֶרֶשׁ יְרֵחַֹּיִם: With the bounteous yield of the sun, And the bounteous crop of the moons;

Talmud

The Talmud discusses remedies for bulmos, including eating a sheep's tail with honey, fine wheat flour with honey, or barley flour with honey. Rabbi Yoanan recounts how he found ripe figs on the east side of a fig tree and ate them to cure his bulmos, fulfilling the verse "Wisdom preserves the lives of those who have it" (Ecclesiastes 7:12). The text references Deuteronomy 33:14, stating that the sun ripens fruit and makes them sweet.

Commentary

The commentary on Deuteronomy 33:14 discusses the influence of the sun and moon on agricultural yield, with some commentators focusing on the role of the sun in ripening crops while others highlight the moon's impact on moisture and monthly fruit production. The verse suggests that both celestial bodies play a beneficial role in the harvests of the territory of Joseph. Rashi mentions how the land exposed to the sun produces sweet fruit, while other interpretations discuss specific fruits affected by the moon's influence like cucumbers and melons.

Quoting Commentary

In Genesis 1:15:1, Chizkuni explains that the luminaries such as the sun and moon were needed to illuminate the earth, while the light created on the first day was used to illuminate the heavenly regions. Malbim relates the stone of Yosef to success and wealth. Midrash BeChiddush warns against premature redemption, comparing it to harvesting fruits before they ripen. Radak discusses the creation of vegetation on the third day, influenced by the activity of the luminaries, and emphasizes the importance of light provided by the sun and moon to promote growth. Rabbeinu Bahya attributes the planting of the garden in Eden to God personally, connecting it to the beneficial effects of winds from the east.

Chasidut

In Chasidut, it is believed that just as the luminaries of the sky affect the earth with their light, the stars also have an effect on human service of God, influencing one's body and constitution. By directing one's inclinations towards holiness, such as becoming a ritual circumciser or a judge, it is possible to avoid falling into transgression. However, failing to use one's inclinations for holiness can lead to being overpowered by one's natural constitution, as seen in the tale of R. Nahman b. Yitzhak. Additionally, it is believed that there is a Mazal for all things, even inanimate objects, with each having its own influence.

Targum

The texts describe how the earth's harvest is produced and ripened with the sun's help, yielding bounteous fruits and first fruits every month. (Targum | Onkelos, Targum Jerusalem, Targum Jonathan on Deuteronomy 33:14)

Halakhah

The Sefer HaChinukh explains that the spheres of the sun and moon influence all aspects of life on earth, including human activities like cutting trees, planting, and even bloodletting. Therefore, it is fitting to offer an additional sacrifice

on Rosh Chodesh to acknowledge that all novelty and power ultimately come from God, as commanded in Numbers 28:11. This practice serves to remind people of the divine origins of all phenomena and invites blessings upon their lives.

Deuteronomy 33:15

15 וּמֵרֶאֱשׁ הַרְרֵי־קֹדֶם וּמִמְקָד גְּבָעוֹת עוֹלָם: With the best from the ancient mountains, And the bounty of hills immemorial;

Commentary

The blessings bestowed upon the tribe of Joseph in Deuteronomy 33:15 include fertility and prosperity from the ancient mountains and everlasting hills in their land. Rashi explains that the early ripening of the fruits and continual fruit production symbolize the importance and praise of this land allocation, with the mountains and hills representing the patriarchs and matriarchs. This blessing signifies the special nature of the land and its precedence in the eyes of God.

Talmud

In Jerusalem Talmud Megillah 1:12:4, The Great Rabbi iyya discusses that all covers were only in Benjamin's part and explains why, citing the blessing of Benjamin in Deuteronomy. Other rabbis mention the consumption of sacrificial meat in Joseph's part, the location of the altar, and the dwelling of the Divine Presence in the greatness of Joseph, all linking back to specific biblical references.

Targum

The verses from Deuteronomy 33:15 in Targum Onkelos, Targum Jerusalem, and Targum Jonathan all emphasize the abundant blessings and fruitfulness that come from the righteous actions and merit of the patriarchs and matriarchs in Jewish tradition. These blessings are compared to the early mountains and perennial hills, symbolizing the lasting and plentiful nature of the goodness bestowed upon the people.

Quoting Commentary

In Genesis 41:55:3, Tanchuma Miketz 7 describes how Pharaoh's people had to circumcise themselves before Joseph would give them food; Pharaoh then instructed them to follow Joseph's instructions. This is related to the blessings on Joseph in Genesis 49:26 and Deuteronomy 33:15 as the supplier of grain. Radak on Genesis 49:11:1 praises the quality of land given to the tribe of Yehudah, with an exaggeration of abundant wine and grapes. Rashbam on Genesis 49:26:3 discusses the far-reaching blessings on Joseph, using duplication to emphasize the depth of the blessing similar to Moses' blessing.

Deuteronomy 33:16

16 וּמִמְלֶכֶת אֶרֶץ וּמִלֵּאָה וּרְצוֹן שְׂכֵנֵי סִנְיָה תָבוֹאתָה לְרֹאשׁ יוֹסֵף וּלְקֹדֶקֶד
נָזִיר אֶחָיו: 16 With the bounty of earth and its fullness, And the
favor of the Presence (Presence Lit. “Dweller”;
cf. Exod. 3.1ff.) in the Bush. May these rest on
the head of Joseph, On the crown of the elect of
his brothers.

Midrash

In Midrash Bereshit Rabbah 100:9, Joseph comforts his brothers, emphasizing that despite their previous actions, God had intended good to come out of their harm. He reassures them that he will sustain them and speaks words of comfort to their hearts. In Midrash Bereshit Rabbah 94:8, Benjamin explains the names of his sons based on the experiences of his lost brother. Additionally, the sons of Naphtali are described with unique qualities linked to weaving and idolatry. In Midrash Bereshit Rabbah 98:20, interpretations of Joseph's actions and blessings are discussed, highlighting his ability to control his passions and the special blessings bestowed upon him by his father.

Tanakh

In Exodus 3:1, Moses is tending the flock of his father-in-law when he comes to Horeb, the mountain of God. In Exodus 3:2, a messenger of הוהי appears to him in a blazing bush that is not consumed. In Genesis 49:26, the blessings of Joseph surpass those of his ancestors and are said to rest on his head and on the brow of his brothers.

Jewish Thought

The term "dwelling" when applied to God indicates the continuance of His Divine Presence or Providence in a specific place or object, as seen in references in the Bible such as Exod. 24:16, 29:45, and Deut. 33:16. In Jewish thought, the term signifies the manifestation of the Divine Presence or protection by Divine Providence in a consistent manner, reflecting the contextual understanding of God's Shechinah or Providence.

Commentary

The text from various commentaries on Deuteronomy 33:16 focuses on the blessings bestowed upon the tribe of Joseph. References are made to the precious things and fullness of the earth, God's favor from the burning bush, and the hope for blessings upon Joseph's head, indicating distinct virtues of Joseph deserving recognition. Moses refers to God revealing Himself at the burning bush and prays for a direct relationship without intermediaries for Joseph's descendants. Additionally, Moses hopes for special blessings on areas that do not naturally yield bounty, symbolized by the thorn bush.

Talmud

The Jerusalem Talmud Megillah discusses the placement of the Tabernacle and Temple covers in Benjamin's territory, despite references to Judah. It also mentions that sacrificial meat given for atonement should be consumed in Joseph's territory, where the altar was situated. Referring to Deuteronomy, it connects the Dweller to Joseph. In Zevachim, Rabbi Yosei interprets Moses' blessing to Joseph, stating that offerings of lesser sanctity could be consumed in areas overlooking Shiloh, even in territories of tribes described as hating Joseph.

Chasidut

The text discusses the relationship between different attributes and characters, such as Moshe and Aharon representing Truth and Loving-kindness respectively, and how they come together in a complementary way. It also explores the idea of patience and peace being essential for redemption in Israel, as illustrated through a commentary on different temples in Jewish history. Additionally, it mentions the rectification of past sins and attributes to specific individuals, like Yosef and the concept of the head representing intellect.

Quoting Commentary

In Midrash BeChiddush on the Pesach Haggadah, Egyptians oppressed Israelites by overburdening them with hard labor and decrees, denying them rest, burying their dead, subjugating them to other slaves, and preventing efficiency in work to weaken them despite their continued growth. Meanwhile, Radak interprets Psalms as stating that malevolent individuals like Doeg and Ahithophel would not be saved by God. Rashi explains grammatical intricacies in verses from Exodus and Isaiah, suggesting implications for the strength and praise found in the Lord as salvation. Through a blessing on Joseph, Sforno depicts God's direct bestowal of blessings, referencing Deuteronomy 33. The Tze'enah Ure'enah commentary presents Joseph as a righteous figure whose refusal to sin meant the earth was blessed for his sake.

Targum

The Targums on Deuteronomy 33:16 all express similar sentiments, highlighting the abundance and blessings bestowed upon Joseph by the favor of God, symbolized by the presence of the Shechinah. They emphasize Joseph's distinction and leadership among his brothers, describing him as a recipient of divine favor and greatness.

Deuteronomy 33:17

17 בְּכֹר שׁוֹרֹ הָדָר לוֹ וְקַרְנָי רָאֵם קַרְלָיו בְּהֵם עֲמִים יִנְגַּח יִחַדּוּ
אֶפְסֵי־אֶרֶץ וְהֵם רַבְבוֹת אֶפְרַיִם וְהֵם אֶלְפֵי מְנַשֶּׁה: {ס}

17 Like a firstling bull in his majesty, He has horns like the horns of the wild-ox; With them he gores the peoples, The ends of the earth one and all. These (These I.e., one of the wild-ox's horns.) are the myriads of Ephraim, Those (Those I.e., the other horn.) are the thousands of Manasseh.

Midrash

With the insignias, each prince had a banner with colors based on the gems on Aaron's heart. Reuben's banner was red with mandrakes, Simeon's green with Shechem, Levi's white, black, and red with the urim and tumim, Judah's blue with a lion, Issachar's bluish-black with the sun and moon, Zebulun's white with a ship, and Dan's sapphire with a serpent.

Jewish Thought

Jacob calls in his sons to discuss future events, focusing on the souls after death and Messianic times. Reuben's error led to irreversible consequences, while Shimon and Levi's actions were driven by planning and impulsivity. Judah is recognized for his mature judgment and leadership qualities, with his descendants promised hereditary royalty. The text also delves into the treatment and blessings of each son, as well as the burial concerns of Jacob. In messianic times, a single flag will symbolize unity amongst the nation, ending rivalries. References to Mashiach ben Yosef in various texts underscore the importance of righteous conduct in overcoming future tribulations.

Quoting Commentary

Bartenura explains that the shofar for Rosh Hashanah is specifically a horn and not called a shofar, noting the distinction between the two based on biblical references. Chizkuni discusses the use of flags with inscriptions on them for each tribe, elaborating on the symbols and colors used for each flag. Midrash BeChiddush explains the metaphorical use of "numerous" in a botanical context rather than a numerical one, relating it to the growth and stature of babies in a unique manner. Bahya delves into various verses involving the tribes of Israel and their symbology, such as associating Joseph with an ox and lion, and Yehudah with a lion, providing a deeper thematic analysis based on Midrashic and kabbalistic interpretations. Radak discusses the linguistic interpretations and contextual meanings in various verses, particularly emphasizing the symbolic significance of terms like "horn" and "wild ox" in relation to Biblical narratives. Lastly, Rambam and Ramban provide theological interpretations, discussing concepts like blessings, inheritance, and symbolism tied to the tribes of Israel and their historical contexts.

Talmud

The Talmud teaches that a person who merits reward equal to the portion of two tribes can be compared to Joseph, represented by an ox, and Issachar, represented by a donkey. This reward can manifest in receiving a canopy of honor in a similar manner to Joseph, and having understanding like Issachar. Additionally, the primary category of Goring is derived from the verse Exodus 21:28, where goring is associated with horns. In dreams, seeing an ox prompts reciting a positive verse to avert negative outcomes. The Rabbis argue that the horns of a bull are called "keren," not "shofar" as suggested by Rabbi Yosei. Finally, the comparison of Israel to animals in different tribes is discussed, highlighting their individual characteristics.

Commentary

Moses blesses the tribes of Joseph by comparing them to powerful animals like oxen and wild-oxen, symbolizing their strength and leadership qualities. The references to Joshua and Gideon highlight their roles as significant leaders from these tribes, with Joshua being compared to an ox and Gideon to a firstborn ox. The blessings highlight the prowess of these tribes in battle and their significance within the Israelite community, with the tribes of Ephrayim and Menasheh each receiving distinct blessings that reflect their respective roles and importance.

Tanakh

In Judges 8:10, the army of Zebah and Zalmunna at Karkor is said to have only 15,000 fighters left out of a total of 120,000, highlighting their defeat. In Numbers 27:20, Moses is instructed to invest some of his authority onto another person in order to ensure the obedience of the entire Israelite community.

Musar

Amaleik, a descendant of Eisav, represents the concept of an "other god," while the spirit of Hashem corresponds on the side of holiness. Various figures in Jewish history, such as Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, and the Torah itself, are symbolized by the term "horn." The camps of Yehudah, Reuben, Ephrayim, and Dan in the Torah are represented by different symbols like a lion, Adam, an ox, and an eagle respectively. The blessings given to Esau and Jacob in the Torah allude to different spiritual merits, with Israel referred to as a flock. Joseph and Issachar are linked to the concept of the "ox" and "donkey," while their descendants are praised for their Torah knowledge and understanding of G-d's rule.

Chasidut

The text discusses the significance of bowing down to God and the connection to the concept of Yosef as the "grandeur of holiness" (Likutei Moharan 11:6:2). It also highlights the importance of focusing on inner intelligence in order to bring oneself closer to God, as exemplified by Yosef (Likutei Moharan 1:4:3). Additionally, it mentions the role of charity in shaping the holy speech of the tzaddik and how this speech can carry multiple meanings, providing strength to those who may misinterpret it (Likutei Moharan, Part II 15:1:7).

Mishnah

The Mishnah in Rosh Hashanah 3:2 explains that the primary mitzvah of Rosh Hashanah is to sound the shofar, with all shofarot being suitable except for a cow's horn. Despite this, Rabbi Yosei argues that even a ram's horn, referred to as a "horn" in the Bible, should qualify as a shofar for this purpose.

Targum

The texts from Targum Onkelos, Targum Jerusalem, and Targum Jonathan on Deuteronomy 33:17 all speak of the greatness and power of Joseph's descendants, particularly the tribes of Ephraim and Menasheh. They emphasize how they will be victorious in battle against their enemies and will have a significant impact on nations across the earth, with references to specific leaders from these tribes who will achieve great triumphs.

Halakhah

The law regarding the minimum size of a shofar is discussed in the Sefer HaChinukh 405:3. It is explained that a shofar must be hollow with a cavity, like the horns of rams, ewes, and goats, in order to be fit for use on Rosh Hashanah. Other animal horns, including those of cows and oryx, are not suitable due to lacking this cavity. Despite some confusion in interpretation, it is clarified that horns with cavities are considered fitting for this purpose, while those without are not. This distinction is important in understanding which horns are appropriate for use as a shofar on Rosh Hashanah.

Liturgy

The text from the Selichot prayers on the second and third day of the Ten Days of Penitence invokes a prayer for God to teach us to improve and correct our ways, to bless and uplift the downtrodden, and to restore the glory of Jerusalem and Joseph, symbolized by the bullock on the left, B'chor Shor, as mentioned in Deuteronomy 33:17.

