

Deuteronomy 32-34

Yahweh is perfect in all of His ways—His Covenant love, purposes, and words; His steadfast faithfulness, Providences, and salvation

BACKGROUND, CONTEXT, AND MAKING THE CONNECTIONS

1 / We have come to the end of this very brief survey of some of the most prominent highlights here in the Book of Deuteronomy. However sketchy it may have been, I have attempted to point out how significant this Book was to them—and to us.

- why it was delivered and written down;
- when and where they were in their historical 'journey' (literally);
- and how the structure of the Book is developed in its various sections.

2 / And, if you'll remember, one of the main takeaways of this brief study has been: ***"I want us all to come away from looking into Deuteronomy again loving this Book as much as Jesus did!"***

3 / This concluding study, though, will pick up where our last lesson left off. Our last lesson considered **chapters 27-31** as Moses was concluding his three primary discourses / sermons / messages and then adding what Bible teachers call "the last words of Moses."

- They are 'last' words, not only because they conclude the Deuteronomy sermons,
- but also they are his last words before he, himself, died and transferred the Divinely-commissioned leadership of Israel over to Joshua. Joshua then would carry on in his capacity to lead the children of Israel into Canaan, the Promised Land, and enact all the Divine 'Book of the Covenant Law' that Yahweh had given them through Moses.

4 / So, since **chapters 32-34** overlap and are a continuation of what was introduced in **chapter 31**, we will introduce **chapter 32** with a recap of **chapter 31**.

I | The Death of Moses & the appointment of Joshua

1 / **ch 31.1-8 / Moses announces his impending death and departure and delivers a final charge both to Israel and to Joshua.** Moses is now 120 years old. His life has been neatly 'packaged' into three seasons of 40 years: [1] first 40—growing up in Egypt and his first attempt to be Israel's deliverer; [2] second 40—tending his father-in-law's sheep in Midian as Yahweh prepares him to return to Egypt; [3] third 40—leading Israel out of Egypt and through all their wanderings in the wilderness.

- Also you can find another account of Yahweh's appointment of Joshua in **Numbers 27.15-23 & here in Deuteronomy 31.14-15.**
- Keep in mind that Joshua, too, is a promise, prefigure, pointer, and pre-enactment of Christ [Joshua & Jesus are the same name: *'Yahweh will save'*]. Just as Joshua was Yahweh's appointed leader to bring His people into their OT Promised Land, so Jesus is our perfect fulfillment to lead us into our New Covenant 'rest,' 'inheritance,' and eternal Kingdom [**Hebrews 4.8-10 & context**].

2 / Moses's death announcement and the account of his actual death are recorded in the end of **chapter 32** and in **chapter 34**. So, since we are here, let's go ahead and preview them:

- **ch 32.48-52 / Yahweh reminds Moses of why he is dying without seeing for himself the Promised Land:** ***"...because you broke faith with me in the midst of the people of Israel at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin, and because you did not treat me as holy in the midst of the people of Israel"*** [32.51].
 - This account takes us back to the actual event as recorded in **Numbers 20.12-13 & 27.12-14.**
 - AND, you can read some other testimonies of Moses's laments and pleadings for Yahweh to *'please re-consider and allow me to go into the Promised Land with your people'* in **Deuteronomy 3.23-29 & 4.21-22.**
- **ch 34.1-12 / The death of Moses is recorded.** Here again in **34.7**, Moses's age is given as **"120 years when he died. *His eye was undimmed, and his vigor unabated.*"** Moses may have died *in old age*,

but he did not die *of old age*. He was still 'fit as a fiddle' and 'full of vim and vigor' even at 120 years old.

- ALSO, since we are here in the record of his death, **look at vv 5-6: “So Moses the servant of The LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of The LORD, and He buried him in the valley of the land of Moab opposite Beth-peor; but no one knows the place of his burial to this day.”** This is an awesome account on so many levels: The LORD brought Moses Home to Glory and buried him Himself. And, it is not recorded here, but **Jude, verse 9**, tells us **“But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, ‘The LORD rebuke you.’”** The devil attempted to argue and fight for access to Moses's body—obviously to use it for his own evil, nefarious ends. We can only speculate how the devil may have attempted to use Moses's body to promote who-knows-what-all kinds of corrupting, idolatrous distractions for the people of God.

