

עץ חיים

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ETZ HAYIM

TORAH AND COMMENTARY

THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY  
THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM



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32 Give ear, O heavens, let me speak;

Let the earth hear the words I utter!

<sup>2</sup>May my discourse come down as the rain,

My speech distill as the dew,

Like showers on young growth,

Like droplets on the grass.

<sup>3</sup>For the name of the LORD I proclaim;

Give glory to our God!

<sup>4</sup>The Rock!—His deeds are perfect,

Yea, all His ways are just;

A faithful God, never false,

True and upright is He.

לֵב \*הַאֲזִינוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֲדַבְּרָה

וְתִשְׁמַע הָאָרֶץ אִמְרֵי־פִי:

<sup>2</sup>יַעֲרֹף כַּמָּטֶר לְקֹחֵי

תִּזְלַב כַּטֵּל אִמְרֵתִי

כְּשֶׁעִירָם עַל־יְדֵשָׁא

וְכַרְבִּיבִים עַל־יַעֲשָׂב:

<sup>3</sup>כִּי שֵׁם יְהוָה אֶקְרָא

הַבּוֹ גִדְל לְאֱלֹהֵינוּ:

<sup>4</sup>הַצּוֹר תַּמִּים פֶּעֱלוּ

כִּי כָל־דַּרְכָּיו מִשְׁפָּט

אֵל אֱמוּנָה וְאֵין עֲוֹל

צַדִּיק וְיֵשֶׁר הוּא:

v. 1. בכתב היד שלנו, צורת השירה בי"7 שורות, ולפי הלכות כתיבת ספר תורה, היא נכתבת בי"7 שורות

Epilogue: Moses' Last Days (continued)

MOSES' POEM (32:1–43)

The poem describes the consequences of Israel's anticipated betrayal of God. Its style is typical of biblical poetry. Each verse consists of at least two lines that are parallel to each other in meaning.

**1.** Heaven and earth are employed as a literary device. They function here as objective on-lookers who serve as witnesses to the poem's charges and the fairness of Israel's punishment.

**2. distill** Parallel to "come down."

**dew** Hebrew: *tal*, which refers to rain or dew, both of which were thought to fall from the sky.

**3. the name of the LORD I proclaim** Proclaiming God's name means declaring His qualities, recounting His deeds.

**Give glory** Acknowledge God's greatness.

Usually God's "greatness" refers to His vast power. Here it seems to point to His extraordinary kindness and justice in dealing with Israel.

THE HISTORY OF GOD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL (vv. 4–18)

**4.** This verse states the first main theme of the poem: God has treated Israel with complete justice.

**Rock** Hebrew: *tzur*; as a term for God, it expresses the idea that the deity is a source of refuge, a protector.

**perfect** That is, reliable, faithful.

**never false** Never faithless.

**True** In the sense of faithful.

**upright** Trustworthy, reliable.

CHAPTER 32

This is the last *parashah* of the Torah that is read at services on *Shabbat* morning. (Chapters 33–34 are read only on *Simhat Torah*, to complete the annual cycle of Torah reading.) It consists entirely of a poem reprising and summarizing the themes of the first section of Deuteronomy: the greatness and generosity of

God and the stubbornness and unreliability of the Israelites.

**1. Give ear, O heavens . . . Let the earth hear** Listen to me—you spiritual people whose thoughts are in heaven, and also you down-to-earth people whose concerns are more material. This message is meant for all of you (Hatam Sofer).

<sup>5</sup>Children unworthy of Him—  
That crooked, perverse generation—  
Their baseness has played Him false.  
<sup>6</sup>Do you thus requite the LORD,  
O dull and witless people?  
Is not He the Father who created you,  
Fashioned you and made you endure!

<sup>7</sup>Remember the days of old,  
Consider the years of ages past;  
Ask your father, he will inform you,  
Your elders, they will tell you:  
<sup>8</sup>When the Most High gave nations their  
homes  
And set the divisions of man,  
He fixed the boundaries of peoples  
In relation to Israel's numbers.

5 שֶׁחַת לוֹ לֹא בָנָיו מוֹמִים  
דֹּר עֲקֹשׁ וּפְתִלְתַּל:  
6 הֲיִלְיִהוּהָ \* תִּגְמְלוּ-זֹאת  
עִם נָבֵל וְלֹא חָכֵם  
הֵלֹא-הוּא אָבִיךָ קִנְיָךְ  
הוּא עָשָׂךְ וַיִּכְנֶנְךָ:  
שׁוּבִי 7 זְכוֹר יְמֹת עוֹלָם  
בִּינֵנו שָׁנוֹת דֹּר-וְדוֹר  
שָׁאֵל אָבִיךָ וַיִּגְדֶּךָ  
זְקֵנֶיךָ וְלֹאמְרוּ לָךְ:  
8 בְּהִנְחַל עֲלֵיוֹן גּוֹיִם  
בְּהַפְרִידוֹ בֵּי אָדָם  
יַצֵּב גְּבֻלֹת עַמִּים  
לְמִסְפָּר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

v. 6. ה' רבתי לפי נוסחים מקובלים

**5. Children unworthy of Him** This verse states the second main theme of the poem: Israel, in contrast to God, is faithless and perfidious, a “crooked, perverse generation.” The reference to the people Israel as God’s children is part of the parent–child metaphor through which the poem expresses God’s relationship with Israel. The translation of this verse is a paraphrase, because the text is difficult and of uncertain meaning.

**6.** The poem now addresses the Israelites directly, charging them with responding to God’s benefactions with ingratitude and rebellion.

**Do you thus requite the LORD** Literally, “Is it the LORD you requite thus?” The word order in Hebrew underscores the shocking nature of their behavior: “Do you treat even God this way?” In Torah scrolls, this interrogative prefix, the letter *hei* (Is it?), is written in larger script. The reason for this is unknown, but it has the effect of heightening the shock expressed by the question.

**dull** Hebrew: *naval*; literally, “villain(ous).” Here it refers to the foolish attitudes of the villain, who feels safe because he is contemptuous of God, believing that He is inattentive to human events or powerless to affect them. Israel acts as if it shared this attitude.

**witless** Unwise.

**made you endure** Literally, “brought you into existence.”

**7.** If the audience has any doubt about the truth of what is said, it can turn for confirmation to its elders—the custodians of historical tradition in a predominantly oral culture. Similar challenges to consult the elders appear in the Book of Job (8:8–10) and in a Mesopotamian royal inscription.

**8. Most High** Hebrew: *elyon*; used in the Bible as a common title of God, primarily in poetry, by both Israelites and non-Israelites. It also appears in non-Israelite sources outside the Bible. Here it emphasizes God’s supremacy over all beings considered divine; and because it does not have exclusively Israelite associations, it suits the context of God organizing the entire human race.

**gave nations their homes** According to Genesis, the division of humanity into nations took place after the Flood, in the aftermath of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 10, 11:1–9). God’s benefactions to Israel began by dividing the human race into separate nations and choosing Israel as His own.

**In relation to Israel’s numbers** A matter of how the world was to be ruled. In the Hebrew basis of the Septuagint, as well as in a Qumran

#### HALAKHAH L’MA·ASEH

**32:7. Remember . . . Ask** This verse echoes the command to remember our past and to ask our ancestors about it (Exod. 12:25–27). This commandment is carried out explicitly in the *Pesah Seider*; in the rituals associated with the other pilgrimage festivals; and in the education of our children in Jewish history, tradition, and observance.

<sup>9</sup>For the LORD's portion is His people,  
Jacob His own allotment.

