

# HA'AZINU – “Listen”

## DEUTERONOMY (D'VARIM 32:1–52)

### INTRODUCTION:

1. This portion contains the song of which Moses spoke of in the preceding chapter.
  - a. It is a song that summarizes Israel's history: Exodus from Egypt and its rebellion.
  - b. Also speaks of the future: the redemption and defeat of Israel's enemies.
2. Moses' ministry in the wilderness began with a song and concludes with one.
  - a. In sight of Canaan he gave them this song.
3. God's faithfulness is contrasted with Israel's infidelity and ingratitude.
  - a. If God is a loving father, Israel is the disobedient prodigal son.
  - b. All the disasters that would befall them are recompense for their conduct.
  - c. Yet the nations should not think that Israel is helpless and abandoned – God intervenes.
4. This song speaks in terms of the past, present and future as if they all happened at same time.
  - a. God transcends time – He is, was and is to come – so this is how He views Israel.

### CHAPTER 32: HE IS OUR ROCK

1. Verse 1: “Give ear (האזינו *ha'azinu*, you heavens...and let the earth hear my words.”
  - a. Moses calls heaven and earth (eternal) to bear witness eternally to what he said.
  - b. Not hyperbole, but understood to mean they “heard” what he said.
2. When someone inspired by Spirit of God speaks those words empowered by One who created heaven and earth.
  - a. Joshua commanded the sun to stand still and it did.
  - b. Y'shua said this:

**“Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ it will be done.” – Matthew 21:21**

3. There is power in the words spoken by the sons and daughters of God – the breath gives life.
  - a. The breath came from the One who spoke the worlds into existence.
4. As eternal witnesses they outlive those Moses was speaking to at the time.
  - a. Thus, future generations couldn't deny they had accepted the covenant.
  - b. Heaven and earth would be used to rebuke and provoke those who broke it.
  - c. Heaven would withhold rain or generate cosmic omens and signs.
  - d. Earth would withhold its produce or shake causing chaos.
5. Verse 2: “My teaching shall drop as the rain...my speech shall flow as the dew.”
  - a. Rain is generally viewed as a blessing.
  - b. The dew falls gently and silently yet revives the faint grass.
6. “As the small rain upon the tender grass” – doesn't drown the young and immature.
  - a. God's Word is needed to survive but is tempered to meet needs of spiritually young.

7. “As the showers upon the herb” – soaks the more mature plants who need more.
  - a. God’s Word can be simple and yet unfathomable at the same time.
  - b. Important that we remember this: if God acknowledges the differences shouldn’t we?
8. Verse 4: “The Rock; His work is perfect” – Hebrew is הַצֹּר ha ’tzur – unchanging, constant.
  - a. Which is to say that all He ordains and declares will come true.
  - b. If He says He will bring you into Canaan, He will do so.
  - c. If He says He will redeem you at the end of days, He will do so.
  - d. Nine times in this song we are reminded that He is a Rock.
9. “Perfect” is תַּמִּים *tammim* or “undefiled.”
  - a. Ages may pass but He remains pure and reliable – a refuge and example to emulate.
  - b. “Just” (צַדִּיק *tzadik*) and “upright” (יָשָׁר *yashar*) is He”
10. The statements should impress upon us His character and, consequently, ours as His people.
  - a. We should be upright (יָשָׁר *yashar*); defines אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל *Yisrael* – uprightness of El.

**“Listen to me, you who follow after righteousness (צַדִּיק *tzadik*) you who seek the LORD: look to the rock (צֹרֵר *tzur*) from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug.” – Isaiah 51:1**

11. Verse 5: “Is corruption His? No; His children’s is the blemish.”
  - a. There may be evil and corruption in the world but the blame is not His.
  - b. People are the reason for corruption, not God.

**“So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.” – Genesis 6:12**

12. The Hebrew text in this verse is difficult to understand but is to indicate that His children are “fault-laden.”
  - a. Israel’s sins are not a blemish upon God or His goodness.
  - b. The sins of a child are not necessarily an indictment of the parent.
  - c. Sometimes the child is the wayward prodigal who rejects instruction of parent.
  - d. Thus, the command “honor your father and mother.”
13. Verse 6: “Do you do this to the LORD?” – is this the way to treat your father?
14. Verse 7-14: Look to the lessons of history.
  - a. God created the world so all nations could worship Him – they failed.
  - b. He chose Israel to be a light to those nations and gave them a land to shine in.
  - c. They failed in this and deserved to be destroyed.
  - d. Yet, because this would desecrate His name, He punished and exiled them.
  - e. Still, at the end of days, Israel will be redeemed and restored.
15. This historical cycle first appears with Adam:
  - As a priest in the Garden (specific land) to lead the other people in proper worship
  - He failed in His mission and deserved death but was exiled from the Garden.
  - Left with a promise of redemption through the Seed of the Woman.
16. Verse 7: “Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations.”
  - a. Many don’t consider the lessons of the past thinking it is not relevant.
  - b. Yet Scripture make it clear the truth is otherwise.

