

HA'AZINU { הֶאֱזִינוּ } (Give Ear - Listen!)

A Messianic Jewish Commentary

By Hannah Nesher www.voiceforisrael.net

Deuteronomy 32:1-52, 2 Samuel 22:1-51, Romans 10:17-11:12

וּתְשַׁמַּע הָאָרֶץ אִמְרֵי פִי
תִּזְכַּר כִּסְלֵי אִמְרֹתַי
וּכְרַבִּיבִים עָלַי עֲשֵׂב
הִבּוּ גֵדִל לֹאֲלֹהֵינוּ
כִּי כָל דַּרְכֵינוּ מִשְׁפָּט
צְדִיקָה וְיִשְׁרָר הָיָה

הֶאֱזִינוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֲדַבְרָה
יִעָרֵף כַּמַּטֵּר לִקְוֹזֵי
כַּשְׁעִירִים עָלַי דֶּשֶׁא
כִּי שֵׁם יְהוָה אֶקְרָא
הַצֹּר תַּמִּים פִּלְעֹנוּ
אֵל אֲמוֹנָה וְאִין עֹלָם

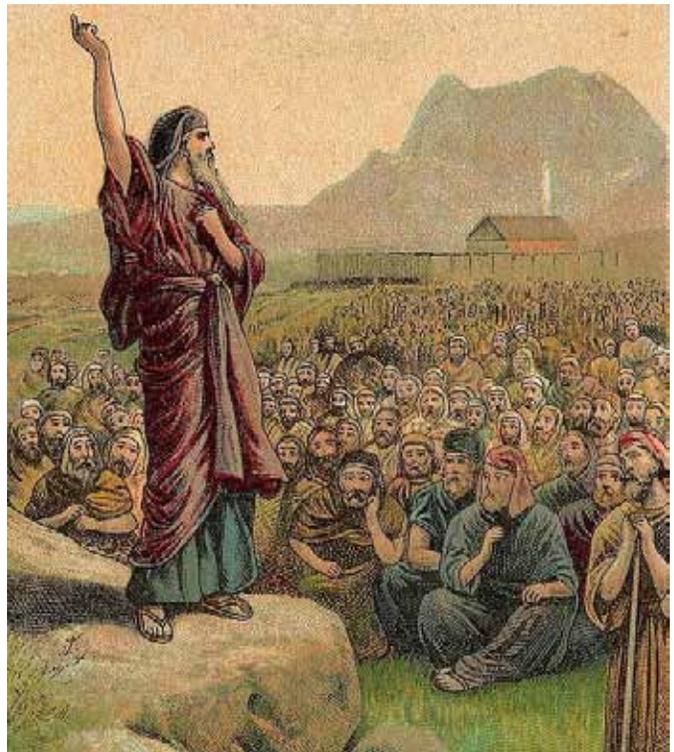
The beginning of Parashah Haazinu, Deuteronomy 32:1–4, as it appears in a Torah scroll

“Give ear (Ha’azinu), the heavens, and I will speak...” (Deuteronomy 32:1)

The Song of Moses

This parashah opens with the Song of Moses – a song which some believe to have been written down and placed in the Ark of the Covenant, along with Aaron's staff and the Pentateuch. In the scroll of the Torah, this song is written in two parallel columns. This special layout of script resembles the two towers that were destroyed on September 11, 2001; and this section of Scripture is also generally read in the month of September when the Fall Feasts, with their theme of God’s judgment, take place.

It is with a song of praise that Moses began his ministry at the Red Sea, and also with praise (hallel) to God (Yah) that he ends his time of serving the Lord on the banks of the Jordan River. Even though Moses did not cross the Jordan with the children of Israel,



Moses pleading to Children of Israel, lithography from a 1907 card

it was enough for him that He had been faithful to his calling and had seen with his own eyes, the Promised Land.

Moses' joy came from his anticipation of the glorious future that awaited Israel beyond their dry, barren, wilderness wanderings. Yeshua (Jesus) also endured the cross by anticipating the joy of the resurrection. We too may find joy, even when we fall short of our heart's desire in this life, by anticipating the great and glorious things that God has prepared for us in eternity.

"No eye has seen, nor ear has heard and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him." (1 Corinthians 2:9)

Moses sang, calling upon all of creation – heaven and earth – to hear the words of his song. He asked that his song would be like moisture for the grass as He proclaimed God's greatness, righteousness, justice and perfection.

"Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak;
And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth
Let my teaching drop as the rain...

For I proclaim the name of the LORD:
Ascribe greatness to our God.
He is the Rock, His work is perfect;
For all His ways are justice,
A God of truth and without injustice;
Righteous and upright is He." (Deut. 32:1-4)



"My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew." (Deuteronomy 32:2)

In his final address to the nation, Moses asks, not only for the attention of the people of Israel, but of all creation. Nearing the end of his earthly life, Moses delivers his final message as a 'melodic farewell'.

This seems an odd time for Moses to be singing. After all – practically the entire generation that he brought out of Egypt lay dead – their carcasses scattered all around the wilderness; and Moses, himself, stood ready to die as well.

However, herein lays evidence of the spiritual greatness of this leader of Israel. The personal tragedies and hardships which would likely have broken the spirit of a lesser man, instead, caused Moses to rise to an even higher spiritual plane.

Moses sang - despite his impending death; despite the fact that he failed to achieve his life's goal of entering the Promised Land - Moses still sang. We may also refuse to succumb to despair over the trials of life through the ministry of song.

Serving through Singing



“Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him.

Praise the LORD with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.

Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy.”
(Psalm 33: 1-3)

<http://loswl.deviantart.com/>

The Hebrew word for sing is ‘shar’ שָׁר and it is the root of the Hebrew word for serve ‘sharet’ שָׁרַת. When we go through a time of weakness and don’t even know how we can serve the Lord in our condition, we can still serve Adonai through singing to Him and making music to His name.

The Hebrew language contains a secret meaning behind the power of praise and worship music. Many of the Psalms (called Tehillim in Hebrew) are addressed ‘*To the Chief Musician*’. In Hebrew, the chief musician is called a ‘*menatzeach*’ מְנַצֵּחַ. The root of this word is ‘*netzach*’, נֶצַח, which means ‘*eternity*’.



The First Lyre ferrebeekeeper.wordpress.com

Victory through Worship Music

What is amazing, is that the Hebrew word for ‘victory’ (*nitzachon*) נִצְחוֹן comes from this very same Hebrew root! What does this mean to us as worshippers of the one, true God? The Hebrew shows us that when we minister to Adonai with music and song, we touch the eternal realm and from this heavenly place, we may receive the victory. Halleluyah!

“Now thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Messiah, and reveals through us the sweet aroma of his knowledge in every place.” (2 Corinthians 2:14)

If we can overcome the temptation to be discouraged or downcast when we fail to reach our goals; when things don't seem to go our way; and rather sing praises to the Lord instead, then we will walk in triumph in Yeshua.

Some New Testament Believers may be under the impression that Moses, as part of the 'Old Testament', is not really relevant to their faith. However, in the book of Revelation, we read that in the end of the final battle with evil, those who have been victorious over the beast and its image hold harps and sing the song of Moses.

“And I saw what looked like a sea of glass glowing with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and its image and over the number of its name. They held harps given them by God and sang the song of God’s servant Moses and of the Lamb.” (Revelation 15:2-3)



Sea of Glass www.youtube.com

ROCK OF ISRAEL (Tzur Yisrael) { צור ישראל }

Nine times in Moses' farewell song is God called 'The Rock' (Ha'tzur). One of the names of God is **Tzur Yisrael** - solid, unchangeable, immovable, and a safe place of refuge. It is for these particular qualities that the rabbis chose the verse from this parashah as the opening line of the Jewish burial service (called Tziduk Hadin – Righteous Judgment).

“He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice; a God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is He.” (Deuteronomy 32:4)

We are told that our Israelite ancestors all drank from the same 'spiritual rock'; and that this Rock which accompanied them in the wilderness was Yeshua the Messiah.¹ Yeshua is with us in all of our wanderings.

God keeps track of our wanderings and keeps our tears in a bottle. (Psalm 56:8)

¹ 1 Corinthians 10:4

Moses also compared God to an eagle – a bird of great strength and vision – who took the children out of Egypt on His outstretched wings.

