

Deuteronomy
November 23, 2008
Song of Moses (Moses' Prophetic Insight)
Chapters 32

I. Prosecuting a Trial

This chapter (verses 1-43) is sometimes called the Song of Moses. (NOTE: Exodus 15 is also referred to as some as the Song of Moses.) The song is a "lawsuit" address in which the Lord outlined the controversy He had entered into with Israel because of Israel's covenant disloyalty.

Wiebe has this outline for the song

- 1-6 Introduction, summoning of witnesses, case stated.
- 7-14 Prosecutor's speech; historical review
- 15-18 The specific indictment
- 19-26 Sentence
- 27-33 Act of Lamentation
- 34 Judge's deliberation
- 35-42 Decision following deliberation
- 43 Concluding doxology

Liberal scholars would argue that this chapter is obviously written late in the history of OT Israel as the charges against Israel had not happened at the time of Moses. Of course, they overlook God's ability to know the future.

II. The Lawsuit Begins

Deut 32:1-6

Listen, O heavens, and I will speak; hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. 2 Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants. 3 I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! 4 He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he. 5 They have acted corruptly toward him; to their shame they are no longer his children, but a warped and crooked generation. 6 Is this the way you repay the LORD, O foolish and unwise people? Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you?

NIV

Verse 1: The heavens and earth as a permanent part of this existence until they are destroyed will be a witness to whether the Israelites keep the covenant. This has been pointed out several times in earlier parts of Deuteronomy, including last chapter (31:28), only a few verses ago. The law requires two witnesses. (Note also Romans 8:19-23)

Verse 2: Rain brings life, and so does God's words and teaching.

Isa 55:10-11

10 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, 11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

NIV

Verse 4: The "Rock" refers to the stability and permanence of God. A rock is also used as a sanctuary to thwart trouble. The "Rock" is also used in verses 15, 18, 30, 31, and 37; it is one of the themes of the Song of Moses. It is used six times. There

are two parties to a covenant. Here, one is the LORD, and verses 3-4 describe His character.

Verse 5: While the LORD does not change, Israel become corrupts and does not keep their part of the covenant.

Verses 6: How do we repay the LORD?

III. Chapter 32:7-14: Prosecutor's Speech/Historical Review

Deut 32:7-15

7 Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you. 8 When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel. 9 For the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance.

10 In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye, 11 like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions. 12 The LORD alone led him; no foreign god was with him. 13 He made him ride on the heights of the land and fed him with the fruit of the fields. He nourished him with honey from the rock, and with oil from the flinty crag, 14 with curds and milk from herd and flock and with fattened lambs and goats, with choice rams of Bashan and the finest kernels of wheat. You drank the foaming blood of the grape. 15 Jeshurun grew fat and kicked;

NIV

Verse 7: God has worked among them and showed them what He can do. They can have no excuse for not believing in Him as He has given them lots of evidence.

Verse 8: This is the only place that "Most High" (*Elyon*) is used in Deuteronomy. It has the sense of God's power.

Verse 10: Think of Israel when found as a baby in a hostile desert...everything ready to destroy him and only the LORD keeping it from happening. The "him" might be Jacob or Abraham or it might be only an allegory used to indicate the state of Israel in the beginning.

Verse 13: This is apparently looking forward to the time when Israel will inherit the land. From basically nothing, He will nourish them.

Verse 15: Jeshurun (meaning "beloved one" or "upright one") is a poetic name for Israel. What is the significance of being fat?

IV. Chapter 32:15-18: Specific Indictment

Deut 32:15-18

15 Jeshurun grew fat and kicked; filled with food, he became heavy and sleek. He abandoned the God who made him and rejected the Rock his Savior. 16 They made him jealous with their foreign gods and angered him with their detestable idols. 17 They sacrificed to demons, which are not God — gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your fathers did not fear. 18 You deserted the Rock, who fathered you; you forgot the God who gave you birth.

NIV

Verse 15: Jeshurun (meaning "beloved one" or "upright one") is a poetic name for Israel. What is the significance of being fat?

Verse 16: It should be noted that God's jealousy comes into play when someone leaves the protection of God. In this case, horrible things will befall that person. As such, God's jealousy is also an indication of His love for us, His desire that we will not face the ramifications of leaving Him.

V. Chapter 32:19-26: Sentence

Deut 32:19-26

19 The LORD saw this and rejected them because he was angered by his sons and daughters. 20 "I will hide my face from them," he said, "and see what their end will be; for they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful. 21 They made me jealous by what is no god and angered me with their worthless idols. I will make them envious by those who are not a people; I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding. 22 For a fire has been kindled by my wrath, one that burns to the realm of death below. It will devour the earth and its harvests and set afire the foundations of the mountains.

