

# *Ha'azinu*

## Hear "The Rock of Salvation"

Deuteronomy 32:1–52  
2 Samuel 22:1–22:51

This week we are in the midst of the Fall festivals of the Lord. The Ten Days of Awe are ending, and *Yom Kippur* is about to take place. The annual Torah cycle is nearing completion. Final preparations for the Feast of Tabernacles or *Sukkot* are being made. The time to contemplate some of the final words of Moshe Rabbeinu, Moses our Teacher, could not be better, as the message of *Sukkot* is that the Lord desires to take up residence with His people, “tabernacle” with them if you will, during the Millennial reign of Messiah Yeshua—and beyond into the Eternal State.

Before *Ha'azinu* begins, we witness how Moses' time as the leader of the Ancient Israelites is coming to a quick conclusion. Yet, there is a definite message that God wants to give the people of Israel, in the form of a song that speaks of the destiny that is to befall them.<sup>49</sup> Before Moses dies, he was specifically asked to record this song that will detail the future history of Israel. What was recited is not very good, as God's people would prostitute themselves with other gods and break the covenant that they have made with Him. As a result, God will be angry and temporarily turn His face away from Israel, who would then be consumed by many evils and troubles. The scene opens with the following,

“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Behold, the time for you to die is near; call Joshua, and present yourselves at the tent of meeting, that I may commission him.’ So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves at the tent of meeting. The LORD appeared in the tent in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood at the doorway of the tent. The LORD said to Moses, ‘Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers; and this people will arise and play the harlot with the strange gods of the land, into the midst of which they are going, and will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. Then My anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide My face from them, and they will be consumed, and many evils and troubles will come upon them; so that they will say in that day, “Is it not because our God is not among us that these evils have come upon us?” But I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil

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<sup>49</sup> Please note that the Song of Moses referred to in Revelation 15:3 is most probably the Song of the Sea of Exodus 15, something employed in the daily liturgy of the Jewish *siddur*.

For a further discussion, consult the article “The Song of Moses and God's Mission for His People” by J.K. McKee, appearing in the *Messianic Spring Holiday Helper*.

which they will do, for they will turn to other gods. **Now therefore, write this song for yourselves, and teach it to the sons of Israel; put it on their lips, so that this song may be a witness for Me against the sons of Israel.** For when I bring them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and are satisfied and become prosperous, then they will turn to other gods and serve them, and spurn Me and break My covenant. **Then it shall come about, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify before them as a witness (for it shall not be forgotten from the lips of their descendants);** for I know their intent which they are developing today, before I have brought them into the land which I swore.’ So Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the sons of Israel” (Deuteronomy 31:14-22).

The Lord had some very specific reasons about why Moses was to write a song. The Almighty appeared in a pillar of cloud and gave Moses a word that would be a witness to the rebellious behavior to be anticipated in the future. Moses was instructed to teach this song to the people of Israel, who will fall into sin after his death:

“Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call the heavens and the earth to witness against them. **For I know that after my death you will act corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you;** and evil will befall you in the latter days, for you will do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands.’ Then Moses spoke in the hearing of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song, until they were complete” (Deuteronomy 31:28-30).

The song Moses was to compose would become a witness against Israel, not only for the time period after Moses’ death, but also *b’acharit ha’yamim* or “in the days to come” (RSV), the Last Days or the end-times. When you read or contemplate this song or poem, it has multiple meanings that surely transcend time, and speak into the common problems associated with people in general rejecting God. Surely implied, within the song of Deuteronomy 32:1-43, is the need for all who hear to turn back to the Lord in repentance *and* obedience to His Instruction:

“Give ear, O heavens, and let me speak; and let the earth hear the words of my mouth. Let my teaching drop as the rain, My speech distill as the dew, as the droplets on the fresh grass and as the showers on the herb. For I proclaim the name of the LORD; ascribe greatness to our God! The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He. They have acted corruptly toward Him, *they are* not His children, because of their defect; *but are* a perverse and crooked generation. Do you thus repay the LORD, O foolish and unwise people? Is not He your Father who has bought you? He has made you and established you.