“As an eagle stirs up its nest, hovers over its young, spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings, so the LORD alone led him, and there was no foreign god with him.” (Deuteronomy 32:11-12)



Sea Eagle's Nest (1907 painting by Bruno Liljefors)

A Crooked and Perverse Generation

In contrast to all these wondrous qualities of God, man is described as ‘corrupt, perverse, and crooked’ to the point of being compared to Sodom and Gomorrah. “For their vine is of the vine of Sodom and of the fields of Gomorrah; their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter. Their wine is the poison of serpents, and the cruel venom of cobras.” (Deuteronomy 32:32-33)

God’s lovingkindness and unchanging faithfulness is contrasted with Israel’s ingratitude and faithlessness. God is vindicated as a loving Father, while Israel is chastised as a wayward, disobedient child.

There is no way to bridge the wide chasm between the corruption of man and the holiness of God except for one – that narrow gate that leads to life is through Yeshua the Messiah. He said, ‘I am the way, the truth and the life, and no one comes to the Father but through Me.’ (John 14:6)

“Is corruption His? No, His children’s is the blemish; a generation crooked and perverse.” (Deuteronomy 32:5)

Israel’s choice to sin is not a blemish upon the goodness of God. He offered them life and blessing or destruction and cursing; and they chose the latter.

All the subsequent disasters that would fall upon the nation of Israel are just punishment for their rebellion against God. And yet, lest the enemies of Israel exalt themselves and claim that Israel is finished, God promises, in His mercy, to intervene on their behalf and save them.

But for the grace of God through Yeshua Hamashiach (the Messiah), we would all be doomed, but thankfully, His mercies are new every morning, therefore we are not consumed.

“Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.” (Lamentations 3:22-23)

Israel is called ‘the portion of the Lord’; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. (Deuteronomy 32:9)

Israel is likened to an abandoned, starving child left to die in the wilderness; but God finds, rescues, and saves him. God cares for the orphaned child, supplying all of his needs through food (manna), protection (pillar of fire by night) and guidance (pillar of cloud by day).

“He found him in a desert land, and in the waste, a howling wilderness... He kept him as the apple of His eye.” (Deuteronomy 32:10)

Through the prophet Zechariah, the Lord warns the nations that **“he who touches you (Israel) touches the apple of His eye.”** (Zechariah 2:8)



www.graceandpeace.org

The apple of one’s eye is the pupil, the most sensitive and delicate part of the body. Anyone who tries to harm Israel is as if poking their finger into the very pupil of God’s eye.

God is represented as a father to whom Israel owes their very existence; but also as a mother, carrying and nurturing her infant with tender affection. And yet Israel turned to other ‘no-gods’ and forgot the Rock who bore them.

“They sacrificed to demons, no-gods, gods that they knew not...of the Rock that begot you, you were unmindful and you forgot God that bore you.” (Deuteronomy 32:17)

God had every reason to take vengeance and to give up on the nation of Israel, but instead He had mercy on them, lest their enemies exalt themselves. But it was not for Israel’s sake that He saves them, but for His name’s sake.

When we think that we have blown it too many times, and that God would have every reason to give up on us as well, may we remember that though God will deal with us, He is a merciful God, faithful and true. His desire is that we would also be long-suffering with others.

From the calamities Israel suffers, God wants her to see and know that He is the one true God with the power of life and death in His hands. He wounds but He also binds up those wounds.

“See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with Me; I kill, and I make alive; I have wounded, and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of My hand.” (Deuteronomy 32:39)

Even today we continue to dwell amidst a ‘crooked and perverse generation’ that stubbornly refuses to live according to God’s ways of righteousness and justice; but the Word of God tells us how we can shine as lights in the darkness:

“Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,” (Philippians 2:14-15)

Torah is our Life

Moses concludes his last message to Israel with the exhortation to observe all of the words of the Torah: **“For it is no vain thing for you; because it is your life....”** (Deuteronomy 32:47)

The Bible is not a book of meaningless, empty words; it is our instructions for a long, full, satisfying life of blessing, health, holiness and prosperity through obedience and faith.

“The fear of the Lord prolongs days; but the years of the wicked shall be shortened.” (Proverbs 10:27)



Faithful in Death as in Life

God then commanded Moses to ascend the mountain one last time and there, although still full of health and vigor, Moses climbed Mt. Nebo in the Land of Moab to die and be buried. God said Moses would die ‘be’etzem b’yom ha’zeh’ (surely this day – in broad daylight). This is an expression that is used only two other times in the Torah: when Noah was instructed to board the ark and when the Jews were to leave Egypt – ‘in broad daylight’ - so that all would witness God’s perfect will.



