

June 16: Deuteronomy 32:1-52

Chapter breakdown:

- I. Verses 1-4: The Greatness of God: The Lord is Israel's perfect, just and faithful Rock! He is the only God, able to kill and to give life, to wound and to heal.¹
- II. Verses 5-14: The grace of God: he found and took care of Jacob/Israel: The Lord is Israel's perfect, just and faithful Rock! He is the only God, able to kill and to give life, to wound and to heal.²
- III. Verses 15-18: The grief of God, what Israel has done
- IV. Verses 19-27: the grief of God, what the Lord will do
- V. Verses 28-29: the grief of God, what Israel has done
- VI. Verses 30-38: The grief of God, what the Lord will do
- VII. Verses 39-42: The greatness of God
- VIII. Verse 43: the grace of God
- IX. Verses 44-47: the challenge, Moses spoke the song to the people; narrative interlude
- X. Verses 48- 52: Moses' death foretold

Detailed analysis:

- I. Verses 1-4: The Greatness of God: The Lord is Israel's perfect, just and faithful Rock! He is the only God, able to kill and to give life, to wound and to heal.³

*"Give ear, O heavens, and let me speak;
And let the earth hear the words of my mouth.*

²*"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.*

³*"For I proclaim the name of the Lord;
Ascribe greatness to our God!*

⁴*"The Rock! His work is perfect,
For all His ways are just;*

¹ The Outline Bible

² *ibid.*

³ The Outline Bible

*A God of faithfulness and without injustice,
Righteous and upright is He.*

- a. The song of Moses was introduced in the previous few verses, so now Moses jumps right in.
- b. The Moody Bible Commentary shares: *The book of Deuteronomy concludes with two songs: the Song of Moses (chap. 32) and the Blessing of Moses (chap. 33). Moses in psalm-like fashion poetically crafted the words as a memorial to Israel's future generations. He invoked heaven and earth (v. 1) to pay attention to what was being communicated because they would be eyewitnesses to verify what they saw Israel do while in the land. Moses desired that his lyrics would be like refreshing rain on fresh grass (v. 2). With these words Moses proclaimed the Lord's name and His greatness. For the first time in the Scriptures the Lord is described as a Rock (v. 4), suggesting His constancy and permanence. His actions are perfect and just, compared to the often-capricious actions of other ancient Near Eastern deities. He is faithful and treats everyone without injustice.*⁴
- c. About this literature the New American Commentary shares: *Scholars are in general agreement that the song of Moses is in the form of a rîb, that is, a "lawsuit" address in which the Lord outlined the controversy he had entered into with Israel because of Israel's covenant disloyalty.*⁴ *This analysis is supported by vv. 1–4 in which an appeal is made to witnesses to observe the proceedings so as to put their legality beyond doubt. Such an appeal is invariably part of rîb-texts and, in the Old Testament, occurs in the context of the Lord's complaints about the rebellion of his vassal people (cf. Deut 4:25–31; 30:19; 31:28; Isa 1:2; Jer 6:19; 22:29; Mic 1:2).*⁵ *This does not nullify the idea that the song is a witness (Deut 31:21), for form and function are two different things. The song is a witness against Israel, one composed in the form of a rîb.*⁵
- d. This song is poetic and it is anticipating the downfall of Israel. It is prophesy in that it is anticipating Israel rejecting God. It is written in the past tense. Remember this is to be a testimony against them in the future. God is omnipresent, He says all human history before Him at one time. God knows what Israel will do. God sees this as already happened.
- e. He is calling on heaven and earth as witnesses of this song.
- f. That was very common.

⁴ The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 11933-11938). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

⁴ For an early and detailed study of the song from that assumption, see G. E. Wright, "The Lawsuit of God: A Form-Critical Study of Deuteronomy 32 *Israel's Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor,*" of James Muilenburg, ed. B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), 26–67. Of the vast literature before and since, see for now B. Gemser, "The Rîb- or Controversy-Pattern in Hebrew Mentality," *VTSup* 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1955), 120–37; H. B. Huffmon, "The Covenant Lawsuit in the Prophets," *JBL* 78 (1959): 285–95; J. Harvey, "Le 'Rîb-Pattern,' Réquisitoire Prophétique sur la Rupture de L'Alliance," *Bib* 43 (1962): 172–96; J.