3 / But, even though Moses was disqualified from entering the Promised Land, none of us should ever think that he was a 'failure' in his overall ministry and service. Yahweh provided numerous commending epitaphs in Scripture. Remember **Numbers 12.3: “Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth.”** And here in **Deuteronomy 34.10, “And there has not risen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom The LORD knew face to face...”** And this commendation is repeated from **Exodus 33.11, “Thus The LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.”** Then, of course, the Hebrews writer compares Moses to Christ whom Moses prefigured and pre-enacted: **“...[Christ] was faithful to Him who appointed Him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house ... Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son” [Hebrews 3.2, 5-6].**

- Christ, of course, will serve perfectly and ultimately faithfully, with perfect obedience to fulfill the types and pre-enactments Moses sketched out imperfectly!

II | The introduction to 'The Song of Moses'

1 / **“That this song may be a witness for me against the people of Israel...”** / Before we get into the text of this 'Song of Moses,' let's note how and why this song was written. I'm going to take you back one more time to the elements of the *suzerain-vassal covenant* that was often used by the sovereign overlords of the kingdom-nations in that day. Among those sections or articles of that covenant, there was **a list of witnesses** to confirm the authenticity, verity, and to which the suzerain may appeal [usually the nation's patron deities].

In Israel's case...

-Moses calls on the heavens and earth to witness Yahweh's covenant [chs 31.28; 32.1]

-he composes a song—a 'national anthem,' as it were [ch 31.20-32.47]

-the song includes an oath by Yahweh [ch 32.39-42]

-and the very words of the Book of the Torah will serve as an enduring witness [ch 31.24-29].

2 / **ch 31.15-29 / “For I know...”** / In this prophetic testimony, Yahweh tells Moses that He knows Israel will not keep faith and covenant with Him in the generations to come. And Yahweh also foretells the upcoming captivities they will suffer because of their faithlessness and disobedience. **This is a summary re-statement of the curses for disobedience He had pronounced in chapter 28.**

- That's why Yahweh commanded Moses to **“Take this Book of the Law and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of The LORD your God, that it may be there *for a witness against you*” [v 26].** Yahweh sums up His prescient predictions in v 21b: **“For I know what they are inclined to do even today, before I have brought them into the land that I swore to give them.”**
- Moses then will go on to add his own forewarnings to the people of Israel in vv 27-29: **“For I know [how well he knew!] how rebellious and stubborn you are. Behold, even today while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the LORD. How much more after my**

death!²⁸ Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears and call heaven and earth *to witness against them*.²⁹ *For I know* that after my death you will surely act corruptly and turn aside from the way that I have commanded you. And in the days to come evil will befall you, because you will do what is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger through the work of your hands.”

3 / “**Yahweh’s Song**” / Moses is the human author and transmitter, but Yahweh Himself is the Author as He has been also of all the other contents of this “Book of the Covenant Law.” Look at v 19: “**Now therefore write this song and teach it to the people of Israel. Put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the people of Israel.**” Then note how “**this song**” is repeatedly referenced throughout the narrative to keep drawing attention to its importance and significance: vv 19 [2 times], 21, 22, 30; 32.44.

- Why a ‘song’? Because by giving His personal testimony in a song, Yahweh can make it more memorable and easier to retain. NOT that Israel will remember and retain it, but by making it more memorable and easier to retain, the witness of this song will stand as an irrefutable testimony to Yahweh’s faithfulness to them...and their inexcusable guilt when Yahweh’s foretold judgments are executed against them. It will be a kind of ‘*I told you so from the beginning*’ song.

4 / BTW, this is not the only song Moses composed: he also authored ‘the song of salvation at the Red Sea’ in **Exodus 15**, which will also be sung in Heaven [**Revelation 15.3**]; and he is also credited with writing **Psalms 90-91**.

III | The Song of Moses

1 / Now, when we come to **chapter 32, The Song of Moses**, what we will find here is *a summary poetic narrative of Israel’s history set in verse*. We began this brief survey of Deuteronomy by announcing that *the most prominent and pronounced theme and purpose of Deuteronomy is to give a witness to Yahweh’s faithfulness to His Covenant set in contrast to Israel’s stubborn faithlessness*. That theme is the occasion, backdrop, and fabric woven all throughout this song. Read, watch, and listen for it...

2 / **Yahweh gives Himself a unique Name in this Song to declare His unfailing faithfulness to His Covenant: The Rock.** [see vv 4, 15, 18, 30, 31 & 37; also Psalm 92.15]

- This word ‘rock’ doesn’t mean a mere boulder—it is a sheer, towering mountain of a rock, a monolith—like El Capitan.
- [Think of God’s dream given to Nebuchadnezzar of Christ’s Kingdom that will destroy all the kingdoms of the earth: “But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth” (Daniel 2.35, et. al.). Yahweh is *that* kind of ‘Rock’!]

