

A Song, A Blessing, and Funeral

Week 11

Scripture: Deut. 32-34

Sermon Series: *Deuteronomy: The Final Words of Moses*

Topic: Moses, Song, Blessing, Funeral

Introduction

Today we come to the final three chapters of Deuteronomy. In them, we find *a song, a blessing, and a funeral*. Moses teaches Israel a song, he pronounces a blessing over them, and then God alone attends Moses' funeral.

Father, open our eyes to see wonderful things from your word. Open our minds to understand what we see.

Open hearts to delight in what we understand. Through Christ we pray.



Today we will complete our journey through the book of Deuteronomy. We are now at the last day of Moses' life.

A Song (32)

Chapter 32 contains the song that Moses and Joshua wrote at the command of God. God had called Moses and Joshua out to the tent of meeting¹ and explained his reasoning.

¹⁹ "Now therefore write² 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. ²⁰ For when I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to give to their fathers, and they have eaten and are full and grown fat, they will turn to other gods and serve them, and despise me and break my covenant. ²¹ And when many evils

¹ Deuteronomy 31:14.

² The imperative "write" in Dt 31:19 is plural, implying that both Moses and Joshua are to write this song together. Edward J. Woods, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. David G. Firth, vol. 5, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2011), 304.

and troubles have come upon them, this song shall confront them as a witness (for it will live unforgotten in the mouths of their offspring).

Deuteronomy 31:19-21 (ESV)

Songs are powerful. Songs lodge deeper in our brains than do mere facts. Research has shown that dementia and Alzheimer's patients who are not be able to recall the names of their own children are still able to remember the lyrics of songs they learned as children.³ Songs are not merely words, but in they mind they are words attached to experiences and emotions that surround the times when they are sung. God told Moses and Joshua to write a song that would be a perpetual witness against the certain faithlessness he knew would plague Israel's future. The song they wrote is recorded in chapter 32, which most Bible's simply refer to as "the Song of Moses." Oh how I wish we had a recording of this song.

Introduction (vs.1-2)

Moses begins by calling forth two witnesses, the *heavens* and the *earth*⁴ (v.1). He expresses the desire that his teaching *drop as the rain* and his words fall *like gentle rain upon tender grass*. His purpose is that his teaching would be productive and fruitful, and like water, bring life and goodness to his listeners.

The Greatness of Yahweh (3-4)

The song then moves to a proclamation of the great *name, Yahweh*. A name worthy to be proclaimed and praised. Moses declares him to be *The Rock*. Five times in this song Yahweh is referred to as *Rock*. A rock is stable, steady, unchangeable, and unmoving. This Rock, his *work is perfect*. His ways are *just*. He is *faithful, without iniquity*, and completely *upright*. There is no fault in this great God.

The Faithfulness of Israel (5-9)

Though Yahweh is great, Israel is not. In strange turn of events, *they have dealt corruptly with him*. Those who would respond in this way are certainly *blemished*. They assuredly are *a crooked and twisted generation*. Why *repay* Yahweh's faithfulness with such *senseless* faithlessness? They are acting like they are not his children? And yet from the beginning of time God chose to be their Father. Yahweh selected Israel to be his children out of all the nations of the earth. He loved them and selected them to be his *allotted heritage* and permeant *portion*.

Yahweh's Protection and Provision (10-14)

For this reason Yahweh *protected* them and *provided* for them. He rescued Israel out of a dangerous *howling wilderness*. He stretched out his strong arms out and *encircled* them and protected them from wretched wind of wilderness weather. He cherished

³ Source: https://www.wfit.org/health-care/2024-03-15/music-rejuvenates-the-culture-history-and-memories-of-dementia-patients?utm_source=chatgpt.com accessed 20 March 2026.

⁴ See also Deuteronomy 30:19; 31:28.

them *as the apple of his eye*. Moses likened God to a mother eagle *fluttering over her young* with strong and protective *wings*. She carried them when they needed to be *carried* and she alone *guides* them to safety. She lifted them up on her *pinions* above the *heights of the land* and fed them with the best *produce of the field*. Yahweh brought food to them from normally barren places. He nourished them with *honey from the rock*. This may be a reference to manna since it tasted like “*wafers made with honey*.”⁵ He fed them with *oil* and *milk*, the fattest of *lambs* and *goats*, the *finest of wheat* and the *best wine*. Yahweh lovingly provided them with all they needed.

Israel's Rebellion (15-18)

But Israel did not respond in kind. In their blessing they turned away in rebellion. Instead of clinging to God, they *kicked* against him. They grew *fat* and *forsook* God *who made them*. They *mocked*, instead of magnifying the *Rock of their salvation*. Their actions were *strange*. They embraced *demonic non-gods*. They abandoned the God they knew by replacing him with non-gods they did not know. They were *unmindful* the *Rock* who *bore* them and they *forgot* the God who *gave them birth*. This *abominable* rebellion *provoked* God's *anger* and *stirred* his *jealousy*. How could he allow his bride to embrace what would lead to certain death?