Limburg, "The Root רִיב and the Prophetic Lawsuit Speeches," *JBL* 88 (1969): 291–304.

⁵ Huffmon, "The Covenant Lawsuit in the Prophets," 288–89.

⁵ Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, vol. 4, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 409.

- g. Verse 2 begins the introduction to the teaching. Moses wants the teaching to soak down deep and saturate them.
- h. Most translations say: “teaching,” but I notice the KJV says: “doctrine.”
- i. Think about it: rain waters down and accomplishes a purpose. Dew also accomplishes a purpose. That seems to be Moses’ goal for the teaching.

Is 55:10 The rain and snow fall from the sky and do not return, but instead water the earth and make it produce and yield crops, and provide seed for the planter and food for those who must eat.

Is 55:11 In the same way, the promise that I make does not return to me, having accomplished nothing. No, it is realized as I desire and is fulfilled as I intend.”

Ps 72:6

Ps 72:6 He will descend like rain on the mown grass, like showers that drench the earth.

- j. Moses wants his teachings to sink down and soak up because, verses 3-4,³ *“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.*

- k. Moses’ teaching is what is worth taking deep root because his teaching is doctrine. His teaching is about the Lord.
- l. The New American Commentary: *There clearly is a subject shift in v. 3, where Moses appears as a character witness on the Lord’s behalf. Also addressing the heavens and the earth, he extols the Lord’s greatness, especially by the public proclamation of his name, that is, of his reputation (v. 3; cf. Exod 33:19; 34:5–6).*⁷⁶
- m. The Lord is the “Rock.” This represents strength.
- n. The Lord’s ways are perfect.
- o. The Lord is faithful.
- p. The Lord does not have injustice. Some translations say that “all” His ways are justice. Not some ways, but “all” His ways are justice.
- q. He is righteous and upright.
- r. About verse 4 the Net Bible shares: *The Hebrew term depicts God as a rocky summit where one may find safety and protection. Within a covenantal context it serves as a reminder to the people that their God has committed himself to their protection in return for their allegiance.*⁷

II. Verses 5-14: The grace of God: he found and took care of Jacob/Israel: The Lord is Israel’ perfect, just and faithful Rock! He is the only God, able to kill and to give life, to wound and to heal.⁸

⁷ I. Cairns, *Word and Presence*, ITC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 281.

⁶ Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, vol. 4, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 410.

⁷ Biblical Studies Press, *The NET Bible First Edition Notes* (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Dt 32:4.

⁸ *ibid.*

⁵ *“They have acted corruptly toward Him,
They are not His children, because of their defect;
But are a perverse and crooked generation.*

⁶ *“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.*

⁷ *“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.*

⁸ *“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.*

⁹ *“For the Lord’s portion is His people;
Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance.*

¹⁰ *“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.*

¹¹ *“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.*

¹² *“The Lord alone guided him,
And there was no foreign god with him.*

¹³ *“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,*

¹⁴ *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.*

- a. God is great, but notice verse 5, they have acted corruptly toward Him.
- b. This carries the idea of unfaithful. They have acted unfaithful toward Him.
- c. Moses goes on to say how they are “not his children...” I believe this is prophetic talking about how they ended up acting toward the Lord. They broke the covenant and lost the privilege of being a child of God.
- d. As Christians we are adopted, think of the privilege of being a child of God.
- e. They are perverse and crooked.
- f. Deut. 4:25 and 31:39 prophesies their disobedience.
- g. In Matthew 17:17 Jesus called the people he was with an unbelieving and crooked generation.

