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DEUTERONOMY 32:1 Give ear, ye heavens, and I will speak. Let the earth hear the words of my mouth.

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The prophetic and historical song of Moses, showing forth the nature of God's doctrine, Deu 32:1-3. The character of God, Deu 32:4. The corruption of the people, Deu 32:5, Deu 32:6. They are called to remember God's kindness, Deu 32:7, and his dealings with them during their travels in the wilderness, Deu 32:8-14. Their ingratitude and iniquity, Deu 32:15-18. They are threatened with his judgments, Deu 32:19-28. A pathetic lamentation over them because of their sins, Deu 32:29-35. Gracious purposes in their behalf, mixed with reproaches for their manifold idolatries, and threatenings against his enemies, Deu 32:36-42. A promise of salvation to the Gentiles, Deu 32:43. Moses, having finished the song, warmly exhorts the people to obedience, Deu 32:44-47. God calls him up to the mount, that he may see the good land and then die, Deu 32:48-52.

#### Verse 1

On the inimitable excellence of this ode much has been written by commentators, critics, and poets - and it is allowed by the best judges to contain a specimen of almost every species of excellence in composition. It is so thoroughly poetic that even the dull Jews themselves found they could not write it in the prose form; and hence it is distinguished as poetry in every Hebrew Bible by being written in its own hemistichs or short half lines, which is the general form of the Hebrew poetry; and were it translated in the same way it would be more easily understood. The song itself has suffered both by transcribers and translators, the former having mistaken some letters in different places, and made wrong combinations of them in others. As to the translators, most of them have followed their own fancy, from good Mr. Ainsworth, who ruined it by the most inanimate rhyming version, to certain latter poets, who have cast it unhallowedly into a European mould. See the observations at the end of the chapter, Deu 32:52.

Give ear, O ye heavens - Let angels and men hear, and let this testimony of God be registered both in heaven and earth. Heaven and earth are appealed to as permanent witnesses.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:2 My doctrine will drop as the rain. My speech will condense as the dew, as the misty rain on the tender grass, as the showers on the herb.

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#### Verse 2

My doctrine - *ליקחי* likchi, from *לקח* lakach, to take, carry away; to attract or gain over the heart by eloquence or persuasive speech.

Hence the Septuagint translate the word *αποφθεγμα*, an apophthegm, a sententious and weighty saying, for the regulation of the moral conduct such, properly, are the sayings in this inimitable ode.

Shall drop as the rain - It shall come drop by drop as the shower, beginning slowly and distinctly, but increasing more and more till the plenitude of righteousness is poured down, and the whole canon of Divine revelation completed.

My speech shall distil as the dew - אמרתִי imrathi; my familiar, friendly, and affectionate speeches shall descend gently and softly, on the ear and the heart, as the dew, moistening and refreshing all around. In hot regions dew is often a substitute for rain, without it there could be no fertility, especially in those places where rain seldom falls. And in such places only can the metaphor here used be felt in its perfection. Homer uses a similar figure when speaking of the eloquence of Ulysses; he says, Il. iii., ver. 221: - ἄλλ' ὅτε δη ῥόπα τε μεγαλήν εκ στηθεος ἰει, Καὶ επεα νιφαδεσσιν εοικοτα χεμερησιον - "But when he speaks what elocution flows!

Soft as the fleeces of descending snows."

On the manner in which dew is produced, philosophers are not yet agreed. It was long supposed to descend, and to differ only from rain as less from more; but the experiments of a French chemist seemed to prove that dew ascended in light thin vapours, and that, meeting with a colder region of the air, it became condensed and fell down upon the earth. Other recent experiments, though they have not entirely invalidated the former, have rendered the doctrine of the ascent of dew doubtful. Though we know nothing certain as to the manner of its production, yet we know that the thing exists, and that it is essentially useful. So much we know of the sayings of our God, and the blessed effects produced by them: God hath spoken, and the entering in of his words gives light and life. See the note on Gen 2:6.

As the small rain - שעירים seirim, from שער saar, to be rough or tempestuous; sweeping showers, accompanied with a strong gale of wind.

And as the showers - רביבים rebibim, from רבה rabah to multiply, to increase greatly; shower after shower, or rather a continual rain, whose drops are multiplied beyond calculation, upon the earth; alluding perhaps to the rainy seasons in the East, or to those early and latter rains so essentially necessary for the vegetation and perfection of the grain.

No doubt these various expressions point out that great variety in the word or revelation of God whereby it is suited to every place, occasion, person, and state; being "profitable for doctrine, reproof, and edification in righteousness." Hence the apostle says that God, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, and in these last times has spoken unto us by his Son; Heb 1:1, Heb 1:2. By every prophet, evangelist, and apostle, God speaks a particular language; all is his doctrine, his great system of instruction, for the information and salvation of the souls of men. But some portions are like the sweeping showers, in which the tempest of God's wrath appears against sinners. Others are like the incessant showers of gentle rain, preparing the soil for the germination of the grain, and causing it to take root. And others still are like the dew, mildly and gently insinuating convictions, persuasions, reproofs, and consolations. The preacher of righteousness who wishes to handle this word profitably, must attend closely to those distinctions, that he may rightly divide the word of truth, and give each of his hearers his portion of the bread of life in due season.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:3 For I will proclaim the LORD's name. Ascribe greatness to our God!