<sup>10</sup>He found him in a desert region,  
In an empty howling waste.  
He engirded him, watched over him,  
Guarded him as the pupil of His eye.

<sup>11</sup>Like an eagle who rouses his nestlings,  
Gliding down to his young,  
So did He spread His wings and take him,  
Bear him along on His pinions;

<sup>12</sup>The LORD alone did guide him,  
No alien god at His side.

<sup>13</sup>He set him atop the highlands,  
To feast on the yield of the earth;  
He fed him honey from the crag,  
And oil from the flinty rock,

<sup>14</sup>Curd of kine and milk of flocks;

<sup>9</sup> כִּי חֶלֶק יְהוָה עַמּוֹ  
יַעֲקֹב חֶבֶל נַחֲלָתוֹ:

<sup>10</sup> וַיִּמְצָאֵהוּ בְּאֶרֶץ מִדְבָּר  
וּבְתַהוֹ יֵלֵל יִשְׁמֵן

יִסְבְּבֵנְהוּ יְבוֹנְנֵהוּ  
יִצְרְנֵהוּ כְּאִישׁוֹן עֵינָיו:

<sup>11</sup> כְּנֶשֶׁר יַעִיר קֶנֶן

עַל-גּוֹזְלָיו יִרְחֵף

יִפְרֹשׁ כַּנְּפָיו יִקְחֵהוּ

יִשְׂאֵהוּ עַל-אַבְרָתוֹ:

<sup>12</sup> יְהוָה בַּדָּד יִנְחֵנוּ

וְאֵין עִמּוֹ אֵל נֹכַר:

<sup>13</sup> וַיִּרְכַּבְהוּ עַל-בְּמוֹתַי בְּמַתֵּי אֶרֶץ <sup>שלישי</sup>

וַיֹּאכַל תְּנוּבַת שְׂדֵי

וַיִּנְקְהוּ דְבֶשׂ מִסְּלַע

וְשִׁמֵּן מִחֶלְמִישׁ צֹר:

<sup>14</sup> חֶמְצָת בָּקָר וְחֶלֶב צֹאן

scroll and other texts, the phrase here (*l'mispar b'nei Yisra-el*) reads "equal to the number of divine beings" (*l'mispar b'nei el*). According to a concept found elsewhere in the Bible, God established two tiers in governance of the world: at the top, God, who reserved Israel for Himself, to govern personally; below Him, 70 angelic divine beings, to whom God allotted other peoples. The image is that of a ruler who governs the capital or heartland of the realm personally and assigns the provinces to subordinates.

**9. His people** Refers to Jacob, a synonym for Israel both as an individual and as a nation.

**allotment** As God's "allotment," Israel was cherished and protected by Him.

**10. found him** Israel was like a foundling or a desert wanderer, in danger of starvation and exposure. This metaphor shows how perilous Israel's situation had been and how indebted it should be to God for its survival.

**desert region** The Sinai, where the Israelites roamed before entering the Promised Land. Hebrew: *eretz midbar*, a wilderness partly marked by vegetation and sparse water sources.

**howling waste** A wasteland filled with the howling of winds and wild animals.

**engirded** God encircled Israel protectively.

**Guarded him** From snakes, scorpions, and marauders like the Amalekites.

**as the pupil of His eye** A graphic simile for an object of protective care, because it is guarded by a reflex action.

**11.** God led Israel safely through the desert, in the manner of an eagle training its young to fly and catching them on its back when they tire or fall.

**12. The LORD alone** No other deity helped Israel; hence for Israel to turn to other gods is baseless as well as ungrateful.

**guide him** Through the wilderness to the Promised Land.

**13. atop the highlands** The mountainous heartland of Israel.

**fed** Hebrew: *va-yenikeihu*; literally, "suckled." Implies that God nurtured Israel, which exerted virtually no effort. The most barren places yielded abundant food: In fissures and caves were found honeycombs; in rocky limestone soils, oil-producing olive trees.

**14. Curd** Hebrew: *hem-ah*, which includes butter, cream, and *leben*, a coagulated form of sour milk. The Land's rich pastures sustain cattle that produce dairy products and meat, and its soil yields wheat and wine.

With the best of lambs,  
And rams of Bashan, and he-goats;  
With the very finest wheat—  
And foaming grape-blood was your drink.

15 So Jeshurun grew fat and kicked—  
You grew fat and gross and coarse—  
He forsook the God who made him  
And spurned the Rock of his support.  
16 They incensed Him with alien things,  
Vexed Him with abominations.  
17 They sacrificed to demons, no-gods,  
Gods they had never known,  
New ones, who came but lately,  
Who stirred not your fathers' fears.

עִם־הַלֵּב כָּרִים  
וְאֵילִים בְּנִיבְשָׁן וְעִתּוּדִים  
עִם־הַלֵּב כְּלִיּוֹת חֹטֵה  
וְדָם־עֵגֶב תִּשְׁתֶּה־חֶמֶר:  
15 וַיִּשְׂמַן יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּבְעֹט  
שְׂמֵנָה עֲבִיּוֹת כָּשִׂית  
וַיִּטֵּשׁ אֱלֹהֵי עֲשָׂהוּ  
וַיִּנְבֵּל צוּר יִשְׁעָתוֹ:  
16 וַיִּקְנְאוּהוּ בְּזָרִים  
בְּתוֹעֵבֹת יִכְעִיסֶהוּ:  
17 וַיִּזְבְּחוּ לִשְׂדִים לֹא אֱלֹהֵי  
אֱלֹהִים לֹא יָדְעוּם  
חֲדָשִׁים מִקְרֹב בָּאוּ  
לֹא שְׁעָרוּם אֲבֹתֵיכֶם:

**best of lambs** Literally, “fat of lambs.” Fat is often used figuratively to refer to the best, as in the idiom “the fat of the land.”

**Bashan** The mountain range in northern Transjordan, which included the best pastureland in the region, with herds famed for their strength and size.

**very finest wheat** Literally, “fat of the kidneys of wheat.” Some commentators take “kidneys” to mean the kernel of the wheat; the full phrase would then mean “the finest grains of wheat.” Others hold that it is a poetic overstatement meaning “wheat with grains as thick as kidneys.”

**grape-blood** A poetic metaphor for wine.

**15. Jeshurun** Hebrew: *Y'shurun* (the Upright; from *yashar*, “upright”), which alludes to “Israel” (*Yisra-el*) and sounds something like it. Used ironically here, it underscores how Israel has failed to live up to its expected character.

**kicked** Like an unruly, rebellious animal. Not satisfied and docile from being fed, Israel rejected the One who fed it.

**You grew fat and gross and coarse** Here the poet addresses Israel directly.

**Rock of his support** The Rock who delivered Israel and protected it from danger.

**16. incensed Him** By worshipping other gods, Israel provoked the resentful rage that God warned about in the Decalogue.

**alien things . . . abominations** Alien gods and idols.

**17.** The verse does not argue that Israel worshiped nonexistent beings, mere statues, but that it worshiped beings that lack effective power and are unworthy of worship.

**demons** Hebrew: *shedim*; better: “spirits.” In Akkadian, a *shed* is a minor protective spirit.

**no-gods** Pseudo-gods, beings undeservedly called “gods.”

**Gods they had never known** Although the poem has just denied their divinity, it continues to use “*elohim*” for these beings. Probably the word here means “so-called gods.”

**New ones** Unlike the Lord, “the ancient God” (33:27), who has acted on behalf of Israel since its beginning, these beings have no record of achievement or reliability. In the ancient world, antiquity was a hallmark of authenticity, and these new beings lacked it.

**stirred not your fathers' fears** The Septuagint renders “whom your fathers did not know,” which is synonymous with the second line in the verse.

