

The Amazing “Song of Moses” in Deuteronomy 32

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The “Song of Moses,” near the end of Deuteronomy, previews the apostasy, punishment, and restoration of the nation of Israel. The song rightfully exalts Yahweh (translated “the LORD”), the living God and “Rock” of Israel. In Hebrew the song is poetic, as seen in the parallelism of its lines and in its powerful imagery. In the comments below, owed in part to Keil and Delitzsch, all chapter and verse references are to Deuteronomy. After reading the comments for a section of the song, read that section in Deuteronomy.

A. THE BACKGROUND OF THIS SONG

- 1. The Book of Deuteronomy** is the book most quoted in the New Testament. It records the renewal of the “Mosaic covenant,” giving many samples of its requirements, just before Moses’ death. The book is cast in the form of a suzerain-vassal treaty common in the Ancient Near East, the LORD being the suzerain (great Ruler) and Israel being the vassal.

Preamble (1:1-5)

Historical Prologue (1:6—4:49)

Main Provisions (5:1—26:19)

Curses and Blessings (27:1—30:20)

Arrangements for Continuation of the Covenant (31:1—33:29)

(The Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Translation, p. 270)

The last chapter records the death of Moses just before Israel crosses the River Jordan to possess the Promised Land.

- 2. The Purpose of the song** is given in 31:14-22,30. Moses is about to die (v. 16). Through Joshua the LORD will bring Israel into the Promised Land. But they will reject Him and His covenant and will turn to other gods (16,20). Then in anger the LORD will forsake Israel and bring upon them troubles (vv. 17-18; these have been predicted earlier, ch. 28). Though Israel will be unrepentant (v. 17b), this song—to be memorized—will witness against them (vv. 19,21). Moses immediately writes this song and teaches it to Israel in assembly (vv. 22,30).

B. THIS SONG BY SECTIONS (All references are in Deut. 32.)

- Vv. 1-3 **The Importance of This Instruction**
 Heavens and earth are called to witness (v. 1).
 His teaching will have good results like the rain (v. 2).
 His teaching exalts the LORD (v. 3).
- V. 4 **Israel’s Righteous “Rock”**
 The LORD is blameless and righteous in His deeds.

- Vv. 5-18 Israel's Folly in Rebelling against the LORD
 The folly announced (vv. 5-6a). Israel is corrupt and perverse to turn from such a Benefactor.
 The LORD's benefits to His people (vv. 6b-14)
 He made them (6b), set the boundaries for the nations according to them (8), chose to inherit them (9), found them and protected them (10), brought them out of Egypt (11-12), enriched them (13-14).
 The ingratitude of the LORD's people (vv. 15-18)
 "Jeshurun grew fat and kicked." Israel is pictured as a fat but rebellious animal called "Jeshurun" ("the upright one"). He "abandoned the God who made him" (v. 15) and "gave [him] birth" (v. 18), his Rock (vv. 15,18). Instead of the true God he chose "foreign gods... detestable idols... demons... gods they had not known... gods..." (vv. 16-17).
- Vv. 19-22 The LORD's Purpose to Reject and Punish the Rebellious People
 His resolve (19-20), method (21), fierceness (22)
- Vv. 23-27 Details of the LORD's Judgment of Israel
 Details of judgment (23-25)
 Limits of judgment (26-27). He would not annihilate Israel lest idolatrous enemies take the credit.
- Vv. 28-33 Israel's Lack of Discernment
 Israel fails to see that other nations punish them only because the LORD allows it (29-30).
 Ungodly nations are eventually doomed (31-33).
- Vv. 34-43 The LORD's Vindicating Judgment of Ungodly Nations. He will have mercy on His people and annihilate His foes.
 The future is laid up in store with the LORD (34-35).
 He will vindicate them by punishing the wicked (36-39). He mockingly asks the nations He punishes, where their gods are. (Cf. Jer. 2:28.)
 By taking vengeance on His adversaries who punished Israel, He will show that He is the only true God (40-42).
 The nations are told to rejoice with His restored people (43).

Here is the Septuagint version of verse 43. The bolded line is quoted in Hebrews 1:6:

Rejoice, O heavens, with Him,
And let all the angels of God worship Him.
 Rejoice, O nations, with His people,
 And let all the children of God rely on Him;
 For he avengeth the blood of His children,
 And will judge, and execute vengeance on His enemies.
 To them who hate Him he will render retribution,
 And the Lord will purify the land of His people.