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The Song of Moses

31:30 to 32:43

The song of Moses DIG: Read the song out loud and imagine yourself as an Israelite listening to the song. As you interpret this song, what does it say about God? What is the song's purpose? What does it mean that God is called "the rock?" What kind of parent is God? Does God's choice of and care for Isra'el obligate Isra'el in any way? What is the extent of the rebellion? What is God's response and action? What instant recall and vivid memories are seen in this song? What does God think about Isra'el? Isra'el's enemies? What is Isra'el to think about God?

REFLECT: In what sense is this song *your* song? What songs remind you of God's goodness and mercy? What song warns you of the consequence of disobedience? Why does music often work so powerfully in people? What would you say is your "major concern" in the school of life? Why is learning God's character vital to a well-lived life? How can God's faithfulness be seen in His disciplining of Isra'el? What does it mean to say that the Word of God is the life of God's people? If a person doesn't find it life-giving, what would you recommend?

Parashah 53: Ha'azinu (Hear) 32:1-52
(to see link click [Af](#) - Parashah)

The Key People: Moshe and Joshua, speaking to all Isra'el. This chapter is actually a court hearing. **God** is the plaintiff, **Isra'el** is the accused, **the Heavens and the Earth** are the judges, and there are a set of **witnesses**.

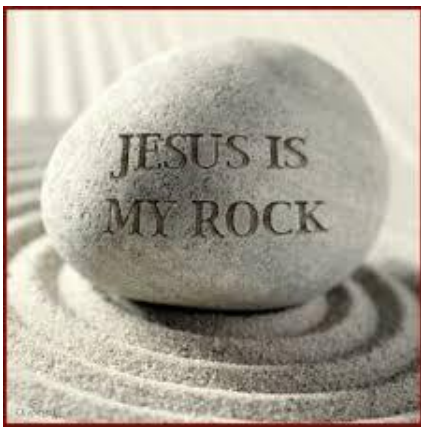
The Scene: Moshe taught the Israelites a prophetic song, which foretells Isra'el's future and warns **the people** not to stray from the path that **God** had commanded. The song ends with the promise that the LORD would avenge the blood of His servants and be finally reconciled with **His chosen people** and **the Land**. All this took place in the wilderness east of **the Promised Land** and Mount Nebo with its view across the Jordan.

The Main Events: include **Moshe and Joshua** reciting the Song of Moses to all the people gathered; this song was used as a teaching poem, calling on heaven and earth to "give ear"

as witnesses of Isra'el's disobedience, which leads to devastation and scattering, but eventual regathering; later that same day, Moshe climbing Mount Nebo to view the Promised Land before dying.⁶⁷⁰

The song of Moses, given to him by ADONAI, is basically a warning against spiritual adultery on Isra'el's part in the years to come.

The day Moses died.



*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that **You** are our solid **Rock**. Hurricane winds of calamity and change may blow, but nothing can move **You**. We can always run to **You** and trust **Your** sovereign mighty power and love. Nothing is out of **Your** control. We may get sick, lose a job, or get in an accident, but it can't touch our relationship with **You** and our eternal home in heaven with **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).***

*Praise **You** that **You** are the way to heaven. **Yeshua** said to him, "**I am the way, the truth, and the life! No one comes to the Father except through Me (John 14:6).**" Praise **You** that **You** open the door of heaven to all who choose to love and follow you as their **Lord** and **Savior**. **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. For with the heart it is believed for righteousness, and with the mouth it is confessed for salvation (Romans 10:9-10).** Joy, and peace forever-how wonderful! In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

Deuteronomy is not primarily about **Moses**, it is about **Yeshua**, who, through **His**

redemptive work, can carry anyone beyond the Jordan into the place of rest. And **Moses**, perhaps unknowingly, spoke so much of **the Messiah** as **the Rock of our salvation** (**Psalm 62:2**). **Paul** echoes this reality in the B'rit Chadashah when **he** says: **For I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers and sisters, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the Sea of Reeds. And all drank the same spiritual drink, their sustaining force - for they were drinking from a spiritual rock that followed them, and that Rock was Messiah (First Corinthians 10:1-4).**