**15. kicked . . . forsook . . . spurned** The ultimate ingratitude. God will bless Israel with a measure of prosperity, and that prosperity will lead them to become arrogant and to neglect God. When individuals or nations be-

come wealthy, they are often tempted to celebrate their material wealth at the expense of their spiritual development, focusing on what they do well and abandoning what may be more challenging.

<sup>18</sup>You neglected the Rock that begot you,  
Forgot the God who brought you forth.

18 צֹר יִלְדָךָ תִשְׁכַּח \*  
וּתְשַׁכַּח אֱל מִחֻלְלֶךָ:

<sup>19</sup>The LORD saw and was vexed  
And spurned His sons and His daughters.

19 וַיִּרְא יְהוָה וַיִּנְאָץ רביעי  
מִכַּעַס בָּנָיו וּבָנָתָיו:

<sup>20</sup>He said:

I will hide My countenance from them,  
And see how they fare in the end.

20 וַיֹּאמֶר אֶסְתִּירָה פָנַי מֵהֶם  
אֶרְאֶה מָה אַחֲרֵיהֶם

For they are a treacherous breed,  
Children with no loyalty in them.

כִּי דֹר תִּהְפֹּכֶת הָיְמָה  
בָּנִים לֹא־אֱמָן בָּם:

<sup>21</sup>They incensed Me with no-gods,  
Vexed Me with their futilities;

21 הֵם קִנְאוּנִי בְלֹא־אֱל  
כַּעֲסוּנִי בְהַבְלִיָּהֶם

I'll incense them with a no-folk,  
Vex them with a nation of fools.

וְאֲנִי אֶקְנִיאֵם בְּלֹא־עַם  
בְּגוֹי נָבָל אֶכְעִיסֵם:

<sup>22</sup>For a fire has flared in My wrath  
And burned to the bottom of Sheol,  
Has consumed the earth and its increase,

22 כִּי־אֵשׁ קָדְחָה בְּאֲפִי  
וַתִּיקַד עַד־שְׁאוֹל תַּחְתִּית  
וַתֹּאכַל אֶרֶץ וַיִּבְלָה

v. 18. י' זעירא לפי נוסחים מקובלים

**18.** Again the poem turns directly to Israel and exclaims that it is guilty of the most unnatural behavior: forgetting one's own parent.

**begot . . . brought forth** These Hebrew verbs may have been chosen to suggest a mother. The image of forgetting one's mother casts Israel's behavior in the most unnatural light.

#### GOD DECIDES TO PUNISH ISRAEL (vv. 19–25)

**19. sons and . . . daughters** The involvement of both men and women in the worship of foreign gods is also mentioned in 17:2 and 29:17.

**20.** See 31:17–18.

**And see how they fare in the end** Literally, “and see what their end will be.” God's words are ironic inasmuch as He intends to determine the outcome Himself.

**treacherous breed** Literally, “turnabout generation.” It broke faith with God.

**21.** God will punish the Israelites measure for measure, treating them as they treated Him. As the Israelites incensed Him by favoring

non-gods, He will incense them by favoring a non-people, sending it to invade them.

**futilities** Hebrew: *havalim*, one of the Bible's negative terms for idols; it means “puffs of breath,” “vapor.” In other words, insubstantial beings that do not last.

**nation of fools** “Nation of dullards, villains” (*goy naval*). Israel is characterized similarly (*am naval*) in verse 6. The description of the enemy as a no-folk and a nation of fools is reminiscent of Mesopotamian characterizations of nomadic, “uncivilized” outlanders as “not classed among people, not reckoned as part of the [civilized] land.”

**22. For a fire has flared in My wrath / And burned to the bottom of Sheol** Sheol is the netherworld. The use of the past tense implies that once God has decided on the punishment, it is as good as accomplished. Fire is a metaphor for God's anger (4:24), and burning to the bottom of Sheol and to the foundations of the mountains is a picturesque description of its power.

**its increase** The earth's yield, its produce.

**20.** See Comment to Deut. 31:17. Where the earlier verse says that God will hide the divine countenance from Israel, which will cause terrible things to happen to them, this passage softens the threat. God will hide from them “to

see how they fare in the end.” This leaves the possibility of our reclaiming God's attention—bringing God back into a godless world—by our behavior.

Eaten down to the base of the hills.

<sup>23</sup>I will sweep misfortunes on them,

Use up My arrows on them:

<sup>24</sup>Wasting famine, ravaging plague,  
Deadly pestilence, and fanged beasts

Will I let loose against them,

With venomous creepers in dust.

<sup>25</sup>The sword shall deal death without,

As shall the terror within,

To youth and maiden alike,

The suckling as well as the aged.

<sup>26</sup>I might have reduced them to naught,

Made their memory cease among men,

<sup>27</sup>But for fear of the taunts of the foe,

Their enemies who might misjudge

And say, "Our own hand has prevailed;

None of this was wrought by the LORD!"

<sup>28</sup>For they are a folk void of sense,

Lacking in all discernment.

<sup>29</sup>Were they wise, they would think upon this,

Gain insight into their future:

<sup>30</sup>"How could one have routed a thousand,

Or two put ten thousand to flight,

וּתְלַהֵט מוֹסְדֵי הָרִים:

<sup>23</sup> אֶסְפֶּה עָלֵימוּ רָעוֹת

חֲצֵי אֶכְלֶה־בָּם:

<sup>24</sup> מְזִי רָעַב וּלְחָמֵי רֶשֶׁף

וּקְטַב מְרִירֵי

וְשֶׁן־בְּהֵמוֹת אֲשַׁלַּח־בָּם

עִם־חַמַּת זֹחֲלֵי עָפָר:

<sup>25</sup> מִחוּץ תִּשְׁפֹּל־חֶרֶב

וּמִחֻדְרֵים אֵימָה

גַּם־בַּחוּר גַּם־בְּתוּלָה

יִוָּנֵק עִם־אִישׁ שִׁיבָה:

<sup>26</sup> אֶמְרָתִי אֶפְאַיֶהֶם

אֲשַׁבִּיתָהּ מֵאֲנוּשׁ זְכָרָם:

<sup>27</sup> לֹוּלֵי כָעַס אוֹיֵב אָגוּר

פֶּן־יִנְפְרוּ צָרֵימוּ

פֶּן־יִאֲמְרוּ יִדְנוּ לָמָּה

וְלֹא יִהְיֶה פֶּעַל כָּל־זֹאת:

<sup>28</sup> בִּי־גוֹי אֲבַד עֲצוֹת הַמָּה

וְאֵין בָּהֶם תְּבוּנָה:

<sup>29</sup> לֹו חֲכָמוּ יִשְׁפִּילוּ זֹאת

יְבִינוּ לְאַחֲרֵיתָם:

<sup>30</sup> אֵיכָּה יִרְדֹּף אֶחָד אֶלֶף

וּשְׁנַיִם יִנְיִסוּ רַבָּה

חמישי

**23. I will sweep . . . on them** God resolves to bring all of His destructive forces against Israel.

**Use up My arrows** That is, shoot all My arrows, a metaphor for the calamities of verse 24. It is used again in verse 42.

**24. Wasting famine** Famine that will waste their bodies.

**pestilence** In some Arabic dialects, "ketev" refers to smallpox.

**fanged beasts . . . venomous creepers** Wild animals, such as lions, bears, and poisonous snakes. Settled territory was often in danger of being overrun by wild animals.

**25.** War will spread everywhere, and to people of both sexes (not just the young men who are the warriors) and of all ages.