Kabbalah

The text explores the symbolism of the horns of a cow, representing Shekhinah and the ox, which are associated with messianic figures and the First and Second Temples. It also delves into the allegory of the fourth exile as a pit with an ox, linking it to the generation of evil people filled with snakes and scorpions. Additionally, it discusses how troubles are endured to protect the descendant of Joseph, preventing him from being violated among idol-worshipping nations.

Deuteronomy 33:18

18 וְלִזְבוּלֹן אָמַר שְׂמֹחַ זְבוּלֹן בְּצֵאתְךָ וְיִשָּׁשְׁכָר בְּאֹהֶלְךָ: And of Zebulun he said: Rejoice, O Zebulun, on your journeys, And Issachar, in your tents.

Midrash

to the sin that Israel committed through the golden calf, for which a sin offering was needed. “And for the peace offering, two cattle, five rams, five goats, five sheep in their first year” (Numbers 7:47), these numbers correspond to the leaders and elders appointed by Moses to assist him in governing the people, totaling fifteen. This offering by Elyasaf son of Deuel was in honor of his role in helping the Israelites take possession of the Promised Land.

Commentary

Moses blesses the tribe of Zebulun, reassuring them about their territory by the ocean and encouraging them in their seafaring trade. Zebulun's partnership with Issachar is highlighted, with Zebulun supporting Issachar's Torah study. Issachar is blessed for guarding his territory and excelling in Torah study. The tribes are blessed for their respective roles and intertwined destinies, with Zebulun receiving a longer blessing for their support of Torah study and success in commerce. Along with other blessings, Zebulun is reassured of their success in trade due to their important role in supplying blue dye for tzitzit. The importance of Zebulun's coastal location is tied to their involvement in commerce and Torah support, showcasing how their blessings are interconnected.

Tanakh

In Genesis 47:2, Joseph presents a small group of his brothers to Pharaoh in order to introduce them to the ruler [Tanakh].

Musar

Supporting Torah scholars discreetly is akin to delighting in the Shabbos, as scholars, like the day of rest, dedicate themselves solely to Torah study without engaging in other labor. It is a duty to ensure scholars have financial support in a dignified manner, as honoring scholars brings blessings while causing them anguish results in punishment. This support is crucial, as those who support Torah study receive significant rewards, and the act of supporting scholars is compared to the staves carrying the Ark, symbolizing the financial backing of non-scholars and the importance of their role in sustaining Torah study and receiving equal reward to those who study. (Musar | Kav HaYashar 54:13, Musar | Shemirat HaLashon, Book I, The Gate of Torah 5:5, Musar | Shenei Luchot HaBerit, Torah Shebikhtav, Bamidbar, Nasso, Beha'alotcha, Torah Ohr, Bamidbar 72, Musar | Shenei Luchot HaBerit, Torah Shebikhtav, Re'eh, Torah Ohr 33, Musar | Shenei Luchot HaBerit, Torah Shebikhtav, Terumah, Derech Chayim 7)

Halakhah

Both Halakhah from the Kitzur Shulchan Arukh and Mishneh Torah stress the importance of Torah study for all Jewish men, regardless of their circumstances. The Kitzur Shulchan Arukh emphasizes the value of supporting Torah study even if one cannot engage in it personally, while the Mishneh Torah calls for a deep and dedicated commitment to Torah learning, stressing the need to sacrifice comfort and pleasure to acquire Torah knowledge. Both commentaries stress the importance of investing one's entire self in Torah study, whether through personal study or supporting others.

Chasidut

The commentary Likutei Moharan explains that Zevulun is associated with business activity, as seen in the verse "Rejoice, Zevulun, in your journeys" (Deuteronomy 33:18), highlighting the importance of economic engagement despite the intrinsic value of Torah study. God's light is connected to business activity, reflecting the need for balance between spiritual and material pursuits, as exemplified in Zevulun's role.

Targum

Moses blesses the tribe of Zebulun and Issachar, encouraging Zebulun to rejoice when going out for commerce and for war, and Issachar to rejoice when coming back to their houses of learning and for calculating festival times. [Targum Onkelos; Targum Jerusalem; Targum Jonathan]

Quoting Commentary

Issachar and Zevulun were listed ahead of Reuben in the order of sacrifices because Issachar's focus on Torah study was supported by Zevulun's generosity. This is reflected in Jacob's blessings and in Moses' blessings before his death. Zevulun provided for Issachar to devote himself to Torah study, resulting in Issachar's vocation to Torah study. The two brothers were interconnected, with Zevulun focusing on trade and Issachar on Torah while ensuring both experienced success and prosperity. This connection is also seen through examples in the Midrash and biblical stories like Jonah.

Deuteronomy 33:19

עמיהם הר־יקראו שם יזבחו זבח־יצדק כי שפע ימים יילקו 19 They invite their kin to the mountain,Where they
ושפני טמוני חול: }ס{ offer sacrifices of success.For they draw from the
riches of the seaAnd the hidden hoards of the
sand.

Halakhah

In Abudarham's commentary on the Amidah prayer, it is explained that God's love, kingship, help, and protection are reflected in various biblical verses mentioned in the prayer. In the commentary on Treasures Hidden in the Sand, it discusses the challenges of finding the Hillazon to make Techelet dye and the significance of acquiring it. The signs of the Hillazon are also detailed, explaining its emergence from the sea and burying itself in the earth.

Midrash

The Midrash from Bamidbar Rabbah 13:17 discusses the offerings of Zebulun and Issachar, highlighting their partnership in Torah study and commerce. The Midrash from Bereshit Rabbah 82:5 addresses the concept of descendants acting like other nations in terms of sacrifice. The Midrash from Kohelet Rabbah 1:8:1 discusses using coded language to hint at specific meanings. In Midrash Tanchuma Buber and V'Zot HaBerachah 2:4 and 3:1, Moses blesses Israel before the Angel of Death comes for him. Lastly, the Midrash from Tehillim 119:8 talks about the Lord's rewards for deeds, both for the wicked and the righteous, and the value of Torah study as a hidden treasure.

Commentary

Zebulun and Issachar will call people to the mountain of God to offer sacrifices in gratitude for their prosperity, wealth obtained from seafaring and hidden treasures found in the sand. The neighboring nations will visit Zebulun's land, witness the worship of the one God, and likely convert to Judaism due to their admiration. This interaction will showcase the unique qualities of the God of Israel, influencing other nations.

Jewish Thought

This passage from "Guide for the Perplexed," Part 2 12:4, discusses the concept of "influence" or "emanation" by incorporeal beings, particularly God. It explains that these beings act continuously and do not depend on impact or distance in their actions. The term "influence" is used to describe the effect produced by these beings, as it is difficult to accurately describe their actions. The text also challenges misunderstandings about how God's actions are carried out, emphasizing the role of the imagination in shaping beliefs. Ultimately, the passage aims to clarify the term "influence" as it applies to incorporeal beings such as God and angels, as well as to the forces of the spheres in their effects on the earth.

Quoting Commentary

During the Geonic period, the Babylonian scholars completed the Babylonian Talmud, creating a comprehensive source of knowledge that provides answers to various inquiries through diligent study. Mastery of the Talmud allows individuals to interpret laws clearly and make inferences, whether derived from pilpul methods or scholarly discussions, offering an understanding limited only by one's analytical abilities and perseverance in debating Torah-related issues.

Tanakh

In I Chronicles 12:33, it is noted that among the Issacharites were men who were skilled in interpreting the signs of the times and advising Israel on how to act. They were led by 200 chiefs, and their kinsmen followed their guidance [Tanakh].

Liturgy

The text discusses the gathering of the nobles of the nations to recognize the sovereignty of God, urging them to clap hands and sound trumpets in recognition of Hashem as King. This is symbolized by the blast of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah, specifically the broken blast of teruah which leads to repentance and forgiveness. The text emphasizes singing praises to God and acknowledges His reign over all nations, with the power to shield the earth. (Machzor Rosh Hashanah Ashkenaz, Sounding of the Shofar 13)

Talmud

Zebulun acknowledges receiving mountainous land and seas compared to his brothers' fertile fields and vineyards, but is assured of importance due to the ilazon residing in his territory, providing dye for tzitzit. The tribe questioned who would inform him if others took these resources without permission, and God reassured Zebulun that anyone doing so would not succeed in business. The treasures referred to the ilazon, tarit, and sand used for white glass found in Zebulun's territory would be protected by this sign.

Targum

The Targums on Deuteronomy 33:19 describe how the tribes of Israel will gather at the mountain of the sanctuary to offer sacred offerings, consuming the wealth of nations and revealing hidden treasures. They will eat from the sea and sand, using the resources found there for different purposes such as dyeing clothes and making glass vessels.

Musar

The text in Musar Sha'arei Teshuvah discusses the punishment for those who separate from the community's ways, noting that they are seen as opponents to the service of God and are considered among those who scorn God's word. This separation can lead to causing others to sin and excludes the individual from the world to come. On the other hand, the text in Musar Shenei Luchot HaBerit discusses the completion of repair work in the future, which will restore the world to its original state where body and soul were on an elevated level. This restoration will bring about unity among the Jewish people and everlasting life intended by the Creator.

Kabbalah

Rabbi El'azar in Tikkunei Zohar 43b:7 discusses the concept of the seven seas with a higher sea above all of them, referencing Deuteronomy 33:19. The passage questions who this higher sea nourishes.

Deuteronomy 33:20

וַיֹּגֵד אֱמֶר בְּרוּךְ מְרַחֵב גֹּד כְּלָבִיא שֶׁלֹךְ וְטֶרֶף זֶרֶעֱ אִף־קִדְקֹד׃ 20 And of Gad he said:Blessed be the One who enlarges Gad!Poised is he like a lionTo tear off arm and scalp.

Midrash

In Midrash Bereshit Rabbah 95:4, it is explained that Joseph selected five men from among his brothers to present before Pharaoh because they were not considered mighty, unlike others whose names were repeated in blessings. Similarly, in Sifrei Bamidbar 106:1, it is discussed how Moses and Joseph were both carried to their burials by God, and Moses was buried in the territory of Gad, linking this to the selection of men from those whose names were doubled in the blessing. Additionally, Sifrei Devarim 355:1 notes that Gad was specifically mentioned in a blessing because Joseph took men from those whose names were doubled.

Commentary

The tribe of Gad was blessed with a large territory suitable for raising sheep and cattle, and was compared to a lion for its strength and ability to repel enemies, causing them to flee. The broadening of Gad's territory eastward was a sign of power and expansion, reflecting the tribe's prowess and success in acquiring land for themselves due to their skills in warfare and cattle-raising. The blessing bestowed upon Gad was also a recognition of their abilities as warriors and their significance as a tribe capable of defending themselves and expanding their borders.

Quoting Commentary

The texts discuss how the tribe of Gad was known for their pilpul, courage, and military prowess, allowing them to inhabit the land opposite Beis-pe'or. Gad was praised for their bravery and strength, as mentioned in Deuteronomy 33:20 and Genesis 49:19, and their ability to defeat enemies. The Gadites were willing to remain distant from the main body of Israel, showing no fear despite the potential risks involved in settling on the far bank of the Jordan. Moses' blessing of Gad highlighted their lion-like courage, their role in battles, and their ability to maintain power, symbolized by various gemstones. Their strength and might were portrayed through their success in warfare and their readiness to defend their territory.

Tanakh

The text in Numbers 32:17 describes a group of Israelites expressing their willingness to lead the way as shock-troops to establish the Israelites in their home, while their children remain in fortified towns due to the inhabitants of the land. The meaning of the Hebrew word "ushim" used in this context is uncertain [Tanakh | Numbers 32:17].

Targum

In the blessings given to the tribe of Gad in Deuteronomy 33:20, it is emphasized that Gad will increase and expand like a lion, being powerful in battle and capable of defeating rulers and kings with his strength. He is compared to a lion resting in his territory but becoming a fierce warrior when facing enemies, distinguishing himself by decapitating the slain on the battlefield.

Deuteronomy 33:21

וַיִּרְא רְאֵשִׁית לּוֹ כִּי־שָׁם חִלָּקֶת מַחֲקֶק סָפוֹן וַיִּתֵּא רְאֵשִׁי לָם צִדְקָת
יְהוָה עֲשֶׂה וּמִשְׁפָּטֵיו עִם־יִשְׂרָאֵל: {ס} 21 (Meaning of verse uncertain; cf. vv. 3–5 (with note there), and saphun “esteemed” in post-biblical Heb.) He chose for himself the best, For there is the portion of the revered chieftain, Where the heads of the people come. He executed יהוה’s judgments And God’s decisions for Israel.

Jewish Thought

G-d displays varying levels of tolerance depending on who He needs to relate to, with the ultimate goal being to bring people closer to righteousness and rectify their actions towards a higher purpose. Leaders like Moses, who brought merit to many people, are praised and seen as instrumental in leading the Jewish people towards righteousness. Keeping the Torah’s commandments is seen as integral to achieving a lofty ultimate purpose for humanity, with those who separate from the community risking losing their share in this collective good. Ultimately, the goal is to discern between the righteous and the wicked, with those who serve G-d reaping everlasting life.

Midrash

separated from his wife, just as it says: “Separate from the men this day to the Lord...and come, you and Aaron” (Exodus 32:29). Separation is written regarding his wife, as it is stated: “You must separate from your wife” (Exodus 19:15), just as he separated from his wife until they reached the mountain. “Of one hundred and thirty” – this teaches that she was blessed with six additional months, beyond the eighty months. “One silver basin...” – corresponding to Shifra and Puah, who attended to the women who gave birth in Egypt. That is why it is written: “Of seventy shekels,” corresponding to the seventy souls who descended to Egypt with Jacob, just as it says: “These are the souls of Jacob...seventy souls” (Exodus 1:5). “To Israel” – he was written resembling Israel.

Talmud

In the Talmudic texts discussed, it is debated where Moses is buried, with one suggesting it is in the portion of Gad based on Deuteronomy 33:21, and another discussing how God Himself transported Moses there. Additionally, in Tractate Semachot, Rabbi Akiba emphasizes the importance of honoring the dead, highlighting how Moses’ righteousness influenced others to be righteous, contrasting with those who lead others to sin like Jeroboam.

Commentary

Gad chose a territory on the east bank of the Jordan River due to the favorable conditions of the land, including that it contained the burial site of Moses, the lawgiver. The area was covered with well-built houses and Gad, along with Reuven and half of Menashe, returned the favor by leading the Israelites in warfare and fulfilling their promise to remain until all the tribes received their inheritance (Ibn Ezra, Sforno, Steinsaltz). This choice of land was not just for practical reasons but also because it represented the first part of the conquest of the Canaanite nations and symbolized justice and righteousness for Israel (Tur HaArokh, Rabbeinu Bahya, Siftei Chakhamim).