Although **Moses** was preparing to transfer the leadership of the nation to **Joshua**, **God** was not quite finished with **him** yet. Here, **ADONAI** gives **Moshe** a glimpse into **Isra'el's** future, and it came to be known as the **Song of Moses**. It contrasts the obedience of **God** and the disobedience of the people. **Moshe** invoked **his blessing** on **the Israelites** then and the future generations to come. **He** knew that **they** would fail, but **he** also knew that **he** was given the revelation that one day **the Jews** would be reestablished, and fulfill **their** role as **a nation of priests**. Something that is yet to come after the Great Tribulation (see the commentary on **Revelation**, to see link click [Dz - The Seven Angels with the Seven Last Plagues](#)) and during the Messianic Kingdom (see the commentary on **Isaiah Kb - All Who See Them Will Acknowledge that They are a People the LORD Has Blessed).**

The Song of Moses was to be taught to **Isra'el** for use in **the covenant-renewal** ceremony. Normally, ancient Hebrew poetry is introduced as having been sung (**Exodus 15:1 and Judges 5:1**), but here, **the song** is said to have been **spoken**.⁶⁷¹ **Then, Moshe spoke in the hearing of the whole assembly of Isra'el the words of this song, from beginning to end (31:30 CJB)**. These words form the introduction to the poem, all of which **Moses** recited before **Bnei Isra'el**. The poem serves as a climax of the book and provides a theological summary that clearly distinguishes the covenantal rebels from the righteous of the TaNaKh.

The character of ADONAI (32:1-4): The song begins: **Ha'azinu (give ear). Hear, oh heavens, as I speak! Listen, earth, to the words from my mouth! Moses** calls **heaven** and **earth** as witnesses to this **song**. As **he** has done before, **Moshe** calls **the heavens** and **the earth** as witnesses to this legal proceeding (**Deuteronomy 4:26 and 30, 30:19, 31:28; Jeremiah 2:12**). They serve as silent, objective onlookers observing the justice of the charges brought against **Isra'el** and the fairness of **Isra'el's** punishment. **Moses** uses several similes to describe the life-giving, growth-producing results of **Moses' teaching**: **May my teaching fall like rain. May my speech condense like dew, like light rain on blades of grass, or showers on growing plants (32:1-2 CJB)**. The rain and the dew were part of **God's** generous provision for **His** vassal nation (see [Ah - The Treaty of the](#)

Great King).

For I will proclaim the name of ADONAI. To proclaim **His Name** means much more than pronouncing a title. In this **song**, **Moses** will declare **His** character and recount **His** many deeds. **Come, declare the greatness of our God! The Rock! Moshe** introduces **YHVH's** case against **Isra'el** by contrasting **His** perfection with **their** guilt. **He** likens **Ha'Shem** to a **rock**, totally immovable. Then, using five nouns or adjectives, **he** describes **ADONAI's** characteristics. **His work is perfect**, or totally reliable and without flaw. **For all his ways are just**, and **He** is absolutely dependable. Unlike sinful humanity, **He** is not characterized by stubbornness or wickedness. And **He** is a **trustworthy God who does no wrong, He is righteous and straight (32:3-4 CJB)**. That is to say . . . **perfect**.⁶⁷²

