

The Jewish People of God

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

*Once you were not a people,
but now you are God's people;
once you had not received mercy,
but now you have received mercy.¹*

Following the teaching of the apostles we, as Christians, think of ourselves as the People of God. Yet this title is far older, reaching back over a thousand years before Christ and speaking of the Jewish people. This understanding, of being a 'chosen race', found its foundation in stories about Abraham, finding fulfilment in the story of Moses and the leading of Israel out from captivity in Egypt. The 'exodus' and the 'forty years in the desert' were seen as the defining experiences of the Jewish people who, in the time of Christ, were still awaiting the coming of the promised Messiah. That Jesus came and was not recognised by many Jews was a problem, not only for Judaism itself, but for the first Christians who sought to understand how God's faithful and unchanging Promise could fail to be fulfilled among His chosen People of Israel and come to fall on those who came to follow Christ. It was not enough to say that God had chosen the Christian people instead of Israel, because both Jesus and the apostles were themselves Jews, and the question inevitably arose as to how God's unchanging promise had, in fact, been fulfilled.

This was a question grappled with, not only by Peter and Paul, but also by the authors of the gospels – particularly of Luke (who was also the author of the Acts of the Apostles). This author retained the belief that the Jewish people would turn, once again, to their God and find Him in His Son Jesus. The promise made to Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, by an 'angel of the Lord' at the beginning of Luke makes this clear:

*'Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. **He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God.** With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.'²*

¹ 1 Peter 2:9-10

² Luke 1:13-17

When Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, preached to the people of Jerusalem:

they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, 'Brothers, what should we do?' Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.'

So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.³

As the account continues, however, opposition to the Christian followers grows. Paul himself is first seen not as an apostle but as a persecutor of Christians named Saul, standing by 'and approving'⁴ the stoning to death of Stephen, the first Christian martyr.

The turning away by the Jewish people is seen when Paul and Barnabas preached in Antioch in Pisidia,⁵ and finds echoes in the letters of John. It seems that many of the first Christians found themselves expelled from their synagogues, and so began their divergence from Jewish practice. Paul's mission to the gentiles cemented this sense of separation, as the new Christian communities grew in confidence.

The Promise to Moses

Say therefore to the Israelites, "I am the Lord, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgement. I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord."⁶

Israel's exodus from slavery in Egypt was recognised as a historical,⁷ but also a symbolic, event. Through their leader, Moses, those fleeing believed themselves to be directly guided

³ Acts 2:37-39,41-42

⁴ Acts 8:1

⁵ Acts 13:14-52 (see the extract below). This was a different Antioch from the Syrian Antioch where the followers of Jesus were said to have been called 'Christians' for the first time, and which was seen as a cradle of Christianity

⁶ Exodus 6:6-8

⁷ Some potential archaeological evidence exists from the 13th century B.C. during the nineteenth Egyptian Ramesside dynasty (Ramses II, or possibly later, Ramses III) though the historicity of the exodus as recorded remains the subject of scholarly debate

by their God. The stories of the 'pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire at night'⁸ and of the manna in the desert⁹ tell of their deep faith that God was with them, leading them faithfully towards the promised land.

But the account in the Old Testament books of Exodus and Numbers also tells of the unfaithfulness of Israel; that God was always faithful, yet they were not. The forty years wandering through the desert is therefore a symbol of God faithfully leading and His People gradually learning to trust the journey, not knowing the way.

This symbol remains for us as Christians: God leads faithfully but we must learn to walk trustfully. The path to salvation is not hurried but followed with patience and fidelity.

The Jewish Law

The Old Testament Book of Deuteronomy recalls the words and teachings of Moses:

So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the Lord your God with which I am charging you. You have seen for yourselves what the Lord did with regard to the Baal of Peor - how the Lord your God destroyed from among you everyone who followed the Baal of Peor, while those of you who held fast to the Lord your God are all alive today.

See, just as the Lord my God has charged me, I now teach you statutes and ordinances for you to observe in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!' For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is whenever we call to him? And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?

