



THIS WEEK'S TORAH PORTION

## DEUTERONOMY 32

*Parashat Ha'Azinu* / פְּרַשְׁת הָאֲזִינוּ

### In this week's guide...

Our **COMMENTARY** offers a biblical foundation for hope in turbulent times—our God is the Rock! In this insightful analysis of the “Song of Moses,” you may discover a name of God that is not commonly used. But, as Rabbi Jason would famously say, THERE’S MORE! This divine name invites us to look beyond this moment in Israel’s history and see the fulfillment of that history in a radical Rabbi some 1,500 years later: *Yeshua*..... 1

The **NEW TESTAMENT TIE-IN** continues this theme of names and explores a title that appears only four times in Scripture. As we study the meaning of this name, it seems like an odd choice, but what if that was the point? God calls us into the best version of who He created us to be AND has provided **the Way** to get there!..... 2

The **HEBREW WORD STUDY** unpacks one of the most unpopular (or at least, uncomfortable) topics: judgment. The unbelieving world often accuses the Body of Messiah of being “judgmental.” Many of us have experienced the scars of being judged by moralistic people. But “judgment” is an integral aspect of God’s work. How can we better understand this?..... 3

### OVERVIEW

The word *Ha'azinu* literally means “give ear,” an expression meaning “Listen to this.” The Song of Moses, which comprises most of this *parashat*, begins with the words “Give ear (*Ha'azinu*), O heavens, and let me speak” (Deuteronomy 32:1). The Song of Moses is a prophetic oracle warning Israel about apostasy to come and the resulting wrath of God. The song looks far into the future, even envisioning the Messianic advent amid rich and frightening apocalyptic imagery. After the conclusion of the song, Moses is told to ascend Mount Nebo and overlook the Promised Land before dying.

FUSION GLOBAL WITH RABBI JASON  
Weekly Torah Portion – *Parashat Ha'Azinu* / פרשת האזינו

Deuteronomy 32

COMMENTARY

by Staff Contributor

This week, we read *Parashat Ha'azinu*, a poem/song Moses spoke over the Nation of Israel. The concluding Torah portion of Deuteronomy follows, which includes Moses' final blessing before eventually ascending Mount Nebo, where he departs the *Olam HaZeh* ("the world that is").

In *Parashat Ha'azinu*, comprised of only one chapter—Deuteronomy 32, Moses describes to Israel how they will inevitably become "comfortable" with the blessings of *ADONAI* in the Promised Land. Consequently, such complacency will cause them to forget that *ADONAI* was the source of blessing and protection they would be enjoying. Israel will ultimately take their relationship with *HaShem* and His love for them for granted and will end up chasing after the gods of the land of Canaan (which they've never known).

One of the things I love about this *parsha* is the description of God being *Tzoreinu*, our Rock. The Hebrew word *tzor* means a rock, refuge, or strength, and this is the perfect image of *HaShem*. He is our Rock of Refuge and our Strength. A rock is solid, and it is hard. Historically, humans have used them for everything from crushing grain to weaponry, building houses, and destroying cities. David used a rock to slay the giant. It was through a rock that *ADONAI* provided water for *B'nei Yisrael*. It was also a rock that was the image used to describe the foundation of the Body of Messiah to *Shimon Kefa* (Peter).



Masada fortress (Judean Desert / Israel)

Through Moses, God called on Israel to remember Him as their Rock of Refuge. He told them to compare the gods made by their hands from rock to the Rock who spoke all creation into existence. God's ultimate call to the Children of Israel in this *parsha* is to return to Him, to remember Him, and to find their refuge from the torments of the world around them in the only Rock they can depend upon—*ADONAI Tzoreinu*.

This *parsha* also has a connection to one of my favorite Psalms. Moses' allusion to *ADONAI Tzoreinu* is a beautiful reminder that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the mighty fortress we see in Psalm 46. Rocks were the primary building material of ancient fortresses for their foundations and walls of defense.

Much like *Parasha Ha'Azinu*, Psalm 46 reminds us that *ADONAI* is our **fortress** (*misgav*—used in Psalm 46:8, 12), which is an intentional place of defense and protection, but He is also our **refuge** (*machaseh*—used in Psalm 46:2) that we can run to when we realize we are out of His will and the enemy is on our heels. As believers in Messiah, this word picture of God as a Rock also has prophetic significance. As we read in Psalm 118:22,

The stone *which* the builders rejected  
Has become the chief cornerstone. (NKJV)



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*Parashat Ha'Azinu*

I say “prophetic” because this verse is speaking of *Yeshua*, who was the Rock the builders rejected. Hence, this Psalm looks ahead to the writers of the *Brit Chadashah* (New Testament) who quoted it repeatedly in direct reference to *Yeshua* (cf. Mark 12:10; Acts 4:11; Ephesians 2:20); it also points back to this *parsha*, which reveals *HaShem* as the Rock of Israel and, tragically, Israel’s numerous rejections of Him throughout her history.