View of the [Dead Sea](#) from [Mount Nebo](#)

Although this great man of God was not allowed to enter the Promised Land, but was only given a glimpse of it from afar off, Moses was faithful to God in death as he was in life.

“Yet you shall see the land before you, though you shall not go there, into the land which I am giving to the children of Israel.” (Deuteronomy 32:52)

Moses was allowed to see the land; but not to enter in – and yet he ended his life with a song. What was the nature of this song? It began by describing God’s lovingkindness and faithfulness toward Israel; and it ended with a promise of retribution, redemption and atonement.

Rejoice in the Lord



“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people; for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land and His people.” (Deuteronomy 32:43, Romans 15:10)

It is not only the people of Israel who will rejoice with this final redemption; but also the Gentiles together with God’s people. God’s salvation is for all people – of every tongue, tribe, race or ethnic background. All people – Jews and Gentiles - can rejoice together in unity at the goodness of God.

Music and song has always been an integral part of the Jewish people. England’s chief rabbi Jonathan Sacks wrote, *“Jewish life is a symphony whose score is the Torah, whose composer is God, whose orchestra is the Jewish people, and whose most moving performance is on Simchat Torah.”*² (Festival of Rejoicing in the Torah).

A particular kind of Yiddish - Jewish music originating from Eastern Europe, Klezmer, comes from the words ‘klei’ (vessel or instrument) and zemer (song). We are all walking vessels or instruments designed to praise God with singing. It was the singers and musicians who were at times sent out in front of the armies of Israel; and this in itself was enough to bring victory.



Klezmer musicians at a wedding, Ukraine, ca. 1925

“The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; among them were the maidens playing timbrels.” (Psalm 68:25)

² *Torah with a Twist of Humor*, Joe Bobker, p. 409

“And when he (King Jehoshfat) had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying:

“Praise the LORD,
For His mercy *endures* forever.”

Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated.” (2 Chronicles 20:21-22)

Why is singing such a spiritual, sacred act of worship? Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav wrote, *“If two people talk at the same time, neither hears or understands the other; whereas if two people sing at the same time, they give each other harmony.”* (Bobker, p. 410)



Triumph of Jehoshaphat over Adad of Syria. Illustration by Jean Fouquet(1470s) for Flavius Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*.

Music has been called the universal ‘language of the heart’; and therefore Moses used the song of Ha’azinu to complete his life’s mission with a stirring challenge to the people of Israel. What is Moses’ message? It is that our actions have consequences – for good or for evil – and that our very survival depends upon our faithfulness to God our ‘Rock’.

Moses’ song has not been forgotten; but has been passed down from dor l’dor (generation to generation). It was sung by the Levite singers each week in the first and second Temples. Later, after their destruction, Jewish children were taught in religious schools to memorize the entire song.

Making Israel Jealous

In between the beginning and the end of this song, however; is the middle which contains severe words of rebuke toward Israel for their infidelity and unfaithfulness toward God. Not only would God ‘hide His face’ from His people; but He would also render judgment.

‘I will heap disasters on them; I will spend My arrows on them. They shall be wasted with hunger, devoured by pestilence and bitter destruction; I will also send against them the teeth of beasts, with the poison of serpents of the dust.’ (Deuteronomy 32:23-24)

Although this song (called a ‘shir’ in Hebrew) includes words that seem negative and harsh, it shows us that even the discipline of God will ultimately lead to our final redemption. Because the people of Israel made God jealous with their worship of other false gods and idols, God vowed to provoke His people to jealousy by those who are called ‘not a nation.’

“They have provoked Me to jealousy by what is not God; they have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols. But I will provoke them to jealousy by those who are not a nation; I will move them to anger by a foolish nation.” (Deuteronomy 32:21)

This reference to ‘*not a nation*’ is in Hebrew, ‘*loh ami*’. It is found again in the Book of Hosea:

“ I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one.' I will say to those called 'Not my nation,' (*loh ami*) 'You are my nation'; and they will say, 'You are my God.'" (Hosea 2:23, Romans 9:25)

Who are these people who were once ‘not a nation’ and are now God’s people? These are the Gentiles who have come to join themselves with the commonwealth of Israel through the Jewish Messiah: **“Once you were not a nation, but now you are the nation of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”** (1 Peter 2:10)

These are the very people whom God has called to salvation to provoke Israel to jealousy. **“So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.”** (Romans 11:11)

How will the Jewish people ever be jealous of these Gentiles? Isn’t it the other way around? Because of how God has blessed many Jewish people with material prosperity, is it not the Gentiles who are jealous of the Jews? Is this not the cause of so much of the world’s anti-Semitism?

