

Ha'azinu

הַאֲזִינוּ "Listen"

Deuteronomy 32:1–52

Torah Together



This *Torah* portion records the “Song of Moses.” Although this song was probably never set to music, it was written in poetic form so that it could be memorized and passed down from generation to generation.

1. The Song of Moses - 32:1-47

a) This is the second “Song of Moses” we’ve encountered. (The first was in **Exodus 15**.) To whom did Moses recite the words of this song?

Moses recited this song to “the whole assembly of Israel.” (Verse 1)

b) What characteristic of God does Moses describe in verses 3-4? Given what you know about other pagan gods, is this characteristic unique to God?

Moses states that God is “the Rock”, i.e., steady, firm, dependable, and that He is just, upright, faithful and does no wrong. Pagan gods were often portrayed as capricious and sometimes did evil things.

c) Who is the “they” referred to in verse 5? Do you think Moses is speaking of the people standing in front of him or of future generations?

Although this could be taken to mean the Israelites that were standing before Moses, the description better fits future generations of Israelites who had forsaken God and his Torah. (The same phrase is used in *Philippians 2:15* where Paul is talking about the generation at the time of Yeshua.)

d) In the next several verses, Moses uses poetic language to describe how God chose Israel to be his people and brought them to the Promised Land. What events in Israel’s past do you think Moses is describing in verses 10 - 12?

This passage could certainly describe the nation of Israel as it wandered in the desert after leaving Egypt. Another interesting interpretation would refer to Jacob after he left his home to avoid being killed by Esau, spending the first night away at Bethel. (Genesis 27:41 - 28:22) There God “found him and cared for him,” leading him to Laban and back to Israel before his family finally went to Egypt.

Scripture Link:

According to **Deuteronomy 31:19 & 21**, what is the purpose of this song?

Scripture Link:

Yet another Song of Moses is recorded as **Psalm 90**. Also, in **Revelation 15:2-3**, John states that we will all be singing *The Song of Moses* before God.

Scripture Link:

Genesis 27:41 – 28:22 tells the story of Jacob’s journey from his family home to Laban, his uncle. Do you think this might be the event described here?

Scripture Link:

The land of Bashan lies east of the Jordan River. **Numbers 32:33-42** describes the assignment of this land to a specific tribe of Israel.

Even though this passage is full of graphic imagery concerning the misfortunes that will befall Israel, it is clear that God never completely leaves them or forsakes them. He has known from the beginning that these events would come on His people. In the end, God will have compassion on His servants and they will return to Him. God will then take vengeance on His enemies.

e) Verses 13 - 14 describe Israel's future in the land of Israel. Initially, how did Israel do in the land? Which tribe inherited the land of Bashan? Why did they choose this land?

Initially, when the Israelites entered the land, they prospered. They were faithful to their covenant with God and He blessed them. Bashan was east of the Jordan river, in northeast Israel. This was the land that the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh chose for their inheritance. (Specifically, half of Manasseh inherited this land.) They chose it because it was very fertile and good for raising livestock.

f) In verse 15, Jeshrun means "the upright one", that is Israel. What does Moses predict will happen to Israel in verses 15 - 18? Did this indeed come to pass?

Moses predicted that after the Israelites entered the land, they would become fat and lazy because of God's blessings and grow away from God, worshipping "foreign gods." This is indeed what happened to Israel.

g) Beginning in verse 19, Moses describes how God will respond to Israel's actions. What are some of the things God will do to Israel?

Moses says that God will reject Israel and "hide his face from them." God said that He will "make them angry by a nation that has no understanding," which could mean conquest by gentiles. Moses describes many terrible things, most of which did indeed happen to Israel.

h) In verses 26 - 27, God explains why he will not blot out all memory of Israel. What is his reason?

In these verses, God says that He will not allow Israel to be totally destroyed "lest the adversary (Satan) misunderstand" and think that he had triumphed over God.

i) Finally, God's anger will run its course. According to verse 36, what will be Israel's condition when God has compassion on them? What will God do when his people finally turn from their pagan ways and return to him?

God will "have compassion" on his people when their strength is gone and when they turn back to Him. God will then take vengeance on His adversaries and all nations will rejoice with Israel at their restoration. (Verses 40-43)

j) After he finished reciting this song, what did Moses encourage the people to do?

Moses encouraged the people to obey the Torah and to teach their children to do the same because "these words are your life" (verse 47).

“They are not just idle words for you – they are your life.”

Deuteronomy 32:47

2. Moses to Die on Mount Nebo - 32:48-52

a) Where did God tell Moses that he would die? Can you locate this spot on map?

God told Moses that he would die on Mount Nebo, across from Jericho. (This is a popular tourist site in Jordan near Amman. One can look across the Dead Sea valley and, on a clear day, see almost all of Israel.)

b) God again explains why Moses was not allowed to enter the land with the Israelites. Do you recall the incident God refers to? Does this give you a better understanding of why God chose to punish Moses and Aaron in this way?

God told Moses that he and Aaron had “broken faith with Him in the presence of the Israelites” when Moses struck the rock twice to bring forth water. This may seem like a harsh punishment to many, but God is sovereign.

See the map and photograph on pages 1 and 2 for details about Mount Nebo.

Scripture Link:

The incident that led to Moses not being allowed to enter the Promised Land is described in **Numbers 20:1-13.**

Digging deeper

1. Although this “Song of Moses” is not really a song, it does use poetic language to tell God’s message. Why do you think this is a good idea?

Although this “song” was probably not ever set to music, it was to be written down (Deut. 31:19) and memorized by the Israelites and taught to their children as a reminder, from generation to generation, of God’s words. Before printed material became commonplace, this was a very effective way to preserve important literary pieces through history. It seems to have worked as we are reading it some 3500 years after it was written and spoken.

2. This “Song of Moses” speaks prophetically to the future of the nation of Israel. How much of this prophecy do you think has come to pass? How much is yet to be fulfilled? Given that this prophecy was given about 3500 years ago, does this give you a sense of God’s time scale? Is this encouraging to you or not?

With the conquest and dispersion of Israel (several times), much of this prophecy has come to pass. It is also true that “the memory of Israel has not been blotted from mankind,” rather miraculous given the last 2000 years of Jewish history. However, God has only just begun to gather His people from the nations of the world. And many have not yet returned to Him and forsaken their foreign gods. Yet to come is God’s vengeance on his adversaries and the nations rejoicing with his people (verse 43). This reinforces the fact that the history of mankind is unfolding just as God had planned it from the beginning. It is comforting to know that God is indeed in control.

For further study, see

Haftarah : II Samuel 22:1-51

Brit Hadashah : Romans 10:14-21; 12:14-21;

Hebrews 12:28-39