But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children.¹⁰

⁸ Exodus 13:21

⁹ Exodus 16:4-35

¹⁰ Deuteronomy 4:1-9

We remember the Ten Commandments¹¹ given by God to Moses, but the 'Law' – the teaching given by Moses to Israel – was more far-reaching, presented at length in the holy writings of the Jewish People.

Handed on in the Jewish tradition and interpreted over the centuries in the light of changing situations, this body of teaching is what Saint Paul refers to as 'the Law' and which he teaches has been superseded by Christian Faith.¹² This fulfils the words of Jesus:

'Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil'.¹³

As Christians we stand as descendants of Abraham in faith,¹⁴ the promise given to Abraham - 'I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven'¹⁵ - is fulfilled in us.

Our relationship with Judaism today

On 13 April 1986 Pope Saint John Paul II visited the Great Synagogue of Rome. After many centuries of tension and undeniable cruelty, his visit was intended as a step towards mutual respect and peace.

We cannot be proud of our treatment of Jewish people. We must remember that they have walked the path of faithfulness ahead of us and have suffered deeply in doing so. And we are reminded, again, that Jesus Himself was a Jew, as were his disciples.

Without the Jewish faith, how could we learn by their example how to walk in trust towards God's Kingdom? We remain deeply indebted to them in sharing our love of the One God.

As Christians we believe that God has shown His face in Jesus and so, looking always towards Christ, we seek to grow in love and faithfulness as descendants of Abraham.

We cannot push our Jewish sisters and brothers aside and we cannot dismiss their faithfulness over thousands of years.

We pray that the promise made by the angel to Zechariah will be fulfilled: that they will turn to the Lord their God¹⁶ and recognise Him in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹¹ Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:1-21

¹² This is the theme of Paul's letter to the Romans – see especially Romans 4

¹³ Matthew 5:17; cf. Luke 16:16

¹⁴ Romans 4:16

¹⁵ cf: Exodus 32:13

¹⁶ Luke 1:16

Suggested Points for Discussion

- How do you think we can learn from the example of our Jewish brothers and sisters?
- What more do we gain from our faith as Christians that we can offer to others?
- What do we, as Christians, lose if we forget the faith of the Jewish People of God?

Suggested Activities

- Read together Acts 13:14-52 (see below) and share your reflections on the text. Give time so that everyone has the opportunity to read the text more deeply.
- Read together the speech of Pope Saint John Paul II at his meeting with the Jewish community in Rome. What, do you think, are the key points of his message?
- Together, write down what you think are the key lessons to be learned from the stories of the Exodus and the journey of Israel through the desert. You may find Deuteronomy 32:1-47 (see below) helpful.

Further Reading

Reflections on Catholic-Jewish Relations: On the Occasion of the 50th anniversary of Nostra Aetate, Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, Catholic Truth Society, 2016
Salvation is from the Jews: The Role of Judaism in Salvation History from Abraham to the Second Coming, by Roy Schoeman, Ignatius Press, 2003

Acts 13:14-52

[Paul and Barnabas] came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. After the reading of the law and the prophets, the officials of the synagogue sent them a message, saying, 'Brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, give it.' So Paul stood up and with a gesture began to speak:

'You Israelites, and others who fear God, listen. The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. For about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness. After he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance for about four hundred and fifty years. After that he gave them judges until the time of the prophet Samuel. Then they asked for a king; and God gave them Saul son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, who reigned for forty years. When he had removed him, he made David their king. In his testimony about him he said, "I have found David, son of Jesse, to be a man after my heart, who will carry out all my wishes." Of this man's posterity God has brought to Israel a Saviour, Jesus, as he promised; before his coming John had already proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John was finishing his work, he said, "What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but one is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of the sandals on his feet."

'My brothers, you descendants of Abraham's family, and others who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent. Because the residents of Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize him or understand the words of the prophets that are read every sabbath, they fulfilled those words by condemning him. Even though they found no cause for a sentence of death, they asked Pilate to have him killed. When they had carried out everything that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead; and for many days he appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, and they are now his witnesses to the people. And we bring you the good news that what God promised to our ancestors he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm,

"You are my Son;
today I have begotten you."