DEUTERONOMY 32:4 The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are just. A God of faithfulness who does no wrong, just and right is he.

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He is the Rock - The word צור tsur is rendered Creator by some eminent critics; and khalyk is the reading in the Arabic Version. Rab. Moses ben Maimon, in his valuable work, Moreh Nebochim, observes that the word צור tsur, which is ordinarily translated rock, signifies origin, fountain, first cause, etc., and in this way it should be translated here: "He is the first principle, his work is perfect." As he is the cause of all things, he must be infinitely perfect; and consequently all his works must be perfect in their respective kinds. As is the cause, so must the effect be. Some think the word rock gives a very good sense: for, as in those lands, rocks were the ordinary places of defense and security, God may be metaphorically represented thus, to signify his protection of his followers. I prefer the opinion of Maimon.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:5 They have dealt corruptly with him. They are not his children, because of their defect. They are a perverse and crooked generation.

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#### Verse 5

Their spot is not the spot of his children - This verse is variously translated and variously understood. They are corrupted, not his, children of pollution - Kennicott. They are corrupt, they are not his children, they are blotted - Houbigant. This is according to the Samaritan. The interpretation commonly given to these words is as unfounded as it is exceptionable: "God's children have their spots, i. e., their sins, but sin in them is not like sin in others; in others sin is exceedingly sinful, but God does not see the sins of his children as he sees the sins of his enemies," etc. Unfortunately for this bad doctrine, there is no foundation for it in the sacred text, which, though very obscure, may be thus translated: He (Israel) hath corrupted himself. They (the Israelites) are not his children: they are spotted. Coverdale renders the whole passage thus: "The froward and overthwart generation have marred themselves to himward, and are not his children because of their deformity." This is the sense of the verse. Let it be observed that the word spot, which is repeated in our translation, occurs but once in the original, and the marginal reading is greatly to be preferred: He hath corrupted to himself, that they are not his children; that is their blot. And because they had the blot of sin on them, because they were spotted with iniquity and marked idolaters, therefore God renounces them. There may be here an allusion to the marks which the worshippers of particular idols had on different parts of their bodies, especially on their foreheads; and as idolatry is the crime with which they are here charged, the spot or mark mentioned may refer to the mark or stigma of their idol. The different sects of idolaters in the East are distinguished by their sectarian marks, the stigma of their respective idols. These sectarian marks, particularly on the forehead, amount to nearly one hundred among the Hindoos, and especially among the two sects, the worshippers of Seeva, and the worshippers of Vishnoo. In many cases these marks are renewed daily, for they account it irreligious to perform any sacred rite to their god without his mark on the forehead; the marks are generally horizontal and perpendicular lines, crescents, circles, leaves, eyes, etc., in red, black, white, and yellow. This very custom is referred to in Rev 20:4, where the beast gives his mark to his followers, and it is very likely that Moses refers to such a custom among the idolatrous of his own day. This removes all the difficulty of the text. God's children have no sinful spots, because Christ saves them from their sins; and their motto or mark is, Holiness to the Lord.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:6 Is this the way you repay the LORD, foolish and unwise people? Isn't he your father who has bought you? He has made you and established you.

DEUTERONOMY 32:7 Remember the days of old. Consider the years of many generations. Ask your father, and he will show you; your elders, and they will tell you.

DEUTERONOMY 32:8 When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the children of men, he set the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel.

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Verse 8

When the Most High divided to the nations, etc. - Deu 32:8 and Deu 32:9, says Dr. Kennicott, give us express authority for believing that the earth was very early divided in consequence of a Divine command, and probably by lot, (see Act 17:26); and as Africa is called the land of Ham, (Psa 78:51; Psa 105:23, Psa 105:27; Psa 106:22), probably that country fell to him and to his descendants, at the same time that Europe fell to Japheth, and Asia to Shem, with a particular reserve of Palestine to be the Lord's portion, for some one peculiar people. And this separation of mankind into three bodies, called the general migration, was commanded to Noah, and by him to his sons, so as to take place in the days of Peleg, about two hundred years afterwards. This general migration was prior to the partial dispersion from Babel by about five hundred years.

He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel - The Septuagint is very curious, Εστησεν ὅρια εθνων κατα αριθμον αγγελων του Θεου. "He established the bounds of the nations according to the number of the angels of God." The meaning of the passage seems to be, that when God divided the earth among mankind, he reserved twelve lots, according to the number of the sons of Jacob, which he was now about to give to their descendants, according to his promise.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:9 For the LORD's portion is his people. Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.

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Verse 9

The Lord's portion is his people - What an astonishing saying! As holy souls take God for their portion, so God takes them for his portion. He represents himself as happy in his followers; and they are infinitely happy in, and satisfied with, God as their portion. This is what is implied in being a saint. He who is seeking for an earthly portion, has little commerce with the Most High.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:10 He found him in a desert land, in the waste howling wilderness. He surrounded him. He cared for him. He kept him as the apple of his eye.

