

A Messianic Jewish Commentary on Parashah

Ha'azinu (Listen!)

Deuteronomy 32:1-52, 2 Samuel 22:1-51, Romans 10:17-11:12

By Hannah Nesher

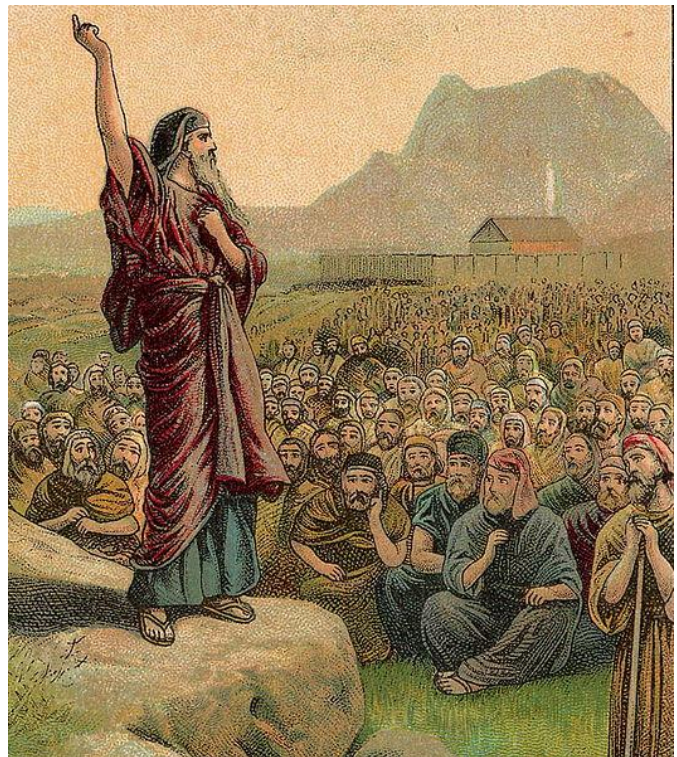
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"Give ear (Ha'azinu), the heavens, and I will speak..." (Deuteronomy 32:1)

THE SONG OF MOSES (Deuteronomy 32:1-44)

This Parashah opens with the Song of Moses – a song which some believe to have been written down and placed in the Ark of the Covenant, along with Aaron's staff and the Pentateuch. In the scroll of the Torah, this song is written in two parallel columns. This special layout of script resembles the two towers that were destroyed on September 11, 2001; and this section of Scripture is also generally read in the month of September when the fall feasts, with their theme of God's judgment take place.

It is with a song of praise that Moses begins his ministry at the Red Sea, and also with praise (hallel) to God (Yah) that he ends his time of serving the Lord on the banks of the Jordan River. Even though Moses did not cross the Jordan with the children of Israel,



Moses pleading to Children of Israel, lithography from a 1907 card

it was enough for him that He had been faithful to his calling and had seen with his own eyes, the Promised Land.

Moses' joy came from his anticipation of the glorious future that awaited Israel beyond their dry, barren, wilderness wanderings. Yeshua (Jesus) also endured the cross by anticipating the joy of the resurrection. We too may find joy, even when we fall short of our heart's desire in this life, by anticipating the great and glorious things that God has prepared for us in eternity.

"No eye has seen, nor ear has heard and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him." (1 Corinthians 2:9)

Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak;
And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth...

For I proclaim the name of the LORD:
Ascribe greatness to our God.
He is the Rock, His work *is* perfect;
For all His ways *are* justice,
A God of truth and without injustice;
Righteous and upright *is* He.

In his final address to the nation, Moses asks, not only for the attention of the people of Israel, but of all creation. Nearing the end of his earthly life, Moses delivers his final message as a 'melodic farewell'.

This seems an odd time for Moses to be singing – after all – practically the entire generation that he brought out of Egypt lay dead – their carcasses scattered all around the wilderness; and Moses, himself, stood ready to die as well.

However, herein lays evidence of the spiritual greatness of this leader of Israel. The personal tragedies and hardships which would likely have broken the spirit of a lesser man, instead, caused Moses to rise to an even higher spiritual plane.

Moses sang despite his impending death; despite the fact that he failed to achieve his life's goal of entering the Promised Land; Moses still sang. We may also refuse to succumb to despair over the trials of life through the ministry of song.

Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him.
Praise the LORD with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.
Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy." (Psalm 33: 1-3)

The Hebrew word for sing is 'shar' שָׁר and it is the root of the Hebrew word for serve 'sharet' שָׁרַת. When we go through a time of weakness and don't even know how we can serve the Lord in our condition, we can still serve Adonai through singing to Him and making music to His name.

The Hebrew language contains a secret meaning behind the power of praise and worship music. Many of the Psalms (called Tehillim in Hebrew) are addressed 'To the Chief Musician'. In Hebrew, the chief musician is called a menatzeach מְנַצֵּחַ. The root of this word is 'netzach', נָצַח which means 'eternity'.

What is amazing, is that the Hebrew word for 'victory' (nitzachon) נִצָּחוֹן comes from this very same Hebrew root!

What does this mean to us as worshippers of the one, true God? The Hebrew shows us that when we minister to Adonai with music and song, we touch the eternal realm and from this heavenly place, we may receive the victory. Halleluyah!

“Now thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Messiah, and reveals through us the sweet aroma of his knowledge in every place.” (2 Corinthians 2:14)

If we can overcome the temptation to be discouraged or downcast when we fail to reach our goals; when things don't seem to go our way; and rather sing praises to the Lord instead, then we will walk in triumph in Yeshua.

Some New Testament Believers may be under the impression that Moses, as part of the 'Old Testament' is not really relevant to their faith. However, in the book of Revelations, we read that in the end of the final battle with evil, those who have been victorious over the beast and its image hold harps and sing the song of Moses.