So when and how will the Jews become provoked to jealousy by Gentile followers of Yeshua? It will be when they see the real and true love, joy and peace that they possess in Yeshua, even when the entire material world around them falls apart and the economy collapses.

It was this ability to sing in the face of apparent tragedy that set Moses apart from the others. Most of his generation had died in the wilderness because of their unbelief and idolatry. Moses himself was about to die, having never reached the Promised Land; but He still praised God in song – reminding Israel of God’s power, love and faithfulness.

Moses, called ‘friend of God’, died alone and yet not alone; for his very best friend in the entire universe remained with him even unto the end. It was God who buried Moses and to this day He alone knows the burial place.



Memorial of Moses, [Mount Nebo](#), Jordan

David's Song of Praise

Moses was not the only leader of Israel who celebrated victories by composing and performing songs. Deborah (whose Hebrew name, D'vorah, means 'bee' and whose root letters mean 'to arrange, speak, motive or litigate') was a judge over Israel and one of only five prophetesses in the Bible. She sang, together with her lieutenant Barak, to inspire her people to unite to defeat General Sisera and the Cannanites.



Miriam, Moses' sister, also sang a song of praise when God led them safely through the Red Sea and drowned their Egyptian enemies.

The Songs of Joy (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

In the Haftarah (Prophetic reading) for this week's study, David also recited a Song of Thanksgiving, which parallels Moses' composition. David praises God as his Rock, refuge, fortress and deliverer after he saves his life from King Saul.

“YHVH יהוה is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; the God who is my rock, in Him I take refuge ...” (2 Samuel 22:2-3)

When we are being persecuted, pursued or in any kind of distress, we can do what David did and call upon the Lord our God. He will save and deliver us out of our trouble. We can trust God to be our mighty Savior, even from those who are too strong for us.

Like David, we can say, **“For by You I can run upon a troop; by my God, I can scale a wall...For who is God, save יהוה YHVH? And who is a Rock (tzur) , save our God?”** (2 Samuel 22:30-32)

Of course we all want to live in peace and security; but sometimes we find ourselves facing war. When we are in the midst of any kind of battle, we can remember that our God will train our hands for war and He will also be our shield.

“For You have girded me with strength unto the battle; you have subdued under me those that rose up against me.” (2 Samuel 22:40)

Today, as Israel stands poised on the verge of battle with Islamic forces rising against her, will you pray that the hearts of the Israeli people will return to God - that Israel will look to God our Rock, our refuge, our fortress and strong tower to save and deliver us from our enemies.

Let us sing and rejoice: **“The Lord lives, and blessed be my Rock; and exalted be the God, Rock of my salvation (Yeshuah).”** (2 Samuel 22:47)

Ha'azinu Study Questions

1. If Moses was about to die and knew he would not be allowed to enter the Promised Land; and if most of his generation died in the wilderness – how do you think he was still able to sing? Do you find it difficult to sing and praise God in times of darkness?
2. How does the Hebrew word for singing relate to serving? How does the Hebrew word for 'worship leader' (choir director or chief musician) relate to eternity and victory? How does this impact you personally?
3. Where in the New Testament (Book of Revelation) does it speak of the Song of Moses?
4. What does 'Tzur Yisrael' mean? How was Yeshua the 'rock' in the wilderness?
5. Why is God compared to the image of an eagle?
6. Why were the children of Israel compared to Sodom and Gomorrah in Moses' song?
7. How can we shine as lights in the midst of a perverse and crooked generation?
8. Is music a significant part of your life? Would you like it to become more important? What steps could you take toward this goal?
9. How do you think you can provoke the Jewish people to jealousy? Do you think Christians are doing so today? Share and discuss.
10. When you face a battle, is singing praise your first response? Share and discuss.

About the Author:

Hannah Neshet grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home and received her education in a religious Hebrew school in Canada. During a crisis pregnancy, she came to know Jesus (Yeshua) as her Messiah and Savior. She now lives in Israel with her children and grandchildren, teaching the Jewish roots of the Christian faith.

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