

13. And of Joseph he said,
Blessed of the LORD be his land;
For the precious things of heaven, for the dew,
And for the deep that coucheth beneath.
14. And for the precious things of the fruits of the sun,
And for the precious things of the growth of the
moons,
15. And for the chief things¹ of the ancient mountains,

¹ Gr. *From the top of the ancient mountains, and from the top of, etc.*

territory of Benjamin, Josh. 18: 28; but it is possible that the reference may be to Bethel, the chief sanctuary of the North Kingdom, Josh. 18: 13.

13-17. Joseph. The fortunes of these tribes (Ephraim and Manasseh) are treated at greater length, as is natural from the pen of an Israelite of the North; the blessing resembles in many phrases the oracle of Gen. 49: 25, 26, and one may have been influenced by the other. These tribes possess a fertile soil and are remarkable for unconquerable military strength.

13. Choice fruits, that which is noble and dignified, in the O. T. only of fruits, Cant. 4: 15-16; 7: 14. Here it may have a somewhat wider meaning including the forces of nature which produce fruitfulness and noble gifts.

The lordliest things that come from heaven above,
And from the water-floods that couch beneath.

The reference is to the rain and dew from heaven and the water from the springs below. Coucheth like an animal; see 29: 20; Gen. 4: 7. The word used for deep is a similar one to the name of the great Babylonian sea-monster. It is a striking phrase used also in Gen. 49: 25 and not likely to be original in both places.

14. The words corresponding to this verse, Gen. 49: 25, are merely

Blessings of the breasts, and of the womb.

Originally there may have been a much closer resemblance between the two passages. Our present text can only be interpreted of the beneficent effect of light upon the world of nature, in quickening its growth and enriching its produce.

15. The security and strength of Joseph is guaranteed by the fact that he possesses:

The best produce from the primæval mountains,
And the choice fruits of the everlasting hills.