- h. Verse 6: Moses is about to speak about how the Lord led them out and look how they repay him. Moses asks a rhetorical question: “Is he not your father, who has bought you?”
- i. Verses 7 begins writing about how the Lord took care of them.
- j. Moses tells them to remember the past. He tells them to ask their elders. Remember there are only 3 people over 40- Joshua, Caleb and Moses- still they did have elders and they would have people who can educate them in the past. Further, this song is written for future generations. The idea is that they want the older to train the young.
- k. Asking elders may show that things were still transmitted orally. We do not know if they have the written Torah yet.
- l. This is a New Testament idea as well: 2 Timothy 2:2
- m. 2 more passages about teaching children: Ex 12:26; Ps 78:5–8
- n. Verse 8 continues to walk through the song and how God established Israel. The table of nations in Gen. 10.
- o. Moses calls the Lord, the “Most High.” The NET Bible gives insight: *The Hebrew term יְיָ־עֵלְיוֹן (’elyon) is an abbreviated form of the divine name El Elyon, frequently translated “God Most High” (so here NCV, CEV) or something similar. This full name (or epithet) occurs only in Gen 14, though the two elements are parallel in Ps 73:11; 107:11; etc. Here it is clear that Elyon has to do with the nations in general whereas in v. 9, by contrast, Yahweh relates specifically to Israel.*⁹
- p. The Lord set the boundaries for the people. The ESV Study Bible shares: *For example, Edom, Moab, and Ammon in [2:1–23](#), as well as Israel throughout the book. According to the number of the sons of God may suggest that certain angels (“sons of God”; see [Job 1:6](#)) are responsible for specific nations, whereas the Lord himself cares for Israel.*¹⁰
- q. Verse 9: this seems to be saying that the Israelites are the Lord’s people. Remember that Jacob was renamed Israel.
- r. About verse 10 the NET Bible shares: *in an empty, howling wasteland.” The word “howling” is derived from a verbal root that typically refers to the wailing of mourners. Here it likely refers to the howling of desert animals, or perhaps to the howling wind, in which case one may translate, “in an empty, windy wasteland.”*¹¹
- s. Verse 10 begins a description of the Lord calling Abram. Abram was in a desert land. Moses uses modifiers to call it a “howling waste.” The Lord “encircled” him, meaning surrounded him with protection. The Lord cared for him.
- t. I like the next description: the Lord, guarded them as one would guard his/her pupil. Do we guard our eyes? I know that I do. There are other Scriptures about guarding the pupil: Ps 17:8; Prov 7:2; Zech 2:8¹²

NCV New Century Version (1991)

CEV *The Contemporary English Version*

⁹ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Dt 32:8.

¹⁰ <https://www.esv.org/Deuteronomy+32/>

¹¹ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Dt 32:10.

¹² [New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

- u. In verse 11 we have maternal imagery for God. This is all talking about the Lord's protection of Israel. It is also reminding them of how they repay the Lord for His protection. The Lord watched over them and yet they rebel against the Lord.
- v. IVP BBC OT: *Though the eagle cannot be ruled out, the bird named here is more usually taken to be the griffin vulture, with a wingspan of eight to ten feet.* While Bible reference books often report how the eagle carries its young on its wings when they grow weary of flying, or catches them on their wings when they are fluttering in failure, this behavior has been difficult for naturalists to confirm through observation. In fact most eagles and vultures do not take their first flight until three or four months of age, at which time they are nearly full grown. Furthermore, observations by naturalists have consistently confirmed that the first flight is usually taken while the parents are away from the nest. Alternatively, if the metaphor here concerns a vulture, it may be political in nature. In Egypt, Nekhbet was the vulture goddess who represented Upper Egypt and served as a protecting deity for Pharaoh and the land. Israel was protected in Egypt until Yahweh brought them to himself. Nekhbet was depicted as particularly maternal and was believed to assist at royal and divine births. Significant building of her temple in el-Kab (capital of third nome in Upper Egypt) took place in the Eighteenth Dynasty toward the end of the Israelite stay in Egypt, so we know that she was a popular goddess at that time. It is conceivable that the imagery of this verse was not drawn from actual observation of the behavior of vultures but from elements in the depiction of the vulture goddess, Nekhbet, whose characteristics are here transferred to Yahweh (see v. 12, "no foreign god was with him"). The first half of the verse would then introduce the metaphor of the vulture that cares for and protects its young. The second half of the verse speaks of the Lord's care and protection of his people using the imagery that was familiar from Egyptian metaphors of care and protection. Additionally, in Mesopotamia the Tale of Etana includes an eagle that carries Etana and then repeatedly lets him go and catches him on its wings. (See Ex 19:4.)¹³
- w. Ex 19:4: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt and how I lifted you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.'¹⁴
- x. Psalm 18:10-18 is another cross reference:
- y. In verse 12 it will remind them that there is One God. They will later go after foreign Gods, but this is a reminder that it was only the Lord who protected them (see also Deut 4:35, 39).
- z. Verses 13-14 continue the poetic imagery.
 - aa. He, the Lord, made him, the Israelites, "ride on the high places..." This just means that he made him travel over the high terrain. God made it so that he could eat produce. The Lord provided honey. Honey was always a blessing. Remember, they could not go to Dairy Queen for their sweet cravings.
 - bb. Olive oil was also a blessing.

