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Teach This Song to the Israelites

31: 19-29

Teach this song to the Israelites DIG: Why does God tell both Joshua and Moshe to write down this song? Why is Isra'el's future disobedience described? Is it prophecy? What words does Moses use to describe the darkness of the Israelites' hearts? What does it mean to be stiff-necked?

REFLECT: Why is godly leadership so important in preventing a Messianic congregation or church from drifting away from commitment to the Lord? Why is idolatry a symptom of living by sight instead of faith? How do songs enhance your interaction with God? Besides worshiping with your congregation, what do you do to grow in your understanding of the Word and sound doctrine? How have you tried to encourage others to grow in this way?

If there was to be a future at all for Isra'el, it must lie with ADONAI. God had no illusions about her tendency to do evil. But God's grace and Isra'el's sin stood side-by-side.

The day before Moses died.

*Dear Great Heavenly Father, **You** are awesome! If there is to be a future for each of us, it lies with our living a life of love for **You**. Praise **You** that **Yeshua** is making a home in heaven for those who love **You**. **In My Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to Myself, so that where I am you may also be (John 14:2-3).***

*Sometimes life is hard, painful and full of tough situations and relationships; but soon that will all be over. **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18).** How wonderful heaven will be! **He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. Nor shall there be mourning or crying or pain any longer, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4).** I will so enjoy worshiping and praising **You***

*throughout all eternity! **You** are wonderful! In **Your** holy **Son's** name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*



ADONAI instructed **Moses** and **Joshua** to **write down for yourselves this song and teach it to the Israelites and have them sing it, so that it may be a witness for me against them (31:19 NIV)**. It would be a **song** that **the people** could easily learn and remember from generation to generation, never to be forgotten. It would serve as a warning of the dangers that would plague **Isra'el** and hopefully prevent **them** from going astray. But if **they** did wander off the path of righteousness, its words would condemn **them**.

The song that appears in **Chapter 32** was to be written as a witness against **Isra'el**. It would place in proper perspective the promise of **the blessings** made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and **the curses** of the broken covenant. **For when I bring them to the land flowing with milk and honey that I swore to their fathers, and they eat and are satisfied and grow fat - then they will turn to other gods and serve them, and they will spurn Me and break My covenant. Now when many evils and troubles have come on them, this song will confront them as a witness; for it will not be forgotten from the mouth of their descendants. For I know the intention** (Hebrew: *yetser*, meaning *tendency, impulse* or *disposition*) **they are devising this day, even before I bring them into the land that I swore."** Already a *yetser* was forming in the hearts of **the people**. This **intention** would lead to **Isra'el's** breaking the covenant and committing spiritual adultery. When the promised covenantal **curses** fall on **Isra'el**, the words of this **song** would ring in **their** ears. In fact, **the song** of **Chapter 32** is strongly reminiscent in its structure and content of a well-known secular political form of a complaint against a rebel vassal by his overlord with its threat of punishment (**to see link click [Ah](#) - Treaty of the Great King**).⁶⁶⁵ If there was to be a future at all for **Isra'el**, it must lie with **ADONAI**, not in the ability of **Isra'el**. That much had already been demonstrated by the previous generation, and there was no reason to expect future generations to be any different. **God** had no illusions.⁶⁶⁶ But **God's** grace and **Isra'el's** sin stood side-by-side. **That day Moses wrote this song and taught it to Bnei-Yisrael (31:20-22)**.

Now when Moses had finished writing the words of this Torah on a scroll, right to the end . . . Moses commanded the Levites (see the commentary on [Ezra-Nehemiah An - Priests, Levites and Temple Servants Who Returned with Zerubbabel](#)), carriers of the Ark of the Covenant (see the commentary on [Exodus Fr - The Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place: Christ at the Throne of Grace](#)) of ADONAI saying: **Take this scroll of the Torah, and place it beside the Ark of the Covenant** (probably in a jar where it would be safe as well as accessible to the priests) **of ADONAI your God. It will remain there as a witness against you (31:24-26).**⁶⁶⁷