Yahweh's Wrath (19-25)

The LORD sees all things and when *his sons and daughters spurred* him, then he *hid his face* from them. He would not look upon their *perversity*. They had become completely *faithless* to the LORD by worshiping *idols*. Therefore the LORD would look away from them. They made the LORD *jealous* with their *non-gods* they had not known, therefore the LORD would make them *jealous* with a *non-people* who *he* had not known. His anger would be so intense that it would burn like a *fire* that would *devour* the *earth*, even the *foundations of the mountains*. God promised to *heap disasters* upon them, like enemy *arrows*, *wasting hunger*, and *poisonous pestilence*. In addition to this, he would send on them *vicious* and *venomous* beasts, along with slaying *swords* outside and *night terrors* Inside. These curses will come upon the young and old, and both men and women.

Yahweh Relents, Because of Folly (26-35)

However, there will be an end to the LORD's wrath. God will not completely destroy Israel. He would restrain his anger because their enemies might *misunderstand* what was actually happening. If God totally wiped Israel out because of their sinfulness, then their enemies might wrongly presume *our hand is triumphant*. (This was the argument Moses used to save Israel from God's wrath after they failed to enter the Promised Land Num 14:16.)

⁵ Exodus 16:31.

These godless nations are *void of counsel* and have *no understanding in them*.⁶ Thus, they might mistakenly think that their own strength was the decisive reason for Israel's destruction, rather than God's punitive power. *If* these pagan nations were *wise*, then they would perceive this was God's heavy hand upon Israel for their unfaithfulness and they would *discern their latter end!*⁷ How could *one Israelite* have had the strength to *chase a thousand* of them and *two* Israelites have *put to flight a thousand*?⁸ The only sensible answer is the *Rock* of Israel *had sold them* into the hands of Israel, the *LORD* God of all *had given them* over to Israel's power.⁹ "*Their rock is not as our Rock.*" The gods of the nations are not God at all! The *enemies* of Israel *are by themselves*.¹⁰ They are alone. They have no divine support. Their roots are sourced out of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*. Their faulty faith in their idols is *poisonous* and their trust in their false gods is *venomous*.¹¹

God's wrath against the godless nations is *laid up in storage* and *sealed* away in God's *treasuries*. The day of judgment of all nations will surely *come swiftly* for their *calamity is close at hand*. The LORD declares, "*Vengeance is mine, I will repay.*"¹²

Yahweh Vindicates and Saves His People (36-43)

When Israel realizes that *all* her *power is gone*, and there is no one to save them, '*bond or free*,'¹³ then the *LORD* will come and *vindicate his people*. Yahweh will show *compassion on his servants*.¹⁴ God's compassion begins with a call for contemplation. In their powerless state, God asks Israel, "*Where are your gods? Where is the 'rock' in which you took refuge? Where are those false gods now, those who ate your sacrifices and drank your wine offerings? Will they now rise up and help you? Have they come to protect you?*" The questions painfully, yet accurately reveal the truth, which Yahweh himself now speaks,

"See now that I, even I, am he,
and there is no god beside me;
I kill and I make alive;
I wound and I heal;
and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.
Deuteronomy 32:39 (ESV)

⁶ Deuteronomy 32:28.

⁷ Deuteronomy 32:29.

⁸ Leviticus 26:7-8.

⁹ Deuteronomy 32:30.

¹⁰ Deuteronomy 32:31.

¹¹ Deuteronomy 32:32-33.

¹² Deuteronomy 32:34-35; Romans 12:19; Hebrews 10:30.

¹³ This phrase often refers to leaders, see 1 Kings 14:10; 21:21; 2 Kings 14:26.

¹⁴ Deuteronomy 32:36.

There is only one God and his name is Yahweh. He alone has authority over life and death, and sickness and health. He alone is sovereign over this world which he alone created. And *He alone has come to rescue Israel*. Though they rebelled against him and he disciplined them for it, yet his love for them will stand. *At the end of their utter rebellion, Yahweh stands before them in love, with his arms wide open, waiting to welcome them*. Surely, this people will see him for who he truly is and respond to his unfailing love and devotion to Israel!