**As shall the terror within** Those taking refuge indoors will die of fright.

#### GOD DECIDES TO LIMIT RETRIBUTION

(vv. 26–42)

**26. reduced them to naught** Obliterated them.

**Made their memory cease** Made an end to their name, wiped them out entirely.

**27. taunts** Hebrew: *ka-as*; literally, "vexation." The enemy would also vex God by falsely claiming credit for the defeat of Israel.

**Our own hand has prevailed** After its victory, this nation of dullards will reason exactly as Moses warns Israel not to reason when it prospers (8:17).

**28. they** The enemy.

**29. Gain insight into their future** Better: "reflect on what happened to them," on the circumstances or cause behind their victory.

**30.** The motif of a few chasing thousands is

Unless their Rock had sold them,  
The LORD had given them up?"

<sup>31</sup>For their rock is not like our Rock,  
In our enemies' own estimation.

<sup>32</sup>Ah! The vine for them is from Sodom,  
From the vineyards of Gomorrah;  
The grapes for them are poison,  
A bitter growth their clusters.

<sup>33</sup>Their wine is the venom of asps,  
The pitiless poison of vipers.

<sup>34</sup>Lo, I have it all put away,  
Sealed up in My storehouses,

<sup>35</sup>To be My vengeance and recompense,  
At the time that their foot falters.  
Yea, their day of disaster is near,  
And destiny rushes upon them.

<sup>36</sup>For the LORD will vindicate His people  
And take revenge for His servants,

אִם-לֹא כִּי-צוּרֵם מְכָרָם  
יִהְיֶה הַסְּגִירָם:

<sup>31</sup>כִּי לֹא כְצוּרֵנוּ צוּרֵם  
וְאִי-בֵינוּ פְּלִילִים:

<sup>32</sup>כִּי-מִגֶּפֶן סוּדִם גִּפְנֵם  
וּמִשְׂדֵּמֶת עֲמֹרָה

עֲנְבֵימוּ עֲנְבֵי-רוֹשׁ  
אֲשֶׁפֶלֶת מְרֹרֶת לָמוּ:

<sup>33</sup>חֶמֶת תַּנְיָנִים יִינֵם  
וְרֹאשׁ פְּתָנִים אֲכֹרֶ:

<sup>34</sup>הֲלֹא-הוּא כָּמֶס עֲמֹדֵי  
חֲתָם בְּאוֹצְרוֹתַי:

<sup>35</sup>לִי נָקָם וְשָׁלֵם  
לְעֵת תַּמוּט רַגְלָם

כִּי קָרוֹב יוֹם אִיָּדָם  
וְחָשׁ עֲתֵדֶת לָמוּ:

<sup>36</sup>כִּי-יִדְּיִן יְהוָה עִמּוֹ  
וְעַל-עַבְדָּיו יִתְנַחֵם

a traditional way of describing a divinely determined rout.

**sold them . . . given them up** Handed them over, delivered them. Mere abandonment would not have produced a rout of such proportions; God must have actively aided the enemy.

**31. their rock** Here, used ironically of the enemy's god, as if the text said, "their so-called rock" (see v. 4). Nor could the enemy—if at all wise—credit its victory to its own gods, because its gods are not equal to Israel's God.

**In our enemies' own estimation** This translation is unlikely. It is implausible that the enemy, having just routed Israel, would consider its own gods unequal to Israel's God. Better: "nor are our enemies' guardians (*p'lilim*) [like our Rock]."

GOD DECIDES TO PUNISH THE ENEMY  
(vv. 32–35)

**32.** The enemy will suffer the destiny of Sodom and Gomorrah: They will drink the same wine—from the same vines—that was served to the people of those devastated cities. Poisonous

drink is a metaphor for a disastrous fate.

**33. pitiless poison** Painful or incurable poison.

**34.** The poison wine is stored up securely, waiting for the day when God will serve it to the enemy. Describing the wine as "sealed up" is based on the practice of sealing the latches to storerooms with clay, stamped with the signet of the king or the official in charge, to detect whether the room has been entered without authorization.

**35. To be My vengeance** Hebrew: *li nakam*; literally, "vengeance is Mine." As the accompanying word "recompense" makes clear, "vengeance" refers only to just retribution, not to revenge.

**At the time that their foot falters** A biblical idiom for reversal of fortune.

**destiny** Hebrew: *atidot*; literally, "what is prepared." Probably refers to the punishment sealed up in God's storehouses (v. 34).

GOD'S PLAN TO DELIVER ISRAEL (vv. 36–42)

**36. vindicate** Judge in favor of.

**take revenge for** That is, avenge them, get satisfaction for the way the enemy treated them.

**31. their rock is not like our Rock** The God of Israel is like a rock, unfailingly supportive

and reliable. The gods of the pagan nations are like rocks, incapable of feeling or responding.

When He sees that their might is gone,  
And neither bond nor free is left.

<sup>37</sup>He will say: Where are their gods,  
The rock in whom they sought refuge,  
<sup>38</sup>Who ate the fat of their offerings  
And drank their libation wine?

Let them rise up to your help,  
And let them be a shield unto you!

<sup>39</sup>See, then, that I, I am He;  
There is no god beside Me.

I deal death and give life;  
I wounded and I will heal:  
None can deliver from My hand.

<sup>40</sup>Lo, I raise My hand to heaven  
And say: As I live forever,

<sup>41</sup>When I whet My flashing blade  
And My hand lays hold on judgment,

כִּי יִרְאֶה בִּי־אֲזַלְתַּי יָד  
וְאָפֶס עֲצוּר וְעֹזוּב:

<sup>37</sup>וְאָמַר אֵי אֱלֹהֵימוֹ  
צוּר חֲסִיו בּוֹ:

<sup>38</sup>אֲשֶׁר חָלַב זִבְחֵימוֹ יֹאכְלוּ  
יִשְׁתּוּ יַיִן נְסִיכֶם

יִקְוֹמוּ וַיַּעֲזְרְכֶם  
יְהִי עֲלֵיכֶם סִתְרָה:

<sup>39</sup>רְאוּ | עֵתָה כִּי אֲנִי אֲנִי הוּא  
וְאֵין אֱלֹהִים עִמָּדִי

אֲנִי אֲמִית וְאֶחֱיָה  
מִחֲצַתִּי וְאֲנִי אֲרַפָּא

וְאֵין מִיָּדִי מַצִּיל:  
שִׁי <sup>40</sup>כִּי־אֲשֶׁא אֶל־שָׁמַיִם יָדִי

וְאֲמַרְתִּי חַי אֲנֹכִי לְעֹלָם:  
אִם־שְׁנוֹתַי בְּרַק חֲרָבִי

וְתֹאחֲזוּ בְּמִשְׁפֹּט יָדִי

**When . . . their might is gone** When they have become totally powerless, so that they could not possibly attribute their salvation to themselves, God will intervene to save them.

**neither bond nor free** The meaning of this idiom is uncertain. Other biblical contexts (1 Kings 14:10, 21:21; 2 Kings 9:8, 14:26) suggest that the Hebrew *atzur v'azuv* may refer to “ruler and helper.” The verse would then mean that God will act when He, or Israel, sees that Israel is without a ruler or a helper to deliver it.

**37.** When Israel reaches the point of total helplessness, God will point out how the false gods in whom it trusted are powerless—in contrast to His own power (v. 39).

**rock** Used ironically, because Israel’s false gods will have proven unable to shield it from the enemy (see v. 31).

**38. Who** The false gods who were the objects of Israel’s illicit cult. The poem—if it is not being merely sarcastic—can represent these beings as actually eating and drinking the offerings because it does not deny their existence, it denies only their divinity.