“ I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues—last, because with them God's wrath is completed. And I saw what looked like a sea of glass glowing with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and its image and over the number of its name. They held harps given them by God and sang the song of God's servant Moses and of the Lamb:” (Revelations 15:1-3)

ROCK OF ISRAEL (Tzur Yisrael) **צור ישראל**

Nine times in Moses' farewell song is God called '**The Rock**' (**Ha'tzur**). One of the names of God is **Tzur Yisrael** – solid, unchangeable, immovable, and a safe place of refuge.

“The Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice; a God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is He.” (Deuteronomy 32:4)

We are told that our Israelites ancestors all drank from the same **spiritual rock**; and that this Rock which accompanied them in the wilderness was **Yeshua the Messiah**. (1 Corinthians 10:5)

Yeshua is with us in all of our wanderings. God keeps track of our wanderings and keeps our tears in a bottle. (Psalm 56:8)

God's lovingkindness and unchanging faithfulness is contrasted with Israel's ingratitude and faithlessness. God is vindicated as a loving Father, while Israel is chastised as a wayward, disobedient child.

“Is corruption His? No, His children's is the blemish; a generation crooked and perverse.” (Deuteronomy 32:5)

Israel's choice to sin is not a blemish upon the goodness of God. He offered them life and blessing or destruction and cursing; and they chose the latter.

All the subsequent disasters that would fall upon the nation of Israel are just punishment for their rebellion against God. And yet, lest the enemies of Israel exalt themselves and claim that Israel is finished, **God promises, in His mercy, to intervene on their behalf and save them.**

But for the grace of God through Yeshua Hamashiach (the Messiah), we would all be doomed, but thankfully, **His mercies are new every morning, therefore we are not consumed.**

“Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.” {Lamentations 3:22-23}

Israel is called ‘the portion of the Lord’; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. (Deuteronomy 32:9)

Israel is likened to an abandoned, starving child left to die in the wilderness; but God finds, rescues, and saves him. God cares for the orphaned child, supplying all of his needs through food (manna), protection (pillar of fire by night) and guidance (pillar of cloud by day).

“He found him in a desert land, and in the waste, a howling wilderness... He kept him as the apple of His eye.” (Deuteronomy 32:10)

Through the prophet Zechariah, the Lord warns the nations that **“he who touches you (Israel) touches the apple of His eye.”** (Zechariah 2:8)

The apple of one's eye is the pupil, the most sensitive and delicate part of the body. Anyone who tries to harm Israel is as if poking their finger into the very pupil of God's eye.

God is represented as a father to whom Israel owes their very existence; but also as a mother, carrying and nurturing her infant with tender affection. And yet Israel turned to other ‘no-gods’ and forgot the Rock who bore them.

“They sacrificed to demons, no-gods, Gods that they knew not...of the Rock that begot you, you were unmindful and you forgot God that bore you.” (Deuteronomy 32:18)

God had every reason to take vengeance and to give up on the nation of Israel, but instead He had mercy on them, lest their enemies exalt themselves. But it was not for Israel's sake that He saves them, but for His name's sake.

When we think that we have blown it too many times, and that God would have every reason to give up on us as well, may we remember that though God will deal with us, He is a merciful God, faithful and true. His desire is that we would also be long-suffering with others.

From the calamities Israel suffers, God wants her to see and know that He is the one true God with **the power of life and death in His hands.** He wounds but He also binds up those wounds.

“See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with Me; I kill, and I make alive; I have wounded, and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of My hand.” (Deuteronomy 32:39)

Moses concludes his last message to Israel with the exhortation to observe all of the words of the Torah: **“For it is no vain thing for you; because it is your life....”**

The Bible is not a book of meaningless, empty words; it is our instructions for a long, full, satisfying life of blessing, health, holiness and prosperity through obedience and faith.

“The fear of the Lord prolongs days; but the years of the wicked shall be shortened.” (Proverbs 10:27)



God then commands Moses to ascend the mountain one last time and there, although still full of health and vigor, Moses climbed Mt. Nebo in the Land of Moab to die and be buried. Although this great man of God was not allowed to enter the Promised Land, but was only given a glimpse of it from afar off, Moses was faithful to God in death as he was in life. (Deuteronomy 32:52)

DAVID’S SONG OF PRAISE

In the Haftorah (Prophetic reading) for this week’s study, David also recites a Song of Thanksgiving, which parallels Moses’ composition. David praises God as his Rock, refuge, fortress and deliverer after he saves his life from King Saul.

“YHVH is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; the God who is my rock, in Him I take refuge ...” (2 Samuel 22:2-3)

When we are being persecuted, pursued or in any kind of distress, we can do what David did and call upon the Lord our God. He will save and deliver us out of our trouble. We can trust God to be our mighty Savior, even from those who are too strong for us.

Like David, we can say, **“For by You I can run upon a troop; by my God, I can scale a wall...For who is God, save YHVH? And who is a Rock (tzur) , save our God? (2 Samuel 32:30-32)**

Of course we all want to live in peace and security; but sometimes we find ourselves facing war. When we are in the midst of any kind of battle, we can remember that our God will train our hands for war and He will also be our shield.

“For You have girded me with strength unto the battle; you have subdued under me those that rose up against me.” (2 Samuel 32:40)

Today, as Israel stands poised on the verge of battle with Islamic forces rising against her, will you pray that the hearts of the Israeli people will return to God - that Israel will look to God our Rock, our refuge, our fortress and strong tower to save and deliver us from our enemies.

“YHVH lives, and blessed be my Rock; and exalted be the God, Rock of my salvation (Yeshuah)” (2 Samuel 32:47)

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“For out of Zion shall go forth the Torah, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”
(Isaiah 2:3)

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