

Haftarat Ha'azinu האזינו

Torah: Deuteronomy 32:1–52

Haftarah: 2 Samuel 22:1–51

God's Identity

General Overview

This haftarah is a hymn of praise that David wrote to the Lord for delivering him from King Saul. Its opening verses are a short description of some of God's attributes followed by a section wherein David recounts his plea for deliverance. Then, David tells how God helped him. The middle of the song consists of David's description of some general features of his God, things that can apply to everyone, not just him. The song's closing shows how complete God's deliverance is, even to the point of causing David's enemies to respect him. Finally, David cannot help but to wrap things up with a short section of thanksgiving to God.

Connection to the Parasha

The corresponding Torah portion, *Parashat Ha'azinu* is often called "The Song of Witness." In this song at the end of Deuteronomy, Moshe calls the Lord, his Rock. Moshe's song is very similar to this song of David's, which also refers to God as a Rock.

Exposition

This passage is a typical psalm of David, which is, of course, written in Hebrew poetry. It represents David's song writing ability at its best.

It has long been recognized that 2 Samuel 22 is not only one of the oldest major poems in the OT but also that because Psalm 18 parallels it almost verbatim. It is a key passage for the theory and practice of OT textual criticism...No other ancient security.¹

Because this passage is poetry, it is a challenge to outline. The outline that we have derived from the text represents our best effort at observing and organizing the psalm. Realizing that there will be more than the customary number of main points, we, nevertheless, present to you the following outline.

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|------------------------|----------|
| I. God's Identity | 22:1–3 |
| II. God's Availability | 22:4–7 |
| III. God's Deliverance | 22:8–16 |
| IV. God's Vindication | 22:17–37 |
| V. God's Reliability | 22:38–49 |
| VI. God's Reward | 22:50–51 |

In this excerpt from Haftarat Ha'azinu, we will focus on section I, God's Identity.

I. God's Identity 22:1–3

It is amazing how many descriptive terms there are used for God in the first three verses of 2 Samuel 22. The reason, of course, is that, in these verses, David is addressing God directly and praising Him for the wonderful deliverance and faithfulness that He has demonstrated to him over the years. By the use of the many different metaphors in these verses, we learn that David's God has been resourceful and consistent to meet the many different kinds of deliverances that David needed throughout his life.

This introduction contains the sum and substance of the whole psalm inasmuch as David groups the many expressions of divine deliverance in his agitated life into a long series of predicates, in all of which he extols God as his defense, refuge, and deliverer.²

A. My Rock and Cliff

This description of God is one of the main themes of the Song of Witness in Parashat Ha'azinu. There are two Hebrew words translated "rock:" *tsur* (צור) and *sela* (סלע). They are very similar in meaning. If there is to be any distinction, it might be noted that *tsur* could represent a single strong and firm rock, such as a bolder³ and therefore, "is a figure used to represent immovable firmness."⁴ *Sela*, on the other hand, represents a rocky cliff or crag and is sometimes used to picture security.⁵ Taken together, both words picture God being the absolute secure bolder upon which fragile and insecure man can always rely.

B. My Fortress

In addition, to being portrayed as a rocky cliff, God is also pictured as a fortress. Here we have the Hebrew word *metsada* (מצודה). This is a place of protection sometimes carved out of the rocks and cliffs. This Hebrew word is the basis for the name of one of the most famous ancient Jewish fortresses, Masada — the mountain fortress that King Herod made out of a rocky hill by the Dead Sea in the Judean desert.

Keil and Delitzsch note accurately that when the rock and the fortress are taken together,

the two epithets are borrowed from the natural character of Palestine [Israel], where steep and almost inaccessible rocks afford protection to the fugitive, as David had often found when Saul was pursuing him.⁶

C. My Saviour

Another prominent name that David gives to God is "my Saviour." Again, this title is based on David's personal experience. Note here that the word "salvation" does not always mean deliverance from personal sin, as we see many times, especially in reference to Yeshua in the Brit Hadasha. On the contrary, most often, particularly in the Psalms, it has to do with a deliverance or rescuing of one's physical life. This is how David is using the term in this passage. In 2 Samuel 22:3, David says that God is the "horn of my salvation." Keil and

Delitzsch suggest that this image is, “borrowed from animals, which have their strength and defensive weapons in their horns.”⁷ That may be true. However, it might also be a reference to one of the horns of the altar in the Mishkan and the Temple. Sometimes people clung to one of the horns, located on the four corners of the altar, when he wanted to be delivered from death. Apparently it may have been an indication that he was clinging to God for mercy.

Thus, we have a brief description of the kind of God in which David trusted and upon which he relied to save his life. It is the picture of an incredibly strong and able stronghold, just like the imposing landscape in the wilderness into which David so often fled for protection. Instead of relying, however, on the mere physical environment of the wilderness, David trusted solely in the God who made that wilderness.

¹ Ronald F. Youngblood, 1, 2 Samuel, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (“EBC”), vol. 3, 1064.

² C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 2, 470.

³ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (“BDB”), 849.

⁴ Keil and Delitzsch, op. cit., 470.

⁵ BDB, 701.

⁶ Keil and Delitzsch, op. cit., 470.

⁷ Ibid, 471.