¹³ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Dt 32:11.

¹⁴ Biblical Studies Press, [*The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible*](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2005), Ex 19:4.

- cc. IVP BBC OT: *Cities were typically built on hills because of their natural defensibility, and armies chose hills as strategic points of control. The metaphor of treading on the heights therefore is one that speaks of victory and security. While most honey spoken of in the Old Testament is the syrup from the date palm, mention of the rock here suggests bees' honey from honeycombs in the rocks. Olive trees, which were the main source of oil, were able to grow in rocky soil because they could thrive with minimal amounts of water.*¹⁵
- dd. Remember today, the Lord is our provider.
- ee. Verse 14 continues to be about the Lord providing: milk, meat, wheat, wine. Again the point is, how do they repay the Lord's provision.
- ff. Notice it says the "finest" of wheat. The Lord provided the best.
- gg. The ESV Study Bible shares: *Bashan was a particularly fertile area, where Og had been king (3:1–11; cf. Amos 4:1).*¹⁶

III. Verses 15-18: The grief of God, what Israel has done

¹⁵ *"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.

¹⁶ *"They made Him jealous with strange gods;*

With abominations they provoked Him to anger.

¹⁷ *"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.

¹⁸ *"You neglected the Rock who begot you,*

And forgot the God who gave you birth.

- a. That noun proper noun Jeshurun could throw us off. It means Israel. Let's dissect it a little bit more:
- b. The NET Bible: *To make the continuity of the referent clear, some English versions substitute "Jacob" here (NAB, NRSV) while others replace "Jeshurun" with "Israel" (NCV, CEV, NLT) or "the Lord's people" (TEV).*

¹⁵ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Dt 32:13.

¹⁶ <https://www.esv.org/Deuteronomy+32/>

NAB The New American Bible

NRSV New Revised Standard Version (1989)

NCV New Century Version (1991)

CEV *The Contemporary English Version*

NLT New Living Translation

TEV Today's English Version, also known as *Good News for Modern Man*

- c. *Jeshurun* is a term of affection derived from the Hebrew verb יָשַׁר (yashar, “be upright”). Here it speaks of Israel “in an ideal situation, with its ‘uprightness’ due more to God’s help than his own efforts” (M. Mulder, *TDOT* 6:475).¹⁷
- d. The ESV Study Bible shares: *Jeshurun* means the upright one, a poetic name for Israel used sarcastically here (cf. [Isa. 44:2](#)). jealousy with strange gods. As throughout Deuteronomy, idolatry is the key sin of and threat to Israel (see also [32:21](#)). God, the Rock, has redeemed and provided for Israel, whereas idols or false gods have no real existence or track record ([v. 17](#)).¹⁸
- e. Israel was upright, and they were good, but as God provided so much this is saying Israel grew fat and kicked. Israel bit the hand that fed it.
- f. Moses writes that Israel “forsook” God and scorned the “Rock of his salvation.” God provides salvation. This is a very Theological and soteriological verse. God is the Rock of our salvation. God provides salvation.
- g. The Moody Bible Commentary: *Israel* is ironically referred to as *Jeshurun* (cf. 33:5, 26), meaning “upright one,” even though they were anything but righteous. Their apostasy extended to worshiping idols and sacrificing to strange gods (v. 16). They were so perverse that they were involved in sacrificing to demons (v. 17; cf. [Lv 17:7](#)). They preferred new deities to the One who actually begot them (v. 18). God is portrayed both as the One who fathered them and the mother who gave them birth (v. 18).¹⁹
- h. Verse 16: they made the Lord jealous with all their strange gods.
- i. It is appropriate for God to be jealous, but not us. God is the greatest and we are not. Since He is the greatest it is appropriate and good for Him to be jealous. Plus, God knows that it is for our best when we pursue Him. God knows when we, or Israel in this case, neglect Him for other gods that is always for our demise (**See NET Bible note on verse 21 about the jealousy of God**).
- j. These abominations provoked the Lord to anger.
- k. **Notice how these verses are in the past tense. We know this has happened and it will happen again. We know that this song is for a testimony against them in the future.**
- l. Deut. 31:20 foresees a time when they will follow other gods and break the covenant.
- m. Judges 10:6: *The Israelites again did evil in the LORD’s sight. They worshiped the Baals and the Ashtars, as well as the gods of Syria, Sidon, Moab, the Ammonites, and the Philistines. They abandoned the LORD and did not worship him.*²⁰
- n. Verse 17 informs us that these other gods were and would be demons and as demons they are not God. These demons they do not know.
- o. The IVP BBC OT: *This word for demon is used elsewhere in the Old Testament only in Psalm 106:37, but it is a well-known type of spirit/demon (shedu) in Mesopotamia, where it describes a protective guardian mostly concerned with the individual’s health and welfare. It is not the name of a deity, but a category of being (like cherub would be in the*

