

HOMILY FOR WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10th, 2026 – Deuteronomy 31:30 – 32:14

Our reading this evening from Deuteronomy is the first 14 verses of the Song of Moses which is a valedictory message from Moses to the Israelites. The 48th to the 52nd verse of Chapter 32, some 34 verses after this evening's reading ends, *On that very day the Lord addressed Moses as follows: "Ascend this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab across from Jericho, and view the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites for a possession; you shall die there on the mountain that you ascend and shall be gathered to your kin, as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his kin, because both of you broke faith with me among the Israelites at the waters of Meribath-kadesh in the wilderness of Zin, by failing to maintain my holiness among the Israelites. Although you may view the land from a distance, you shall not enter it, the land that I am giving to the Israelites."*

The breaking of faith to which God refers is the time at the waters of Meribath described in Exodus 17 and Numbers 20 when God instructed Moses to command the rock to give forth water for the people; but Moses exasperated by the people's grumbling and frustrated in the mission God gave him struck the rock twice. It is at that point Moses and Aaron are told that they will not cross Jordan.

The Song of Moses is a song given by God to Moses in Chapter 31: *The Lord said to Moses, "Soon you will lie down with your ancestors. Then this people will begin to prostitute themselves to the foreign gods in their midst, the gods of the land into which they are going; they will forsake me, breaking my covenant that I have made with them. My anger will be kindled against them on that day. I will forsake them and hide my face from them; they will become easy prey, and many terrible troubles will come upon them. On that day they will say, 'Have not these troubles come upon us because our God is not in our midst?' On that day I will surely hide my face on account of all the evil they have done by turning to other gods. Now, therefore, write this song, and teach it to the Israelites; put it in their mouths, in order that this song may be a witness for me against the Israelites.*

The portion of the Song we have in this evening's reading is Moses calling all creation to listen to his message proclaiming the name of the Lord. He characterizes God as a Rock and then speaks of the people's false dealing with God even though God was faithful and ensured they made it through the 40 years in the wilderness. Immediately after our portion, the song, chronicles the people's false dealing: they abandoned God, they made him jealous with strange Gods, they sacrificed to demons, and they were unmindful of the Rock, the God that bore them. God then speaks of a set of punishments he will meet out, *I will heap disasters upon them, spend my arrows against them.* But he then concludes *I thought to scatter them and blot out the memory of them from humankind, but I feared provocation by he enemy, for their adversaries might misunderstand and say, "Our hand is triumphant; it was not the Lord who did all this"*

HOMILY FOR WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10th, 2026 – Deuteronomy 31:30 – 32:14

What can we take away from the Song of Moses. I think there are four basic messages that we each can adapt to our own circumstances and reflections on past, present, and future.

Firstly, when things are going reasonably well it is very easy to slip into spiritual amnesia. We forget how we have been blessed and imagine that it is our due. We forget how we have been sustained in times of difficulty.

Secondly, we tend to drift from our foundation in God or as the passage says the Rock. For example many of us in Canada and other parts of the western world have since the end of the second war to rooted ourselves in concepts of liberal democracy. Each year prosperity grew and self-determination became ever more possible. Inequities one by one were resolved, empires collapsed and real freedom became possible. How mystified, confused, and afraid we are now as liberal democracy is threatened everywhere to lesser and greater degrees, inequalities have never been greater, and constraints on freedom multiplying in many former democratic countries. We thought we were anchored to a rock, but that rock is wobbling dreadfully. Only the Rock that is God is constant.

Thirdly, our passage compares God to an eagle who *stirs up its nest and hovers over its young as it spreads its wings, takes them up and bears them aloft on its pinions.* The eagle stirs up its nest to force its progeny to fly, but the eagle is close by and when the eaglets fail to fly the mother eagle bears them up until they perfect their flight skills. Can we see when our nests are stirred up, that God may be looking for us to develop new skills, strengths, or maturity.

Fourthly, as our passage states, God provided Israel with everything even honey from the rock and oil from the flinty rock to see them through the wilderness. But the Israelites became complacent and self-satisfied imagining themselves as self-sufficient and entirely ungrateful. Being continually mindful of and profoundly grateful for all the blessing we have received and are receiving is probably the most important characteristic in developing and preserving spiritual health.

We live in strange times. Many of us have had years of reasonably stable, comfortable lives. But we look around us and see that all the things that were good for us when we were younger seem much more difficult and problematic for young people today. I walk around Country Grocer for the limited supplies needed by two old men. I am continually horrified at the check out price, but then I see the young families with their monster carts jam packed full, I think of the incredible number they will be given at the cash register and wonder how they pay it. As I said earlier, we also see the very framework of our liberal democracies under threat around the world. We thought the expansion of democracy was an irreversible trend. We feel powerless to restore it. But we are more fortunate than most. We have not lost our faith and our focus in the Living God, the Rock. That faith and that focus will sustain us especially if we work to sustain others. Thanks be to God. Amen