Quoting Commentary

Commentaries explain various Biblical verses through different lenses. Chizkuni deduces the location of Moses' grave based on the tribal territories, giving insight into the symbolism of Nebo. Conversely, Chizkuni also discusses the significance of the Divine punishment Moses received, tying it to the common destiny of his people. Genesis 1:1 and its association with Passover legislation illustrate divine ownership, highlighting the importance of the Torah's sequence in creation events according to the text. Kabbalistic interpretations by various commentators like Rabbi Bahya unravel deeper meanings, such as the attributes represented by Moses and Aaron or the emanations reflected in the creation process and divine interactions. The Daat Zkenim connects the formation of a well to miracles performed by Moses, as seen in Numbers 21:18, while Derekh Chayyim delves into the consequences of leaders' actions, reflecting in collective sin or merit. Furthermore, visions of resurrection with Moses' burial site in Deuteronomy 33:21 exhibit spiritual protection and future significance. The significance of Moses' role in Deuteronomy 5:26 as an intermediary between divine will and human fear of God emphasizes his unique position and purpose. Also, other commentaries discuss Moses and Aaron's impact, connecting their deeds and character traits to the influence they had, as seen in the insight on their leadership in Numbers 14:32 and Deuteronomy 34:12."contexts such as divine punishment and major events in the Torah narratives. Moses and the Torah's role as a source of instruction and interaction between humanity and divine entities are recurrent themes throughout the commentaries, emphasizing the profound significance and interplay of biblical figures, their actions, and divine intentions."

Tanakh

Joshua instructs the Israelites to leave their wives, children, and livestock on the land Moses assigned them on this side of the Jordan, while the fighting men should go armed across the Jordan to assist their kindred (Tanakh | Joshua 1:14).

Chasidut

In Chasidic commentary, it is noted that charity leads to embracing the aspect of mishpat, as seen in the connection between giving charity and mishpat in biblical verses. Additionally, the significance of the number 248 and the mitzvot is emphasized through the connection with the limbs of the body and the importance of not forgetting these mitzvot, as drunkenness can lead to forgetfulness. Finally, the burial place of Moshe is seen as connected to the root of Divine Will, as indicated by the word "sefinta" and the hidden nature of the lawgiver's plot.

Targum

The three Targum commentaries on Deuteronomy 33:21 highlight the belief that Moses, the great scribe, was buried in a place adorned with precious stones and pearls, symbolizing his righteousness and leadership in guiding the people according to God's laws. They all emphasize how he led the people both in this world and in the world to come, with the third Targum specifically noting his role in teaching the judgments to the people of Israel.

Mishnah

The Mishnah in Pirkei Avot 5:18 states that whoever influences the masses to be righteous will not be held accountable for sin, while those who lead them into sin will not be able to repent. Moses is an example of someone who led the masses to righteousness, as seen in Deuteronomy 33:21. In contrast, Jeroboam caused the masses to sin, as mentioned in I Kings 15:30, and was held responsible for their transgressions. This highlights the impact of leadership on the moral behavior of a community.

Musar

The rebels in the story of Korach, Datan, and Aviram represented negative virtues of jealousy, greed, and craving for honor, which are contrary to the good characteristics exemplified by Moses. The tribe of Gad is praised for voluntarily

going above and beyond what was required of them, exemplifying righteousness and justice in their actions. Moses' interactions with his family and the Israelites demonstrate a deep sense of justice and fairness in his leadership. Additionally, the defeat of adversaries in the Celestial Regions before earthly victory is highlighted as symbolic of the importance and role of Israel in the world.

Kabbalah

Kabbalah commentary on Tikkunei Zohar 46b:20 discusses the descent of the Father through the Righteous-One, symbolized by the shureq with one point. This represents the hidden portion of the lawgiver and the depth of truth, composed of 24 letters of the second Unity, as referenced in Psalms 74:21.

Tosefta

In Tosefta Sotah 4:3, it is recounted how Moses, guided by Serakh daughter of Asher, retrieved Joseph's coffin from the Nile River by invoking the divine presence and bringing it to the surface. This act is compared to Elisha making iron float, showcasing Moses' greater power. In Tosefta Sotah 4:4, it is discussed how Moses' bones were buried by the Shekhinah over a distance of four miles, associated with the land of Reuben and Gad according to biblical references. The text also highlights a pattern of retribution starting with the initiators of transgression, seen in various biblical stories such as the Flood, Sodom, and the spies.

Deuteronomy 33:22

וַיֹּאמֶר דָּן גִּיּוֹר אַרְיֵה יִזְנֵק מִן־הַבָּשָׁן: 22 And of Dan he said: Dan is a lion's whelp That leaps forth from Bashan.

Midrash

In Midrash Bamidbar Rabbah, the text discusses several princes of the tribes presenting offerings and their significance. Elyasaf son of Deuel's offering corresponds to the exodus from Egypt, emphasizing Yokheved's age when Moses was born. Nashon son of Aminadav is highlighted for sanctifying God's name, while Aiezer son of Amishadai is praised for taking charge to avenge his people. In Midrash Bereshit Rabbah, Joseph selects five men, not the mightiest, among his brothers to present before Pharaoh, while Dan is noted for avenging his people and producing the judge Samson. In Midrash Tanchuma Buber, Joseph is pleased to see that Benjamin resembles his mother, stemming from the reference to him as "the son of his mother."

Commentary

Various commentaries on Deuteronomy 33:22:1 describe Dan as being compared to a lion's cub who leaps from the region of Bashan, emphasizing the tribe's bravery and strength in guarding the borders against enemies who may try to cross into Israelite territory, while also connecting this imagery to Samson's feats of valor and the attribute of Justice. Some commentaries interpret this leap as symbolic of Dan's tactical prowess in attacking adversaries unexpectedly, and the river of Jordan is mentioned as originating from Dan's territory.

Quoting Commentary

In the Mishnah Chullin 2:6:4 commentary, it states that when blood spurts out, the term "zink" is used to describe forcefully expelling air where blood spurts out, referencing Deuteronomy 33:22. In the commentary on Bamidbar 1:20:1, the tribes of Israel are listed in a specific order based on birth seniority and other historical considerations. The commentary on Shemot 38:22:2 discusses the significance of comparing Betzalel and Oholiav to lion cubs in relation to the construction of the Temple. Rashi's commentary on Genesis 47:2:1 mentions how Pharaoh was presented with weaker brethren to avoid them being drafted into the military, contrasting with Babylonian Talmudic interpretations. The midrash in Tribal Lands, Chapter 8, interprets Jacob's blessing on Dan to resemble Judah, with Moses also making a connection between the two tribes. Another segment from Tribal Lands, Chapter 8, references Moses's blessing that suggests Dan had a territory beyond just the city of Dan, potentially encompassing regions in the Bashan.

Talmud

During the incident of Israelites sinning with the Midianite women and worshipping the Ba'al Pe'or, Moses instructed the judges of Israel to execute the sinners, resulting in 157,200 deaths. When one man brought a Midianite woman to his brothers, Phineas took action, killing them both with a spear. Phineas' act was followed by six miracles, including the angel gluing the bodies together, preventing them from crying out, and stopping a plague that had started to spread among the people. (Jerusalem Talmud Sanhedrin 10:2:17)

Targum

In Deuteronomy 33:22, various Targums describe Moses blessing the tribe of Dan by comparing them to a lion cub and referencing the watered land of Bashan, Batanea, and Mathnan in different ways.

Musar

In Shenei Luchot HaBerit, it is noted that when spelling the Ineffable Name in words, it equals 45, the same as the word for "man" (אדם). Additionally, spelling the word "אדם" also equates to the Ineffable Name. In another commentary from Shenei Luchot HaBerit, there is a question regarding Dan being compared to a lion, while also being called a serpent in Jacob's blessing.

Deuteronomy 33:23

23 וַיִּנְפְּתָלִי אָמַר נַפְתָּלִי שֶׁבַע רְצוֹן וּמִלֵּא בְרַכַּת יְהוָה יָם וְדָרוֹם
יִרְשֶׁהָ: {ס} And of Naphtali he said: O Naphtali, sated with
favor And full of הוהי's blessing, Take possession
on the west and south.

Midrash

The Midrash from Bamidbar Rabbah 2:10 explains how the tribes of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun correspond to the four directions of the world, highlighting Judah's precedence in encampment, travel, offerings, and war. The Midrash from Bereshit Rabbah 95:4 identifies which five brothers Joseph chose to present before Pharaoh based on their might indicated by the repetition of their names in Moses's blessing. Lastly, the Midrash from Bereshit Rabbah 99:12 interprets the characteristics of the tribes of Asher, Naphtali, and Joseph based on their blessings and provides insights into their attributes.

Talmud

The text discusses various interpretations of the tribe of Naphtali inheriting the sea and the south, with references to blessings over a full cup leading to inheritance in this world and the World-to-Come, as well as conditions for gathering grass and stepping to the side mentioned in different commentaries on the Talmud. Additionally, the cup of Grace is described as full, decorated, and washed, with connections to inheritance in both this world and the World-to-Come.

Commentary

Naftali is blessed with high-quality produce that ripens early, enjoying the favor and satisfaction of God [Chizkuni, Deuteronomy 33:23:1; Daat Zkenim, Deuteronomy 33:23:1]. Visitors to Naftali bless the Almighty for its fruits [Chizkuni, Deuteronomy 33:23:2]. The early ripening fruit of Naftali is more satisfying, and those who bless God for the harvest will inherit both worlds [Daat Zkenim, Deuteronomy 33:23:1; Daat Zkenim, Deuteronomy 33:23:2]. The blessing of the Lord enriches Naftali's land in the west and south [Rabbeinu Bahya, Devarim 33:23:2]. Naftali is satisfied with the favor of God and will inherit the sea and south [Ramban on Deuteronomy 33:23:1]. His land is full of everything its inhabitants desire, including a coastal area for fishing [Rashi on Deuteronomy 33:23:1; Rashi on Deuteronomy 33:23:2]. Naftali's portion includes the Sea of Galilee and Beit She'an Valley [Steinsaltz on Deuteronomy 33:23]. The tribe of Naphtali can fully express their satisfaction and gratitude for God's blessings [Tur HaArokh, Deuteronomy 33:23:1].

Jewish Thought

In Jewish Thought, the term "male" is a homonym that denotes one substance entering and filling another, as seen in various biblical examples. It also signifies the completion of a fixed period of time and the attainment of the highest degree of excellency, as illustrated in different verses from the Torah [Guide for the Perplexed, Part 1 19:1].

Quoting Commentary

The commentary discusses the meanings of the names of Naphtali and Asher, noting Asher's generous blessing and Naphtali's contentment with his lot. Naphtali's character is described as agreeable and connected, symbolized by the image of a hind that represents swift messages and sweet words binding society together (Abarbanel, Deuteronomy 33:23).

Targum

In Deuteronomy 33:23, Moses blesses the tribe of Naphtali, proclaiming their fulfillment of desires and blessing from God, along with their possession of land to the west of the Sea of Galilee and to the south [Targum Onkelos, Targum Jerusalem, and Targum Jonathan].

Kabbalah

The Torah is considered a blessing because it starts with the letter ב, symbolizing blessings [Kabbalah | Sefer HaBahir 3]. The Torah is associated with divine counsel and nourishment as depicted in stories about a king seeking advice from flowing water to build a garden, symbolizing the Torah's role in delighting the world [Kabbalah | Sefer HaBahir 5]. Following Moses's decrees leads to inheriting both the present world (the South) and the World to Come (the sea), with the Targum translating the present world as "the south" [Kabbalah | Sefer HaBahir 7]. Inheriting the world is linked to inheriting God by following His ways, creating unity and completeness [Kabbalah | Sefer HaBahir 9]. The Torah is symbolized as a "full cup" or "dry land" throughout the week [Kabbalah | Tikkunei Zohar 61a:11].

Musar

The commentary from Shenei Luchot HaBerit discusses the blessings of the tribe of Asher within the camp of Dan, suggesting that their many sons may be a reward for their charitable giving and connecting their tithing practices to receiving unlimited blessings from God. On the other hand, the commentary from Torah Ohr explores the connection between the beginning and end of the Torah, emphasizing that Israel is the purpose of creation and that the Torah itself is a blessing, symbolized by the letter ב, representing expansion and intensification of God's abundant blessings. The eternal nature of the Torah is highlighted as the essence of all blessings, as seen in Psalms and explained in the Ziyoni text which connects the Torah to blessings through Biblical references.

Halakhah

In Shulchan Shel Arba 1:54, the requirements for the cup of blessing are outlined, including ten key actions such as rinsing, holding with two hands, and passing it on to household members. The wine should be undiluted until the blessing is made, and water is added for birkat ha-mazon. The cup should be full for a boundless inheritance, and there are mystical interpretations related to the nazirite and the sefirah of Compassion. R. Yohanan claims there are only four essential actions: undiluted, full, rinsing, and washing, which can be remembered with the acronym HaMiShaH or SiMHa”H.

Deuteronomy 33:24

וַיֹּאמֶר אֶמֶר בְּרוּךְ מִבְּנֵי אֲשֶׁר יְהִי רְצוֹי אֶחָיו וְטָבֵל בְּשֶׁמֶן רַגְלֹו׃ 24 And of Asher he said: Most blessed of sons be Asher; May he be the favorite of his brothers, May he dip his foot in oil.

Midrash

The Midrash Bamidbar Rabbah 2:10 explains the significance of the different directions of the world and the corresponding tribes that were placed in each direction. Judah is highlighted as the leading tribe in the east, representing rulership and importance, with Issachar and Zebulun supporting roles. The commentary also discusses the roles of Reuben, Gad, Simeon, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin in the other directions. Additionally, the Midrash relates Judah, Moses, and Aaron to the four angels surrounding God's throne. In another Midrash, Bereshit Rabbah 95:4, Joseph chooses five brothers to present to Pharaoh, based on their strength and mentions that Judah is not presented because of his might. Midrash Ein Yaakov adds a story about the richness of oil in Asher's land. Furthermore, the Midrash Tanchuma and Tanna DeBei Eliyahu Rabbah discuss Asher's daughters and their beauty, emphasizing their blessings and favor among their brethren.

Chasidut

The month of Shevat is associated with the Tribe of Asher, known for their rich bread and abundance of olive oil in their land. According to Bnei Yissaschar, Olive oil represents wisdom, suggesting a connection between physical abundance and spiritual wisdom.

Commentary

Asher is blessed more than the other sons of Yaakov, receiving blessings from other tribes due to the abundance of oil in his territory, making him favorable among his brothers. The tribe of Asher is blessed with many children, though the reason for their increased blessing remains unclear. Asher is also recognized for acting as an intermediary for other tribes, providing oil and other resources. Additionally, Asher's territory was extremely fertile, leading to his being favored by his brothers and having a significant increase in population, military strength, and blessings as a result.

Quoting Commentary

Yaakov's blessings on the tribes of Asher and Gad in Genesis 49 indicate that Asher's land is rich in olive trees, symbolizing the abundance of oil that would come from his territory, providing luxurious food. The fertile fields of Asher would also supply the needs of the neighboring tribe of Gad, whose troops would be called up for military service. Moses' blessing in Deuteronomy 33 further highlights Asher's provision of abundant, high-quality oil from their land, which was essential for the Temple service and symbolized prosperity. The Tartumud recounts a story illustrating the abundant oil from Asher, emphasizing its richness and generosity. Despite Dan's association with darkness due to idolatry in an alternative interpretation by Rabbeinu Bahya, Asher, along with Naftali, helped brighten the spiritual darkness, further emphasizing Asher's abundant oil. Archeological sites and landscapes in Asher's territory today continue to reflect the rich and abundant nature of this tribe's blessing.