**“Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.”**

**– Isaiah 46:9-10**

**“That which is has already been, and what is to be has already been; and God requires an account of what is past.” – Ecclesiastes 3:15**

**“Of the sons of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.” – 1 Chronicles 12:32**

17. “Times” is not limited to the present but can also include the past – learning from the past helps us to understand what to do today.

- a. Consult those who have experience of the past because it speaks to us today.

## **CHAPTER 32: GOD’S GOODNESS TO ISRAEL**

**“When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel. For the LORD's portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance.”**

**– Deuteronomy 32:8-9**

1. When this occurred in Genesis 10 & 11 He had respect to needs of Israel.
  - a. All people spoke one language until Babel when God separated them.
  - b. Divided into 70 languages corresponding to “number of children of Israel.”
  - c. Those that went down into Egypt.
2. Because nations had not responded to God, He raised up Israel from numbers (70) that were parallel to the nations.
  - a. Thus Israel became His portion (verse 9).

**“Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to me above all people; for all the earth is mine.” – Exodus 19:5**

3. Verse 9: “Jacob (is) the lot (literally “rope”) of His inheritance.
  - a. Rope is to infer “measure” – i.e. Israel is the measure by which nations judged?
  - b. Rope is comprised of many strands; united they are strong, divided they are weak.
4. Verse 10: “He found them in a desert land” – an abandoned child found and rescued by God.
  - a. “He kept him as the apple of His eye” - i.e. as His very life.
5. Verse 11: God likens Himself to an eagle that watches over its young and prompts them to fly.
  - a. When time comes, strikes branches, stirs the young and makes nest uncomfortable.
  - b. Entices young to imitate her as she flutters her wings.
  - c. If too timid or weak, she takes young upon her wings and carries them.
6. Israel was young and weak, so God carried them into wilderness and to Sinai.

**“You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.” – Exodus 19:4**

7. Gave them the Torah in order to imitate Him and His character – to fly.
  - a. To be His witnesses to all the earth – a light to the nations.
8. In the future this scenario will be replayed.

**“But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.” – Revelation 12:14**

9. Moses’ song makes it clear that prosperity can be a weakness for a nation.
  - a. The more prosperous, the less attentive to spiritual responsibility.
10. Verse 15: “But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked...and he forsook God who made him.”
  - a. Jeshurun (Heb. יִשְׁרוּן *Y’shurun*) – first time in Torah this used of Israel.
  - b. יָשָׁר *Yashar* is “upright” or “straightforward.” – LXX translates as “beloved one.”
  - c. This is linked to the name Israel (Heb. יִשְׂרָאֵל *Yisrael*) – “straightforward before God.”
  - d. Is to imply Israel when walking upright and in obedience – the ideal.
11. The upright one was puffed up because of prosperity and fell away from God.
12. Verse 17: “They sacrificed to demons (שְׂדִיִּים *shedim*), no-gods (לֹא אֱלֹהִים *lo eloha*).”
  - a. Demons: Assyrian *shidu* are gods represented by bulls outside palaces.
  - b. “No gods” contains word that is also pronounced אֱלֹהִים *alah* and translated as “curse.”
  - c. These “no gods” “came up of late” - arrived on the scene later, e.g. Islam.
13. These gods were the “new thing” – Christianity is full of the “new thing.”
  - a. Will even quote Isaiah – “Behold, I will do a new thing,” (Isa. 43:19).
  - b. That speaks of a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.
  - c. Are these “new things” similar to what Moses warned of?
14. These “no gods” were ones “your fathers did not dread.” (Heb. שְׁעָרוֹם *s’arum*).
  - a. Derived from שַׁעַר *se’ar* – “hair” or “hairy goat” which is linked to pan-like gods.
  - b. Also related to word Esau.
15. Verse 20: As a result of all this, “I will hide my face from them” – as discussed previously.
16. Verse 21: “Have roused me to jealousy with a no-god...have provoked me with vanities.”
  - a. Here “no-god” is בְּלֹא-אֵל *b’lo el* – phonetically similar to בְּלִיעַל *Belial*.
  - b. Belial is one that appears good outwardly but is full of corruption inwardly.
  - c. “Vanities” is literally “breaths or vapors” – unreal, intangible, thus false gods.
17. As a consequence, God will arouse them to jealousy with a “no people” and provoke with a “vile nation.”
  - a. “No people” is לֹא עַם *lo am* and “vile nation” is literally “foolish nation.”
  - b. Foolish nation understood as ignorant and, therefore, barbaric; yet triumphs over Israel.
  - c. Assyria, Babylon and now threatened by Islam.
18. Is it possible this might allude to something else?
  - a. Hosea’s לֹא עַמִּי *lo ammi* – “not my people” – are also called “sons of the living God.”
  - b. Might they be alluded to 1 Peter?

**“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were **not a people** but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” – 1 Peter 2:9-10**

19. “Not a people” is translated into Hebrew as **לֹא עַם** *lo am*.
  - a. These are the people Paul says are to “provoke them to jealousy” (Rom. 11:11).
20. Verse 26: “I thought I would make an end of them” – or “I will scatter them.”
  - a. The exile of the Northern Kingdom is believed to be the fulfillment of this.
  - b. An exile that continues to this day.
  - c. Which might bring us back to the “no people” issue – these are those in Hosea 1.
21. “I will cause their memory to cease from man.”
  - a. According to commentary, this speaks of the exile of Judah and Benjamin.
  - b. “The Davidic kingdom from which today’s known Jews are descended.”