Remember the days of old, consider the years of all generations. Ask your father, and he will inform you, your elders, and they will tell you. When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of man, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel. For the LORD's portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of a wilderness; He encircled him, He cared for him, He guarded him as the pupil of His eye. Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that hovers over its young, He spread His wings and caught them, He carried them on His pinions. The LORD alone guided him, and there was no foreign god with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, and he ate the produce of the field; and He made him suck honey from the rock, and oil from the flinty rock, curds of cows, and milk of the flock, with fat of lambs, and rams, the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the finest of the wheat—and of the blood of grapes you drank wine. But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked—you are grown fat, thick, and sleek—then he forsook God who made him, and scorned the Rock of his salvation. They made Him jealous with strange *gods*; with abominations they provoked Him to anger. They sacrificed to demons who were not God, to gods whom they have not known, new *gods* who came lately, whom your fathers did not dread. You neglected the Rock who begot you, and forgot the God who gave you birth. The LORD saw *this*, and spurned *them* because of the provocation of His sons and daughters. Then He said, 'I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end *shall be*; for they are a perverse generation, sons in whom is no faithfulness. They have made Me jealous with *what* is not God; they have provoked Me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with *those who* are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation, for a fire is kindled in My anger, and burns to the lowest part of Sheol, and consumes the earth with its yield, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap misfortunes on them; I will use My arrows on them. *They will be* wasted by famine, and consumed by plague and bitter destruction; and the teeth of beasts I will send upon them, with the venom of crawling things of the dust. Outside the sword will bereave, and inside terror—both young man and virgin, the nursing with the man of gray hair. I would have said, "I will cut them to pieces, I will remove the memory of them from men," had I not feared the provocation by the enemy, that their adversaries would misjudge, that they would say, "Our hand is triumphant, and the LORD has not done all this." For they are a nation lacking in counsel, and there is no understanding in them. Would that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would discern their future! How could one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had given them up? Indeed their rock is not like our Rock, even our enemies themselves judge this. For their vine is from the vine of Sodom, and from the fields of Gomorrah; their grapes are grapes of poison, their clusters, bitter. Their wine is the venom of serpents, and the deadly poison of cobras. Is it not laid up in store with Me, sealed up in My treasuries? Vengeance is Mine, and retribution, in due time their foot will slip; for the day of their calamity is near, and the impending things are hastening upon them. For the LORD will vindicate His people, and will have

compassion on His servants, when He sees that *their* strength is gone, and there is none *remaining*, bond or free. And He will say, ‘Where are their gods, the rock in which they sought refuge? Who ate the fat of their sacrifices, *and* drank the wine of their drink offering? Let them rise up and help you, let them be your hiding place! See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me; it is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal, and there is no one who can deliver from My hand. Indeed, I lift up My hand to heaven, and say, as I live forever, if I sharpen My flashing sword, and My hand takes hold on justice, I will render vengeance on My adversaries, and I will repay those who hate Me. I will make My arrows drunk with blood, and My sword will devour flesh, with the blood of the slain and the captives, from the long-haired leaders of the enemy.’ Rejoice, O nations, *with* His people; for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance on His adversaries, and will atone for His land *and* His people” (Deuteronomy 32:1-43).

The song of Deuteronomy 32:1-43 is not exactly something to be read, recited, or even sung without a strong degree of sobriety—recognizing that it is largely a rebuke of the sins of Israel. Immediately following, we see how Moses and Joshua went before the camp of Ancient Israel, and the people were admonished to observe God’s Torah, as it is to serve as their living body of instruction for entering into the Promised Land. In spite of the sin that is anticipated to come, there will still be a wide degree of faithfulness and obedience to the Lord:

“Then Moses came and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people, he, with Joshua the son of Nun. When Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel, he said to them, **‘Take to your heart all the words with which I am warning you today,** which you shall command your sons to observe carefully, *even* all the words of this law. For it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life. And by this word you will prolong your days in the land, which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess” (Deuteronomy 32:44-47).