Talmud

In Jerusalem Talmud Bava Batra 5:1:6, Rebbi Tanum and Rebbi Eleazar ben Rebbi Yose discuss the conditions imposed by Joshua for collecting grasses, relieving oneself, and grazing in forests. Rebbi Aqiba identifies the locations of "lake" and "South" in Deuteronomy 33:23. In Jerusalem Talmud Sanhedrin 10:1:22, a series of homilies on Ecclesiastes 12:11 equate planted nails with planted trees, highlighting the importance of Torah teachings. In Jerusalem Talmud Shabbat 6:2:3, Rebbi Joanan, Rebbi anina, and Rebbi Aa discuss the number of nails permitted in shoes, while Rebbi Zeira clarifies rules related to scraping shoes on the Sabbath. Finally, in Menachot 85b:14, Moses' blessing to the tribe of Asher is explained in relation to a story involving the city of Tekoa and the flow of oil. Menachot 85b:16 tells a story of a messenger questioning a man's ability to provide oil, only to discover the abundant oil of the Tribe of Asher.

Targum

Moses blesses the tribe of Asher in Deuteronomy 33:24, predicting that they will be blessed with sons, favored by their brothers, and produce an abundance of oil. This blessing emphasizes their prosperity and abundance, especially in the production of oil.

Musar

The tribe of Asher, part of the camp of Dan, is described as being blessed with many sons, possibly as a reward for his charitable giving. This is related to the concept of tithing and the promise of unlimited blessings from God. The tribe of Naftali, also part of the camp, is described as sated with favor and full of the Lord's blessing (Musar | Shenei Luchot HaBerit, Torah Shebikhtav, Bamidbar, Nasso, Beha'alotcha, Torah Ohr, Bamidbar 88).

Deuteronomy 33:25

25 בְּרִזְלִי וּנְחוֹשֶׁת מְנַעֲלָיִךְ וּכְיִמְיֶךָ דְּבִאָּדָךְ: (Meaning of verse uncertain.) May your doorbolts be iron and copper, And your security last all your days.

Midrash

The text discusses the importance of Torah scholars and their teachings, likening them to goads and implanted nails that direct individuals towards the paths of life. It emphasizes the need to contemplate and study the words of the wise, as well as the role of the Sages and Sanhedrin in imparting wisdom. Additionally, it highlights the significance of Eretz Yisrael in terms of prosperity and wealth, with all lands streaming money towards it.

Commentary

Moses blesses Asher to enjoy a vigorous old age full of strength and vitality, referencing the days of anxiety often associated with old age as "הבאד" (Chizkuni). Iron and copper symbolize the sinews and bones of the body (Daat Zeinim), Moses prays for Asher's physical strength to remain in old age as in his prime, recounting the strength of Rabbi Chanina at age 80 (Daat Zeinim). The metaphoric "bars" of iron and brass symbolize sturdy borders for Asher, offering protection and prosperity (Ibn Ezra, Ramban). The Aramaic word "ךאבד" in Deuteronomy 33:25:2 describes the abundance of prosperity flowing throughout Asher's life (Ramban). Asher's land is described as securely locked with iron and copper, symbolizing safety and protection (Sforno, Rashi). Moses blesses that Asher's old age be as strong as his youth, lacking pessimism often associated with aging (Sforno, Sifte Chakhamim).

Jewish Thought

In Jewish Thought, the term "male" is a homonym that denotes one substance entering and filling another, as seen in various biblical examples. It also signifies the completion of a fixed period of time and the attainment of the highest degree of excellency, as illustrated in different verses from the Torah [Guide for the Perplexed, Part 1 19:1].

Talmud

It is forbidden to wear nail-studded work-boots on the Sabbath, but permitted to wear shoes decorated with nails. Different traditions suggest different numbers of nails as decoration, with Rebbi Hanina suggesting seven and Rebbi explaining that 24 nails should be used to represent the watches in the Temple. It is permitted to place all the nails on one sandal or boot. It is also allowed to oil or dip old boots or sandals in water, but scraping is prohibited. Anointing one's foot in a boot or sandal is also not allowed, but oiling the foot before stepping into the footwear is permitted. Olive oil produced in the Sabbatical year must be used for personal needs, but not for preparing leather products.

Targum

In the commentary on Deuteronomy 33:25 in Targum Onkelos, Targum Jerusalem, and Targum Jonathan, it is emphasized that the tribe of Asher will remain strong and mighty in their old age, just as they were in their youth, likening their strength to that of iron and copper.

Quoting Commentary

The text discusses how Torah scholars in Israel benefit from a superior climate conducive to studying Torah, making them less likely to struggle like scholars in other countries who suffer from "the bread of troubles". This blessing is emphasized by the availability of resources like iron and copper in the land of Israel, highlighting its lack of shortcomings. Additionally, Rashi explains in different commentaries about the significance of naming certain brothers twice in blessings, indicating strength or perceived weakness in different contexts.

Chasidut

The text discusses the importance of maintaining strength and virtues from youth into old age, as seen in the blessings of iron and copper locks in Deuteronomy 33:25. By remembering Hashem in youth, one can avoid hardship in old age, leading to a fruitful life. This concept also applies on a national level, as the generation of the Midbar protected themselves with strength, preparing future generations. Moshe Rabbeinu's ability to pass down wisdom to future generations is highlighted as a testament to his enduring legacy.

Deuteronomy 33:26

אֵין כָּאֵל יִשְׁרָאֵל רֹכֵב שָׁמַיִם בְּעֶזְרֹךָ וּבְגִּבּוֹתָיו שְׂחָקִים: 26 O Jeshurun, there is none like God, Riding through the heavens to help you, Through the skies in His majesty.

Jewish Thought

Rabbi Eleazar emphasizes the importance of children witnessing the king reading the Torah in shaping their future reverence for G'd [Jewish Thought | Akeidat Yitzchak 102:1:16]. The significance of the sanctification of the moon as the first commandment given to the Jewish nation is explored in depth, highlighting the intricate rituals surrounding this observance and its role in dispelling idolatrous beliefs [Jewish Thought | Akeidat Yitzchak 37:1:6]. Numbers in the Torah hold independent significance, with the number ten representing the directives used in creating the universe [Jewish Thought | Akeidat Yitzchak 45:1:6]. The theme of God riding on the heavens as a symbol of dominion and control over the universe is explored, with emphasis on the motions of the spheres as evidence of design in the universe [Jewish Thought | Guide for the Perplexed, Part 1 70:1, Part 1 70:3, Part 2 19:11, Part 2 19:18]. The concept of human actions influencing divine actions is discussed with references to the comparison of a chariot steed led by Par-oh's horses and the parallel with human actions leading to divine interactions [Jewish Thought | Nefesh HaChayim, Gate I 9:8].

Midrash

In Midrash Bamidbar Rabbah 12:4, the world is compared to a palanquin constructed by King Solomon, representing the Holy One blessed be He bringing peace and combining fire and water to create the firmament. The pillars of silver represent genealogy, the cushioning of gold represents the Torah, and the seat of purple wool represents the sun. The text explores how creation and the beings within it are interconnected. In Midrash Bamidbar Rabbah 2:10, the text explains the significance of the tribes' arrangement around the Tabernacle, emphasizing the symbolic associations of each tribe with different qualities like Torah, repentance, wealth, and strength. Lastly, Midrash Bereshit Rabbah 77:1 discusses the notion of the righteous and their relationship with God, highlighting the actions of the righteous as mirroring God's actions and connecting to the deeper meanings of various biblical passages.

Talmud

In the Talmudic commentary Chagigah 12b:14, it is described how God dwells in the firmaments above the ofanim, seraphim, and ministering angels in Aravot, which is called "heaven." In a separate commentary from the Jerusalem Talmud Taanit 4:2:12, three scrolls found in the Temple courtyard were compared and discrepancies resolved by confirming two readings and annulling the third.

Commentary

In Deuteronomy 33:26, Moses blesses all of Israel, emphasizing that there is no one like God for Yeshurun (Israel). The verse highlights the idea that God's power is unmatched, as He rides through the heavens and sky to help His people, a concept representing divine assistance unique to Israel compared to other nations. This direct connection to God, signifying the special relationship between God and His people, is portrayed as essential for receiving blessings and protection.

Chasidut

In Chasidut, Moses' description of reverence for God in Deuteronomy is seen as God mirroring the attributes practiced by the Jewish people on earth, whether it be loving kindness or harshness towards blasphemers. This reflects the idea that God restricts His unlimited abilities out of love for His people, adjusting His actions based on how His people behave. In Likutei Moharan, Pharaoh's army is linked to tefilin, which is described as a vehicle for revealing lights through the supernal Mother, Imma. This connection is related to the Zohar's interpretation of Pharaoh as Imma, highlighting the importance of meriting the aspect of tefilin.

Kabbalah

The texts explore the significance of righteousness and caution in the practice of emitting semen, connecting it to the radiance of the Shechinah and the ability to offer sacrifices on the altar. Additionally, they discuss the concept of HaShem riding upon the heavens with the help of the children of Israel, granting them reward and affixing victory and majesty to do goodness, as well as the relationship between the names E"l, Elohi"m, and HaShem in being called "the heavens" and the dwelling place of HaShem.

Targum

The three Targums on Deuteronomy 33:26 describe the incomparable God of Israel, whose Shekinah dwells in the heavens and aids His people, displaying His magnificence and might in the high heavens.

Quoting Commentary

In a kabbalistic approach, the power of G'd's attributes is influenced by the conduct of the Jewish people - when they observe commandments, G'd's power is manifest, but sinful conduct weakens this manifestation (Bamidbar 14:17:4). In a discussion of the flag camps in Bamidbar, the camp of Reuven symbolizes repentance, opening the way for other sinners to repent, and is associated with the archangel Michael and the attribute of Mercy (Bamidbar 2:2:5). Maimonides interprets a dream involving a ladder as representing the preexistence of G'd, and Ramban discusses the creation of the heavens from nothing (Bereshit 28:12:9, Devarim 32:15:1). The Mishnah references various disciplines as appetizers leading to wisdom, possibly theology (Pirkei Avot 3:18:8).

Musar

The Midrash of Rabbi Nechunya ben Hakaneh states that studying Torah for its own sake is considered an act of kindness towards God [Musar | Shenei Luchot HaBerit, Torah Shebikhtav, V'Zot HaBerachah, Derekh Chayim 7]. By doing so, God helps us and allows us to reach heavenly heights, leading to a sense of pride in the skies.

Deuteronomy 33:27

מַעֲנֵה אֱלֹהֵי קֶדֶם וּמִתְחַת זְרַעַת עוֹלָם וַיִּגְרֶשׁ מִפְּנֵיךָ אוֹיֵב וַיֹּאמֶר
הַשֹּׁמֵד: 27 (Meaning of verse uncertain.) The ancient God is a
refuge, A support are the arms everlasting. He drove
out the enemy before you By His command: Destroy!

Midrash

The text explores the idea that the Holy One is the dwelling place of the world, and not the other way around, as seen in various verses like Deuteronomy 33:27 and Psalms 90:1. The righteous play a role in supporting the world, with references to Esau and Jacob. Prayer and Torah study are emphasized, showing that the Holy One does not necessarily require offerings but rather words of Torah, as exemplified through historical figures like Mordechai. The text also delves into the concept of God as a place, with discussions on various Torah scrolls with pseudonyms like "me'on" and "hi" found in the Temple court.

Jewish Thought

The commentary from Akeidat Yitzchak discusses the significance of refraining from contact with one's wife during menstruation to receive blessings symbolized by circumcision, emphasizing the internal conflict within man and the steps the Torah takes to help overcome physical urges. The commentary from Guide for the Perplexed delves into the concept of dominion represented by the term 'ride,' attributing this characteristic to both humans and God. Additionally, the treatise from HaEmunot veHaDeot underscores the importance of sustaining thoughts of the Creator despite lack of sensory experience, highlighting the attributes of God and the necessity of praising Him for his greatness and glory.

Talmud

The commentaries discuss the cosmological beliefs of Rabbi Yosei and others based on various biblical verses, contemplating the structure of the world and its ultimate reliance on God. Additional discussions explore theological concepts such as God's omnipresence and His existence outside of space and time, as well as textual variations found in different Torah scrolls and the decisions made regarding those discrepancies.

Commentary

God is seen as supporting Asher as well as the universe, and as the ruler of both its upper and lower regions. The enemy, including Amalek, Sichon, and Og, are thrust out and destroyed. God is described as the ultimate refuge, supporting both heavens and earth. The everlasting arms of God are benevolent, giving strength and support to the Jewish people. Through observance of God's commandments, aspects of justice can transform into advocacy on behalf of the people. God is perceived as eternal, dwelling in the heavens and providing protection to those below.

Kabbalah

In Kabbalistic teachings, all existence depends on the will and word of God, who is the necessary existence ensuring the existence of all things. The Torah contains deep secrets and mysteries that only a select few can comprehend, revealing the divine nature of God as the primary cause of all creation and the one to be worshipped. The Temple, symbolizing human creation, is destined to be rebuilt by God, signifying His ultimate power and glory over all things.

Quoting Commentary

In texts from various commentaries, it is discussed that individuals who reach a spiritual height as a Merkavah de-Shechinah would not die, similar to Elijah the Prophet. However, if everyone reached this state, the world would not be inhabited, as highlighted in Hashmatos. Despite this, there are opportunities for those who long to express love for God to embody a Chariot of the Divine Presence, as exemplified by Hillel acting solely for Heaven's sake. Additionally, the righteous ones are described as the pillars of the earth, preserving the world in their merit, and the preexisting God's abode is highlighted in Deuteronomy 33:27. Furthermore, it is emphasized that God is the place of the world, yet cannot be contained within it.

Halakhah

After the Hakafo in the daytime, three Sifrei Torah are left out with many people called up to read Vezos haberachah up to Me'onah repeatedly. Young boys are called up, with a bar mitzvah boy saying the blessing and others listening. The verse Hamalach hagoel is read or recited over them. The Chasan Torah reads from Me'onah to the end in the first Seifer Torah, the Chasan Bereishis reads in the second, and Maftir is read in the third. It is common to call an eminent person as Chasan Torah. In communities with only two Sifrei Torah, Vezos haberachah should be read in one and Bereishis in the other, with the first Seifer being used again for Maftir [Kitzur Shulchan Arukh 138:9].

Chasidut

In Likutei Moharan, teachings discuss driving away enemies from holiness by rejecting idolatry and the desire for money. Ascending through lights leads to delight in Shabbat, connecting to the patriarchs who bring the merit of faith and allow for the enjoyment of Shabbat. The concept of counsels is emphasized in the healing process achieved by following divine guidance and the merit of the Patriarchs.

Targum

The Targums of Onkelos, Jerusalem, and Jonathan on Deuteronomy 33:27 all describe God as the eternal dwelling place, with power over the world and the ability to defeat enemies. They all mention God's word being used to command destruction of enemies.

Musar

The text discusses the concept of humility in the Jewish people, contrasting their modesty with the arrogance of Gentile nations that received greatness from God. Examples include Abraham, Moses, and Aaron humbling themselves despite their elevated status. The commentary also explores the idea of God as a "Place" in relation to the world, ultimately highlighting the importance of good deeds and humility in maintaining the world order and Divine presence. Through humility and righteous actions, blessings are bestowed upon Israel and humanity as a whole (Shenei Luchot HaBerit, Torah Shebikhtav, Eikev; Vayetzei).

Deuteronomy 33:28

וַיֵּשְׁכֶן יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּטַח בְּדֶרֶךְ עַיִן יַעֲקֹב אֶל־אֶרֶץ דָּגָן וְתִירוֹשׁ 28 Thus Israel dwells in safety, Untroubled is Jacob's
אֶרֶץ־שִׁמְיוֹ יַעֲרֹפוּ טָל: abode, (abode Others "fountain.") In a land of
grain and wine, Under heavens dripping dew.