**39.** Israel’s punishment by the Lord, and the inability of its false gods to protect it, should finally make it realize that the Lord alone is the only effective divine being, the only true God. He

brought all this about, and He alone can change it.

**I, I am He** That is, “I alone am He,” I alone control events.

**There is no god beside Me** Literally, “There is no god with me.” No god has been involved in the events.

**I deal death and give life; I wounded and I will heal** The first clause is a general assertion, meaning that God alone determines people’s welfare. The second means that it is He who is doing so in this particular case.

**None can deliver from My hand** None of your false gods could protect you from My punishment, and none will be able to save the enemy from Me.

**40. I raise My hand to heaven** Raising the hand heavenward is a gesture that accompanies invoking God in an oath. Here, with God as the speaker, it is simply an idiom meaning “I swear.”

**As I live forever** In human oaths, declaring “As the LORD lives” (*hai Adonai*) is a verbal counterpart to raising the hand heavenward. God swears by saying *hai anokhi* (or *ani*), using the pronoun “I” instead of His own name.

**41. whet My flashing blade** God is pictured as a warrior preparing for battle.

**judgment** Hebrew: *mishpat*. In light of the parallel term “blade” (literally, “sword”) and the

Vengeance will I wreak on My foes,  
Will I deal to those who reject Me.  
42I will make My arrows drunk with blood—  
As My sword devours flesh—  
Blood of the slain and the captive  
From the long-haired enemy chiefs.

43O nations, acclaim His people!  
For He'll avenge the blood of His servants,  
Wreak vengeance on His foes,  
And cleanse the land of His people.

44Moses came, together with Hosea son of Nun,  
and recited all the words of this poem in the  
hearing of the people.

45And when Moses finished reciting all these  
words to all Israel, 46he said to them: Take to

אָשִׁיב נֶקֶם לְצַרִּי  
וְלִמְשַׁנְּאֵי אֲשֵׁלֵם :  
42 אֲשַׁכֵּיר חֲצֵלִי מִדָּם  
וְחֶרְבִי תֹאכַל בָּשָׂר  
מִדָּם חָלָל וְשִׁבְיָה  
מֵרֹאשׁ פְּרָעוֹת אוֹיֵב :  
43 הֲרִנְנוּ גוֹיִם עִמּוֹ  
כִּי דָם-עֲבָדָיו יִקְוֶם  
וְנֶקֶם יִשִׁיב לְצַרִּיו  
וְכִפֵּר אֶדְמָתוֹ עִמּוֹ : פ

44 וַיָּבֵא מֹשֶׁה וְיֹדָבֵב אֶת-כָּל-הַדְּבָרִי  
הַשִּׁירָה-הַזֹּאת בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם הוּא וְהוֹשִׁיעַ  
בֶּן-נּוּן :  
45 וַיְכַל מֹשֶׁה לְדַבֵּר אֶת-כָּל-הַדְּבָרִים  
הָאֵלֶּה אֶל-כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל : 46 וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם

parallelism “arrows . . . sword” in the next verse, *mishpat* here must mean a weapon of judgment, an instrument of punishment.

**My foes** The enemy, although used by God as an agent for punishing Israel, is His foe. The Bible implicitly assumes that God uses evil nations to punish Israel and that they, too, will ultimately be punished.

**wreak . . . deal** Literally, “return . . . pay back.” The enemy’s punishment will be deserved.

42. The enemy will go down to a bloody defeat. The image of the devouring sword is a common one; that of drinking arrows is unique.

**blood of the . . . captive** The blood of wounded captives or prisoners killed after capture.

**long-haired . . . chiefs** This difficult passage has been explained as implying that warriors, like Samson, let their hair grow long, either out of a belief that strength resides there or as a mark of dedication to the deity (see Num. 6:1–21).

#### CELEBRATING ISRAEL’S DELIVERANCE (v. 43)

The poem concludes with a final invocation

calling on the nations to acclaim God’s deliverance of Israel and punishment of the enemy. This invitation implies that God’s salvation of Israel has importance for the world at large.

**43. acclaim** Congratulate Israel on its deliverance and for having such a God.

**He’ll avenge the blood of His servants** The verb “redeem” is used when the avenger is a relative; “avenge,” when it is God or human authorities. Hence the use of “avenge” here may be because in this part of the poem the Israelites are no longer described as God’s children but as His “servants” (v. 36).

**cleanse the land of His people** That is, cleanse His people’s land. Presumably, the land has been polluted by Israelite blood shed by Israel’s enemy, and God will cleanse it with the blood of the enemy (see Num. 35:33). But the Hebrew *admat* (land) may be a scribal error for *ud’ma-ot*, a variant (known from ancient Ugaritic) of *d’ma-ot* (tears). Thus the clause may mean that God “will wipe away His people’s tears.”

#### CONCLUSION TO THE POEM (vv. 44–52)

44. This verse summarizes the contents of 31:22 and 30. It means, “So Moses came—either from the place where he received the instructions to teach the poem, or from where he wrote

it—and taught it to the people.”

**Hosea** That is, Joshua (see Num. 13:16).

**45. all these words** The entire Teaching, including the poem.

heart all the words with which I have warned you this day. Enjoin them upon your children, that they may observe faithfully all the terms of this Teaching. <sup>47</sup>For this is not a trifling thing for you: it is your very life; through it you shall long endure on the land that you are to possess upon crossing the Jordan.

<sup>48</sup>That very day the LORD spoke to Moses:

<sup>49</sup>Ascend these heights of Abarim to Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab facing Jericho, and view the land of Canaan, which I am giving the Israelites as their holding. <sup>50</sup>You shall die on the mountain that you are about to ascend, and shall be gathered to your kin, as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his kin; <sup>51</sup>for you both broke faith with Me among the Israelite people, at the waters of Meribath-kadesh in the wilderness of Zin, by failing to uphold My sanctity among the

שִׁימוּ לִבְבְּכֶם לְכָל-הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי  
מֵעִיד בְּכֶם הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר תִּצְוֶם אֶת-בְּנֵיכֶם  
לִשְׁמֹר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת-כָּל-דְּבָרֵי הַתּוֹרָה  
הַזֹּאת: <sup>47</sup>כִּי לֹא-דָבָר רַק הוּא מִכֶּם  
כִּי-הוּא חַיֵּיכֶם וּבְדָבָר הַזֶּה תִּתְּרִיבוּ יָמִים  
עַל-הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר אֲתֶם עֹבְרִים אֶת-  
הַיַּרְדֵּן שָׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ: פ

<sup>48</sup>וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בְּעֵצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה  
מִפְּטִיר לֵאמֹר: <sup>49</sup>עֲלֵה אֶל-הָר הָעֵבְרִים הַזֶּה  
הַר-נֶבֹו אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ מוֹאָב אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי  
יַרְחוֹ וְרֵאֵה אֶת-אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר אָנִי נֹתֵן  
לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאִחְזָה: <sup>50</sup>וּמָת בָּהָר אֲשֶׁר  
אֲתָה עֹלֶה שָׁמָּה וְהֶאֱסַף אֶל-עַמִּיךָ  
כְּאֲשֶׁר-יָמָת אֶהְרֹן אַחִיךָ בְּהָר הַהָר וַיֶּאֱסַף  
אֶל-עַמּוּיוֹ: <sup>51</sup>עַל אֲשֶׁר מְעַלְתֶּם בִּי בְּתוֹךְ  
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִי-מְרִיבַת קֹדֶשׁ מִדְּבַר-צֶן  
עַל אֲשֶׁר לֹא-קִדְשַׁתֶּם אוֹתִי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי

**46. all the words with which I have warned you** Better: “with which I have charged you.” It is clear from the rest of the verse that the words in question include commands, and because the poem contains none, the words must be those of the Teaching as a whole.