TDOT Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament.

¹⁷ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Dt 32:14–15.

¹⁸ <https://www.esv.org/Deuteronomy+32/>

¹⁹ The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 11947-11950). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

²⁰ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2005), Jdg 10:6.

Old Testament). A shedu could destroy one's health just as easily as it could protect it, so sacrifices to keep it placated were advisable. They are depicted as winged creatures (similar to the cherub; see comments on Gen 3:24 and Ex 25:18–20), but they do not have idols (as the gods have idols) by which they are worshiped (see comment on Deut 4:28 for how this worked).²¹

- p. Interesting as it says that they are new gods and their fathers did not dread them.
 - a. It seems to me that Moses is foreseeing them being corrupted by false gods who are demons which they do not yet know about.
 - b. Since at the time of this writing they do not know about these false gods their fathers cannot warn them about them.
 - c. This is much like 100 years ago our ancestors could not anticipate the idolatry of the LGBTQ movement today.
 - d. If they could then they could prepare us. Think about it, if Christians 100 or 200 years ago could prepare us for what we would face and know how certain liberal ideas would lead to compromise it would help us greatly today. This could prevent sin and corruption.
- q. Deut. 28:64 anticipates a time when they sacrifice to false gods whom they nor their ancestors would know.
- r. Verse 18 once again is about them Neglecting God as the Rock. He is the Rock who gave them birth. It is interesting how the first part of verse 18 is repeated a little differently in the second part.

IV. Verses 19-27: the grief of God, what the Lord will do

"The Lord saw this, and spurned them

Because of the provocation of His sons and daughters.

²⁰ *"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.

²¹ *'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,

²² *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.

²¹ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Dt 32:17.

²³ *'I will heap misfortunes on them;
I will use My arrows on them.*

²⁴ *'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.*

²⁵ *'Outside the sword will bereave,
And inside terror—
Both young man and virgin,
The nursing with the man of gray hair.*

²⁶ *'I would have said, "I will cut them to pieces,
I will remove the memory of them from men,"*

²⁷ *'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.'"*

- a. Now we see God's grief and what He will do.
- b. God will spurn them, but once again, this is in the past tense. God see this as already happened.
- c. "spurned" means "to treat disrespectfully"
- d. This verse tells why the Lord does that too. The Israelites have provoked Him by what they have done.
- e. Jeremiah 44:21-23 is about this after it had happened. In that passage the Lord says He could no longer endure their wicked deeds.
- f. Verse 20: The Lord hides His face. That means He turns from them. It was a blessing for the Lord to turn His face towards them and the opposite is a sign of disapproval.
- g. They are perverse.
- h. They provoke the Lord to anger with Idols. We see that in: 1 Kin 16:13, 26²²
- i. The Lord switches roles by not blessing them and making them jealous of another people group. Then they are provoked to anger by these other nations.
- j. About verse 21 the ESV Study Bible shares: *In [Rom. 10:19](#) Paul quotes from this verse to show that Israel will need a remedy for their unbelief regarding Jesus (in [Rom. 11:11, 14](#), Gentile faith is the remedy).*²³
- k. The NET Bible shares about the jealousy of God: *They have made me jealous. The "jealousy" of God is not a spirit of pettiness prompted by his insecurity, but righteous indignation caused by the disloyalty of his people to his covenant grace*