The goodness of ADONAI to His people (32:5-14): You would think that **Isra'el** would have praised **ADONAI** and counted it a privilege to know **Him** and serve **Him**, but **they** didn't. Instead, **they** turned to **idols** and corrupted **themselves** and blemished **their** own name and standing.⁶⁷³ So, **Moshe** begins a short history of **Isra'el**, and **he** draws a sharp contrast between the perfection of **YHVH** and the imperfection of **His people**. **He is not corrupt; the defect is in His children, a crooked and perverted generation. You foolish people, so lacking in wisdom, is this how you repay ADONAI? He is your Father, who made you His! It was He who formed and prepared you (32:5-6 CJB)!** The fundamental clashing questions of the song are thus starkly set out: On the one hand, how do such a **people** escape judgment? But, on the other hand, how can such a **Rock** abandon **His** purpose; how can such a **Father** sever this relationship? The answer led Paul to write **Romans Chapters 9-11**.⁶⁷⁴

Meanwhile, back in the courtroom, the case against **Isra'el** proceeds with a speech by the prosecutor, **Moses**, speaking on behalf of **God** and describing all that **God** had done for the accused. It was common in all suzerain-vassal lawsuit passages (see [Ah](#) - **Treaty of the Great King**) that kindly acts of the suzerain on behalf of his vassal be listed. So, here the history of **YHVH's** redemptive actions on **Isra'el's** behalf laid the foundation for the charge of spiritual adultery. **Remember . . .** The prosecution was not appealing to any secret evidence, but simply laying out what was common knowledge to every generation of **Israelites**. The accused could not plead ignorance. **Remember how the old days were; think of the years through all the ages. Ask your Father - He will tell you; your leaders too - they will inform you (32:7 CJB)**. **Moses** only talks to the people of **Isra'el** like this because of **his** deep love for **them**. This is like a wounded shepherd, seeing his flock dispersed and unable to care for **themselves**. Is this not like us? **Now these things happened to them as an example, and it was written down as a warning to us - on**

whom the ends of the ages have come (First Corinthians 10:11). This is one of the reasons that **her** history is brought to our attention.

Moshe directs **his** audience's attention to the distant past, even before **YHVH** brought the nation of **Isra'el** into existence. **When Elyon gave each nation its heritage, when He divided the human race** (see the commentary on **Genesis Df - The Table of Nations**), **He assigned the boundaries of peoples according to Isra'el's population.** Even though **Isra'el** did not exist at that time, and even though there are **seventy nations** mentioned in the Table of Nations, **YHVH**, in **His** foreknowledge, already knew **her**. **Elyon** had a special plan for **Isra'el**, for **they** were to be **His** own **people** and **He** made sure **they** had a **Land** adequate for **them**. **But ADONAI's share was His own people, Ya'akov His allotted heritage (32:8-9 CJB).** The drama of salvation would be played out in **the land of Isra'el**, so that **Land** was very special to **Him**.⁶⁷⁵



The number **seventy** has a special meaning for **Isra'el**. There were seventy languages spoken after the destruction of the Tower of Babel; seventy elders were assembled with Moses in the desert (**Numbers 11:16-30**); there are seventy names used for Jerusalem throughout the Bible; there are seventy holy days throughout the year (52 Shabbat, the 7 days of Pesach, the 7 days of Sukkot, 1 day of Shemini Atzeret, the eight day following the festival of Sukkot; 2 days of Rosh Ha'Shanah, and 1 day of Yom Kippur); 70 men of the Great Sanhedrin; 70 years of Babylonian exile; 70 BC the siege on Jerusalem by the Romans began and the Second Temple was destroyed; 70 rabbis translated the TaNaKh into the Greek Septuagint; 70 Weeks of years emphasized by **Dani'el**; 70 years between the First Zionist Congress in 1897 and the reunification of Jews with Jerusalem during the Six Day War in 1967.⁶⁷⁶