**47. trifling** The teaching is not frivolous or inconsequential, for Israel’s survival as a nation depends on it.

#### GOD SUMMONS MOSES TO HIS DEATH (vv. 48–52)

Moses has transmitted the poem to the people. Preparations for his departure resume.

**48. That very day** The day on which Moses concluded the activities just described. The only specific date previously mentioned in the book is the first day of the 11th month in the 40th year after the Exodus (1:3). On that date, Moses began to expound the Teaching (1:5); he did not necessarily finish it then. The context implies that God said this to Moses on the day he died, or perhaps the preceding day.

**49. heights of Abarim** Probably the moun-

tain range east of the Dead Sea. Mount Nebo was one of its prominent peaks. To reach it, Moses would have doubled back on the Israelites’ route the distance of one day’s march because, according to Num. 33:47–48, “the hills of Abarim, before [the city] Nebo,” was the Israelites’ last encampment before reaching their current one.

**facings Jericho** That is, east of Jericho, across the Jordan.

**view the land** This is a minor concession to Moses’ plea in 3:25, “Let me, I pray, cross over and see the good land.”

**50. die . . . be gathered to your kin** It was common belief in the ancient world that one’s spirit reunited after death with the spirits of one’s kin in Sheol, the netherworld.

**as . . . Aaron died** Six months earlier. See Num. 20:23–28, 33:38.

**on Mount Hor** Deuteronomy 10:6 gives a different place for Aaron’s death.

**51. for you both broke faith with Me** See Num. 20:1–13.

**Meribath-kadesh** The place at Kadesh where the incident in question occurred was

**47. this is not a trifling thing for you** Literally, “it is not an empty thing from you.” If anything in the Torah seems “empty” (i.e.,

unclear, meaningless), that perception is “from you,” owing to your own failure to study it thoroughly (JT Pe-ah 1:1).

Israelite people. <sup>52</sup>You may view the land from a distance, but you shall not enter it—the land that I am giving to the Israelite people.

יִשְׂרָאֵל: <sup>52</sup>כִּי מִמֵּנֶה תִּרְאֶה אֶת־הָאָרֶץ  
וְשָׁמָּה לֹא תָבוֹא אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־אֲנִי  
נֹתֵן לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: פ

called Meribah, “Quarrel Place,” commemorating the quarrel that touched it off (see Num. 20:13).

*wilderness of Zin* This is the section of the

wilderness of Paran (i.e., of the Negeb and the Sinai) that formed the southern boundary of the Promised Land.

# הַפְּטָרָה הַאֲזִינוּ

## HAFTARAH FOR HA·AZINU

2 SAMUEL 22:1–51

(*On the Shabbat before Yom Kippur, recite the haftarah on p. 1234.*)

This *haftarah* presents David's great hymn of victory and thanksgiving, sung to God "after the LORD had saved him from the hands of all his enemies and from the hands of Saul" (2 Sam. 22:1). The designation "after" also connotes finality, for the hymn appears just before the account of David's death (followed only by his "last words" in 2 Sam. 23:1–7 and final arrangements for succession in 1 Kings 1). In a grand, celebratory manner, a great military hero thanks God at the end of his life for all the protection and favor he has received. Accordingly, God is portrayed here as a Lord of battles—storming with heavenly arrows to the aid of human armies. The hymn also portrays a deeper religious spirit, with theological features found in other biblical prayers. With but minor textual variations, the whole hymn is also found in Ps. 18.

Of the terms used in the *haftarah* for God's invincible protection, none stands out as much as *tzur* (rock). It recurs in neutral designations of God as a sheltering rock (v. 3), and as a source of personal safety (v. 47). Even more striking are the formulations that virtually equate the epithet with God Himself. "Who is a rock except God?" asks David (v. 32). "Exalted be God, the rock / Who gives me victory" (v. 47). Clearly, the primordial security of mountain rocks was a preferred metaphor to express inviolable stability on earth. Indeed, great rocks reveal terrestrial forces erupting heavenward, standing firm with the face of eternity.

The image of God as an earthly *tzur* thus stands at one pole of the hymn, tracing a line that rises toward the heights. At the other pole is the image of God's descent on the wings of the storm clouds to save His people on earth. This figure is not terrestrial but atmospheric, deriving from ancient

Near Eastern depictions of storm gods riding to battle on their heavenly chariots. The cosmic arsenal includes swirling blasts of wind that stir the depths and "expose" the "bed of the sea" (v. 16), fiery bolts that furiously fly like arrows out of dark thunderheads (vv. 10–12, 15), and awesome peals of thunder that bark out an earth-shattering divine voice (v. 14). In this way did the Lord come to rescue his people at the Sea of Reeds, blasting the waters with the wind of His fury and uncovering the dry bed below (Exod. 15:8, 19). David's hymn excels in these depictions. Their dramatic vitality contrasts sharply with the scene of stability established by the mountain rocks at the beginning of the hymn. These images derive from different poles of the religious imagination. Their fusion in this song produces a visual and visceral tension that draws the reader toward the vastness of God's power that the speaker celebrates.

### RELATION OF THE HAFTARAH TO THE PARASHAH

The song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32 and David's song of thanksgiving in this *haftarah* are grand recitations in praise of God's providence in history. Each was produced near the end of a hero's life, and thus each closes an era in which that leader was the dominant figure.

The main distinction between the two compositions is one of focus. Moses' song reviews God's past beneficence for the entire nation (Deut. 32:7–14), and David's prayer thanks God for personal help against his enemies. What is more, Moses chides the people for rebellion against their divine protector (Deut. 32:15–18) and, in this context, portrays God as one who requites sinners with vengeance and doom (Deut. 32:19–43). By contrast, David believes that God's benefits to him are rewards for his faithful service and obedience ("The LORD rewarded me

according to my merit," 2 Sam. 22:21). Divine vengeance is something brought against his enemies (v. 41).

Despite the different emphases of the two songs, they are bound by common theological images and vocabulary. Most notable is the recurrent stress on integrity, blamelessness, and perfection through the term *tamim*, and on stability, power, and protection through the word *tzur*. Thus Moses' song proclaims God at the outset as "The Rock!—His deeds are perfect" (*tzur tamim po-olo*, Deut. 32:4). Faithless Israel, however, is a "crooked, perverse generation" (*dor ikkesh u-f'taltol*, v. 5) that "spurned the Rock [*tzur*] of . . . support" (v. 15) and "neglected the Rock [*tzur*] that begot" them (v. 18).

David echoes this theology from his own standpoint. He too glorifies God as a "rock" (2 Sam. 22:47) whose way is perfect (*tamim*, v. 31). God is "the rock wherein I take shelter" (v. 3), the one to whom he has "been blameless" (*tamim*, v. 24). Indeed, David proclaims God as acting "blame-

lessly" with the "blameless" hero (*im gibbor tamim titammam*, v. 26), but "with the perverse" He is "wily" (*v'im ikkesh titappal*, v. 27). As a reward for his piety, God has "kept" David's path "secure" (*tamim*, v. 33) and crowned him with success and victory. The prayer concludes with the hope that these same benefits will continue to his lineage.

These similarities are striking and reflect a common theology of God as a mighty and sustaining power, whose way is *tamim*. David maintains allegiance to his divine source and neither forgets the rock of his strength nor rebels through success or perversity. By contrast, the people of Moses turn against God, which condemns them to doom. The contrast could not be more stark. Indeed, through the liturgical juxtaposition of this *haftarah* and this *parashah* the reader is faced with two religious paths: a God-centered way of remembrance and humility and a self-centered way of forgetfulness and pride. The one gives life; the other destroys. Every spiritual seeker stands before this fateful duality.