## **CHAPTER 32: MOSES CONCLUDES HIS DISCOURSE**

1. Verse 27: He couldn’t let this happen because of the “enemy’s provocation” and the fact they would misinterpret these reasons for Israel’s destruction; they wouldn’t think it the hand of God.
  - a. If they succeeded entirely, who would be a light in the darkness?
  - b. When archaeologists discovered traces of Israel, they would determine natural means.
  - c. Therefore, God doesn’t allow Israel to disappear entirely – He hides them.
2. Consistently He says He preserves Israel for “His holy name’s sake.”

**“For the LORD will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you His people.” – 1 Samuel 12:22**

3. Verse 29: “If they were wise, they would understand this.”
  - a. If they considered the magnitude of this, would know that only God can accomplish.
  - b. Only their sins have permitted them to be turned over to their enemies.
  - c. Bila’am understood that he couldn’t curse them – but could entice them.
4. Verse 30: They would ask how can one chase a thousand and two ten thousand?
  - a. The only answer is because God had turned them over to their enemies.
  - b. These are the total enemies that fall at the side of the upright man (Psalm 91:7).
5. I see a fascinating parallel scenario taking shape – the collapse of America and rise of Islam.
6. Verse 31: “Their rock is not as our Rock” – their victory was because of their gods.
  - a. Their god is no comparison – **אלה** *allah* is not comparable to **אלהים** *Elohim*.
7. Verse 32: “Their vine is of Sodom...their grapes are of gall...their clusters are bitter.”
  - a. Some commentators say Israel suffered because they behaved as the people of S’dom.
  - b. Others interpret this as speaking of the nations that overcame Israel.
  - c. They are corrupt in root and in fruit – the stock is from S’dom and ‘Amorah.
8. Ancient writers speak of “apples of Sodom” – color as if fit to eat but have no substance.
  - a. “Grapes of gall” – considered poisonous; pleasant outside but deadly inside.
9. Verse 33: “Their wine is the venom of serpents and the poison of asps.”
  - a. The rendering of their fruit is from the **mouth** of the serpent – Gen. 3 (good and evil).

10. The Adversary has always used his mouth to lure Israel into death and destruction.
11. Verse 34-35: “Vengeance is mine...the day of their calamity is at hand.”
  - a. Their destruction has been written down and determined.
  - b. God would intervene on behalf of His people.
12. Verse 36: “The LORD will judge His people and repent Himself for His servants.”
  - a. Better, “have compassion on His people” – when they are so vulnerable.
  - b. He is the One who allowed them to be in that position.
  - c. He saw to it that no government or ally could be the source of their salvation.
  - d. Footnote: America is turning away from Israel – handiwork of God?
13. Verses 37-39: God would prove to Israel that the gods they trusted in were not gods at all.
  - a. His correction was not intended to destroy but to restore.
  - b. He wants them to see that He alone is God.

**“Now see that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides me; I kill and I make alive (resurrect); I wound and I heal (restore); nor is there any who can deliver from my hand. For I raise my hand to heaven, and say, ‘As I live forever.’” – Deuteronomy 32:39-40**

14. Verse 41-42: “I will render vengeance to my adversaries...recompense them that hate me.”
  - a. Israel’s enemies are those who are “My adversaries...and those that hate me.”
  - b. Israel’s enemies are God’s enemies.
  - c. Psalm 83 makes this very clear.

**“For behold, your enemies make a tumult; and those who hate you have lifted up their head. They have taken crafty counsel against your people, and consulted together against your sheltered ones.” – Psalm 83:2-3**

15. Verse 42: “My sword shall devour flesh.” – His sword is His Word.
  - a. The Word devours flesh (carnal nature).

## **CHAPTER 32: MOSES GIVES FINAL INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Verse 46: “Set your heart unto the words...that you may instruct them to your children.”
  - a. By placing these things in hearts of children, Israel is sustained.
2. Verse 47: “It is not vain thing for you because it is your life” – “vain” is to say “empty.”
  - a. Torah is not a book of empty words without meaning or substance, but Torah is life.
  - b. Obedience leads to longer life because it restrains us from sin, which hastens death.
  - c. Torah does not impede life but the evil inclination within us all.

**“The fear of the LORD prolongs days, but the years of the wicked will be shortened.”  
– Proverbs 10:27**

3. Verse 48-49: That same day God told Moses to ascend Mount Nebo in the Abarim mountains.
  - a. He was to view the land from a distance because he could not go over.
  - b. He did not sanctify God in the midst of the children of Israel at Meribah.
  - c. He gave into his emotion and struck the rock.

4. Those God appoints to lead can't give in to emotion and fail to sanctify His name in sight of the people.
  - a. For this, he is prohibited from possessing the Land but can only see it.
  - b. Demonstrates high standard God places upon those He has set among people to lead.