3 / ‘Rock’ is often used in Scripture narrative to refer to a cliff, promontory point, or even to a cave in the face of a rock where one could hide and take refuge, ‘a rock of refuge.’ And, God is often referred to as a ‘rock’ in this sense—especially in the Psalms. Sometimes our English word ‘refuge’ or ‘strength’ is translated from this Hebrew word for ‘rock.’ But here in **Deuteronomy 32**, Yahweh refers to Himself as **The Rock** to testify to His immovable, immutable, unfailing faithfulness. He has ‘steadfastly—like a **Rock**’—made, kept, and faithfully executed all His covenant words. He doesn’t just provide refuge, safety, shelter, and protection from Israel’s adversaries; **their Rock creates them, nurses them, sustains them, provides for them, rules and governs them.**

4 / So, with that in mind, let’s break down and summarize the themes of the stanzas of this Song:

- vv 1-3: Yahweh calls for the whole created universe to listen up and bear witness to the truth of His Covenant faithfulness to Israel—the **greatness** of His faithfulness is a universally-known testimony.
- v 4: All of **The Rock’s** works are **perfect**—completely fulfilled without flaw or shortcoming. **The Rock** is **perfect** in His **justice, faithfulness, truth, and fairness** in everything He does.
- vv 5-9: Israel, by contrast, disowned Him. They proved to be stubborn, disobedient, perverted, foolish, senseless. **The Rock** created them when they were nothing, loved them, redeemed them, adopted them. He even staged and orchestrated all the other nations of the earth, situated them geographically, and

raised them up and took them down in the ages of world history to advance and accomplish His Kingdom purposes for His elect nation.

- **vv 10-14:** **The Rock** found Israel when 'he' was an abandoned, helpless fledgling; He lovingly and jealously **cared for him** and **kept him as the apple [pupil] of His eye**. **The Rock** graciously and generously guided and enriched Israel and gave him the very best of all the earth had to offer.
- **vv 15-18:** **But Jeshurun...** [a name that means 'upright one,' see v 4]—but given in a sarcastic, facetious tone [also ch 33.5, 26 & Isaiah 44.2]. They were 'upright' by Yahweh's Grace [see **Deuteronomy 6.25**]**—but they betrayed and broke faith with The Rock**. These verses contain a summary indictment of Israel's stubborn faithlessness: **"...then he forsook God who made him and scoffed at The Rock of his salvation ... They sacrificed to demons that were no gods ... You were unmindful of The Rock that bore you, and you forgot the God who gave you birth."** This will be the story of their history throughout the remainder of the Old Testament narrative...and even in to the New Testament when they will reject Christ, The True Rock [see **Matthew 21.44**].
- **vv 19-33:** These verses will describe in prospect how Yahweh will judge them by giving them over to their enemies. Their enemy nations will think that it was *their* superior power that conquered Israel [v 27]. Yet, Yahweh will then turn His wrath against these very enemy conquerors to make them know that they could not have conquered His covenant nation **"...unless their Rock had sold them, and The LORD had given them up ... For their rock [their pagan, demon gods in whom they trusted] is not as our Rock; our enemies are by themselves"** [vv 30-31]. **NOTE especially how Yahweh declares that He will save a remnant in the end in order to keep His Covenant and vindicate His own Name and Glory [vv 26-27].**
- **vv 34-38:** Yahweh will execute His recompensing vengeance then upon the very enemies He used to exact His promised judgments on Israel in keeping with the terms and conditions of His Covenant with them.
- **vv 39-42:** Yahweh, **The Rock**, declares—swears by His own Name, Being, and Life—that He, and He alone is the only True God...not only of Israel, but of all the nations of the whole earth. **"See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no God beside me ... For I lift up my hand to Heaven and swear, 'As I live forever...'"** He is the sovereign, supreme, superior, solitary God—the Only One! He dictates and executes all the affairs of all the nations by His own sovereign will and for His own covenant purposes. **See Daniel 4.34-35.**
- **v 43:** Yahweh returns to call on His universal witnesses [see v 1] to not only recognize His supreme sovereignty as **The Rock**, but also to **"Rejoice with him, O heavens; bow down to Him, all gods"** in undivided worship!

5 / **vv 44-47:** So, having now one last time [for then] called on Israel to remember, recite, and respond to this poetic concluding summary of all that he had delivered to them, Moses gives this 'farewell charge' to Israel:

Moses came and recited all the words of this song in the hearing of the people, he and Joshua the son of Nun. ⁴⁵ **And when Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel,** ⁴⁶ **he said to them, "Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law.** ⁴⁷ **For it is no empty word for you, but your very life, and by this word you shall live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess."**

IV | Moses's Final Blessing on Israel—tribe by tribe. [patterned after Jacob's blessing of his sons, families, and tribes in Genesis 49]