Having arranged for **Isra'el's** inheritance to be placed in Canaan, **YHVH** set about bringing **His people** there. **He found His people in a desert country, in the howling, wasted wilderness** of Egypt. It was not a place where they could live, but a place through which **they** must pass. It was not **the Land God** was going to give **them**, but a land of testing and preparation for the travels laying ahead of **the Israelites**. **His** care is depicted using three metaphors: (1) an encircling **Protector** who guarded **Isra'el** as **He** would **the very pupil of His eye**; (2) a mother **eagle** who stirs up **her young** to fly but hovers beneath **them** to support **them** in **their** first faltering attempts at flight; and (3) a kindly **Shepherd** who guided **His people** without anyone's assistance.⁶⁷⁷ **He protected her and cared for her, guarded her like the pupil of His eye (Psalm 17:8; Proverbs 7:2), like an eagle that stirs up her nest, hovers over her young, spreads out her wings, takes them and carries them as she flies.** During **her** wilderness wanderings, **ADONAI alone led His people; no alien god was with Him (32:10-12 CJB)**. It was this truth that made **Isra'el's** tendency for idolatry so reprehensible. It was **God** who deserved their loyalty. **The foreign gods** had done nothing to deserve **their** worship.

The focus now shifts to the future, when **the people** would possess **the Promised Land** and experience the goodness of **God** in **its** rich produce. **He made them ride on the heights of the earth.** The metaphor seems to refer to the conquest and the invincibility of **the people of God** in **their** possession of Canaan. **The Israelites** would eat **the produce of the fields**. **He** would have **them suck honey from the rocks and olive oil from the crags**, meaning that infertile places would become rich with produce.⁶⁷⁸ **The people** would have an abundance of **curds from the cows and milk from the sheep, with lamb fat, rams from Bashan** (a fertile area east of the Sea of Galilee) **and goats, with the finest wheat flour; and you drank sparkling wine from the pure blood of grapes (32:13-14 CJB)**. **The healthy pure blood of grapes** is distinguished from fermented **wine** (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ Kk- The Third Cup of Redemption](#)).

The faithfulness of ADONAI to discipline His people (32:15-25): The goodness of **God** is now contrasted sharply with the fickleness of **the people of God**. Having **grown fat** on the graciousness provision of **YHVH**, **the Israelites** relax in **their** newly found prosperity and forget the source of their benefit. Forgetting **their** own **God**, **they** turn ungratefully to the attractive, but shallow, temptations of foreign **gods**.⁶⁷⁹ **But Yeshurun** (a nickname for **Isra'el** as seen in **Deuteronomy 33:5** and **26; Isaiah 44:2**, meaning *the upright one*) **grew fat and kicked (you grew fat, thick, gross!).** **Moses** warned **the people** that **their** undeserved prosperity in **the Land** would tempt **them** to become proud and **forget ADONAI** (see [Cg - Do Not Forget ADONAI](#)), or **He** would have to discipline **them** (see the commentary on [Hebrews Cz - God Disciplines His Children](#)), and that's exactly what

happened. The metaphor of an animal **kicking** its owner suggests the mindless nature or **Isra'el's** rebellion against **God her Maker**; she scorned **the Rock**, her salvation.

The nation's spiritual adultery took shape in the worship of **idols**. **She made Him zealous with alien gods, and provoked Him with abominations**. This was **the zealousness** of a loving and faithful husband whose wife had betrayed him (see the commentary on [Jeremiah Ao - I Planted You Like a Choice Vine, from the Very Best Seed](#)). **The Israelites sacrificed to demons (Psalm 106:37), non-gods, do-nothing gods that she had never known, new gods that had come up lately, which her ancestors had not feared. She ignored the Rock who fathered you, and you forgot God, who gave you birth (32:15-18 CJB)**. The parental imagery is used of **YHVH** once again. **He** is described as a mother **who gave birth** in pain. In **their** apostasy, **the Israelites** were mindless of even a mothers' love. Such rebellion invited **the LORD's** reaction, as the following verses make clear.