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Verse 10

He - the Lord, found him - Jacob, in his descendants, in a desert land - the wilderness. He led him about forty years in this wilderness, Deu 8:2, or יסבבנוהו yesobebenhu, he compassed him about, i. e., God defended them on all hands, and in all places. He instructed him - taught them that astonishing law through which we have now almost passed, giving them statutes and judgments which, for depth of wisdom, and correct political adaptation to times, places, and circumstances, are

so wondrously constructed, as essentially to secure the comfort, peace, and happiness of the individual, and the prosperity and permanency of the moral system. Laws so excellent that they have met with the approbation of the wise and good in all countries, and formed the basis of the political institutions of all the civilized nations in the universe.

Notwithstanding the above gives the passage a good sense, yet probably the whole verse should be considered more literally. It is certain that in the same country travelers are often obliged to go about in order to find proper passes between the mountains, and the following extracts from Mr. Harmer well illustrate this point. "Irwin farther describes the mountains of the desert of Thebais (Upper Egypt) as sometimes so steep and dangerous as to induce even very bold and hardy travelers to avoid them by taking a large circuit; and that for want of proper knowledge of the way, such a wrong path may be taken as may on a sudden bring them into the greatest dangers, while at other times a dreary waste may extend itself so prodigiously as to make it difficult, without assistance, to find the way to a proper outlet. All which show us the meaning of those words of the song of Moses, Deu 32:10 : He led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. "Jehovah certainly instructed Israel in religion by delivering to him his law in this wilderness; but it is not, I presume, of this kind of teaching Moses speaks, as Bishop Patrick supposes, but God's instructing Israel how to avoid the dangers of the journey, by leading the people about this and that dangerous, precipitous hill, directing them to proper passes through the mountains, and guiding them through the intricacies of that difficult journey which might, and probably would, have confounded the most consummate Arab guides. They that could have safely enough conducted a small caravan of travelers through this desert, might have been very unequal to the task of directing such an enormous multitude, encumbered with cattle, women, children, and utensils. The passages of Irwin, that establish the observation I have been making, follow here: 'At half past eleven we resumed our march, and soon came to the foot of a prodigious hill, which we unexpectedly found we were to ascend. It was perpendicular, like the one we had passed some hours before; but what rendered the access more difficult, the path which we were to tread was nearly right up and down. The captain of the robbers seeing the obstacles we had to overcome, wisely sent all his camels round the mountain where he knew there was a defile, and only accompanied us with the beast he rode. We luckily met with no accident in climbing this height.' p. 325. They afterwards descended, he tells us, into a valley, by a passage easy enough, and stopping to dine at half past five o'clock, they were joined by the Arabs, who had made an astonishing march to overtake them, p. 326. 'We soon quitted the dale, and ascended the high ground by the side of a mountain that overlooks it in this part. The path was narrow and perpendicular, and much resembled a ladder. To make it worse, we preceded the robbers, and an ignorant guide among our people led us astray. Here we found ourselves in a pretty situation: we had kept the lower road on the side of the hill, instead of that towards the summit, until we could proceed no farther; we were now obliged to gain the heights, in order to recover the road, in performing which we drove our poor camels up such steeps that we had the greatest difficulty to climb after them. We were under the necessity of leaving them to themselves, as the danger of leading them through places where the least false step would have precipitated both man and beast to the unfathomable abyss below, was too critical to hazard. We hit at length upon the proper path, and were glad to find ourselves in the road of our unerring guides the robbers, after having won every foot of the ground with real peril and fatigue.' p. 324. Again: 'Our road after leaving the valley lay over level ground. As it would be next to an impossibility to find the way over these stony flats, where the heavy foot of a camel leaves no impression, the different bands of robbers have heaped up stones at unequal distances for their direction through this desert. We have derived great assistance from the robbers in this respect, who are our guides when the marks either fail, or are unintelligible to us.' The predatory Arabs were more successful guides to Mr. Irwin and his

companions, than those he brought with him from Ghinnah; but the march of Israel through deserts of the like nature, was through such an extent and variety of country, and in such circumstances as to multitudes and incumbrances, as to make Divine interposition necessary. The openings through the rocks seem to have been prepared by Him to whom all things from the beginning of the world were foreknown, with great wisdom and goodness, to enable them to accomplish this stupendous march." See Harmer's Observat., vol. iv. p. 125.

He kept him as the apple of his eye - Nothing can exceed the force and delicacy of this expression. As deeply concerned and as carefully attentive as man can be for the safety of his eyesight, so was God for the protection and welfare of this people. How amazing this condescension!

DEUTERONOMY 32:11 As an eagle that stirs up her nest, that flutters over her young, he spread abroad his wings, he took them, he bore them on his feathers.

#### Verse 11

As an eagle stirreth up her nest - Flutters over her brood to excite them to fly; or, as some think, disturbs her nest to oblige the young ones to leave it; so God by his plagues in Egypt obliged the Israelites, otherwise very reluctant, to leave a place which he appeared by his judgments to have devoted to destruction.