Midrash

The texts discuss the relationship between God and Israel, emphasizing the importance of following God's will to receive His protection. The dew, often a metaphor for divine blessings, is controlled only by God, highlighting His authority. Through prayer, Israel is saved despite adversity, as seen in biblical figures like Elijah and Gideon. The texts also reflect on the idea that gratitude and Torah study are essential forms of worship, with divine forgiveness granted through sincere words and repentance. Ultimately, the narrative underscores the significance of humility, prayer, and faithfulness to God's teachings in achieving divine favor and protection.

Jewish Thought

In Akeidat Yitzchak, Isaac becomes suspicious of Jacob's identity but ultimately blesses him after confirming it with his senses. The blessing given by Isaac is both spiritual and material, meant to be used in service of God. Esau's anger towards Jacob leads to Rebecca advising Jacob to flee. In Kol Dodi Dofek, loneliness is portrayed not as negative isolation but as a state of glory, strength, and holiness. It is seen as a necessary aspect of individual spiritual personality and greatness, as exemplified by figures such as Moses and Elijah. Loneliness provides security, self-esteem, and significance to man.

Commentary

The word "fountain of Jacob" metaphorically represents the descendants of Jacob [Chizkuni, Ibn Ezra]. Israel dwelling securely signifies living in isolation, free from enemies after eliminating Canaanites [Or HaChaim]. The blessing "his heavens shall drip dew" prophesies conditions in the messianic age resembling pre-sin times, making the land fertile without human effort [Sforno]. This blessing alludes to Isaac's blessing as well, ensuring abundant dew [Rashi]. The exclusive connection between the Jewish people and the blessings of prophecy, Torah, land of Israel, and resurrection is highlighted, emphasizing the uniqueness and inheritance of these gifts [Rabbeinu Bahya].

Quoting Commentary

The accepted custom in Genesis 46:4:2 implied Joseph would help in transferring Yaakov's remains to the cave of Machpelah; dry land's name is based on characteristics; Balaam considered Israel a unique nation not to be assimilated with others in Numbers 23:9:1; the phrase "alone in safety" in Deuteronomy 33:28 and Psalms 4:9:2 expresses security.

Tanakh

Genesis 27:28 talks about the blessings of heaven and earth bestowed upon someone. In Genesis 48:21, Israel reassures Joseph that God will always be with him. In Psalms 4:9, the psalmist finds peace and security in the Lord's protection [d].

Chasidut

In Likutei Moharan 2:5:1, it is explained that the main cause of foreign thoughts is the corruption of mishpat, which is connected to the concept of AYNin. This idea is supported with references from Genesis 14:7 and Deuteronomy 33:28.

Liturgy

The text praises God for his path through the Reed Sea, the rain and dew in the skies, and the proclamation of His Name in synagogues morning and evening. It highlights the exaltation of Adonoy of Hosts dwelling upon the cherubim as a representation of Hashem's holiness.

Talmud

Rabbi Yosei bar anina claims that Moses issued four decrees upon the Jewish people which were later revoked by prophets. One such decree was that the Jewish people would only dwell in safety if they reached a spiritual level similar to Jacob our forefather, which was later overturned by Amos. In a similar vein, Rabbi Yoanan interprets phrases from Deuteronomy and Lamentations as reflections of the Jewish people's spiritual state and their consequences, suggesting that their rejection of divine directives has led to their solitude and sorrow. (Makkot 24a:28, Sanhedrin 104a:14)

Mishnah

In Mishnah Pesachim 7:1, it is explained how to roast the Paschal lamb: one must bring a spit of pomegranate wood and thrust it into the mouth of the lamb until it reaches its anus. According to Rabbi Yosei HaGelili, one should put the legs and entrails inside the lamb and roast it all together. However, Rabbi Akiva argues that this is a form of cooking and suggests suspending the legs and entrails from the spit above the animal's head outside it to ensure direct roasting by the fire and avoiding cooking of the internal parts.

Targum

In Deuteronomy 33:28, Targum Onkelos, Targum Jerusalem, and Targum Jonathan all describe how Israel will dwell securely in a land rich in grain and wine, blessed by Yaakov, with dew from the heavens above. This represents the promise of safety and abundance for the people of Israel.

Kabbalah

In Tikkunei Zohar 30b:16 and Tikkunei Zohar 36b:18, it is highlighted that the descendants of Jacob are secure and alone, with no foreign god with them, reflecting the purity and integrity of Jacob himself. This theme of being securely alone is emphasized as a characteristic of Jacob and his lineage, separate from any outside influences.

Deuteronomy 33:29

אֲשֶׁר־יְיָ *יִשְׂרָאֵל מִי כְמוֹךָ עִם נוֹשָׁע בְּיָהוּהָ מִן עֶזְרֶךָ וְאֶשְׁר־חָרָב
גְּאֻלָּתְךָ וְיִכְחָשׁוּ אֵיבֶיךָ לָךְ וְאַתָּה עַל־בְּמוֹתֵימוֹ תִּדְרֹךְ: {ס} 29 O happy Israel! Who is like you, A people delivered
by הוּדָה, Your protecting Shield, your Sword
triumphant! Your enemies shall come cringing before
you, And you shall tread on their backs.

Halakhah

On the night of the ninth day of Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret, prayers are the same as the eighth day. The Torah is read from three scrolls, with the Parashah of Zot HaBerakhah read by five congregants. The reason for this reading is based on King Solomon having blessed Israel on the eighth day of the festival. The Amidah prayer emphasizes that God shows lovingkindness daily and is King, Helper, and Shield, as mentioned in various scriptures. In a midrash, it is interpreted that a future banquet will be held for the righteous, with blessings given by Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, and David. Moses' words at the end of the Torah are understood as a promise of rewards in the world to come. The expression "O Happy Israel" signifies happiness in this world and prosperity in the world to come, with God being the protective shield and provider of eternal salvation.

Midrash

or any animal outside the designated place of worship, whether before the Tabernacle or Temple, is seen as shedding human blood. This is emphasized in Isaiah, where slaughtering an animal is equated to killing a person, cautioning against offering sacrifices in unauthorized locations. (Midrash Tanchuma Buber, Achrei Mot 18:1)

Jewish Thought

Jewish Thought explores the reasoning behind God's actions and interventions in the lives of the Jewish people throughout history. Scholars debate whether God's involvement is due to lack of prescience, power, or as a response to human decisions. Philosophers like Gersonides and Maimonides offer different perspectives on the extent of God's foreknowledge and involvement. The text also discusses the concept of rewards for good deeds performed collectively or individually, as well as the impact of human actions on shaping history and the eventual perfection of mankind and the Jewish nation. The importance of fulfilling commandments in every aspect of life is highlighted, emphasizing the unique spiritual status of Israel as a nation.

Talmud

Rav Ashi quotes verses from Deuteronomy praising Israel's greatness, while Haman tries to force Mordecai to ride a horse before being kicked, citing a verse about treading on enemies. In another commentary, delighting in Shabbat is said to rescue one from exile, with a verse from Isaiah supporting this idea, and a discussion on what constitutes delight on Shabbat, concluding that even a small item prepared for Shabbat can bring delight. (Talmud | Berakhot 6a:24, Talmud | Megillah 16a:10, Talmud | Shabbat 118b:2)

Quoting Commentary

Chizkuni explains that in Deuteronomy 32:13, the letter ך is extraneous and the letter ך should have a short vowel kametz, as seen in Deuteronomy 33:29. He also interprets Jacob's use of the past tense in Genesis 48:22 as expressing certainty in God's promises. Moses, in Deuteronomy 33:29, speaks of joy rather than happiness, reflecting the Torah's

emphasis on sima. Additionally, Rabbeinu Bahya and Ibn Ezra provide kabbalistic and metaphorical interpretations of verses in Deuteronomy and Isaiah, highlighting the influence of the Jewish people's conduct on the manifestation of God's powers. Moses, in his final blessing, expresses love for Israel in Deuteronomy 33:29, similar to Jacob's blessing of his sons in Genesis and David's continuation of Moses' words in Psalms. Moses' blessings in Deuteronomy 33 reflect a different tribal weighting than Genesis, possibly indicating Northern ascendancy, according to scholars like Plaut and Tigay.

Commentary

The commentaries on Deuteronomy 33:29 emphasize that Israel is uniquely protected by God, with references to enemies pretending to be friends to deceive, voluntary isolation as a sign of maturity, being shielded from evil, and achieving victory with God as their sword. The blessings bestowed upon Israel in this world are seen as proof of an even greater reward in the afterlife, illustrating true deliverance as being free from death. Israel's protection by God enables them to be free from fear, with their ultimate salvation depending on Him.

Tanakh

In Joshua 9:9, a group of foreigners claim to have traveled from a distant land to seek the protection of the ETERNAL God of Israel due to the reports of His miracles in Egypt [A]. This deception ultimately leads to a treaty being made with the Israelites [B].

Chasidut

The text from Likutei Moharan discusses the happiness and uniqueness of Israel compared to other nations, emphasizing the greatness of God. Another section discusses leaders of the generation who use their authority undeservedly to exalt themselves over the people, causing harm and damage rather than punishment, with references to wielding the sword of pride and ruling over a destitute people.

Kabbalah

The text explains that the Jewish people, adhering to the middle line-Kav HaEmtza'ee, are able to ascend to the Unlimited One-Ein Sof, in contrast to the seventy ministering angels of the nations who are limited by their adherence to the qualities of Greatness-Gedulah and Might-Gevurah. The Jewish people, embodying Splendor-Tiferet and knowledge-Da'at, can reach higher spiritual levels and ultimately ascend with HaShem's Splendor-Tiferet, symbolized by the letter Vav-ו in the Name HaShem-יהוה, surpassing the capabilities of the ministering angels of the nations.

Targum

The Targums on Deuteronomy 33:29 all express the idea that Israel is blessed as a people saved by the protection of the Lord, with the imagery of a shield, aid, and sword symbolizing the divine support and victory over enemies, allowing them to prevail and conquer their foes.

Liturgy

In Deuteronomy 33:29, it is mentioned that the Israelites will conquer the high places of their enemies. This verse from the liturgy reflects the theme of triumph and victory for the Jewish people, symbolizing their ultimate success and restoration [Liturgy | Shabbat Siddur Sefard Linear, Maariv Service for the Conclusion of Shabbos, Veyiten Lecha 102].

Musar

The Torah uses different expressions for Samael and Rahav because G-d took the "light" Samael divested himself of as a legal instrument for killing, while Rahav's blessing was used sparingly for ensuring the Jewish people's continuity. This is seen in the blessings Moses bestows on Israel in Deut.33,29. G-d offered the Torah to other nations but received a similar response each time, taking away gifts previously bestowed on them and giving them to Israel.

Deuteronomy 34:1

וַיַּעַל מֹשֶׁה מִמִּעְרַבְתַּת מוֹאָב אֶל־הָר נֹבֹה רֹאשׁ הַפְּסָגָה אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי
יְרֵחוֹ וַיֵּרְאֵהוּ יְהוָה אֶת־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ אֶת־הַגִּלְעָד עַד־הַיַּרְדֵּן: 1 Moses went up from the steppes of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the summit of Pisgah, opposite Jericho, and יהוה showed him the whole land: Gilead as far as Dan;

Jewish Thought

The text from Akeidat Yitzchak discusses Moses' request to cross the Jordan and lead the conquest of the West Bank, which was denied due to the people's unworthiness. It emphasizes the importance of maintaining a close relationship with God through observing mitzvot for survival and success. In contrast, the text from Nineteen Letters emphasizes drawing closer to God, being devoted to one's mission on earth, and creating a humane society as part of one's sacred duty. Striving to be a blessing and establishing a home to raise ideal human beings is highlighted, with the first task being selflessly caring for those in need.

Talmud

Rav Yehuda explains boundaries of Eretz Yisrael as areas shown to Moses before his death, obligated in tithe. Moses' physical ability before his death questioned as he climbed Mount Nebo effortlessly. Rabbi Yehuda notes Moses' death in Reuben's portion confirmed by verse, emphasizing significance of written text.

Commentary

Moses ascended Mount Nebo after waiting to bless his people, where he was shown all of Canaan with supernatural eyesight bestowed by God, including the region known as Gilead as far north as Dan, representing the boundaries of the Land of Israel. The Torah's vivid description of the land was intended to impress upon Moses its goodness and to bring him joy, reflecting his deep love for his people and their future.

Midrash

In the Midrash texts, it is explained that Moses was buried in the land of Gad, even though he died in the land of Reuben. Despite initially being denied entry to the Promised Land, Moses' prayers led to him being shown the entire land of Israel by God. The power of prayer is emphasized through examples of Moses, Hezekiah, and Jacob, showing that prayer can change divine decrees. Moses was not allowed to enter the land but was still able to see it from afar, highlighting the idea that a king (Moses) does not enter as a commoner.

Tanakh

The Danites established a sculptured image and Jonathan, son of Gershom of the tribe of Manasseh, served as a priest to the Danite tribe until they were exiled from the land [Tanakh | Judges 18:30].

Halakhah

The custom on the last day of the festival of Simchat Torah is to have more than a quorum read the Torah to increase joy, with everyone in the congregation reading, including those not accustomed to doing so throughout the year. Only one individual reads from Deuteronomy 34:1 to 34:9 in Parashat Zot HaBerakhah, without dividing these verses.

Quoting Commentary

In Job 38:1:8, Malbim suggests that Job's debate was a search for truth and insight into matters of Providence and the immortality of the soul. Meanwhile, Or HaChaim explains that Moses was able to see the land of Israel miraculously with expanded vision. Rabbeinu Bahya discusses the significance of crossing boundaries without hostile intent, while Rashi highlights divine intervention in giving conception and spiritual vision. Sforno contrasts a benevolent gaze with a curse, and Sifte Chakhamim discusses the actions of star gazers. In the biblical narrative, Tribal Lands discusses various tals in the Plains of Moab, rich with scenes from the Bible.

Targum

Moshe ascended Mount Nevo from the plains of Moav, where Adonoy showed him the entire land from Gil'od to Dan of Kesavan, including the strong warriors and future victories that would take place.

Musar

Moses requested from G-d a successor who could understand the minds of all Jews, with a perfect leader not appearing until the arrival of the Messiah. Though Moses prayed to avoid being involved in every generation's mystical aspects, he was unable to escape it, attributed to help Jews achieve rehabilitation. Israel feared death from increased insights, leading them to ask Moses to be their intermediary with G-d. Moses had already experienced insights related to the afterlife, without fear of death, attaining the fiftieth level of understanding. After Israel sinned with the golden calf, G-d indicated that the fiftieth level of understanding would only be attained after death, demonstrated by Moses' ascent to Mount Nebo upon his death, where he could attain the highest levels of insight beyond what others could achieve while still alive.

Tosefta

The text from Tosefta Sotah 4:4 discusses Moses being buried by the Shekhinah in the valley, with details on the location of his burial derived from various verses. It also highlights a pattern of divine retribution where those who initiate transgressions are struck first, such as with the residents of Sodom, Egypt, the spies, the Land of Israel, and the prophets of Jerusalem, all facing consequences for their actions.

Deuteronomy 34:2

וְאֵת כָּל־נַפְתָּלִי וְאֶת־אֶרֶץ אֶפְרַיִם וּמְנַשֶּׁה וְאֵת כָּל־אֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה עַד
הַיָּם הָאַחֲרֹן: 2 all Naphtali; the land of Ephraim and Manasseh;
the whole land of Judah as far as the Western
(Western I.e., Mediterranean; cf. 11.24.) Sea;

Commentary

In the commentary on Deuteronomy 34:2, it is explained that God showed Moses the boundaries of the land of Israel, including the regions of Naphtali, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Judah, as well as significant historical events and figures associated with each region. The phrase "unto the uttermost sea" can also be interpreted as referring to future events in Israel until the last day. The regions mentioned are identified according to the tribes that settled there [Chizkuni, JPS 1985 Footnotes, Rashi, Steinsaltz].