ADONAI saw and was filled with scorn at his sons' and daughters' provocation. Therefore, **He** began to speak, and took over for **Moses**. Here, **God** begins that same way **Moshe** began earlier in **32:5-7**, as a grieving **Father** who sees the tragic future of **His children**, saying: **I will hide my face from them**. Even though **Ha'Shem** will **hide His face from them**, **He** will always be with **them**, as the book of **Esther** demonstrates. **God** sees what will become of them; for they are a **perverse generation, untrustworthy children**. **They aroused my righteous zealousness with a non-god and provoked me with their vanities; I will arouse their jealousy with a non-people and provoke them with a vile nation (32:19-21 CJB)**. Since **Isra'el** moved **Him** to **zealousness** by following **other gods**, **YHVH** decided to move **her** to **jealousy** by **blessing** and using other **nations (Hosea 1)**. Today, **God** wants to use the Church to make **Isra'el jealous** of the spiritual **blessing** that **the Gentiles** have (see the commentary on [Romans Cy - The Jealousy of the Gentile Believers](#)).⁶⁸⁰



This **song** speaks of discipline. **For My anger blazes forth like fire. YHVH's anger** was not the selfish **anger** of one who feels slighted by too little attention. Instead, it was the righteous indignation of a holy and gracious **God** toward **untrustworthy children** who are unfaithful, and who worship worthless **idols**. This devastating judgment would touch every area of life. **God's anger burns to the depths of sh'ol, devouring the earth and its crops, kindling the very roots of the hills. I will heap disasters on them and use up all my arrows against them. Fatigued by hunger, they will be consumed by fever and bitter defeat; I will send them the fangs of wild beasts, and the poison of reptiles crawling in the dust. Outside, the sword makes parents childless; inside, there is panic, as young men and girls alike are slain, sucklings and graybeards together (32:22-25 CJB).** These **curse**s remind us of **Chapter 28** (see [Ff](#) - **Curses for Disobedience**). The **anger** of **Ha'Shem** is an awesome and terrible thing because it is a result of the rejection of the equally all-encompassing love of **ADONAI**.⁶⁸¹

The amazement of ADONAI at Isra'el's lack of discernment (32:26-34): Twice before, **YHVH** had threatened to destroy **His people**, and both times **Moshe** reminded **Him** of **His** covenant promises and of the fact that **the goyim** were watching (**Exodus 32:11-14; Numbers 14:11-25**). **I considered putting an end to them, erasing their memory from the human race; but I feared the insolence of their enemy, feared that their foes would mistakenly think, "We ourselves accomplished this; ADONAI had nothing to do with it" (32:26-27 CJB).** **Moses** was concerned about the glory of **the LORD** as well as the good of **the nation**. But He also punished **the Gentile nations** because **they** went too far and were far too cruel in **their** treatment of **the Jews**. It was **YHVH** that permitted **Assyria** and **Babylon** to capture **His people**, but **they** acted as though **they** were responsible for it.⁶⁸²

The reason for **Isra'el's** plight was not the strength of **her enemies**, but **her** own lack of wisdom. **They are a nation without common sense, utterly lacking in discernment. If they were wise they could figure it out and understand their destiny.** These words are so true today for **Isra'el** and for all those who try to find truth outside of the Scriptures. We must understand that our **blessings** and riches come only through **God**. **After all, how can one chase a thousand and two put ten thousand to rout, unless their Rock sells them to their enemies, unless ADONAI hands them over?** This example is very timely for us. In **Isra'el's** fight for survival in 1956, 1967 and 1973, were not the **Jews** outnumbered by seven Arab nations? And yet, **she** was victorious because **ADONAI** handed them over! **For our enemies have no rock (their gods) like our Rock (ADONAI) - even they can see that (32:28-32 CJB)!**

The character of the enemy is portrayed in vivid metaphors. **Their nation** is deep-rooted in evil. **Their vine (the Gentile nation) is from the vine of Sodom, from the fields of Gomorrah** - hence, **their grapes are poisonous, their clusters are bitter; their wine is snake poison, the cruel venom of vipers**. In the end, **Isra'el's enemies** will face divine judgment. **Isn't this vengeance against Isra'el's enemies hidden with me? Isn't the bad fruit produced from evil lives known to God and sealed in His storehouses (32:33-34 CJB)?** At the proper time, **YHVH** will be **the Avenger**.