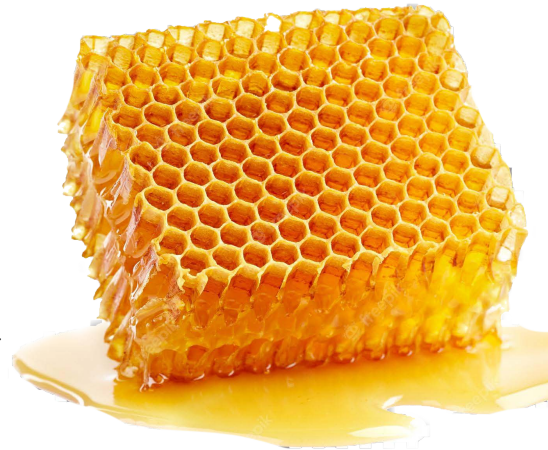
## NEW TESTAMENT TIE-IN

*by Staff Contributor*

Deuteronomy 32 contains the “Song of Moses.” For forty-three verses, we read the epic account of God’s loving care for Israel, Israel’s idolatrous rejection of the Lord, and prophetic hints of the exile. In it, Moses presents glimpses into the heart of God Himself—the “jealousy” He feels in response to Israel’s unfaithfulness, as well as the shameless intensity of His wrath. For example: “See now that I, I am He! There are no other gods beside Me. I bring death and give life, I have wounded but I will heal, and none can rescue from My hand” (Deuteronomy 32:39).

There is some significant tension in this passage. We see a God who not only heals but wounds (and brings death). And...there is absolutely no rescue from Him! It’s safe to say that not many kids memorized this sobering passage in Sunday School.

If you read the Song of Moses carefully, you will notice the creative and poetic references to the nation of Israel in a singular sense. Consider, “*ADONAI alone guided him*” (v. 12) and “*He suckled him with honey from a rock*” (v. 13). If the reader happens to be wondering who this person is, we finally see “his” name: “*Jeshurun grew fat and kicked—you got fat, you grew thick, you gorged! He forsook God who made him. He mocked the Rock of his salvation*” (v. 15 *emphasis added*). “Jeshurun” is a proper name, used exclusively for the nation of Israel, in four passages.<sup>i</sup> The meaning of Hebrew names is often essential to a faithful understanding of a given passage, and this is an excellent example of that. *Jeshurun* means “upright, law-keeping, upholder of justice,” and it comes from the word *yashar*, which means “to go straight” or “to make a way straight.”<sup>ii</sup>



There’s so much that we could examine, but let’s focus on two fundamental points for this brief moment. First, the context of the passage makes it all but certain that use of *Jeshurun* is deeply ironic. God is making it clear that time and again, Israel has been anything but upright and “straight.” Second, the use of singular-masculine grammar (rather than plural-neutral) in reference to Israel is thought-provoking: could this have a connection to *Yeshua*?

We know that *Yeshua* fully-embodied the meaning of *Jeshurun*, as He was without sin (cf. 1 Peter 2:22) and is “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15) in whom there is “no variation or shifting shadow” (James 1:17). *Yeshua* is the embodiment of uprightness and straightness. AND *Yeshua* stands in sharp contrast to *Jeshurun*’s depiction in the Song of Moses, which describes him as the one who got fat on “the kidneys of wheat, and blood of grapes” (v. 14). *Yeshua*’s bread was His broken body that He gave to establish a covenant with His disciples. The cup our Lord drank from was one of death (cf. Mark 14:36). *Yeshua* asked His Father if there was any way for “this cup” to pass, yet “He had come to drink it for everyone, in order to cancel, through this chalice, everyone’s debt, a debt that the prophets and martyrs could not pay with their death.”<sup>iii</sup>



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*Parashat Ha'Azinu*



*Jeshurun's* ironic failures are no cause for finger-pointing (*all* have sinned, right?), but they do make *Yeshua's* faithfulness shine that much brighter. Though *Jeshurun* rejected the straight path with indulgent pursuits, *Yeshua* successfully endured every kind of temptation (*cf.* Hebrews 4:15) for our good. He lived an upright life, and through His death and resurrection has opened up the “straight” way for us.