²² [New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

²³ <https://www.esv.org/Deuteronomy+32/>

(see note on the word “God” in Deut 4:24). **The jealousy of Israel, however (see next line), will be envy because of God’s lavish attention to another nation. This is an ironic wordplay.**²⁴

- l. Verse 22 compares God’s anger to a fire. I notice the imagery about the Lord’s anger: a fire that burns to sheol, which is the grave, this says, the lowest parts of sheol. God’s anger is a fire that consumes the earth and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.
- m. Think of a great forest fire
- n. Now the Lord brings misfortune. Imagine the Lord using arrows against them (verse 23).
- o. Verses 24 and following begin to show what the previous few verses will look like in reality:
- p. A lot of what are in these verses have been written about in chapter 28: Deut 28:22, 48
- q. Famine waste them; plague consumes them; bitter destruction; animals come against them; venom of snakes; the sword in verse 25
- r. Amos 5:18-19: Woe to those who wish for the day of the Lord!
- s. *Why do you want the Lord’s day of judgment to come? It will bring darkness, not light. 5:19 Disaster will be inescapable, as if a man ran from a lion only to meet a bear, then escaped into a house, leaned his hand against the wall, and was bitten by a poisonous snake.*²⁵
- t. Notice in verse 25 it contrasts: outside the sword and inside terror (which seems less specific); young and old; even more specifically, the nursing and the one with grey hair.
- u. Lam 1:20; Ezek 7:15 both uses this “outside and inside” metaphor.
- v. Verses 26-27 show that the Lord would destroy them even more, but the Lord does not want the enemies to take credit for what He is doing.

Dr. Constable: “One of the well-known sermons in American history was preached by Jonathan Edwards in 1741 from this verse [v. 35] and particularly from this clause: ‘In due time their foot will slip.’ The sermon subject was ‘Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.’ Edwards thought that the verse was directed at the unbelieving Israelites, but his application of it reached to all wicked people.”²⁶

- w. I like how “the Message” reads:
- x. *I could have said, “I’ll hack them to pieces, wipe out all trace of them from the Earth,” Except that I feared the enemy would grab the chance to take credit for all of it, Crowing, “Look what we did! God had nothing to do with this.”*²⁸⁻³³
*They are a nation of ninnies, they don’t know enough to come in out of the rain.*²⁷

²⁴ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Dt 32:21.

²⁵ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2005), Am 5:18–19.

²⁶ Tom Constable, [Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Dt 32:26.

²⁷ Eugene H. Peterson, [The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language](#) (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2005), Dt 32:26–28.

V. Verses 28-29: the grief of God, what Israel has done

*“For they are a nation lacking in counsel,
And there is no understanding in them.*

²⁹ *“Would that they were wise, that they understood this,
That they would discern their future!*

- a. Verse 28 begins with the conjunction translated as “for” which means there is an explanation. They are a nation lacking counsel. Verse 29 explains what this means: they do not understand this song. They are not discerning their future.
- b. Verse 29 seems to be the Lord’s emotions. He wishes they would understand this.
- c. The ESV Study Bible points out: *The ideal of [4:5–8](#) is far from realized in this song.*²⁸

VI. Verses 30-38: The grief of God, what the Lord will do

³⁰ *“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?*

³¹ *“Indeed their rock is not like our Rock,
Even our enemies themselves judge this.*

³² *“For their vine is from the vine of Sodom,
And from the fields of Gomorrah;
Their grapes are grapes of poison,
Their clusters, bitter.*

³³ *“Their wine is the venom of serpents,
And the deadly poison of cobras.*

³⁴ *‘Is it not laid up in store with Me,
Sealed up in My treasuries?*

³⁵ *‘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.’*

³⁶ *“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.*

³⁷ *“And He will say, ‘Where are their gods,
The rock in which they sought refuge?*

³⁸ *‘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!*

- a. Verse 30 is continuing what will happen.