The vengeance of ADONAI against His adversaries (32:35-43): The thrust of the closing section of **the song** is the ultimate vindication of **Isra'el** before **the Gentile nations** that have attacked **her**, humiliated **her**, and abused **her**. **Vengeance** (without revenge) and **payback** are **Mine for the time when their foot slips; for the day of their calamity is coming soon, their doom is rushing upon them (32:35 CJB)**. The Hebrew word for **vengeance** (*naqam*) means the zeal of **God** for the discharge of justice. To the repentant, **YHVH's zeal** issues forgiveness and salvation, To the unrepentant and the rebel, **Ha'Shem's zeal** issues **judgment**.⁶⁸³

To some extent, **Isra'el** was vindicated when **Babylon** was defeated by the Persians and **the Jews** were allowed to return to **their Land** (see the commentary on **Ezra-Nehemiah Ai - The Decree of Cyrus**). But surely these verses describe something far more extensive and dramatic than that event. The vivid language makes us think of the descriptions of **the day of the Lord** in the TaNaKh, and the slaughter that will take place (**Isaiah 2:10-21; Amos 5:18-20; Zephaniah 1:7-18**). While it will be a day of judgment for **the Gentiles** for the way **they** have treated **the Jews** (see the commentary on **Revelation Fc - The Sheep and the Goats**), it will also be a time of repentance and regeneration for **Isra'el** (see the commentary on **Revelation Ev - The Basis for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ**).

Yes, God will judge His unfaithful people, taking pity on his servants, the righteous of the TaNaKh, **when he sees that their strength is gone, that no one is left, slave or free**. Here we have **God** presented as **the righteous Warrior** who will defeat **Isra'el's enemies** and, at the same time, vindicate **His own people**. This would be a message of hope for **Isra'el**, for **His discipline** is the first step toward restoring **His people** and returning to **them the blessing** that **they** forfeited when **they** turned to **idols**.⁶⁸⁵

Although **YHVH** turns **His favor** to **His people**, **He** exposes to **them** the foolishness of **their former trust** in **idols** to whom **they** offered **sacrifices** and **drink offerings**. **Then ADONAI will ask the Israelites, "Where are your gods, the rock in whom you have trusted? Who ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink**

offering? Let him get up and help you, let him protect you!" See now that I, yes, I, am He; and there is no god beside Me. I put to death, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; no one saves anyone from My hand (32:36-39 CJB)!

The terrible nature of **God's zeal** is now given in full detail. **For I lift up my hand to heaven**, symbolizing taking an oath, **and swear**, "As surely as I am alive forever, if I sharpen My flashing sword and set My hand to judgment, I will render vengeance to My foes, repay those who hate Me. I will make My arrows drunk with blood, My sword will devour flesh - the blood of the slain and the captives, flesh from the wild-haired heads of the enemy." Sing out, you nations, about His people! For He will avenge the blood of His servants. He will render vengeance to His adversaries and make atonement for the Land of His people (32:40-43 CJB).

Moses closed **the song**, **Joshua** standing with **him**, by appealing to **the people** to take the message to heart and teach **the song** to **their children**, so that future generations would obey **the Torah** and avoid **idolatry (Deuteronomy 4:9-10, 6:7, 11:19; Exodus 10:2, 12:26)**. **The Word of God** is **the life** of **God's people**, just as **ADONAI** is our **life (30:20)**, for **the Word** communicates to us the truth about **ADONAI** and **His glorious blessings**. Therefore, to receive and obey **the Word** is to share in the life of **YHVH**. **They are not just idle words for you - they are your life (32:47)**. **For the Word of God is living and active (Hebrews 4:12)**.⁶⁸⁶