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**Day 68 – March 9**

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## **Conquering the Land (1400 – 1100 BCE)**

***Moses Blesses the Tribes***

***Moses' Death and Burial***

**Readings: *Numbers 27:12-14; Deuteronomy 32:48-52; 33:1-29; 34:1-12***

### ***Reflections:***

- The text opens with the sad reminder of Moses' failure. Moses doesn't seem grieved overly by this at this stage of life as he is so elderly. Again, this provides a contrast to the story of Jesus and the early Jesus movement where grace is so rich and full. We are reminded that life under the law is sad.
- In like fashion to the patriarchs, Moses at the end of his life blesses his children, in this case the whole of Israel. Moses is referred to as the Man of God. Truly he was God's friend.
- He begins with an overview of God's choice of Israel: "Surely it is you who love the people; all the holy ones are in your hand." The central expression of God choosing Israel is giving of the Law.
- Reuben and Judah are both given very simple blessings. It is interesting that the Messiah is not mentioned in Judah's blessing. This will be revealed later.
- Levi, the tribe of priests, has their activity described here. "Bless all his skills, O Lord, and be pleased with the work of his hands." Also, it is painful to think of the curse against their enemies: "...smite the loins of those who rise up against him." And all the men said, "Ouch!"
- The territory of Benjamin is where the temple is built. That is likely what it means when it says "...the one the Lord loves rests between his shoulders [or borders]."
- Joseph is the largest of the tribes, divided into two, Manasseh and Ephraim. He receives the most detailed and richest blessing. Like Joseph the forefather, he is blessed richly at this stage above all the other brothers similar to Abraham giving him the coat of many colors.

- The other blessings make it increasingly clear that these blessings are tied to the land they receive and where they are positioned in the Promised Land. This makes sense as Moses is about to go up on a mountain to view the land before he dies.
- The blessing concludes with a general blessing on Israel. Here is a passage that explains about God coming "...on the clouds." The image is that of an advancing army with horse and chariot causing all the dust to be stirred up. This is carried forward when it says Jesus will come on the clouds; he will come as an advancing and conquering army.
- The fact that no one knew where Moses was buried revealed the opposite set of values to the Egyptians. Their view was to build large burial sites for their Pharaohs. It again underscores the deep humility of being a servant leader and how this story was not about Moses but about God.
- Here is a key verse about Joshua, "Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the Spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him." This sets the stage for the imagery of transference used in the Jesus movement with giving of the Spirit through the laying on of hands.
- Moses "...the Lord knew face to face". Again Moses lives according to a completely different set of rules than the rest of Israel. He didn't need to offer any sacrifices or follow any rituals, He was simply God's friend. He is the glowing exception at this point in the story to provide us a clue to the future. God uses his friendship with Moses to set the stage for the day when all those who come to God through Jesus will be God's friends.