²⁸ <https://www.esv.org/Deuteronomy+32/>

- b. Israel will be EASILY defeated. It does not matter how many numbers Israel has they will be defeated. This is the opposite of God's blessing. When the Lord blesses them, their few numbers will defeat other nations with many.
- c. Verse 30 poses a question and then answers it.
- d. Verse 31 is powerful: even the enemies know that "their Rock," in other words, "strength" is not like Israel's. Israel has the Lord. In Ex 14:25 even the Egyptians realized the Lord fights for Israel.
- e. Verse 32 reaches back to Sodom and Gomorrah to show where they come from. Their "vine," where they come from, is Sodom and Gomorrah.
- f. This means that what these nations produce is poison.
- g. Verse 33: even their wine is poison.
- h. Verses 34 and 35 are a quotation from the Lord.
- i. Verse 34 seems to be saying that their future is stored up in God's treasuries or their future and "the future," meaning the future of their enemies as well.
- j. Verse 35 is a theological statement: even vengeance belongs to the Lord.
- k. The Lord will destroy the enemies in due time as well. I love the prophesy about Babylon that they will never be rebuilt and it never has (Is 13:20; Jer 25:12; Jeremiah 50:39).
- l. Verse 36 is an AWESOME promise, the Lord will bring them back. The Lord will give them grace: cross reference: Ps 135:14; Heb 10:30 and Lev 26:43-45; Deut 30:1-3
- m. Verse 37 a rhetorical question: their meek rock can know longer protect them, these false gods cannot protect the Israelites.
- n. Verse 38: these false gods who they sacrificed to cannot help them.
- o. Jer 11:12 is about this with the Israelites crying out to false gods.
- p.

VII. Verses 39-42: The greatness of God

*'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.
⁴⁰ 'Indeed, I lift up My hand to heaven,
 And say, as I live forever,
⁴¹ 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.
⁴² '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.'*

- a. Verse 39 shows that it is God who gives life and takes life. Even when the state takes life it is under God's authority.
- b. Verse 39 is SO theological about the Lord.
- c. As the ESV Study Bible points out, the emphasis on "I" is the sovereignty of God.

- d. Is 41:4 *Who acts and carries out decrees? Who summons the successive generations from the beginning? I, the LORD, am present at the very beginning, and at the very end—I am the one.*
- e. Is 43:10 *You are my witnesses,” says the LORD, “my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may consider and believe in me, and understand that I am he. No god was formed before me, and none will outlive me.*
- f. Dt 32:12 *The LORD alone was guiding him, no foreign god was with him.*
- g. Is 45:5 *I am the LORD, I have no peer, there is no God but me. I arm you for battle, even though you do not recognize me.*
- h. 1 Sa 2:6 *The LORD both kills and gives life; he brings down to the grave and raises up.*
- i. Ps 68:20 *Our God is a God who delivers; the LORD, the sovereign Lord, can rescue from death.*
- j. Ps 51:8 *Grant me the ultimate joy of being forgiven! May the bones you crushed rejoice!*
- k. Ps 50:22 *Carefully consider this, you who reject God! Otherwise I will rip you to shreds and no one will be able to rescue you.*
- l. Verse 40: The Lord lives forever.
- m. Verse 41 is still powerful:
- n. “Flashing sword” is “lightning sword,” think of a fast sword.
- o. The Lord is going to repay the enemies of Israel.

VIII. Verse 43: the grace of God

*“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.”*

- a. The Lord is taking care of the sin of the people.
- b. [Ps 65:3](#); [79:9](#); [85:1](#)
- c. The Moody Bible Commentary: *Even though the song of Moses contains a negative warning about the consequences of apostasy, it ends on a positive note extolling God’s justice and atoning ability.*²⁹

IX. Verses 44-47: the challenge, Moses spoke the song to the people; narrative interlude

⁴⁴ *Then Moses came and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people, he, with Joshua the son of Nun.* ⁴⁵ *When Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel,* ⁴⁶ *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.* ⁴⁷ *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.”*

- a. This is a narrative interlude between the song and the death of Moses being foretold.
- b. This is also a challenge.
- c. Moses and Joshua speak this song to the people.

²⁹ The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 11975-11976). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

- d. They have been warned once again.
- e. Moses reiterates that they are to “take to heart” these words. In other words, let them have a deep root and be taken seriously. In other words, pay attention carefully.
- f. They are to pass these words on to their sons, in other words to their children, just like Deut 6 had said and Deut 4:9.
- g. They are to command their children to observe them carefully.
- h. Verse 47: this is not an idle word: this is not a simple word, or relaxed word, these are for their life.
- i. Verse 47: by these words they prolong their life.
- j. Notice the focus on the future.