Midrash

In the Midrash Mekhilta DeRabbi Yishmael, it is explained that God showed Moses various future leaders and territories, including Barak, Joshua, Gideon, and David, as well as the land of Naftali, Ephraim, Menasheh, and Judah, to give him a glimpse into the future and the extent of the Promised Land, up to the Mediterranean Sea. This is based on references in Deuteronomy 34:2 and other biblical verses, as explained in the Sifrei Devarim commentary.

Targum

The Targums refer to the division of the land among the tribes of Naftoli, Ephraim, Menasheh, and Yehudah, extending to the westward Sea - highlighting the history and rulers of the respective tribes and kingdoms until the destruction of the sanctuary.

Quoting Commentary

In Rabbeinu Bahya's commentary, it is explained that certain terms such as "well of Yaakov" and "land of grain" are used to emphasize the exclusive claim of the Jewish people to gifts like prophecy, Torah, the land of Israel, and resurrection. These exclusive gifts are attributed directly to quotes from Moses and are considered unique to the Jewish people, with other nations not sharing the same privileges. Additionally, the text delves into the significance of directions in Hebrew, explaining that borrowed terms like "east" and "south" have symbolic meanings related to human orientation and features of the land, while the north is associated with hidden qualities. Finally, when discussing the Sea of Reeds, it is noted that David refers to it as יָם סוּף and it is considered the furthest boundary of the land of Israel.

Deuteronomy 34:3

וְאֶת־הַנֶּגֶב וְאֶת־הַכְּלָר בְּקֶעֶת יְרֵחוֹ עִיר הַתְּמָרִים עַד־צֹר׃ 3 the Negeb; and the Plain—the Valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees—as far as Zoar.

Talmud

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi expresses his anticipation for the rebuilding of the Temple between Judah and Benjamin, planning to prepare fields in Jericho, traditionally enjoyed by the Kenites, descendants of Moses' father-in-law. He also notes that when God removed His Presence, He promised a future reward for Jethro and his descendants, who were supported by charity in the meantime as evidenced by their occupation as potters in Jabez and their dedication to Torah study under Jabez's guidance. Jabez, known for his righteousness and piety, blessed by God after praying for prosperity, served as a model for devotion to God.

Commentary

The city of date palms was exceptionally excellent, and Moses' view of the land extended from the South, the Plain, the Valley of Jericho, and the city of date palms, until Tzo'ar on the banks of the Dead Sea, including the cave of Machpelah and the plain where Solomon cast the vessels of the Temple. (Chizkuni, Rashi, Rashi, Steinsaltz)

Quoting Commentary

The German Commentary on Mishnah Yevamot describes Zoar as a city with abundant palm trees, compared to Jericho, and even in the Middle Ages it was known for its palm trees. Rashi on Judges links Baal Tamar to Jericho, known as the city of dates. Rashi on Numbers explains that the most fertile part of Jericho was left unparcelled for the building of the Sanctuary, given temporarily to the children of Jethro until the Temple was built, as referenced in the Sifrei Bamidbar 81.

Tanakh

King Solomon had 200 large basins cast in earthen molds in the plain of the Jordan between Succoth and Zarethan [5].

Chasidut

The text discusses the interpretation of the commandment in Deuteronomy 6:6, highlighting the significance of the city of Jericho as a symbol of scent and understanding. The inhabitants of Jericho believed that the Words of Torah would eventually be fixed within the hearts of Israel. The sages disagreed with their practice, emphasizing that salvation is ultimately determined by God's will. Jericho's association with scent and dates symbolizes a connection to the loftiest perceptions of Divinity and the end of the matter. The city's unique spiritual power allowed its inhabitants to access ethereal levels not easily reached by others, demonstrating the influence of place on spiritual development.

Midrash

In Midrash Mekhilta DeRabbi Yishmael, it is explained that God showed Moses various significant locations and events, including the graves of the forefathers in Chevron, the overturning of Sodom and Gomorrah, Gog and his hosts in the valley of Jericho, Devorah under the Palm of Devorah, and the wife of Lot in Tzoar. Additionally, in Midrash Shemot Rabbah, Rabbi Simlai defends the belief in one God by interpreting the use of the singular term for speaking,

emphasizing that the voice of God is with the might of each individual, reinforcing the oneness of God.

Mishnah

Rabbi Akiva recounts his encounter with Neemya of Beit D'li in Babylonia, who relayed that Rabban Gamliel the Elder allowed a woman to remarry based on a single witness. Rabban Gamliel of Yavne then affirmed this ruling after Rabbi Akiva presented the case, leading to the establishment of a protocol allowing women to remarry based on various types of testimony. Despite Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua's objections, Rabbi Akiva argued against relying on women's testimony unless they were as convincing as the innkeeper in a specific case where a woman's testimony allowed a widow to remarry. This precedent set the standard for credibility in witness testimony.

Targum

The Targums on Deuteronomy 34:3 provide different interpretations of the geographical locations mentioned, with Targum Jonathan adding a prophetic element involving the kings of the south and north, the oppression of Israel, and the ultimate deliverance by Archangel Michael.

Deuteronomy 34:4

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלָיו זֹאת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם לֵאמֹר
וְלִיעֲקֹב לֵאמֹר לְזֶרְעֶךָ אֶתְנֶנָּה הִרְאִיתִיךָ בְּעֵינֶיךָ וְשָׂמָּה לֹא תַעֲבֹר: 4 And הוהי said to him, “This is the land of which I
swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, ‘I will assign
it to your offspring.’ I have let you see it with
your own eyes, but you shall not cross there.”

Jewish Thought

In Akeidat Yitzchak 105:1:7, G'd shows Moses the land of Gilead but tells him he will not cross over into it. Despite appearing as a consolation, the text raises questions about why Moses was shown something he could not have. Our sages interpret the mention of Moses ascending as a distinction from other mortals, suggesting that the vision of the land was more about glimpsing the future rather than the physical space itself.

Midrash

God showed Moses everything that had been and is destined to be, including the emergence of future leaders, judges, transgressors, and righteous individuals from different generations. He also showed Moses Gehenna, where the wicked and those who betray Him would be sentenced. Despite Moses' request to enter the land in various ways, God stated that he would not pass into the land. This fulfilled the oath made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, showing the connection between past promises and future fulfillment.

Talmud

Rabbi Yonatan reconsidered his opinion on the dead conversing, citing a verse as evidence in Talmud Berakhot 18b:17. In Jerusalem Talmud Berakhot 2:3:15, it is prohibited to relieve oneself in a cemetery as it shows disrespect for the dead. Rabbi Simlai teaches in Talmud Makkot 23b:18 that there are 613 mitzvot in the Torah, 365 prohibitions, and 248 positive mitzvot, each corresponding to the solar year and human limbs respectively.

Halakhah

A father is obligated to teach his son Torah from when the child begins to speak, using fundamental verses like Torah tzivah lanu Moshe and Shema Yisrael. The child should be gradually taught selected verses until he is six or seven years old, at which point he should be taken to a teacher of young children for further Torah study. The Rambam interprets the Mishnah in Avot regarding the age to begin Torah study as the beginning of the sixth year, emphasizing the importance of age and maturity in learning (Mishneh Torah, Torah Study 1:6).

Second Temple

The soul's faith in God's promises is rewarded with the perfect good, as seen in the examples of Abraham and Moses. The allegory of spiritual departure from lower qualities to higher realities is illustrated through biblical stories like Abraham departing from Lot and Joseph's burial in Egypt. Philo emphasizes the importance of faith and the future possession of the perfect good, as seen in the Divine presence and inspiration that transcends human efforts and understanding.

Targum

In Targum Onkelos, Adonoy tells Mosheh that he will not cross over into the land promised to Avrohom, Yitzchok, and Yaakov, but he will see it with his eyes. Likewise, Targum Jerusalem and Targum Jonathan convey a similar message from the Lord to Mosheh, stating that he will not enter the promised land but will be able to see it before his death.

Commentary

The commentary on Deuteronomy 34:4 discusses how God ordered Moses to communicate with the patriarchs after his death to inform them that the oath He swore to them had been fulfilled, emphasizing the importance of Moses' involvement in conveying this message. Additionally, it mentions that the decree preventing Moses from crossing into the land of Israel also had deeper implications for the Jewish people and their connection to the land and their future resurrection.

Quoting Commentary

Or HaChaim comments on Genesis 15:13:2 by stating that the repeated use of the expression "עדה עד י" in G'd's response to Abraham's question serves to emphasize the present and future status of the land of Israel, relating to both the pleasant and unpleasant aspects of the future. Rabbeinu Bahya, in Genesis 9:13:1, explains that G'd's placement of the rainbow as a sign was to symbolize a new relationship between G'd and mankind after the flood, while Ramban, in Deuteronomy 34:1:1, details how G'd showed Moses the entire land of Israel as a manifestation of His love for Israel. Tur HaArokh, in Genesis 26:3:1, further explores the oath G'd swore to Abraham, emphasizing its fulfillment through Yitzchok and Yaakov to ensure the continuity of the promise regarding the land of Israel.

Deuteronomy 34:5

וַיָּמָת שָׁם מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד־יְהוָה בְּאֶרֶץ מוֹאָב עַל־פִּי יְהוָה: 5 So Moses the servant of הוהי died there, in the land of Moab, at the command of הוהי.

Commentary

Moses was buried in an unknown location to prevent his enemies from gaining benefits or desecrating his grave, reflecting the level of his soul and prophecy being hidden; his death was a divine decree, with the details of his passing and movement of his soul described in various Midrashim and Talmudic interpretations. Moses is praised posthumously as a servant of the Lord who died obediently per God's command, with some sources suggesting he wrote the verses of his death with teardrops to distinguish them and ensure they are read in a specific manner.

Talmud

Moses asked to die as honorably as Aaron did, with God eventually taking his soul with a kiss and storing it under the Throne of Glory. Discussions in Talmud refer to the deaths of various biblical figures, with some, like Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, being spared the Angel of Death, and Rabbi Elazar suggesting Miriam also died with a kiss. Additionally, there is a debate whether Moses wrote his own death in Deuteronomy, with some arguing Joshua wrote the final verses of the Torah, and debate on whether the generation of the desert will be given a trial for eternal life. Finally, various rabbis interpret different verses to highlight Moses' wisdom and special relationship with God.

Kabbalah

Even if one does not physically enter the Land of Israel, there is value in simply viewing it from a distance, as illustrated by Moses who was granted a great elevation by seeing the land close to his death. This indicates that there is merit in the act of seeing the land, as shown in the Torah when it states that Moses' eye was not dim and his strength had not diminished even at the age of 120. (Kabbalah | Chesed LeAvraham, Even Shetiya, Maayan 2 33:2)

Quoting Commentary

Vezot Habrakha concludes Moses' blessing to the Israelites, highlighting his status as "the servant of the Lord," emphasizing his humility and leadership in serving God. Moses' obituary reflects his spiritual success despite worldly failures, mirroring the concept of servant leadership that is rooted in the Torah. His death, symbolizing a painless transition, aligns with the concept of a righteous person's passing as a kiss from God, seen in figures like Moses, Aaron, and others who died without the Angel of Death.

Midrash

Rabbi Yoanan explains that ten times it was decreed that Moses would not enter the Land of Israel, but the High Court revealed that the decree was sealed when God saw little consequence in Moses' prayers. Desperate for mercy, Moses fasted and prayed, but God's oath stood, leading to Moses' death. According to rabbinical tradition, Moses' death was met with sorrow and cries from all creation, yet Moses acknowledged that it was time to resign to God. Despite Moses' sacrifices and pleas, it remained clear that his time with Israel had ended.

Jewish Thought

In Part 3 of the Guide for the Perplexed, it is stated that when Moses, Aaron, and Miriam died, it was described by the Sages as nothing but a kiss from God, symbolizing their death in the midst of pleasure derived from their knowledge of God and great love for Him. While other prophets and pious men may not reach this level of spiritual elevation at death, their knowledge of God is strengthened as death approaches. This kind of death is seen as a deliverance from mortality, allowing the intellect to remain in a constant state of great delight and closeness to God. Other commentaries have also discussed this concept before.

Chasidut

The commentary on Numbers 14:35 from Kedushat Levi explains that the generation who left Egypt had achieved a high level of humility and acceptance of their fate, leading to a promise of a Divine "kiss" upon their deaths. The text also explores the idea of achieving perfection and the belief that the men chosen to explore the land of Canaan could reach a spiritual level beyond material concerns. The use of the word "שם" in the text signifies a heavenly kiss from God upon their passing, emphasizing their spiritual journey and potential for greatness through their own efforts.

Second Temple

In Second Temple, it is revealed that Moses is one of those advanced by God to soar above species and genus, leading him to be stationed beside God himself. When Moses was about to die, he was not simply "leaving" like others, but was translated through the Word of the Supreme Cause, which also formed the universe. This illustrates that God values the Wise Man highly, as the same Word that created the universe is used to draw the perfect man from earthly things to Himself.

Targum

Moshe, the servant of the Lord, died in the land of Moav by the decree of the Word of the Lord, according to various Targum commentaries. Targum Jonathan offers a detailed description of Moshe's virtues, his role as a leader of Israel, and the crowns he earned for his deeds and humility before being gathered by the kiss of the Word of the Lord.

Musar

Moses did not want to publicize his escape from Pharaoh to avoid being informed against, as had happened in Egypt. The commentary suggests that Moses was a reincarnation of Abel, with his body and soul well-matched, explaining why his grave could not be located and why his body did not weaken. This connection also allowed Moses to stand next to God at the revelation.

Deuteronomy 34:6

וַיִּקְבֹּר אֱתֹנֹ בְנֵי בְאֶרֶץ מוֹאָב מִלֵּב בֵּית פְּעוֹר וְלֹא יָדָע אִישׁ אֶת־קְבֻרָתוֹ עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה: 6 [God] buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, near Beth-peor; and no one knows his burial place to this day.

Midrash

The texts from the Midrash focus on various aspects of the lives and actions of figures like Moses and others in the Torah. It discusses God's kindness, visiting the sick, burying the dead, as well as the locations and details of Moses' burial, showing the depth of interpretation and reflection in these sacred writings.

Jewish Thought

The text discusses the burial location of Moses in Deuteronomy 34:6, with the Sifri explaining how the site was kept unknown. It also reflects on the significance of Moses' death as a perfect human being, comparing him to Elijah and Enoch, and examines the story of Dinah's rape in Genesis and its implications on the actions of Jacob's sons. Additionally, it explores the concept of hashgachah, divine providence, in relation to tzaddikim and the Jewish people, as well as the idea of leadership mistakes and punishment in the wilderness, focusing on Moses' burial place as a symbol of longing and unfulfilled aspirations.

Commentary

Moses' grave remains unknown until this day despite detailed descriptions in the Torah. Some believe he buried himself, others believe it was done by God. The site of Moses' grave being unknown serves to prevent it from being used for necromancy purposes, ensuring Moses' honor even after his death (Chizkuni)

Quoting Commentary

Moses inducted Joshua as his successor before his final moments, where God showed him the land of Moab before his death, carefully ensuring that no one knew his burial site to prevent worship after his death. Moses remains a role model rather than a saint, symbolizing human greatness through his struggles and humility, not his achievements. Moses' burial site remains unknown, with God burying him personally in Moab, emphasizing that God is found in life, not death, a sentiment reflected through Jewish teachings that protest against worshipping the dead.