“Because **strait** is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:14 KJV *emphasis added*).

## HEBREW WORD STUDY: *mishpat* (“just”) / משפט

*by Staff Contributor*

“The Rock—blameless is His work. Indeed, all His ways are **just**. God of faithfulness without iniquity, righteous and upright is He.” –Deuteronomy 32:4 (*emphasis added*)

We can translate two Hebrew words into English as “just.” It is interesting that both appear in this verse, giving us a deeper understanding of what the Bible means by “justice.” One of these words is *tzedek* (צדק), often translated as “righteousness.” But the word we are looking at here is *mishpat*, which derives from the root word, *shafat* (שפט).

The classic study reference, Strong’s Concordance, defines *mishpat* as: “to judge, i.e. pronounce sentence (for or against); by implication, to vindicate or punish; by extension, to govern; to litigate (literally or figuratively): abstractly, justice, including a participant’s right or privilege (statutory or customary).”<sup>iv</sup> As mentioned above, there are two Hebrew words typically translated “justice”—*tzedek* and the word we are currently considering, *shafat*—and it is necessary to discuss how they interact. Western Civilization often visualizes justice with a set of scales. *Tzedek*, then, would be the measure of whether the scales are tilted the proper way. *Shafat* is correcting those scales should they tip in the wrong direction. It is the putting of things to rights. Hence, the Psalmist declared, “**Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne**” (Psalm 89:15 *emphasis added*). Thrones being the symbol of authority, righteousness (*tzedek*) and justice (*shafat*) are the foundation of that throne, that authority. You essentially can’t have one without the other.



The Bible also says, “God will bring every deed into judgment (*vemishpat*), including everything that is hidden, whether it is good or evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:14). Paul echoed this theme of divine justice in one of his epistles: “Each one’s work will become clear. For the Day will show it, because it is to be revealed by fire; and the fire itself will test each one’s work—what sort it is” (1 Corinthians 3:13). Which brings us to a critical point: the pinnacle of God’s justice, His ultimate *mishpat*, will be the final resurrection.

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Messiah, so that each one may receive what is due for the things he did while in the body—whether good or bad.” –2 Corinthians 5:10

# TORAH PORTIONS

## Parashat Ha'Azinu

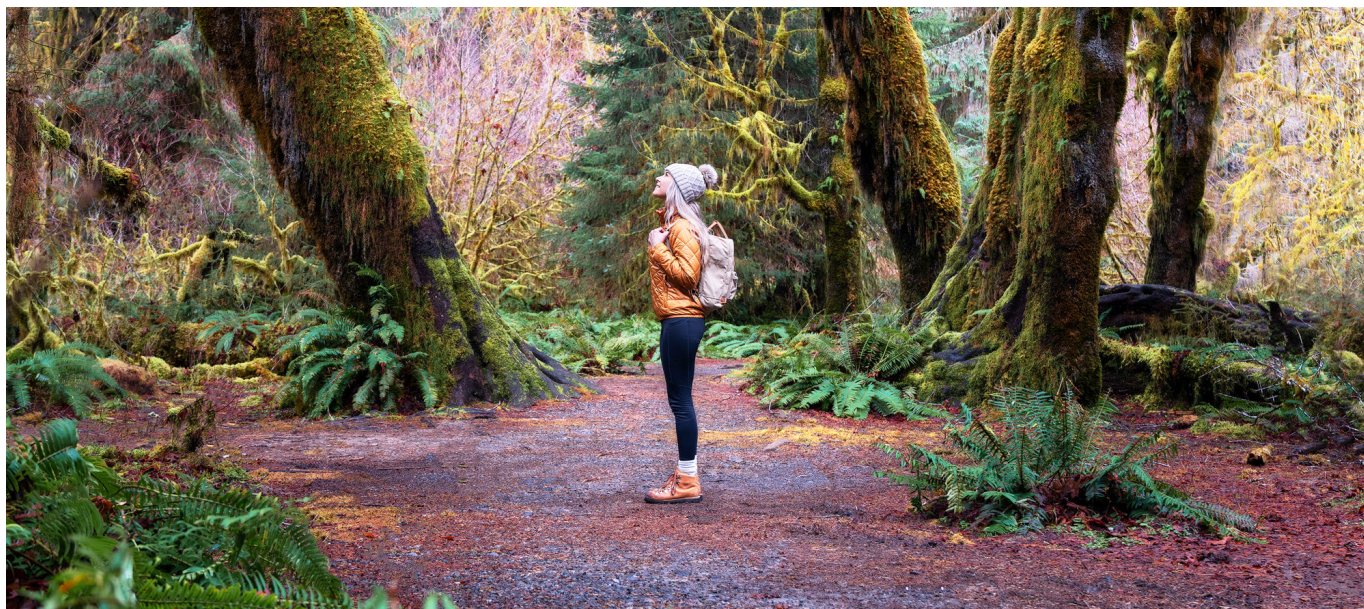
**Justice, as revealed in God's perfect judgment, is coming for us all.**