Yahweh promises to take vengeance on his adversaries and repay those who hate him. At the time he has appointed, he will utterly destroy all his enemies. Therefore, there is only one conclusion,

“Rejoice with him, O heavens;
bow down to him, all gods,
for he avenges the blood of his children
and takes vengeance on his adversaries.
He repays those who hate him
and cleanses his people’s land.”
Deuteronomy 32:43 (ESV)

With these final words, this song is ended. After Moses and Joshua recited all these words in the hearing of people (32:44-45), and as a kind of postscript, Moses said,

⁴⁶ “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.”
Deuteronomy 32:46-47 (ESV)

Summary

The law, being stored up beside the ark of the covenant and read once every seven years, runs the risk of being forgotten. Since we know Israel’s history, we know for a fact that it was forgotten. However, one song can live unforgotten in the minds and mouths of a people. Moses (and Joshua), at God’s command, wrote this song as brief testimony of God’s covenant love for Israel. From the beginning of creation, to their time in the wilderness, through their blessings as a nation, their rebellion, idolatry, spiritual adultery, discipline, devastation, and eventual restoration, his love for them never failed. God is their *Rock*, whose love for Israel is unmovable. They will forever be “*the apple of his eye*.” God’s love for his own name becomes the foundation of Israel’s salvation as well as the final destruction of their enemies. God is truly the one and only God, therefore this song calls upon the wise to rejoice in him or else be repaid with vengeance, which he will one day visit upon all those who reject him.

A Blessing (33)

After reciting the words of the song in ears of Israel, God told Moses that the day of his death had arrived (Dt 32:48-50). He instructed Moses to ascend Mount Nebo and have a look at the Promised Land, which the people of Israel were to enter into.

This is what Moses would have seen. This is the view from atop Mt. Nebo.

God restated the reason that Moses was prevented from entering, which was because he “broke faith” with the LORD (Dt 32:51).

Before climbing the mountain and laying down his life, Moses pronounced a blessing over the nation, blessing them tribe by tribe. Jacob did the same thing before he died (Gn 49), just as his father Isaac had blessed him (Gn 27), and as his father Abraham had blessed him (Gn 25:5, 11). Paternal blessings were significant in OT and expressed more than mere happy wishes of the departing, but rather they communicated and carried divine favor.



These blessings are introduced by an editorial comment, which was most likely written by Joshua and refers to Moses as, “*the man of God* (33:1).” Moses begins and ends this blessing with a few verses of doxology (33:2-5, 26-29), which praise God for his unique character and love for Israel.

He opens his blessings by recalling God’s visitation of them at Mt. Sinai and pictures *God as the great King of Israel* (i.e. Jeshurun) and head of all the tribes of Israel. Moses then goes on to speak a blessing unique to each tribe, some being longer while others are shorter. He gives the greatest prominence to the tribes of Levi and Joseph, with all others being in similar length. Simeon is not included for reasons that are not known, but may indicate that it was very small at this time.

Moses concludes the blessing by turning attention back to God, who is *the eternal God, the dwelling place of Israel* and the One who carries Israel with *everlasting arms*. The result of such love, can only be joy.

Happy are you, O Israel!
Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD,
the shield of your help,
the sword of your triumph!
Deuteronomy 33:29 (ESV)

This conclusion is like Moses' way of wooing the people to God, to keep them near him and happily abiding in his presence, since God alone is the source of all blessing. It is amazing that Moses' final words to this people is a blessing and not shouting in anger saying, "You rebels!"¹⁵ *It's your fault I can't enter the Promised Land!!!* Like a loving father, he seeks to bless them and see them enjoy the full blessings that only LORD God can give!

A Funeral (34)

The final chapter of this book is the scene of a private funeral. Moses ascends alone to *the top of Mount Nebo* (2,329ft), which today is located in Jordan and the place is marked by a tall bronze serpent that commemorates Moses' leadership. From atop the mountain, Moses could see from Jericho to Jerusalem and even as far as the Mediterranean Sea. This was all the land that the LORD promised to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Dt 34:4).



Moses was allowed to see it, but he was not allowed to enter it. There on the mountain, after seeing the fulfillment of the promise of God, Moses died.

Today, atop Mount Nebo, is a *memorial to Moses*.

After dying, the LORD personally buried Moses in the valley in an undisclosed location (Dt 34:6). Moses was 120 years old and he was clear-sighted and vigorous (Dt 34:7).

The people of Israel wept and mourned his death for 30 days. Joshua probably wrote the final paragraph of Deuteronomy, which states that—at the time this book was written—there was no one like Moses who was knew God so closely. No prophet like him has arisen in Israel since, "who knew the LORD face to face, or did the signs and wonders that he did, or who showed such mighty power in the sight of people" (Dt 34:10-12). And so it's no wonder that the people would mourn for 30 days. He was gone. He was not coming back.



Maybe they mourned for 30 days waiting to see if the LORD would change his mind, raise Moses from the dead, and send him back to lead them into the Promised Land. But he didn't come back.

¹⁵ Numbers 20:10.