Fluttereth over her young - *יִרְחֵף* yeracheph, broodeth over them, communicating to them a portion of her own vital warmth: so did God, by the influences of his Spirit, enlighten, encourage, and strengthen their minds. It is the same word which is used in Gen 1:2.

Spreadeth abroad her wings, etc. - In order, not only to teach them how to fly, but to bear them when weary. For to this fact there seems an allusion, it having been generally believed that the eagle, through extraordinary affection for her young, takes them upon her back when they are weary of flying, so that the archers cannot injure them but by piercing the body of the mother. The same figure is used Exo 19:4 (note); in the note. The *נֶשֶׁר* nesher, which we translate eagle, is supposed by Mr. Bruce to mean the rachama, a bird remarkable for its affection to its young, which it is known actually to bear on its back when they are weary.

DEUTERONOMY 32:12 The LORD alone led him. There was no foreign god with him.

#### Verse 12

So the Lord alone did lead him - By his power, and by his only, were they brought out of Egypt, and supported in the wilderness.

And there was no strange god - They had help from no other quarter. The Egyptian idols were not able to save their own votaries; but God not only saved his people, but destroyed the Egyptians.

DEUTERONOMY 32:13 He made him ride on the high places of the earth. He ate the increase of the field. He caused him to suck honey out of the rock, oil out of the flinty rock;

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 Verse 13

He made him ride - ירכבהו yarkibehu, he will cause him to ride. All the verbs here are in the future tense, because this is a prophecy of the prosperity they should possess in the promised land. The Israelites were to ride - exult, on the high places, the mountains and hills of their land, in which they are promised the highest degrees of prosperity; as even the rocky part of the country should be rendered fertile by the peculiar benediction of God.

Suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock - This promise states that even the most barren places in the country should yield an abundance of aromatic flowers, from which the bees should collect honey in abundance; and even the tops of the rocks afford sufficient support for olive trees, from the fruit of which they should extract oil in abundance: and all this should be occasioned by the peculiar blessing of God upon the land.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:14 butter from the herd, and milk from the flock, with fat of lambs, rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the finest of the wheat. From the blood of the grape, you drank wine.

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 Verse 14

Fat of kidneys of wheat - Almost every person knows that the kidney is enveloped in a coat of the purest fat in the body of the animal, for which several anatomical reasons might be given. As the kidney itself is to the abundantly surrounding fat, so is the germ of the grain to the lobes or farinaceous parts. The expression here may be considered as a very strong and peculiarly happy figure to point out the finest wheat, containing the healthiest and most vigorous germ, growing in a very large and nutritive grain; and consequently the whole figure points out to us a species of wheat, equally excellent both for seed and bread. This beautiful metaphor seems to have escaped the notice of every commentator.

Pure blood of the grape - Red wine, or the pure juice of whatever color, expressed from the grapes, without any adulteration or mixture with water: blood here is synonymous with juice. This intimates that their vines should be of the best kind, and their wine in abundance, and of the most delicious flavour.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:15 But Jeshurun grew fat, and kicked. You have grown fat. You have grown thick. You have become sleek. Then he abandoned God who made him, and rejected the Rock of his salvation.

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 Verse 15

Jeshurun - ישרון the upright. This appellative is here put for Israel, and as it comes from ישר yashar, he was right, straight, may be intended to show that the people who once not only promised fair, but were really upright, walking in the paths of righteousness, should, in the time signified by the prophet, not only revolt from God, but actually fight against him; like a full fed horse, who not only

will not bear the harness, but breaks away from his master, and endeavors to kick him as he struggles to get loose. All this is spoken prophetically, and is intended as a warning, that the evil might not take place. For were the transgression unavoidable, it must be the effect of some necessitating cause, which would destroy the turpitude of the action, as it referred to Israel; for if the evil were absolutely unavoidable, no blame could attach to the unfortunate agent, who could only consider himself the miserable instrument of a dire necessity. See a case in point, 1Sam 23:11-12 (note), where the prediction appears in the most absolute form, and yet the evil was prevented by the person receiving the prediction as a warning. The case is the following: -

The Philistines attacked Keilah and robbed the threshing-floors; David, being informed of it, asked counsel of God whether he should go and relieve it; he is ordered to go, and is assured of success; he goes, routs the Philistines, and delivers Keilah. Saul, hearing that David was in Keilah, determines to besiege the place. David, finding that Saul meditated his destruction, asked counsel of the Lord, thus: "O Lord God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake. Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? Will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? And the Lord said, He will come down. Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the Lord said, They will deliver thee up. Then David and his men (about six hundred) arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go: and it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah, and he forbore to go forth." Here was the most positive prediction that Saul would come to Keilah, and that the men of Keilah would deliver David into his hands; yet neither of these events took place, because David departed from Keilah. But had he continued there, Saul would have come down, and the men of Keilah would have betrayed their deliverer. Thus the prediction was totally conditional; and so were all these prophecies relative to the apostasy of Israel. They were only fulfilled in those who did not receive them as warnings. See Jer 18:8-10.