Talmud

In the Jerusalem Talmud, it is discussed how Joseph, Moses, and other righteous individuals were honored in their burials, with Moses being buried by God Himself in a location that remains unknown to this day. The text emphasizes the importance of emulating God's attributes, such as clothing the naked, visiting the sick, consoling mourners, and burying the dead. The theme of kindness from the beginning to the end of the Torah is highlighted, showing that acts of kindness are central to the teachings of the Torah.

Chasidut

In Chasidut, it is explained that during intense prayer, a person may experience a revelation of the Infinite light from God, leading to a state of self-nullification and intense devotion. However, it is not sustainable in the long term, as one

must continue to live and serve God. In another commentary, it is discussed how figures like Moshe counter idol worship and Divine anger, ultimately connecting to the will of Ein Sof. The burial of Moshe in the land of Moav symbolizes ascending into the Infinite, merging the will of Ein Sof with the aspect of Malkhut.

Mishnah

The Mishnah in Sotah discusses the concept of measure for measure in reward for good deeds. It gives examples of Miriam waiting for Moses, the Jewish people waiting for Miriam, Joseph burying his father, Moses transporting Joseph's bones, and God Himself burying Moses. It concludes that God takes part in the burial of all righteous individuals, as seen in Isaiah 58:8.

Second Temple

The first commentary discusses the passing of the soul to God, emphasizing that the soul itself may not be aware of the transition due to being filled with the spirit of God. The second commentary focuses on the idea that virtuous and holy individuals do not experience death but rather a translation to another place, using the example of Enoch and Elijah who were both taken in a mysterious and invisible manner to a different realm, inaccessible to the physical senses.

Targum

The Targums of Onkelos, Targum Jerusalem, and Targum Jonathan all describe Moses being buried in the valley in the land of Moav, across from Beis Peor, and that the location of his burial remains unknown. Targum Jonathan also praises the Lord for teaching righteousness and giving examples of caring for others in different situations, ultimately highlighting the humility that should be inspired by the memory of Moses' burial place.

Kabbalah

In Reshit Chokhmah, Gate of Humility 1:2, it is explained that a humble person finds themselves closer to Hashem when they display surrender and humility, just as Dovid haMelech did in Tehillim 18:36. This is contrasted with individuals who refuse to help others due to their own perceived greatness, while Hashem exemplifies true humility through his actions, as described in various Torah verses.

Musar

It is a great mitzvah to bury the dead and eulogize them, especially Torah scholars, as exemplified by Abraham mourning for Sarah. This commandment is included in the general commandment to emulate God's ways, such as providing clothing, visiting the sick, comforting mourners, and burying the dead. The connection between the living and the dead is described as a complex secret related to the Sefirot, requiring repair, cleansing from sin, and connection to the divine. The verse about burying Moses is interpreted as representing the mercy of God towards those below, ultimately leading to the rising of the buried to the highest levels of wisdom.

Tosefta

In Tosefta Sotah 4:3, it is recounted how Moses, guided by Serakh daughter of Asher, retrieved Joseph's coffin from the Nile River by invoking the divine presence and bringing it to the surface. This act is compared to Elisha making iron float, showcasing Moses' greater power. In Tosefta Sotah 4:4, it is discussed how Moses' bones were buried by the Shekhinah over a distance of four miles, associated with the land of Reuben and Gad according to biblical references. The text also highlights a pattern of retribution starting with the initiators of transgression, seen in various biblical stories such as the Flood, Sodom, and the spies.

Deuteronomy 34:7

7 ומשה בן־מאה ועשרים שנה במתו לא־כהתה עינו ולא־נס לחה: Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eyes were undimmed and his vigor unabated.

Jewish Thought

In Jewish thought, the Talmud states that losing a first wife is comparable to the destruction of the Temple in one's lifetime, symbolizing a loss of spiritual connection. The Rabbis suggest that this loss can lead to a lack of judgment and are referencing those who have corrupted their God-given gifts. The concept of "overcoming the mazzal" is hinted at in Genesis, where man has control over his partner. Moses, a leader who argued until his death, demonstrates a strong and determined spirit until the end, as seen in Deuteronomy 34:7.

Commentary

Moses' age at death was 120 years old, and his physical state did not deteriorate with age: his eye did not dim, and his vitality did not depart, indicating that he remained physically healthy until his passing (Chizkuni, Ibn Ezra, Or HaChaim, Rabbeinu Bahya, Rashi, Siftei Chakhamim, Steinsaltz).

Quoting Commentary

Rashi explains that Yitzchok waited three years before having children with Rivkah to ensure her maturity at 14 years old. In Deuteronomy, it is mentioned that Moses died at the age of 120 with undiminished energy and idealism, illustrating the importance of never losing youthful passion. This concept is also emphasized in various commentaries that discuss how Abraham and Moses both maintained their vigor and ideals into old age, serving as examples of how to age well while maintaining a youthful spirit and energy.

Talmud

Rav Mattana rules that if a nest is found on a person's head, the person is obligated to shoo away the mother bird, as the head is considered like the ground for this mitzva. Additionally, he explains that the hint to Moses' existence before birth can be found in the wordplay of "beshaggam" having the same numerical value as "Moshe," as Moses lived a total of 120 years. The Gemara debates the meaning of "I can no longer go out and come in" in relation to Moses, ultimately concluding that despite this restriction, Moses remained physically strong, as evidenced by his ability to climb Mount Nebo effortlessly.

Midrash

Rabbi Yoanan in Devarim Rabbah 11:10 discusses ten instances of Moses' impending death as decreed by God and the events leading up to his death. As Moses beseeched God to change the decree, a Divine Voice proclaimed his fate. Moses then prayed fervently, and when the time came, God himself descended to take Moses' soul. Similarly, Seder Olam Rabbah 10:2 recounts Moses' death on the seventh of Adar, aligning with other traditions stating the date of Moses' passing. In Seder Olam, the years of Moses' life are compared to those of other revered figures, and it is noted that specific events, such as the cessation of Mannah, coincided with his death and were attributed to him.

Chasidut

The text discusses the connection between Moshe, tefillin, and the repair of the Empty Space, emphasizing the importance of receiving the light through limitations and vessels made by repairing the imagination, which is symbolically represented in the housings of tefillin made of hide. Additionally, Moshe's burial in the valley of Moav is interpreted as ascending into Ein Sof and Malkhut, representing the connection between the will of Ein Sof and the forms of the letters in Malkhut.

Second Temple

Moses dies at the age of 120, but the years of the guilty may match those of a sage and prophet, like Moses, despite their powers being different and far apart from each other. The text suggests that things with the same name are not necessarily alike and can differ in kind, allowing for a matching of years between the good and the bad.

Targum

In the commentary on Deuteronomy 34:7, it is noted that Moses died at the age of 120 without any physical decline, as his facial radiance, eyes, and teeth remained unchanged [Various Targum commentaries].

Musar

The commentary discusses how Moses' physical and intellectual capabilities changed over time, with references to the continued vigor of his body despite death and his eventual need to consult other Torah scholars. It also highlights the evolution of Moses' prophecy from being silent at the beginning to speaking directly from G-d later on, as seen in Deut. 18,18. This discussion is framed within the context of Moses' interactions with G-d and his role as a prophet.

Deuteronomy 34:8

וַיִּבְכּוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־מֹשֶׁה בְּעֶרְבַת מוֹאָב שְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם וַיִּתְּמֹו
יָמָיו בְּכִי אֶבְל מֹשֶׁה: 8 And the Israelites bewailed Moses in the steppes
of Moab for thirty days. The period of wailing and
mourning for Moses came to an end.

Jewish Thought

In Jewish Thought, peace is not just the restoration of harmony but the unification of different entities, like the bond between people or elements. Moses focused on intellectual pursuits, while Aaron understood the importance of weaving together the fabric that binds people and establishing harmony through desiring for others what one desires for oneself. Leadership requires contributing to the peace of the community, as unity is essential for the community's holiness. Aaron was considered beloved and popular, while Moses was seen as important but merely tolerated due to his inability to engage in small talk. (Akeidat Yitzchak 74:1:4, Leadership in the Wilderness; Authority and Anarchy in the Book of Numbers, Part II, Chapter 7; The Dark Hours of Leadership 12)

Talmud

In Talmudic texts, it is discussed why Israel wept for Aaron for thirty days, with one interpretation focusing on his fair judgments and another on the influence he had in bringing peace. The concept of mourning for seven days is derived from Biblical references, with a connection made to events like the Deluge and the death of Methuselah. Following the death of a sage, such as Moses or Samuel, there were specific periods and practices of mourning observed, with communal mourning emphasized. The duty to mourn for a Sage is highlighted through various Scriptural examples. Additionally, the duration of mourning periods, such as thirty days, is justified based on specific verses from the Torah.

Midrash

In Midrash Bereshit Rabbah 100:4, it is explained that Moses and Jacob had different mourning periods because Jacob had others weeping for him. In Midrash Bereshit Rabbah 100:7, the seven day mourning period is derived from verses and explained in detail, with additional interpretations. Midrash Ein Yaakov tells the story of Rabbi giving instructions to his children before his death, emphasizing honoring the mother and no mourning ceremonies. Midrash Tanchuma Buber recounts the death of Aaron and shows how loving-kindness was shown to him. In Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer, it is discussed how both Aaron and Moses experienced loving-kindness and peace in Israel. Sifra Devarim explains the significance of the month of Moses' death, teaching that Moses explained the entire Torah in thirty-six days before his death.

Commentary

When Moses died, the Children of Israel wept, but not as intensely as when Aaron died, as they had been informed in advance of Moses' impending death. Aaron's unexpected death had more visible effects on the people, such as the disappearance of protective clouds and an immediate attack by the Canaanites, leading to a more intense mourning. Additionally, the immediate presence of the Shechinah settling on Joshua after Moses' death provided comfort to the people, similar to finding pearls after losing precious stones. This explains the relatively muted reaction to Moses' death compared to Aaron's.

Quoting Commentary

The commentaries explain that the mourning period of seventy days for Jacob involved forty days of embalming and thirty days of official mourning, similar to the mourning periods for Moses and Aaron. The Israelites mourned for Aaron for thirty days, as the entire nation mourned his peacemaking abilities; while Moses, a man of truth, was mourned differently. Ibn Ezra clarifies that the priests instructed to stay in the tent for seven days could leave for necessary functions, and Radak notes that the Egyptians also mourned Joseph. Rabbeinu Bahya notes the importance of keeping mourning periods to thirty days maximum, as seen in the mourning of Moses and Aaron, and Rashi highlights that the lack of mention of mourning for Joshua indicated a lack of proper respect for him.

Guides

The children of Israel mourned Moses for thirty days in the plains of Moab before the mourning for him came to an end, as stated in Deuteronomy 34:8. This period of mourning serves as a reminder of the profound impact Moses had on the Israelites [Guides | Introductions to the Babylonian Talmud, Moed Katan, Introduction to Perek III 1].

Halakhah

One should not cry over a deceased person for more than three days and should not eulogize for more than seven days, but these guidelines differ for Torah scholars based on their wisdom. For Moses, the mourning period was 30 days, and for Rabbeinu Hakodesh, it was twelve months. If news of a wise man's death reaches after twelve months, no eulogies are held.

Tanakh

After Aaron died, the entire community of Israel mourned his death for thirty days [Numbers 20:29].

Targum

The text from Targum Onkelos, Targum Jerusalem, and Targum Jonathan on Deuteronomy 34:8 all describe how the children of Israel mourned the death of Moshe for thirty days on the plains of Moab, completing the period of mourning. The Targum Jonathan adds that the manna ceased for the Israelites on the sixteenth of Nisan, thirty-seven days after Moshe's death.

Musar

The Torah is described both as G-d's and as Moses', with Moses receiving general rules from G-d at Mount Sinai which included the principles of Torah exegesis. This relationship with the oral Torah led Moses to be known as the spiritual husband of this aspect of G-d, giving up his physical marriage. This title מִיקוּלָא שִׂיא is unique to Moses, symbolizing his connection with the Divine. The mourning after Moses' death is seen as the end of his relationship with Matronita, symbolized by the numerical value of the words for weeping and mourning totaling the current name of G-d. [Shenei Luchot HaBerit, Torah Shebikhtav, V'Zot HaBerachah, Torah Ohr 5]

Tosefta

The Tosefta discusses the birth and death dates of Moses, stating that he was born on the 7th of Adar based on the verse in Deuteronomy 31:2 where Moses says he is 120 years old "today," indicating his years became complete. It also concludes that Moses died on the 7th of Adar, calculating this from the mourning period for Moses in the Plains of Moab in Joshua 1:1-2 and 4:19.

Deuteronomy 34:9

וַיְהִי וְשֵׁעַ בְּיָנוֹן מְלֵא רוּחַ חֲכָמָה כִּי־סָמַךְ מֹשֶׁה אֶת־יָדָיו עָלָיו 9 Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands upon him; and the Israelites heeded him, doing as הוֹדִי had commanded Moses.

Jewish Thought

The text discusses the significance of various offerings in Jewish thought, highlighting the importance of freewill offerings like Noach's thanksgiving offering and the daily offerings of the people of Israel in achieving closeness with G'd [Jewish Thought | Akeidat Yitzchak 57:1:11]. The construction of the tabernacle by the princes symbolizes the ongoing existence of the Divine Presence on earth, with each prince offering representing a specific aspect of human striving and connection to G'd [Jewish Thought | Akeidat Yitzchak 57:1:8]. Moses' ascent to Mount Avarim is not meant for immediate action, but to allow him to appoint a successor and pray for a leader who will shepherd the people in religious authority, consulting with the High Priest on critical issues [Jewish Thought | Akeidat Yitzchak 84:1:13].

Midrash

The appointment of seventy elders by Moses, as described in the Midrash, is likened to a king who hired a guard to protect his orchard and then needed to bring in more guards. This symbolizes how the appointment, akin to the giving of the Torah, required additional support. Joshua, who was filled with wisdom thanks to Moses, is portrayed as providing wisdom to the people reminiscent of a pool supplying a city with water. This contrasts with Bilam's wisdom, which led to his downfall. Miriam's merit produced Betzalel, who played a crucial role in the construction of the Tabernacle. Ultimately, individuals like Joshua, Betzalel, and others were filled with wisdom and talents by God for the benefit of their people, as exemplified in various biblical stories and teachings.

Talmud

Rava asks Rabba bar Mari about the concept of giving gratitude to the one who pours wine, even though it belongs to the owner. Rabba bar Mari explains that this idea comes from the transfer of authority from Moses to Joshua, where Moses was just a conduit but still received credit for giving Joshua the spirit of wisdom (Numbers 27:18–20, Deuteronomy 34:9) [Talmud | Bava Kamma 92b:10].

Quoting Commentary

The commentaries discuss the transmission of divine wisdom and prophecy from Moses to Joshua and the elders of Israel. Moses shared his prophecy with Joshua as seen in Deuteronomy 34:9, without diminishing his own, in a manner likened to a garden owner providing additional guards to an overwhelmed supervisor without reducing his own responsibilities (Rabbeinu Bahya, Tze'enah Ure'enah). This passing of wisdom ensured the continuity of divine knowledge and guidance within Israel's leadership for generations to come (Ezra ben Solomon).