Moshe's angry words to **the people** here reflected both **his** righteous indignation and **his** disappointment in **them** after hearing **God's** prediction of **their** future **rebellion**. **Moses** knew from experience that **they** were **rebellious and stiff-necked**. **He** knew that after **he** was dead, **they** would continue to be **rebellious** and would eventually become utterly **corrupt**. **Indeed, while I am still alive with you today, you have been rebellious against ADONAI - how much more then after my death (31:27)?** By drawing on expressions that **he** used earlier in the scroll, **Moshe** piled up terms to emphasize the darkness of **the Israelites'** hearts: **rebel (1:26 and 43, 9:7 and 23-24), stiff-necked (9:6 and 13, 10:16), corrupt (4:16 and 25, 9:12, 32:5), turn away (11:28, 28:14), do evil (4:25, 9:18, 17:2), provoke to anger (4:25, 9:18, 32:16 and 21).** Not a pretty picture.

Consequently, **Moses** called for **Isra'el's** leaders to **gather** before **him** one last time so **he** could give **them** a final strong appeal. **He** wanted to make sure **they** understood that **their** choices and conduct would have far-reaching implications. **Gather to me all the elders of your tribes and your officials, so that I may speak these words in their ears and call heaven and earth to witness against them. For I know that after my death you will certainly act corruptly and turn aside from the way I have commanded you. So evil will fall upon you in the latter days, because you will do what is evil in the sight of ADONAI, provoking Him to anger by the work of your hands (31:28-29).** Spiritual adultery would result in nothing less than disaster! **Moshe** did not intend that **his** words would pressure **the Israelites** into obedience; rather, they served to confront **them** with the tendency of **the nation** to sin. In light of what **the LORD** had revealed to **His people** through **Moses**, **they** were without excuse.⁶⁶⁸

Haftarah vaYelekh: Hoshea (Hosea) 14:1-9; Mikhah (Micah) 7:18-20; Yo'el (Joel) 2:15-27
(see [Af](#) - Parashah)

Return O Isra'el, to ADONAI your God, for you have stumbled in your iniquity. Take

word with you and return to ADONAI. Say to Him, “Take away all iniquity, and accept what is good, so we may repay with offerings of our lips” (Hosea 14:2-3). These words, read on the Shabbat before Yom Kippur, call Isra’el to repent **her** choices that provoke **God’s** wrath. ADONAI waits, saying: **I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for My anger will turn away from her (Hosea 14:5). His anger turns!** Granting mercy instead of judgement, **the LORD** pledges to renew **the blessings** upon **the Land**. Even the lost **Ephraim** renounce **idolatry** on the day **Isra’el’s** turns and repents (see the commentary on [Revelation Fv - The Basis for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ](#)). Ephraim will say: **What good are idols to me? I have responded and observed ADONAI. I will be like a lush cypress tree. From me will be found Your fruit (Hosea 14:9).**

B’rit Chadashah suggested readings for Parashah vaYelekh: Romans 10:16-17

The righteousness based on faith does not say that knowing and doing **Torah** is impossible. **For this mitzvah that I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you to understand, nor is it beyond your reach. It is not in the heavens, that you should say: Who will go up for us to the heavens and get it for us, and have us hear it so we may do it? Nor is it across the sea, that you should say: Who will cross over for us to the other side of the sea and get it for us, and have us hear it so we may do it? No, the word is very near to you - you can speak it because it is in your mouth and you know it because it is in your heart to do it (Deuteronomy 30:11-14).** Paul says that **Torah** points to the message of **Good News: For if you confess with your mouth that Yeshua is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved (Romans 10:9).** Yet, somehow **Isra’el** has not responded. Paul poses several underlying questions to probe the matter. Perhaps **Isra’el** hasn’t **trusted**; maybe **they** didn’t hear; possibly no one has proclaimed **the Good News**, and maybe no one was sent (**Romans 10:14-16**). However, Paul concludes that the problem is that **not all have accepted the Good News. For Isaiah says, “ADONAI, who has believed our report” (Romans 10:16; Isaiah 53:1). Ha’azinu will help clarify this enigma (see [Fw - The Song of Moses](#)).**⁶⁶⁹