The Rock of his salvation - He ceased to depend on the fountain whence his salvation issued; and thinking highly of himself, he lightly esteemed his God; and having ceased to depend on him, his fall became inevitable. The figure is admirably well supported through the whole verse. We see, first, a miserable, lean steed, taken under the care and into the keeping of a master who provides him with an abundance of provender. We see, secondly, this horse waxing fat under this keeping. We see him, thirdly, breaking away from his master, leaving his rich pasturage, and running to the wilderness, unwilling to bear the yoke or harness, or to make any returns for his master's care and attention. We see, fourthly, whence this conduct proceeds - from a want of consciousness that his strength depends upon his master's care and keeping; and a lack of consideration that leanness and wretchedness must be the consequence of his leaving his master's service, and running off from his master's pasturage. How easy to apply all these points to the case of the Israelites! and how illustrative of their former and latter state! And how powerfully do they apply to the case of many called Christians, who, having increased in riches, forget that God from whose hand alone those mercies flowed!

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DEUTERONOMY 32:16 They moved him to jealousy with strange gods. They provoked him to anger with abominations.

DEUTERONOMY 32:17 They sacrificed to demons, not God, to gods that they didn't know, to new gods that came up recently, which your fathers didn't dread.

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## Verse 17

They sacrificed unto devils - The original word שְׂדִיִּים shedim has been variously understood. The Syriac, Chaldee, Targums of Jerusalem and Jonathan, and the Samaritan, retain the original word: the Vulgate, Septuagint, Arabic, Persic, Coptic, and Anglo-Saxon, have devils or demons. The Septuagint has εθυσαν δαιμονιοις, they sacrificed to demons: the Vulgate copies the Septuagint: the Arabic has sheeateen, the plural of Sheetan, Satan, by which the rebellious angels appear to be intended, as the word comes from the root shatana, he was obstinate, proud, refractory, went far away. And it is likely that these fallen spirits, having utterly lost the empire at which they aimed, got themselves worshipped under various forms and names in different places. The Anglo-Saxon has devils.

New gods that came newly up - באו מקרוב באו mikkarob bau, "which came up from their neighbors;" viz., the Moabites and Amorites, whose gods they received and worshipped on their way through the wilderness, and often afterwards.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:18 Of the Rock who became your father, you are unmindful, and have forgotten God who gave you birth.

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## Verse 18

Of the Rock that begat thee - צור tsur, the first cause, the fountain of thy being. See the note on Deu 32:4.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:19 The LORD saw and abhorred, because of the provocation of his sons and his daughters.

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## Verse 19

When the Lord saw it, etc. - More literally, And the Lord saw it, and through indignation he reprobated his sons and his daughters. That is, When the Lord shall see such conduct, he shall be justly incensed, and so reject and deliver up to captivity his sons and daughters.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:20 He said, "I will hide my face from them. I will see what their end will be; for they are a very perverse generation, children in whom is no faithfulness.

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## Verse 20

Children in whom is no faith - לא אמן במ lo emon bam, "There is no steadfastness in them," they can never be depended on. They are fickle, because they are faithless.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:21 They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God. They have provoked me to anger with their vanities. I will move them to jealousy with those who are not a people. I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.

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Verse 21

They have moved me to jealousy - This verse contains a very pointed promise of the calling of the Gentiles, in consequence of the rejection of the Jews, threatened Deu 32:19; and to this great event it is applied by St. Paul, Rom 10:19.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:22 For a fire is kindled in my anger, that burns to the lowest Sheol, devours the earth with its increase, and sets the foundations of the mountains on fire.

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Verse 22

The lowest hell - שאול תחתית sheol tachtith, the very deepest destruction; a total extermination, so that the earth - their land, and its increase, and all their property, should be seized; and the foundations of their mountains - their strongest fortresses, should be razed to the ground. All this was fulfilled in a most remarkable manner in the last destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, so that of the fortifications of that city not one stone was left on another. See the notes on Matthew 24 (note).

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DEUTERONOMY 32:23 "I will heap evils on them. I will spend my arrows on them.

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Verse 23

I will spend mine arrows upon them - The judgments of God in general are termed the arrows of God, Job 6:4; Psa 38:2, Psa 38:3; Psa 91:5; see also Eze 5:16; Jer 50:14; 2Sam 22:14, 2Sam 22:15. In this and the following verses, to the 28th inclusive, (Deu 32:23-28), God threatens this people with every species of calamity that could possibly fall upon man. How strange it is that, having this law continually in their hands, they should not discern those threatened judgments, and cleave to the Lord that they might be averted!

It was customary among the heathens to represent any judgment from their gods under the notion of arrows, especially a pestilence; and one of their greatest deities, Apollo, is ever represented as bearing a bow and quiver full of deadly arrows; so Homer, Il. i., ver. 43, where he represents him, in answer to the prayer of his priest Chryses, coming to smite the Greeks with the pestilence: - Ὡς εφ'ατ' ευχομενος· του δ' εκλυε Φοιβος Απολλων· Βη δε κατ' Ουλυμποιο καρηνων χωμομενος κηρ, Τοξ' ωμοισιν εχων αμφηρεφ ε α τε φαρετρην. - Ἐξ'ετ' επειτ' απανευθε νεων· μετα δ' ιον ἐηκε· Δεινη δε κλαγγη γενετ' αργυρευοιο βιοιο. κ. τ. λ. "Thus Chryses pray'd; the favoring power attends,

And from Olympus' lofty tops descends.