**22** David addressed the words of this song to the LORD, after the LORD had saved him from the hands of all his enemies and from the hands of Saul. <sup>2</sup>He said:

O LORD, my crag, my fastness, my deliverer!

<sup>3</sup>O God, the rock wherein I take shelter:

My shield, my mighty champion, my fortress and refuge!

My savior, You who rescue me from violence!

<sup>4</sup>All praise! I called on the LORD,

And I was delivered from my enemies.

<sup>5</sup>For the breakers of Death encompassed me,

The torrents of Belial terrified me;

<sup>6</sup>The snares of Sheol encircled me,

The coils of Death engulfed me.

**כב** \*וַיִּדְבֹּר דָּוִד לַיהוָה אֶת־דְּבָרָיו  
הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת בַּיּוֹם הַצֵּיל יְהוָה אֶת־  
מִכְּפָף כָּל־אֵיבָיו וּמִכְּפָף שָׂאוּל: <sup>2</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר

יְהוָה סִלְעִי וּמִצְדָּתִי וּמִפְּלִטֵי־לִי:

<sup>3</sup> אֱלֹהֵי צוּרֵי אֲחֻסָּה־בּוֹ

מִגְּבֵי וּקְרָן יִשְׁעֵי מִשְׁגָּבִי וּמִנוֹסֵי

מִשְׁעֵי מַחְמָס תִּשְׁעֵנִי:

<sup>4</sup> מִהֶלֶל אֶקְרָא יְהוָה

וּמֵאֵיבֵי אֲוֹשַׁע:

<sup>5</sup> כִּי אֶפְפְּנִי מִשְׁבְּרֵי־מוֹת

נִחְלִי בְּלִיעַל יִבְעַתְּנִי:

<sup>6</sup> חֶבְלֵי שָׂאוּל סָבְנִי

קִדְמֵי מִקְשֵׁי־מוֹת:

v. 1. בכתב היד שלנו כותב בצורת שירה

**2 Samuel 22:5–6.** Flood imagery ("breakers," "torrents") combines with figures of hunting ("snares," "coils," or "traps") to express the speak-

er's sense of overpowering and hidden dangers.

**Death . . . Belial . . . Sheol** Three names for the netherworld.

Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary

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7In my anguish I called on the LORD,  
Cried out to my God;  
In His Abode He heard my voice,  
My cry entered His ears.  
8Then the earth rocked and quaked,  
The foundations of heaven shook—  
Rocked by His indignation.  
9Smoke went up from His nostrils,  
From His mouth came devouring fire;  
Live coals blazed forth from Him.  
10He bent the sky and came down,  
Thick cloud beneath His feet.  
11He mounted a cherub and flew;  
He was seen on the wings of the wind.  
12He made pavilions of darkness about Him,  
Dripping clouds, huge thunderheads;  
13In the brilliance before Him  
Blazed fiery coals.  
14The LORD thundered forth from heaven,  
The Most High sent forth His voice;  
15He let loose bolts, and scattered them;  
Lightning, and put them to rout.  
16The bed of the sea was exposed,  
The foundations of the world were laid bare  
By the mighty roaring of the LORD,  
At the blast of the breath of His nostrils.  
17He reached down from on high, He took  
me,  
Drew me out of the mighty waters;  
18He rescued me from my enemy so strong,  
From foes too mighty for me.  
19They attacked me on my day of calamity,  
But the LORD was my stay.  
20He brought me out to freedom,  
He rescued me because He was pleased with  
me.

7 בַּצָּר־לִי אֶקְרָא יְהוָה  
וְאֶל־אֱלֹהֵי אֶקְרָא  
וַיִּשְׁמַע מִהִיכְלוֹ קוֹלִי  
וַשׁוּעָתִי בְּאָזְנוֹי:  
8 וּתְגַעַשׁ וַיִּתְגַּעַשׁ וַתִּרְעַשׁ הָאָרֶץ  
מוֹסְדוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם יִרְגְּזוּ  
וַיִּתְגַּעַשׁוּ כִּי־חָרָה לוֹ:  
9 עָלָה עָשָׁן בְּאִפּוֹ  
וְאֵשׁ מִפִּיּוֹ תֹאכֵל  
גְּחָלִים בָּעֵרוּ מִמֶּנּוּ:  
10 וַיִּט שָׁמַיִם וַיִּרַד  
וַעֲרַפֵּל תַּחַת רַגְלָיו:  
11 וַיִּרְכַּב עַל־כְּרוּב וַיִּעֲף  
וַיֵּרָא עַל־כַּנְפֵי־רוּחַ:  
12 וַיִּשֶׁת חֹשֶׁן סְבִיבֹתָיו סָבּוֹת  
חֲשֵׁר־תַּמִּים עָבִי שְׁחָקִים:  
13 מִנְּגֵה נִגְדוֹ  
בָּעֵרוּ גְחָלֵי־אֵשׁ:  
14 יִרְעַם מִן־שָׁמַיִם יְהוָה  
וַעֲלִיזוֹן יִתֵּן קוֹלוֹ:  
15 וַיִּשְׁלַח חֲצִיִּם וַיִּפְיֲצֵם  
בָּרַק וַיִּהַמּם וַיִּהָם:  
16 וַיִּרְאוּ אֶפְקֵי יָם  
יִגְלוּ מִסְּדוֹת תַּבַּל  
בַּגְּעַרַת יְהוָה  
מִנְּשֹׁמֶת רוּחַ אַפּוֹ:  
17 יִשְׁלַח מִמְרוֹם יִקְחֵנִי  
יִמְשֹׁנֵי מִמֵּיִם רַבִּים:  
18 וַיִּצִּילֵנִי מֵאִיְבֵי עַז  
מִשֹּׁנְאֵי כִּי אִמְצוּ מִמֶּנִּי:  
19 יִקְדָּמֵנִי בַיּוֹם אִידֵי  
וַיְהִי יְהוָה מִשְׁעַן לִי:  
20 וַיִּצַּא לְמַרְחָב אֹתִי  
יַחֲלִצֵנִי כִּי־חָפֵץ בִּי:

11. *He was seen* Hebrew: *va-yera*. The version in Ps. 18:11 has *va-yeide* (He was gliding, swooping)—more appropriate to the atmospheric figures used here.

21The LORD rewarded me according to my merit,

He requited the cleanness of my hands.

22For I have kept the ways of the LORD  
And have not been guilty before my God;

23I am mindful of all His rules  
And have not departed from His laws.

24I have been blameless before Him,  
And have guarded myself against sinning—

25And the LORD has requited my merit,  
According to my purity in His sight.

26With the loyal You deal loyally;  
With the blameless hero, blamelessly.

27With the pure You act in purity,  
And with the perverse You are wily.

28To humble folk You give victory,  
And You look with scorn on the haughty.

29You, O LORD, are my lamp;  
The LORD lights up my darkness.

30With You, I can rush a barrier,  
With my God, I can scale a wall.

31The way of God is perfect,  
The word of the LORD is pure.  
He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him.

32Yea, who is a god except the LORD,  
Who is a rock except God?—

33The God, my mighty stronghold,  
Who kept my path secure;

34Who made my legs like a deer's,  
And set me firm on the heights;

35Who trained my hands for battle,  
So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze!

36You have granted me the shield of Your  
protection

And Your providence has made me great.