Dr. Constable adds to this: *“Again it can be seen that the text portrays the Torah as God’s gift of life to his people in much the same way as the Tree of Life was put into the midst of the Garden of Eden (Ge 2:8–17). Just as obedience to the Lord’s command not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was the key to their access to the Tree of Life (Ge 2:16–17), so obedience to the Lord’s command in the Torah was to be the key to Israel’s ‘living long in the land’ that God had prepared for them.”*³⁴³

This song was one more instrument God used to teach His people to obey Him along with Moses’ sermons, the rituals, the monuments, etc. (vv. 46–47).

*“It will . . . act as a mnemonic, an aid to memory, because during the intervening period it will have lived unforgotten in the mouth of the reader or hearer, ready to come to mind when the troubles arrive. Poetry is thus a kind of time bomb; it awaits its hour and then springs forward into harsh remembrance. . . . It will live in their minds and mouths, bringing them back, whether they like it or not, to the harsh memory of the desert sojourn. Once learned it will not easily be forgotten. The words will stick, they will be importunate, they will not let us alone.”*³⁴⁴³⁰

X. Verses 48- 52: Moses’ death foretold

⁴⁸ *The Lord spoke to Moses that very same day, saying,* ⁴⁹ *“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. ⁵⁰ 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, ⁵¹ 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. ⁵² 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.”*

- a. Numbers 27:12 references this.

Dr Constable shares: Dr Constable

³⁴³ 343. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch . . .*, p. 476.

³⁴⁴ 344. Harold Fisch, *Poetry with a Purpose: Biblical Poetics and Interpretation*, p. 51.

³⁰ Tom Constable, [*Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible*](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Dt 32:39.

The Lord had told him to speak to the rock (Num 20:8), the mere act of speaking being designed to demonstrate the power of God who creates by the spoken word. To strike the rock was to introduce an interruptive element and thus to diminish the significance of the powerful word. By doing this, Moses betrayed not only anger and disobedience but he correspondingly reflected on the God whom he served by implying that God could not bring forth water by the divine word alone.”

Moses’ sin lay in his failure to honor God as He deserved. This is essentially the warning of the Song of Moses (vv. 1–43). Moses had failed God as Israel had failed Him. Moses warned Israel about failing Him again in the future.

- b. This same day the Lord is telling Moses this next part.
- c. Stop and think about this: The Lord is speaking to Moses. Now, we know that Lord has been speaking to Moses in this chapter and the previous chapter, but it still amazes me how the Lord spoke to Moses.
- d. The Lord speaks.
- e. Verse 49 is the grace of God allowing Moses to see the promised land.
- f. The NET Bible shares: *This refers to the high plateau region of the Transjordan, the highest elevation of which is Mount Pisgah (or Nebo; cf. Deut 34:1). See also the note on the name “Pisgah” in Deut 3:17³¹*
- g. Verse 50: God tells Moses he will die on that mountain.
- h. Verse 51: this verse tells why he is dying. He and his brother sinned against the Lord (broke faith with the Lord)... verse 51 refers to the location. Moses did not treat Him as holy.
- i. Verse 52: Moses can see the land from a distance but not go there.
- j. There is more detail in the cross references: Israelites wander in the wilderness Event Nu 27:12–14 *Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go up this mountain of the Abarim range, and see the land I have given to the Israelites. ^{27:13} When you have seen it, you will be gathered to your ancestors, as Aaron your brother was gathered to his ancestors. ^{27:14} For in the wilderness of Zin when the community rebelled against me, you rebelled against my command to show me as holy before their eyes over the water—the water of Meribah in Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.”* Dt 3:27 *Go up to the top of Pisgah and take a good look to the west, north, south, and east, for you will not be allowed to cross the Jordan.* Nu 20:12 *Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not trust me enough to show me as holy before the Israelites, therefore you will not bring this community into the land I have given them.”*

Dt 34:1–3 Then Moses ascended from the deserts of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the summit of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. The LORD showed him the whole land—Gilead to Dan, ^{34:2} and all of Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the distant sea, ^{34:3} the Negev, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of the date palm trees, as far as Zoar.

³¹ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Dt 32:45–49.