Bent was his bow the Grecian hearts to wound;

Fierce as he moved, his silver shafts resound; -  
 The fleet in view, he twang'd his deadly' bow,  
 And hissing fly the feather'd fates below.  
 On mules and dogs the infection first began;  
 And last the vengeful arrows fix'd in man."

How frequently the same figure is employed in the sacred writings, every careful reader knows; and quotations need not be multiplied.

DEUTERONOMY 32:24 They shall be wasted with hunger, and devoured with burning heat and bitter destruction. I will send the teeth of animals on them, with the venom of vipers that glide in the dust.

Verse 24

They shall be burnt with hunger - Their land shall be cursed, and famine shall prevail. This is one of the arrows.

Burning heat - No showers to cool the atmosphere; or rather boils, blains, and pestilential fevers; this was a second.

Bitter destruction - The plague; this was a third.

Teeth of beasts - with the poison of serpents - The beast of the field should multiply upon and destroy them; this was a fourth: and poisonous serpents, infesting all their steps, and whose mortal bite should produce the utmost anguish, were to be a fifth arrow. Added to all these, the sword of their enemies - terror among themselves, Deu 32:25, and captivity were to complete their ruin, and thus the arrows of God were to be spent upon them. There is a beautiful saying in the Toozuki Teemour, which will serve to illustrate this point, while it exhibits one of the finest metaphors that occurs in any writer, the sacred writers excepted. "It was once demanded of the fourth Khaleefeh, (Aaly), on whom be the mercy of the Creator, 'If the canopy of heaven were a Bow; and if the earth were the cord thereof; and if calamities were Arrows; if mankind were the mark for those arrows; and if Almighty God, the tremendous and the glorious, were the unerring Archer; to whom could the sons of Adam flee for protection?' The Khaleefeh answered, saying, 'The sons of Adam must flee unto the Lord.'"

DEUTERONOMY 32:25 Outside the sword will bereave, and in the rooms, terror; on both young man and virgin, the nursing infant with the gray-haired man.

DEUTERONOMY 32:26 I said that I would scatter them afar. I would make their memory to cease from among men;

DEUTERONOMY 32:27 were it not that I feared the provocation of the enemy, lest their adversaries should judge wrongly, lest they should say, 'Our hand is exalted, The LORD has not done all this.'"

## Verse 27

Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy - Houbigant and others contend that wrath here refers not to the enemy, but to God; and that the passage should be thus translated: "Indignation for the adversary deters me, lest their enemies should be alienated, and say, The strength of our hands, and not of the Lord's, hath done this." Had not God punished them in such a way as proved that his hand and not the hand of man had done it, the heathens would have boasted of their prowess, and Jehovah would have been blasphemed, as not being able to protect his worshippers, or to punish their infidelities. Titus, when he took Jerusalem, was so struck with the strength of the place, that he acknowledged that if God had not delivered it into his hands, the Roman armies never could have taken it.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:28 For they are a nation void of counsel. There is no understanding in them.

DEUTERONOMY 32:29 Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!

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## Verse 29

That they would consider their latter end! - אַחֲרֵיתָם archaritham, properly, their latter times - the glorious days of the Messiah, who, according to the flesh, should spring up among them. Should they carefully consider this subject, and receive the promised Savior, they would consequently act as persons under infinite obligations to God; his strength would be their shield, and then: -

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DEUTERONOMY 32:30 How could one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had delivered them up?

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## Verse 30

How should one chase a thousand - If therefore they had not forgotten their Rock, God their author and defense, it could not possibly have come to pass that a thousand of them should flee before one of their enemies.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:31 For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves concede.

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## Verse 31

For their rock - The gods and pretended protectors of the Romans.

Is not as our Rock - Have neither power nor influence like our God.

Our enemies themselves being judges - For they often acknowledged the irresistible power of that God who fought for Israel. See Exo 14:25; Num 23:8-12, Num 23:19-21; 1Sam 4:8.

There is a passage in Virgil, Eclog. iv., ver. 58, very similar to this saying of Moses: -

Pan Deus Arcadia mecum si iudice certet,

Pan etiam Arcadia dicat se iudice victum. "Should the god Pan contend with me," (in singing the praises of the future hero, the deliverer, prophesied of in the Sibylline books), "were even

Arcadia judge, Pan would acknowledge himself to be vanquished, Arcadia herself being judge."

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DEUTERONOMY 32:32 For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, of the fields of Gomorrah. Their grapes are poison grapes. Their clusters are bitter.

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#### Verse 32

For their vine is of the vine of Sodom - The Jews are as wicked and rebellious as the Sodomites; for by the vine the inhabitants of the land are signified; see Isa 5:2, Isa 5:7.

