

Deuteronomy 33:18–19

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-33/deuteronomy-3318-19/>

Moses pronounces blessings on the tribes of Zebulun and Issachar. He asks them to rejoice because the Suzerain God will bless each one in his enterprise.

Moses continues the poem of blessing he pronounced upon Israel that he began in Deuteronomy 33:1. Though Moses began his blessing by only mentioning *Zebulun* (v. 18), giving the reader an initial impression that *Zebulun* was the only recipient of the blessings, *Issachar* receives equal treatment in the body of this stanza. Zebulun and Issachar were the last two sons Leah bore to Jacob (Genesis 30:17–20).

In Moses's blessings, he wanted both *Zebulun* and *Issachar* to *rejoice*. Zebulun was to *rejoice in his going forth*, and *Issachar* was to *rejoice in his tents*. This likely suggests that *Zebulun* would travel abroad to get involved in maritime trades and *Issachar* would remain in his land, enjoying a more pastoral lifestyle at home.

This is in line with Jacob's blessings for these two tribes in which he said, "Zebulun will dwell at the seashore; and he *shall be* a haven for ships, and his flank *shall be* toward Sidon. His is a somewhat remarkable prophecy, since the territories for the tribes had not yet been chosen. Zebulun's territory was chosen by casting a lot (Joshua 18:6-7). Zebulun received a parcel that bordered both the Sea of Galilee as well as the Mediterranean Sea (Joshua 19:10). Zebulun is noted in this Messianic prophecy as being a place by the sea:

"But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.

The people who walk in darkness
Will see a great light;
Those who live in a dark land,

The light will shine on them.”
(Isaiah 9:1-2)

This passage from Isaiah is quoted in Matthew 4:15-16 as an explanation that Jesus settled in Galilee in order to fulfill this prophecy. This emphasizes the sovereignty of God, who spoke a blessing upon Zebulun through Moses prior to the conquest of the land, and prior to Zebulun’s territory adjacent to both seas being chosen by lot (see map in Additional Resources on territories of Israel’s tribes).

Issachar is “a strong donkey, lying down between the sheepfolds” (Genesis 49:14). This seems to be a geographical reference. Together, the tribes of *Zebulun* and *Issachar* were to rejoice wherever they were because the Suzerain (Ruler) God would make them prosperous, whether at home or abroad. Issachar’s land was just south of that of Zebulun, in the fertile Jezreel Valley (see map)

Moreover, Moses stated that *Zebulun and Issachar* would be able to *call peoples* (perhaps, fellow Israelites) *to the mountain* (v. 19) designated as the place of worship and *there they would offer righteous sacrifices*. The mountain in view could refer to Mount Tabor since it was the place where the borders of Naphtali, *Zebulun*, and *Issachar* came together (Judges 4:6; Joshua 19:12). Later in Israel’s history, the prophet Hosea prohibited worship on that mountain (Hosea 5:1-7). Some traditions place it at Mount Moriah, which is where Abraham offered Isaac, and later where the temple and altar would be located. If Mount Moriah, this could offer a picture of Jesus coming out of Zebulun (Galilee) to be offered as a sacrifice in Jerusalem.

The reason for *Zebulun* and *Issachar* to rejoice was that they would *draw out the abundance of the seas, and the hidden treasures of the sand*. The first part of the sentence seems to refer to *Zebulun* extracting riches from the sea and the second part to *Issachar* gaining abundance from the land. Simply put, *Zebulun* would extract riches from *the abundance of the seas* (from the sea itself and from maritime trade with other nations), and *Issachar* would draw minerals and metals from *the sand*. Both tribes would be prosperous by receiving abundant blessings from the Suzerain (Ruler) God.

Biblical Text:

¹⁸ **Of Zebulun he said,**

**Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going forth,
And, Issachar, in your tents.**

**¹⁹ They will call peoples to the mountain;
There they will offer righteous sacrifices;
For they will draw out the abundance of the seas,
And the hidden treasures of the sand.**