Commentary

Joshua was chosen by Moses as his successor and was known to be full of wisdom, so much so that Moses relied heavily on him. Joshua followed the commands of the Lord as instructed by Moses, and his leadership was confirmed by seeking G'd's guidance through the urim vetumim in the breastplate of the High Priest. This was seen by some as an

example of Joshua's inferiority to Moses, as Moses had direct communication with G'd.

Halakhah

The custom on the last day of the festival of Simchat Torah is to have more than a quorum read the Torah to increase joy, with everyone in the congregation reading, including those not accustomed to doing so throughout the year. Only one individual reads from Deuteronomy 34:1 to 34:9 in Parashat Zot HaBerakhah, without dividing these verses.

[Halakhah | Kol Bo 52:12]

Chasidut

In Chasidut, it is explained that the ability to produce worthy students and instill in them wisdom is acquired from the House of God, as seen in how Moshe passed on wisdom to Yehoshua by laying his hands on him. This act of imparting wisdom is connected to writing, as both are aspects of wisdom, with writing also being linked to the creation of the world through the letters of the alphabet. The significance of the spelling of ChaNUKaH is also hinted at in the verse about Yehoshua and Moshe, with each element of the verse representing different concepts related to wisdom.

Targum

Yehoshua son of Nun was filled with a spirit of wisdom because Moshe had rested his hands on him, and the children of Israel listened to him and acted as Adonoy had commanded Moshe (Targum Onkelos, Targum Jerusalem, Targum Jonathan on Deuteronomy 34:9).

Tosefta

Rabbi Yosei suggests that had Moses not come before him, it would have been fitting for Ezra to deliver the Torah. Moses and Ezra are both referred to as having "aliyah" or ascending. Both Moses and Ezra taught the Torah and Scripture in the language of their time, with the Assyrian script initially given to Israel. The text emphasizes the importance of studying and following the Torah, with specific guidance for kings and individuals on its handling and use.

Deuteronomy 34:10

10 וְלֹא-יָקֻם נָבִיא עוֹד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּמֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר יָדְעוּ יְהוָה פָּנִים אֶל-פָּנִים: Never again did there arise in Israel a prophet like Moses—whom הוֹדִי singled out, face to face,

Jewish Thought

The text discusses the unique nature of Moses' prophecy, highlighting that his experiences were miraculous and surpassing human abilities. Moses' ability to communicate with God face to face, the trembling and body breakdown during prophecy, and the intense connection with the divine demonstrate the superiority of his prophetic abilities. The text explores how Moses' prophecy was unlike that of other prophets, emphasizing the supernatural and exceptional nature of his experiences. Moses' unique status as a prophet is seen as unparalleled and unattainable by other individuals due to the divine influence and degree of connection he had.

Chasidut

The text discusses the concept of holy sparks scattered among impure shells after Adam's sin. Through Torah study and mitzvahs, these sparks can be sifted out and rectified with the help of God's presence. The texts also discuss the spiritual heights reached by Moses, contrasting him with Balaam, who utilized his prophetic abilities destructively. Finally, it mentions how Bilaam corresponds to the daat of the evil forces, contrasting him with Moses, who embodies daat and is associated with a generation known for its knowledge.

Midrash

The Midrash discusses the unique qualities of Moses as a prophet, emphasizing his unparalleled connection with God and the distinctions between his prophetic abilities and those of other prophets, such as Bilam. The elders were appointed through a divine selection process, and the Midrash explores the moments leading to Moses' death, highlighting his pleas to remain alive and his ultimate acceptance of his fate. Moses' significant impact on the world and his exemplary righteousness are emphasized as unique qualities among prophets and leaders, underscoring his unmatched status in Israelite history.

Commentary

Moses was a prophet unlike any other in Israel [Chizkuni]. He had a direct and close relationship with God [Ramban, Rashi, Tur HaArokh] and received open revelations unlike other prophets [Steinsaltz]. The phrase "face to face" indicates this special knowledge and intimacy between Moses and God [Siftei Chakhamim, Sforno, Tur HaArokh]. The Torah emphasizes that no future prophet would match Moses' stature [Or HaChaim, Sforno].

Quoting Commentary

Moses' prophecy and miracles were unique in that they were performed face-to-face, publicly, and continually for forty years, distinct from those of other prophets. The signs and wonders of Moses surpassed any other prophet in Israel, with Elijah and Elisha performing miracles through prayer, unlike Moses. The miracle of the manna and the pillar of fire, among others, continued without interruption, not even repeated by other prophets. Moses' prophetic visions did not require multiple filters like other prophets, making his prophecy special and divinely granted. Other prophets' miracles were seen by few, while Moses' deeds were visible to all, including opponents and followers, distinguishing the magnitude and impact of his signs and wonders.

Responsa

The text argues against the belief that Mohammed is alluded to in the Torah, refuting claims made by apostates and Muslims with evidence from Scripture and traditional interpretations. It emphasizes the exclusivity of the Divine covenant with the descendants of Isaac and Jacob, highlights the criteria for a true prophet according to Jewish tradition, and warns against heretics who seek to corrupt the faith. The importance of adhering to the Laws of Moses, both written and oral, is emphasized as a fundamental principle of the Jewish religion.

Targum

The Targums emphasize that no prophet in Israel has ever been like Moses, as he had a unique relationship with God, speaking with Him face-to-face or word for word [Deuteronomy 34:10].

Talmud

King Solomon, referred to as Kohelet, attempted to reach the fiftieth gate but failed to do so, as he sought to be like Moses, who had a unique closeness to God. A Divine Voice reminded Kohelet that his true path was to focus on the words of the Torah, emphasizing the irreplaceable nature of Moses as a prophet who knew God face-to-face [Talmud | Rosh Hashanah 21b:12].

Halakhah

The text discusses the difference between negation of the positive, prohibition, and negation as it relates to commandments in Hebrew. It explains how negation of the positive is unrelated to commandments, while prohibition is a type of command and must be expressed with the exact verb of a command in the future tense. Unlike prohibitions, negations can be in the past, future, or present, and can be narrative sentences. It concludes that negative statements that are negations should not be considered negative commandments since they do not follow the same rules.

Kabbalah

This text explains that the Sixth Sefirah is associated with the Written Torah, as only Moses was able to approach the Great Name of HaShem. This special connection allowed Moses to have a clear vision and direct communication with HaShem, beyond the level of riddles or ambiguity in his understanding of divine truths (Kabbalah | Sha'arei Orah, Fifth Gate, Sixth Sefirah 253).

Musar

The commentary discusses the uniqueness of Moses as a prophet compared to figures like Bileam, highlighting Moses' special relationship with God and his superior understanding of the metaphysical significance of commandments. It also addresses the accusation against Moses of adultery, explaining that it was a denial of his special relationship with God. Furthermore, the text explores the qualities and virtues of Samuel, contrasting him with Korach. Lastly, it emphasizes Moses' spiritual development and purification to reach a level unmatched by any other prophet, even surpassing the angels in his ability to refine physical matter.

Liturgy

In the Siddur Ashkenaz and Siddur Sefard, it is emphasized that there was never another prophet in Israel like Moses, who beheld God's image. This sentiment is expressed in prayers recited during preparation for the morning service and upon entering the synagogue.

Second Temple

The text mentions Moses as a celebrated prophet who had a unique relationship with the Lord, being known through actual appearance and not through riddles. Moses is described as unlike any other prophet who knew the Lord face to face (Num. 12:6, 8; Deut. 34:10).

Deuteronomy 34:11

לְכָל־הָאֵתָת וְהַמּוֹפְתִים אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַח ה' יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם
לְפָרְעָה וּלְכָל־עַבְדָּיו וּלְכָל־אֶרֶץ: 11 for the various signs and portents that הוהי sent him to display in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his courtiers and his whole country,

Jewish Thought

Maimonides explains that having the necessary qualifications does not guarantee one will become a prophet, as exemplified by Baruch ben Neriah. The sages believed that during Hillel's time, the conditions were not right for individuals to receive the gift of prophecy. Moses prayed for prophecy to be exclusive to the Jewish people, as other nations did not have individuals suited to be prophets. The case of Bileam, considered a prophet among gentiles, is questioned due to his lack of qualities expected of a prophet. While some prophets like Moses and Aaron had direct communication with God, others, like Samuel, needed to pray before performing miracles and were uncertain about the outcome.

Midrash

Midrash Bereshit Rabbah 59:5 highlights Abraham's beauty and righteousness, emphasizing his spiritual elevation and moral purity. Additionally, it discusses how Abraham was a source of blessing for all, similar to Moses being a source of miracles for Israel and David's role as Israel's shepherd. In contrast, Midrash Tanchuma, V'Zot HaBerachah 3:1 depicts Moses facing the angel of death before his passing, ultimately justifying his own death and departing peacefully. Lastly, in Midrash Shemot Rabbah 46:3, Moses is shown making decisions in accordance with God's will, such as separating from his wife and breaking the tablets. These actions are praised for their alignment with divine reasoning.

Targum

The three commentaries on Deuteronomy 34:11 from Targum Onkelos, Targum Jerusalem, and Targum Jonathan all emphasize that God sent Moses to perform signs, wonders, and miracles in Egypt before Pharaoh and his people.

Commentary

Or HaChaim explains that the strong relationship between Moses and God allowed him to perform miracles, with face-to-face conversations enabling him to do so efficiently. This special connection also set Moses apart from other prophets, as reflected in the belief the people had in him, which was ongoing. The Torah emphasizes that there was no prophet like Moses who had the complete trust of the people, demonstrated through his miraculous deeds, particularly the splitting of the sea and the revelation at Mount Sinai, witnessed by all of Israel without the need for secondhand reports from later prophets.

Quoting Commentary

In Numbers 16:29:1, Ramban explains that those who rebelled against Moses and Aaron deserved punishment for denying God's deeds and disrespecting Moses' authority. Their punishment, being swallowed up by the earth, was a sign that Moses was truly sent by God. The phrase "common death of all men" indicates Moses' role as a prophet, with his works serving as evidence of his divine commission beyond the specific events of appointing Levites and Aaron to the priesthood.

Musar

The text from Musar | Shenei Luchot HaBerit discusses the different levels of Torah, including concealed and revealed aspects, the role of Moses in performing miracles under the Ineffable Name of G-d, his punishment for not leading the people to the Holy Land, and the unique status of the Jewish people as G-d's chosen nation. It also addresses Moses' physical blemish, his role as a prophet, and the significance of G-d's acts in proving His essence.

Deuteronomy 34:12

12 and for all the great might and awesome power that
מִלְכָּה וְהַיָּד הַחֲזָקָה וְלִכְלֹל הַמּוֹרָא הַגָּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה מִלְכָּה לְעֵינֵי
כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Chasidut

The holy Torah starting with the letter Beis signifies the existence of two Torahs, the written and the oral, as taught in Chasidut (Agra DeKala, Bereshit 2). The Torah predating the creation of the world by two thousand years raises questions about how events such as death were already written, considering they had not yet occurred due to Adam's sin, as explained by the Ba'al Shem Tov in V'Zot HaBerachah 4:2.

Jewish Thought

The commentary raises several questions about the story of Moses at Mount Chorev, such as why Moses arrived there seemingly by chance, why he described himself as insignificant, and why he employed subterfuge in his interactions with G-d and the Israelites. Other questions include the sequence of events and instructions given, why G-d told Moses in advance that Pharaoh would refuse his request, and why the Torah only lists the ancestry of the first three tribes. These questions highlight inconsistencies and complexities in the text that require further analysis and interpretation.

Talmud

The text discusses Moses making stricter rulings to ensure the Israelites receive the Torah while in a state of purity, breaking the tablets in response to the people worshipping the Golden Calf, and the importance of writing Torah scrolls correctly, as seen in various excerpts from Talmudic commentaries (Avot DeRabbi Natan 2:3, 2:7; Jerusalem Talmud Taanit 4:5:2; Menachot 30a:3; Tractate Soferim 9:7).

Quoting Commentary

The commentary from the Bartenura on Mishnah Megillah 3:5:1 discusses the Torah readings on various holidays such as Passover, Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot, detailing which Torah portions are read and which Haftarah portions are recited. The text also provides insights into the significance of these readings and their historical context [Rambam on Mishnah Megillah 3:5:1].

Halakhah

In the Ben Ish Hai's introduction, a prayer is made to Hashem for salvation, success, the establishment of the Sukkah of David, the coming of the Righteous Mashiach, and the rebuilding of the Holy Temple. Additionally, a plea is made for Hashem's pleasantness to be upon us and for the magnification and sanctification of the name of Y-H. In Mishneh Torah, it is clarified that the eight verses at the conclusion of the Torah can be read in a synagogue with fewer than ten people present because they were related by Moses from the Almighty, even though they were recited after Moses' death. Finally, the writing of the Torah should leave four empty lines between each book, with the Torah ending in the middle of the line at the bottom of the column.

Commentary

Mosheh breaking the tablets before the eyes of all of Israel is a complex act that may be seen as a positive construction of a proper reality within a Torah commentary, despite its initial depressing aspect. The breaking of the tablets could be interpreted as a necessary deconstruction leading to a renewed creation, linking the end of the Torah back to its beginning. RaShY ties this act of Mosheh to the strength needed for this action, as noted in the Babylonian Talmud (Shabbat 87a), and the significance of this event is highlighted in various other commentaries that point to its role in inspiring fear of G'd among the Israelites. Ultimately, this act is seen as part of the cycle of destruction and reconstruction within Jewish tradition, embodying the will of G'd and reinforcing the eternal function of the Torah for the Jewish people.

Midrash

Moses separated from his wife based on his reasoning, which aligned with God's will, as God had actually commanded him to do so; Moses also reasoned that if even at Mount Sinai he needed to be called by God before speaking with Him, then even more so at the permanent sanctity of the Tent of Meeting; furthermore, Moses broke the tablets as he reasoned that only Israelites should have the sacred items, showing his strength against everyone, even the will of God, who ultimately approved of his actions. (Shemot Rabbah 46:3)

Targum

The Targums on Deuteronomy 34:12 praise Moses for his strong hand and great displays performed in front of all of Israel. The Targum Jerusalem emphasizes the mighty hand and manifestations of Moses and concludes with a blessing to the God of Israel. Targum Jonathan highlights the strength of Moses' hand in various powerful acts he performed in full view of the Israelites.

Kabbalah

The text discusses the significance of the 42 letters found at the end of the Torah, specifically in Deuteronomy 34:12. It suggests that these letters can be interpreted in three different ways, likening them to the points in the Name from "In the beginning." It also mentions Rabbi Shlomo Molcho's connection to this interpretation and how names in the book "HaKaneh" form the 42-letter Name, serving as a garment for its representation [Kabbalah | Pardes Rimmonim 21:12:6].

Musar

In the commentary from Rabbi Chayim, it is explained how Moses is referenced in Isaiah 53, with his experiences and involvement in the generations after him explained. It is suggested that there will be a "Moses" in every generation, with Moses interceding for sinners and sharing in the merits of each generation. The number twelve, representing the tribes of Israel, is tied to the Ten Commandments, with G-d repeating the first two to ensure understanding by all, making a total of twelve commandments heard by each Israelite. The number fourteen, symbolizing Moses' strong hand, reflects his role as the recipient of the Torah, inscribed on two tablets to distinguish between the written and oral law. (From Musar | Shenei Luchot HaBerit, Torah Shebikhtav commentary on Vaetchanan and Vayechi)