Their grapes - Their actions, are gall and worm-wood-producing nothing but mischief and misery to themselves and others.

Their clusters are bitter - Their united exertions, as well as their individual acts, are sin, and only sin, continually. That by vine is meant the people, and by grapes their moral conduct, is evident from Isa 5:1-7. It is very likely that the grapes produced about the lake Asphaltites, where Sodom and Gomorrah formerly stood, were not only of an acrid, disagreeable taste, but of a deleterious quality; and to this, it is probable, Moses here alludes.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:33 Their wine is the poison of serpents, the cruel venom of asps.

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#### Verse 33

Their wine - Their system of doctrines and teaching, is the poison of dragons, etc., fatal and destructive to all them who follow it.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:34 "Isn't this laid up in store with me, sealed up among my treasures?"

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#### Verse 34

Sealed up among my treasures? - Deeds or engagements by which persons were bound at a specified time to fulfill certain conditions, were sealed and laid up in places of safety; so here God's justice is pledged to avenge the quarrel of his broken covenant on the disobedient Jews, but the time and manner were sealed in his treasures, and known only to himself. Hence it is said: -

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DEUTERONOMY 32:35 Vengeance is mine, and recompense, at the time when their foot slides; for the day of their calamity is at hand. Their doom rushes at them."

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Verse 35

Their foot shall slide in due time, etc. - But Calmet thinks that this verse is spoken against the Canaanites, the enemies of the Jewish people.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:36 For the LORD will judge his people, and have compassion on his servants, when he sees that their power is gone; that there is no one remaining, shut up or left at large.

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Verse 36

The Lord shall judge his people - He has an absolute right over them as their Creator, and authority to punish them for their rebellions as their Sovereign; yet he will repent himself - he will change his manner of conduct towards them, when he seeth that their power is gone - when they are entirely subjugated by their adversaries, so that their political power is entirely destroyed; and there is none shut up or left - not one strong place untaken, and not one family left, all being carried into captivity, or scattered into strange lands. Or, he will do justice to his people, and avenge them of their adversaries; see Deu 32:35.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:37 He will say, "Where are their gods, the rock in which they took refuge;

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Verse 37

He shall say - He shall begin to expostulate with them, to awaken them to a due sense of their ingratitude and rebellion. This may refer to the preaching of the Gospel to them in the latter days.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:38 which ate the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offering? Let them rise up and help you! Let them be your protection.

DEUTERONOMY 32:39 "See now that I myself am he. There is no god with me. I kill and I make alive. I wound and I heal. There is no one who can deliver out of my hand.

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Verse 39

See now that I-am he - Be convinced that God alone can save, and God alone can destroy, and that your idols can neither hurt nor help you.

I kill, and I make alive, etc. - My mercy is as great as my justice, for I am as ready to save the penitent as I was to punish the rebellious.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:40 For I lift up my hand to heaven and declare, as I live forever,

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Verse 40

For I lift up my hand to heaven - See concerning oaths and appeals to God in the note on Deu 6:13 (note).

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DEUTERONOMY 32:41 if I sharpen my glittering sword, my hand grasps it in judgement; I will take vengeance on my adversaries, and will repay those who hate me.

DEUTERONOMY 32:42 I will make my arrows drunk with blood. My sword shall devour flesh with the blood of the slain and the captives, from the head of the leaders of the enemy.”

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#### Verse 42

From the beginning of revenges - The word פרעות paroth, rendered revenges, a sense in which it never appears to be taken, has rendered this place very perplexed and obscure. Mr. Parkhurst has rendered the whole passage thus: -

I will make my arrows drunk with blood;

And my sword shall devour flesh,

With the blood of the slain and captive

From the hairy head of the enemy.

Probably מראש פרעות merosh paroth may be more properly translated, from the naked head - the enemy shall have nothing to shield him from my vengeance; the crown of dignity shall fall off, and even the helmet be no protection against the sword and arrows of the Lord.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:43 Rejoice, you nations, with his people, for he will avenge the blood of his servants. He will take vengeance on his adversaries, and will make atonement for his land and for his people.

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#### Verse 43

Rejoice, O ye nations - Ye Gentiles, for the casting off of the Jews shall be the means of your ingathering with his people, for they shall not be utterly cast off. (See Rom 15:9, for in this way the apostle applies it). But how shall the Gentiles be called, and the Jews have their iniquity purged? He will be merciful unto his land and to his people, וכפר vechipper, he shall cause an atonement to be made for his land and people; i. e., Jesus Christ, the long promised Messiah, shall be crucified for Jews and Gentiles, and the way to the holiest be made plain by his blood.

The people have long been making atonements for themselves, but to none effect, for their atonements were but signs, and not the thing signified, for the body is Christ; now the Lord himself makes an atonement, for the Lamb of God alone taketh away the sin of the world. This is a very proper and encouraging conclusion to the awfully important matter of this poem.

Israel shall be long scattered, peeled, and punished, but they shall have mercy in the latter times; they also shall rejoice with the Gentiles, in the common salvation purchased by the blood of the Savior of all mankind.