While it was true when it was written that there has not arisen in Israel anyone like Moses, that is no longer true today. Someone greater than Moses has arisen.

- While it was true that Moses broke faith with God only once, it is true that Jesus never broke faith with God—not even once!
- While it was true that no one saw God face to face like Moses, yet it is true that Jesus said, “If you have seen me, then you have seen the Father”¹⁶ for “I and the Father are one.”¹⁷
- While it was true that Moses’ face possessed a fading glow after coming out from the presence of God, it is true that the apostles who walked with Jesus said, “We have seen his glory, glory like that of the only Son from the Father” (Jn 1:14), and when the apostle Paul saw Jesus face to face he reported that his glory was “brighter than the brightest noon-day sun”¹⁸ and in the Revelation of John he reports that the face of the resurrected Jesus is “like the sun shining in full strength” (Rev 1:16).
- While it was true when it was written that no one did the signs that Moses did, it is true that after watching Jesus do many things that Moses never did—such as healing lepers, opening the eyes of those born blind, and the ears of those who never heard a sound, loosing the tongue of him who never spoke, casting out demons by the thousands, and raising the dead—those who witnessed Jesus’ might deeds and powerful works said, “We have seen extraordinary things,”¹⁹ and “never since the world began has anyone”²⁰ seen such things as Jesus has done.
- While it was true that Moses was the most faithful leader among all the leaders in God’s house, yet it is true that Jesus is worthy of much more glory than Moses, because Jesus *built* the house in which Moses was faithful! (Heb 3:2-3) and the Builder is worthy of much more glory than the building!
- While it was true that Moses was a great prophet, yet it is true that even Moses said that God would one day raise up a prophet like him who would be even greater than him (Dt 18:15) and it is now true that Jesus is *that* Prophet!
- While it was true that Moses lived in unabated vigor for 120 years before he died. Today it is true that Jesus lived about 33 years in unabated vigor and also died, but unlike Moses, 3 days later Jesus rose again from the dead in unconquerable vigor and in that vigor he has now been living for about 2026 years!
- While it is true that in Moses all the tribes of Israel were blessed, it is now true that in Jesus all *nations* are blessed! *Moses brought blessing to Israel, yet Jesus brings*

¹⁶ John 14:9.

¹⁷ John 10:30.

¹⁸ Acts 26:13.

¹⁹ Luke 5:26.

²⁰ John 9:32.

blessing to all the world—to anyone who will look to him for forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, cleansing from unrighteousness, and life everlasting!

Conclusion

God long ago made a promise to Abraham saying, *"I will bless you"*²¹ and *"in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed."*²² We know that Jesus is a descendant of Abraham. The apostle Paul explains that *"in Christ Jesus all the promises of God are yes,"*²³ because, after *"being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit,"*²⁴ Jesus alone now has the right and authority to pour out God's Holy Spirit upon all who ask him. Receiving the Holy Spirit is the greatest gift anyone can receive (Lk 11:13). He gives His Holy Spirit to all who will repent of your sins, ask him forgiveness, and by faith receive him as Lord and Christ crucified and resurrected.

All great leaders will die. Moses was a great leader, but he died and was not resurrected. Jesus alone God raised from the dead to demonstrate to us that through him alone comes life!

God uses many means to keep his people faithful, including songs. There are multiple means of encouraging faith and reminding ourselves of the gospel of God. Songs are one of those means. Don't just read Scripture. Sing it, too.

Moses' last desire was to bless the people of God. His final words to them, was to bless them. In Numbers 6 we see that the Lord commanded the priests to bless the people as they dismissed them.

²² The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²³ "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them,

²⁴ The LORD bless you and keep you;

²⁵ the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;

²⁶ the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

²⁷ "So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them."

Numbers 6:22-27 (ESV)

This is why we conclude worship services with a benediction, or a blessing. Since the name of Jesus means "Yahweh saves," then we will conclude by singing a blessing that reminds us that God's favor and graces comes only through Jesus.

²¹ Genesis 12:2.

²² Genesis 26:4.

²³ 2 Corinthians 1:20.

²⁴ Acts 2:33.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did God command Moses (& Joshua) to write a song and teach it to Israel? What does a song do that simply listening to the law being recited does not do?
2. What did God say was the purpose of this song (See Dt 31:19-21)?
3. What was the purpose of the blessing Moses spoke over the tribes of Israel? What do you imagine might have been the effect of hearing this blessing over them?
4. How does the circumstances of the death and burial of Moses demonstrate his unique relationship with God?
5. Moses was a great leader, but how was Jesus described as being greater than Moses?
6. In what ways do you see a connection between the New Testament and the book of Deuteronomy?
7. Where have you seen Christ present in Deuteronomy?
8. Where has grace been demonstrated through the book of Deuteronomy?