37You have let me stride on freely,

21 יִגְמְלֵנִי יְהוָה בְּצִדְקָתִי  
כְּבָר יְדֵי יֹשִׁיב לִי:

22 כִּי שָׁמַרְתִּי דְרָכֵי יְהוָה  
וְלֹא רָשַׁעְתִּי מֵאֱלֹהֵי:

23 כִּי כָל־מִשְׁפָּטוֹ מִשְׁפָּטִיו לִנְגִדִי  
וְחֻקְתָּיו לֹא־אָסוּר מִמֶּנּוּ:

24 וְאֶהְיֶה תָמִים לוֹ  
וְאֶשְׁתַּמְרָה מֵעוֹנֵי:

25 וַיִּשָּׁב יְהוָה לִי בְּצִדְקָתִי  
כְּבָרִי לִנְגַד עֵינָיו:

26 עִם־חֹסֵיד תִּתְחַסֵּד  
עִם־גִּבּוֹר תָּמִים תִּתַּמֵּם:

27 עִם־נָבֵר תִּתְבַּר  
וְעִם־עֲקֹשׁ תִּתְפַּל:

28 וְאֶת־עַם עֲנִי תוֹשִׁיעַ  
וְעֵינֶיךָ עַל־רָמִים תִּשְׁפִּיל:

29 כִּי־אֲתָה נִירִי יְהוָה  
וַיהוָה יִגְיֶה חֹשְׁפֵי:

30 כִּי בָכָה \* אַרְוִץ גָּדוּד  
בְּאֱלֹהֵי אֲדֹלְג־שׁוֹר:

31 הָאֵל תָּמִים דְּרָבּוֹ  
אָמַרְתָּ יְהוָה צְרוּפָה

מִגֵּן הוּא לְכָל הַחֹסִים בּוֹ:  
32 כִּי מִי־אֵל מִבְּלַעְדֵי יְהוָה

וּמִי צוֹר מִבְּלַעְדֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ:  
33 הָאֵל מֵעוֹזֵי חֵיל

וַיִּתֵּר תָּמִים דְּרוֹכֵי דְרָכֵי:

34 מְשׁוּדָה רַגְלֵי רַגְלֵי כְּאֵילוֹת  
וְעַל בְּמוֹתֵי יַעֲמֹדֵנִי:

35 מִלְפָּד יְדֵי לְמִלְחָמָה  
וְנַחַת קִשְׁת־נְחוּשָׁה זְרַעְתִּי:

36 וַתִּתֵּן־לִי מִגֵּן יִשְׁעֶךָ  
וְעֵנִתְךָ תִּרְבִּנִי:

37 תִּרְחִיב צַעְדֵי תַחְתָּנִי

And my feet have not slipped.

<sup>38</sup>I pursued my enemies and wiped them out,  
I did not turn back till I destroyed them.

<sup>39</sup>I destroyed them, I struck them down;  
They rose no more, they lay at my feet.

<sup>40</sup>You have girt me with strength for battle,  
Brought low my foes before me,

<sup>41</sup>Made my enemies turn tail before me,  
My foes—and I wiped them out.

<sup>42</sup>They looked, but there was none to deliver;  
To the LORD, but He answered them not.

<sup>43</sup>I pounded them like dust of the earth,  
Stamped, crushed them like dirt of the streets.

<sup>44</sup>You have rescued me from the strife of  
peoples,

Kept me to be a ruler of nations;  
Peoples I knew not must serve me.

<sup>45</sup>Aliens have cringed before me,  
Paid me homage at the mere report of me.

<sup>46</sup>Aliens have lost courage  
And come trembling out of their fastnesses.

<sup>47</sup>The LORD lives! Blessed is my rock!

Exalted be God, the rock  
Who gives me victory;

<sup>48</sup>The God who has vindicated me  
And made peoples subject to me,

<sup>49</sup>Rescued me from my enemies,  
Raised me clear of my foes,

Saved me from lawless men!

<sup>50</sup>For this I sing Your praise among the na-  
tions

And hymn Your name:

וְלֹא מָעְדוּ קַרְסְלִי:

<sup>38</sup> אֲרִדְפָה אִיבֵי וְאֲשַׁמְדֵם

וְלֹא אָשׁוּב עַד־כְּלוֹתֵם:

<sup>39</sup> וְאָכַלְתֶּם וְאָמַחְצֶתֶם

וְלֹא יִקוּמוּן וַיִּפְּלוּ תַחַת רַגְלִי:

<sup>40</sup> וַתִּזְרַנֵּי \* חֵיל לְמַלְחָמָה

תִּכְרִיעַ קַמִּי תַחְתָּנִי:

<sup>41</sup> וְאִיבֵי תַתָּה לִי עָרָף

מִשְׁנֹאֵי וְאֶצְמִיתֶם:

<sup>42</sup> יִשְׁעוּ וְאִין מִשִּׁיעַ

אֶל־יְהוָה וְלֹא עָנָם:

<sup>43</sup> וְאֲשַׁחֲקֶם כַּעֲפַר־אָרֶץ

כְּטִיט־חוֹצוֹת אֲדָקֶם אֲרַקְעֶם:

<sup>44</sup> וַתִּפְּלִטְנִי מִרִיבֵי עַמִּי\*

תִּשְׁמְרֵנִי לְרֹאשׁ גּוֹיִם

עִם לֹא־יִדְעֵתַי יַעֲבֹדְנִי:

<sup>45</sup> בָּנִי נָכַר יִתְכַחֲשׁוּ־לִי

לְשִׁמוֹעַ אֲזִין יִשְׁמְעוּ לִי:

<sup>46</sup> בָּנִי נָכַר יִבְלוּ

וַיִּחְגְּרוּ מִמִּסְגְּרוֹתֵם:

<sup>47</sup> חַיֵּי־יְהוָה וּבְרוּךְ צוּרִי

וַיֵּרֶם אֱלֹהֵי צוּר

יִשְׁעֵי:

<sup>48</sup> הָאֵל הַנִּתָּן נִקְמַת לִי

וּמוֹרִיד עַמִּים תַּחְתָּנִי:

<sup>49</sup> וּמוֹצִיאֵי מֵאִיבֵי

וּמִקְמֵי תְרוֹמֹתַי

מֵאִישׁ חֲמָסִים תַּצִּילֵנִי:

<sup>50</sup> עַל־כֵּן אוֹדֶךָ יְהוָה בְּגוֹיִם

וְלִשְׁמֶךָ אֲזַמְּרָ:

v. 40. חסר א'

v. 44. סבירין ומטעין "עמים", ובנוסח אחר "עם" וגם בנוסח אחר "עמים"

**44. peoples** Translated as in some manuscripts and the Septuagint; the Hebrew text above (like most manuscripts and the printed editions) reads "my people" [Transl.].

<sup>51</sup>Tower of victory to His king,  
Who deals graciously with His anointed,  
With David and his offspring evermore.

<sup>51</sup>מגדיל מגדול ישועות מלכו  
ועשה חסד למשיחו  
לדוד ולזרעו עד-עולם: פ

**51. Tower of victory** This follows the text as read (*k'rei*): *migdol* (tower). The text as written (*k'tiv*) preserves the word as a verb, *magdil*, in a phrase meaning: “He accords wondrous victories” (as in Ps. 18:51). The image of God as a tower does not occur earlier in the song, although it is not out of keeping with it. Nevertheless, one

would expect a verbal form here, matching the next part of the verse, “Who deals graciously.”

Both the *k'rei* and the *k'tiv* are preserved liturgically, at the close of the full grace after meals. The latter is recited on weekdays; the former is recited on *Shabbat* and festivals.

**deals graciously** As promised (2 Sam. 7:15).