While contemplating the song of Deuteronomy 32:1-43 during this season of repentance, two important statements kept coming into my mind—because they contrast the consistency of our God, with the frailty of our human condition before Him. The first passage concerns how the Hebrew term *tzur* or “rock” is mentioned, as the Lord is the One who has been consistently just with the people of Israel:

**“The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He.** They have acted corruptly toward Him, *they are* not His children, because of their defect; *but are* a perverse and crooked generation” (Deuteronomy 32:4-5).

Moses asserted that God, as the Rock of His people, never changes. This is one thing that all of us who follow Him today can surely rely upon! Moses went on to state how loving God has been toward Israel, and how He has taken care of them:

“For the LORD’s portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of a

wilderness; He encircled him, He cared for him, He guarded him as the pupil of His eye. Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that hovers over its young, He spread His wings and caught them, He carried them on His pinions. The LORD alone guided him, and there was no foreign god with him” (Deuteronomy 32:9-12).

After describing this loving relationship with Israel in poetic terms, the contrast is made between the Rock and “Jeshurun,” a term of endearment for the nation of Israel:

**“But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked—you are grown fat, thick, and sleek—then he forsook God who made him, and scorned the Rock of his salvation.** They made Him jealous with strange *gods*; with abominations they provoked Him to anger. They sacrificed to demons who were not God, to gods whom they have not known, new *gods* who came lately, whom your fathers did not dread. **You neglected the Rock who begot you, and forgot the God who gave you birth.** The LORD saw *this*, and spurned *them* because of the provocation of His sons and daughters. Then He said, ‘I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end *shall be*; for they are a perverse generation, sons in whom is no faithfulness’” (Deuteronomy 32:15-20).

In this second passage of interest, *Yeshurun* is a name that means “*upright one*,” and is a “poetic name of Israel, designating it under its *ideal* character” (*BDB*).<sup>50</sup> But as we learn in this song, the beloved Israel will scorn the Rock of its salvation, and neglect the Rock who gave birth to it. Israel will forsake God, and as a result He will hide Himself from them. Sadly, this pattern will repeat itself for *generation after generation*. However, as the instruction of *Ha’azinu* continues, describing the consequences of neglecting and turning away from the Rock—there will come a definite future time when the vengeance of the Lord will come to deal with the enemies of Israel:

**“Indeed their rock is not like our Rock,** even our enemies themselves judge this. For their vine is from the vine of Sodom, and from the fields of Gomorrah; their grapes are grapes of poison, their clusters, bitter. Their wine is the venom of serpents, and the deadly poison of cobras. Is it not laid up in store with Me, sealed up in My treasuries? **Vengeance is Mine, and retribution, in due time their foot will slip; for the day of their calamity is near, and the impending things are hastening upon them.** For the LORD will vindicate His people, and will have compassion on His servants, when He sees that *their* strength is gone, and there is none *remaining*, bond or free. And He will say, ‘Where are their gods, the rock in which they sought refuge? Who ate the fat of their sacrifices, *and* drank the wine of their drink offering? Let them rise up and help you, let them be your hiding place! **See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me; it is I who put to death and give life. I have**

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<sup>50</sup> *BDB*, 449.

wounded and it is I who heal, and there is no one who can deliver from My hand” (Deuteronomy 32:31-39).