DEUTERONOMY 32:44 Moses came and spoke all the words of this song in the ears of the people, he and Joshua the son of Nun.

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Verse 44

And Moses came - Probably from the tabernacle, where God had given him this prophetic ode, and he rehearsed it in the ears of the people.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:45 Moses finished reciting all these words to all Israel.

DEUTERONOMY 32:46 He said to them, "Set your heart to all the words which I testify to you this day, which you shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law.

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Verse 46

Set your hearts unto all the words - Another proof that all these awful denunciations of Divine wrath, though delivered in an absolute form, were only declaratory of what God would do if they rebelled against him.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:47 For it is no vain thing for you; because it is your life, and through this thing you shall prolong your days in the land, where you go over the Jordan to possess it."

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Verse 47

Through this thing ye shall prolong your days - Instead of being cut off, as God here threatens, ye shall be preserved and rendered prosperous in the land which, when they passed over Jordan, they should possess.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:48 The LORD spoke to Moses that same day, saying,

DEUTERONOMY 32:49 "Go up into this mountain of Abarim, to Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is across from Jericho; and see the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel for a possession.

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Verse 49

Get thee up into this mountain Abarim - The mount of the passages, i. e., of the Israelites when they entered into the promised land. See the notes on Num 27:12.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:50 Die on the mountain where you go up, and be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor, and was gathered to his people;

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Verse 50

And die in the mount - as Aaron - Some have supposed that Moses was translated; but if so, then Aaron was translated, for what is said of the death of the one is said of the death of the other.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:51 because you trespassed against me in the midst of the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah of Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because you didn't uphold my holiness in the midst of the children of Israel.

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Verse 51

Ye trespassed against me - at the waters of Meribah - See the note on Num 20:12.

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DEUTERONOMY 32:52 For you shall see the land from a distance; but you shall not go there into the land which I give the children of Israel."

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Verse 52

Thou shalt see the land before thee - See Num 27:12, etc. How glorious to depart out of this life with God in his heart and heaven in his eye! his work, his great, unparalleled usefulness, ending only with his life. The serious reader will surely join in the following pious ejaculation of the late Rev. Charles Wesley, one of the best Christian poets of the last century: - "O that without a lingering groan

I may the welcome word receive;

My body with my charge lay down,

And cease at once to work and live!"

It would require a dissertation expressly formed for the purpose to point out the general merit and extraordinary beauties of this very sublime ode. To enter into such particulars can scarcely comport with the nature of the present work. Drs. Lowth, Kennicott, and Durell, have done much in this way; and to their respective works the critical reader is referred. A very considerable extract from what they have written on this chapter may be found in Dr. Dodd's notes. In writing this ode the design of Moses was,

1. To set forth the Majesty of God; to give that generation and all successive ones a proper view of the glorious perfections of the object of their worship. He therefore shows that from his holiness and purity he must be displeased with sin; from his justice and righteousness he must punish it; and from the goodness and infinite benevolence of his nature he is ever disposed to help the weak, instruct the ignorant, and show mercy to the wretched, sinful sons and daughters of men.

2. To show the duty and interest of his people. To have such a Being for their friend is to have all possible happiness, both spiritual and temporal, secured; to have him for their enemy is to be exposed to inevitable destruction and ruin.
3. To warn them against irreligion and apostasy; to show the possibility of departing from God, and the miseries that would overwhelm them and their posterity should they be found walking in opposition to the laws of their Creator.
4. To give a proper and impressive view of the providence of God, by referring to the history of his gracious dealings with them and their ancestors; the minute attention he paid to all their wants, the wonderful manner in which he led, fed, clothed, protected, and saved them, in all their travels and in all perils.
5. To leave on record an everlasting testimony against them, should they ever cast off his fear and pollute his worship, which should serve at once as a warning to the world, and a vindication of his justice, when the judgments he had threatened were found to be poured out upon them; for he who loved them so long and so intensely could not become their enemy but in consequence of the greatest and most unprincipled provocations.
6. To show the shocking and unprecedented ingratitude which induced a people so highly favored, and so wondrously protected and loved, to sin against their God; and how reasonable and just it was, for the vindication of his holiness, that God should pour out upon them such judgments as he had never inflicted on any other people, and so mark their disobedience and ingratitude with fresh marks of his displeasure, that the punishment should bear some proportion to the guilt, and that their preservation as a distinct people might afford a feeling proof both of the providence and justice of God.
7. To show the glory of the latter days in the re-election of the long reprobated Jewish nation, and the final diffusion of his grace and goodness over the earth by means of the Gospel of Christ.

And all this is done with such strength and elegance of diction, with such appropriate, energetic, and impressive figures and metaphors, and in such a powerful torrent of that soul-penetrating, pure poetic spirit that comes glowing from the bosom of God, that the reader is alternately elated or depressed, filled with compunction or confidence, with despair or hope, according to the quick transitions of the inimitable writer to the different topics which form the subject of this incomparable and wondrously varied ode. May that Spirit by which it was dictated give it its fullest, most durable, and most effectual impression upon the mind of every reader!