But we should note that divine justice is not reserved just for humans. Every created being—physical and spiritual—will experience this dimension of God's love. Notice what we see in Psalm 82:1, **“God takes His stand in the assembly of God. He judges among the ‘gods.’”** As we see in Revelation 20, each will be given their due. The glorious aspect of this final scenario is that we have already received our “justification” (in other words, we are pre-judged to the good) through the sacrifice of the Messiah.

**“And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after this judgment, so also Messiah, was offered once to bear the sins of many. He will appear a second time, apart from sin, to those eagerly awaiting Him for salvation.”**—Hebrews 9:27-28

For this reason, we should not fear God's judgment, but like all of creation, we should see it as a time of rejoicing and great joy. As Psalm 96:12-13 declares,

**“Let the land exult—and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy— before ADONAI, for He is coming! For He is coming to judge [lishpot/לשפוט] the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples in His faithfulness.”**



Yet again, Paul's writing builds on this theme of rejoicing at the prospects of the final judgment: **“For we know that the whole creation groans together and suffers birth pains until now— and not only creation, but even ourselves. We ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the *Ruach*, groan inwardly as we eagerly wait for adoption—the redemption of our body”** (Rom 8:22-23). Hopefully, this analysis of *mishpat* reveals that God's justice (as expressed in divine judgment) is not something we should fear but embrace and even long for!

Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *Tree of Life Version*.



Rabbi Jason & Fusion Global present  
**HEBREW WORD STUDY**

**משפט**

**משפט / mishpat:** n. masc. **judgment, justice.** *The term is often used to express both the attribute of justice as well as the execution of judgment in litigation.*

Derived from the root שפט (*shafat*), this term can be used to describe the characteristic that governing authorities, kings, or judges should exhibit (Isa 32:1; Mic 3:1). Earthly authorities must conduct themselves with integrity and ensure that justice is carried out in accordance with [ADONAI'S] standards....In relation to final judgment, *mishpat* often describes how [ADONAI] will decisively intervene to procure either punishment upon his enemies or justice and reward for the righteous (Psa 1:5; Eccl 12:14; Isa 34:5).

taken from the *Lexham Theological Wordbook*

[fusionglobal.org](http://fusionglobal.org)

**THOUGHTS for REFLECTION**

Take some time this week to prayerfully consider and discuss with friends:

- *ADONAI Tzoreinu*, God our Rock of Refuge and our Strength. Take a few moments to reflect on the history of your journey with the Lord. We've all had highs and lows, glorious mountain top experiences and unsettling treks through the valley. How have you experienced *ADONAI Tzoreinu*? Write down your testimony and look for an opportunity to encourage someone else with it this week!
- In many circles, Christians have a bad reputation when comes to the idea of judgment or judging. Many believers have been on the "wrong end" of judgment in their local church. Due to these (and other) factors, we might be prone to think of judgment as inherently bad and then project this negativity onto God and His judgment. How do you immediately respond to verses about God's judgment, negatively or positively? Why do you think that is? What are the risks (if any) of having positive feelings about God's judgment?

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*Parashat Ha'Azinu*

**NEXT WEEK'S READINGS:** *Sukkot* 5784 / סוכות

**TORAH**

*Sunday* / Leviticus 22:26-33

*Monday* / Leviticus 23:1-3

*Tuesday* / Leviticus 23:4-8

*Wednesday* / Leviticus 23:9-14

*Thursday* / Leviticus 23:15-22

*Friday* / Leviticus 23:23-32

*Saturday* / Leviticus 23:33-44

**Prophetic Reading (*Haftarah*):** Zechariah 14:1-21

**New Covenant Reading:** John 7:1-18

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<sup>i</sup> Harris, R. L., Archer, G. L., & Waltke, B. K. (2004), *Theological wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press), 418.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid, 417.

<sup>iii</sup> Arthur A. Just and Thomas C. Oden, eds. *Luke*. vol. 3 of *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*. ICCS/Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 341.

<sup>iv</sup> "H8199 - Šāpāṭ - Strong's Hebrew Lexicon (KJV)." Blue Letter Bible. Accessed September 11, 2023. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h8199/kjv/wlc/0-1/>.