Moses reminded the Ancient Israelites in his message to the people, that there is no other rock like *the Rock*, the LORD God. Moses’ message in *Ha’azinu* concluded with a word of hope, in that God will avenge His people from the attacks of their enemies:

“Indeed, I lift up My hand to heaven, and say, as I live forever, if I sharpen My flashing sword, and My hand takes hold on justice, **I will render vengeance on My adversaries, and I will repay those who hate Me.** I will make My arrows drunk with blood, And My sword will devour flesh, with the blood of the slain and the captives, from the long-haired leaders of the enemy. **Rejoice, O nations, with His people; for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance on His adversaries, and will atone for His land and His people**” (Deuteronomy 32:40-43).

This is a guarantee from some of Moses’ final words that the Holy One of Israel will be the Rock, which in the end will fully avenge the blood of His servants and restore Israel to its fullness. Down through the history of Israel, we can detect how the themes of *Ha’azinu* would have surely given tremendous courage and strength to those who diligently followed God, in the midst of turmoil, and even in the midst of many others rejecting Him. The Prophet Isaiah seems to have used the words present in our Torah portion, to encourage his own generation to pursue the Lord in righteousness:

“But now listen, O Jacob, My servant, and Israel, whom I have chosen: Thus says the LORD who made you and formed you from the womb, who will help you, **‘Do not fear, O Jacob My servant; and you Jeshurun whom I have chosen.** For I will pour out water on the thirsty *land* and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring and My blessing on your descendants; and they will spring up among the grass Like poplars by streams of water. This one will say, “I am the LORD’s”; and that one will call on the name of Jacob; and another will write *on* his hand, “Belonging to the LORD,” and will name Israel’s name with honor.’ **Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me. Who is like Me?** Let him proclaim and declare it; yes, let him recount it to Me in order, from the time that I established the ancient nation. And let them declare to them the things that are coming and the events that are going to take place. Do not tremble and do not be afraid; have I not long since announced *it* to you and declared *it*? And you are My witnesses. **Is there any God besides Me, or is there any other Rock? I know of none**” (Isaiah 44:1-8).

It can be very easy to read through the song of Deuteronomy 32:1-34 and get a little depressed and upset. While this song surely lauds the great power of God and His supremacy, it is also a strong rebuke of those who are rebellious toward Him and who seek after other objects of worship. How are we to understand and apply

its message? We need to each make sure we understand how the Lord “will atone for His land *and* His people” (Deuteronomy 32:43). The atonement (Heb. verb *kafar*) to be issued is notably not one that the descendants of Israel themselves are to alone benefit from, but also the nations at large (cf. Romans 15:10). As you contemplate the Rock of your salvation, Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ), *whoever you are* make sure that **you have His shed blood for your sins covering your life!** Have the confidence of knowing that a resolution to the problems of sin and rebellion to the Holy One has been provided in the Son of God.

## V'zot Ha'berakhah

This is the blessing

**“Keeping Faith as a Servant of God”**

Deuteronomy 33:1–34:12

Joshua 1:1–18 (A); 1:1-9 (S)

This is the final Torah reading for the annual cycle. Many conservative commentators contend that the final two chapters of Deuteronomy were actually amendments to the original text written and/or dictated by Moses, and were likely composed or authorized by someone like Joshua or Eleazar.<sup>51</sup> If you will recall from our previous Torah portion, Deuteronomy ch. 32 ended with Moses visually surveying the Promised Land that he was not permitted to enter:

“The LORD spoke to Moses that very same day, saying, ‘Go up to this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab opposite Jericho, and look at the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the sons of Israel for a possession. Then die on the mountain where you ascend, and be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people, because you broke faith with Me in the midst of the sons of Israel at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin, because you did not treat Me as holy in the midst of the sons of Israel. **For you shall see the land at a distance, but you shall not go there, into the land which I am giving the sons of Israel**” (Deuteronomy 32:48-52).

Lamentably, Moses as a great man of God was only allowed to see into the Promised Land from a great distance. The Lord refused to allow Moses to enter in because he had broken faith with Him, having not treated the Lord in a holy

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Harrison, pp 659-662.

Also consult the entry for Deuteronomy in *A Survey of the Tanach for the Practical Messiahianic* by J.K. McKee.