23 "I will heap calamities upon them and spend my arrows against them. 24 I will send wasting famine against them, consuming pestilence and deadly plague; I will send against them the fangs of wild beasts, the venom of vipers that glide in the dust. 25 In the street the sword will make them childless; in their homes terror will reign. Young men and young women will perish, infants and gray-haired men. 26 I said I would scatter them and blot out their memory from mankind,

NIV

Verse 19: God's primary nature is being slow to anger, He does become angry.

Ex 34:6-7

6 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, 7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation."

NIV

The KJV has longsuffering for slow to anger. This indicates the suffering that sin causes God.

Verse 19ff: Some see these verses as a reference to the Golden Calf. However, that only refers to one god. More likely, the plural idols refer to the gods of Egypt or to later idols where God is foreseeing the future.

Verse 22: Moses might not have knowingly referenced hell although we can see it in his words. Of course, God already knew about hell as described in the NT.

Verse 23: Arrows" might refer to enemies. Other see "arrows" are referring to direct works of God, one coming after another one, like a bunch of arrows. Examples would be hunger, pestilence, and plague.

Discussion Point: Does God ever feel this way about us? Does He ever have a desire to blot us out of existence, but does not for reasons that might go beyond us?

VI. Chapter 32:27-34: Act of Lamentation

Deut 32:27-35

27 but I dreaded the taunt of the enemy, lest the adversary misunderstand and say, 'Our hand has triumphed; the LORD has not done all this.'" 28 They are a nation without sense, there is no discernment in them. 29 If only they were wise and would understand this and discern what their end will be! 30 How could one man chase a thousand, or two put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, unless the LORD had given them up? 31 For their rock is not like our Rock, as even our enemies concede. 32 Their vine comes from the vine of Sodom and from the fields of Gomorrah. Their grapes are filled with poison, and their clusters with bitterness. 33 Their wine is the venom of serpents, the deadly poison of cobras. 34 "Have I not kept this in reserve and sealed it in my vaults? 35 It is mine to avenge; I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near and their doom rushes upon them."

NIV

Verse 26: While God might give up Israel for a little while, His promise to maintain exists forever (Rom. 11:25ff).

Verse 35: The NT is the best commentary on this verse:

Rom 12:19

19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

NIV

VII. Chapter 32:36-43: Decision Following Deliberation

Deut 32:36-43

36 The LORD will judge his people and have compassion on his servants when he sees their strength is gone and no one is left, slave or free. 37 He will say: "Now where are their gods, the rock they took refuge in, 38 the gods who ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink offerings? Let them rise up to help you! Let them give you shelter! 39 "See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand. 40 I lift my hand to heaven and declare: As surely as I live forever, 41 when I sharpen my flashing sword and my hand grasps it in judgment, I will take vengeance on my adversaries and repay those who hate me. 42 I will make my arrows drunk with blood, while my sword devours flesh: the blood of the slain and the captives, the heads of the enemy leaders." 43 Rejoice, O nations, with his people, for he will avenge the blood of his servants; he will take vengeance on his enemies and make atonement for his land and people.

NIV

Verse 36: Once the people are humbled, the LORD will then go in the opposite direction with the people.

Verse 39: Verses 37-38 point out how helpless the other supposed gods are. This verse, and the next ones, point out how powerful the LORD is. God is more powerful than we can possibly understand in our weakness:

2 Cor 1:8-9

We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. 9 Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.

NIV

Verse 43: Eventually, all the nations of the world will rejoice with God and with His chosen people, probably at Jesus' second coming.

Rom 15:10

10 Again, it says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people."

NIV

VIII. Moses' Final "Vision"

Deut 32:44-52

44 Moses came with Joshua son of Nun and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people. 45 When Moses finished reciting all these words to all Israel, 46 he said to them, "Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. 47 They are not just idle words for you — they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess." 48 On that same day the LORD told Moses, 49 "Go up into the Abarim Range to Mount Nebo in Moab, across from Jericho, and view Canaan, the land I am giving the Israelites as their own possession. 50 There on the mountain that you have climbed you will die and be gathered to your people, just as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people. 51 This is because both of you broke faith with me in the presence of the Israelites at the waters of Meribah Kadesh in the Desert of Zin and because you did not uphold my holiness among the Israelites. 52 Therefore, you will see the land only from a distance; you will not enter the land I am giving to the people of Israel."

NIV

With this great "song," Moses' days in leading the Israelites are coming to an end. God grants him one last favor in seeing the Promise Land.