As to his raising him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way,

"I will give you the holy promises made to David."

Therefore, he has also said in another psalm,

“You will not let your Holy One experience corruption.”

For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, died, was laid beside his ancestors, and experienced corruption; but he whom God raised up experienced no corruption. Let it be known to you therefore, my brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you; by this Jesus everyone who believes is set free from all those sins from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. Beware, therefore, that what the prophets said does not happen to you:

“Look, you scoffers!

Be amazed and perish,
for in your days I am doing a work,
a work that you will never believe, even if someone tells you.”

As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people urged them to speak about these things again the next sabbath. When the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.

The next sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy; and blaspheming, they contradicted what was spoken by Paul. Then both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, ‘It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you reject it and judge yourselves to be unworthy of eternal life, we are now turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying,

“I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles,
so that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”

When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and praised the word of the Lord; and as many as had been destined for eternal life became believers. Thus, the word of the Lord spread throughout the region. But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their region. So they shook the dust off their feet in protest against them, and went to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

MEETING WITH THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN THE SYNAGOGUE OF THE CITY
OF ROME

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II

Sunday, 13 April 1986

Chief Rabbi of the Jewish Community of Rome, Madam President of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, Mr. President of the Communities of Rome, Rabbis, dear Jewish and Christian friends and brothers, who are taking part in this historic celebration

1. I would like, first of all, together with you, to thank and praise the Lord who "*stretched out heaven and founded the earth*" (cf. Isaiah 51:16) and who chose Abraham to make him the father of a multitude of children, numerous "*like the stars in heaven*" and "*like the sand that is on the seashore*" (Genesis 22:17; 15:5), because he willed, in the mystery of his providence, that this evening the Jewish community living in this city of yours since the time of the ancient Romans should meet in this "Great Temple" of yours the Bishop of Rome and universal Pastor of the Catholic Church.

I also feel it my duty to thank the Chief Rabbi, Prof. Elio Toaff, who welcomed with joy, from the first moment, the project of this visit and who now receives me with great openness of heart and with a lively sense of hospitality; And with him I thank all those in the Roman Jewish community who made this meeting possible and worked in many ways to ensure that it was both a reality and a symbol.

So thank you to all of you. "Todà rabbà" (thank you very much).

2. In the light of the word of God just proclaimed and which "lives for ever" (cf. Isaiah 30:8), I would like us to reflect together, in the presence of the Holy One, blessed be He! (as it says in your liturgy), on the fact and significance of this meeting between the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, and the Jewish community that lives and works in this city, so dear to you and to me.

I have been thinking about this visit for a long time. Indeed, the Chief Rabbi had the kindness to come and meet me in February 1981, when I went on a pastoral visit to the nearby parish of San Carlo ai Catinari. Moreover, some of you have come to the Vatican more than once, both on the occasion of the numerous audiences I have been able to have with representatives of Italian and world Judaism, and even earlier, at the time of my predecessors, Paul VI, John XXIII and Pius XII. It is also well known to me that the Chief Rabbi, on the night preceding the death of Pope John, did not hesitate to go to St Peter's Square, accompanied by a group of Jewish faithful, to pray and watch, mingled among the crowd of Catholics and other Christians, as if to bear witness, in a silent but so effective way, to the greatness of soul of that Pontiff, open to all without distinction, and in particular to his Jewish brothers.

The legacy I would now like to remember is precisely that of Pope John, who once, passing through here - as the Chief Rabbi has just recalled - stopped the car to bless the crowd of Jews coming out of this same Temple. And I would like to take up the legacy at this moment, finding myself no longer outside but, thanks to your generous hospitality, inside the Synagogue of Rome.

3. This meeting concludes, in a certain way, after the pontificate of John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council, a long period during which it is necessary not to tire of reflecting in order to draw the appropriate lessons. Certainly we cannot, nor must we, forget that the historical circumstances of the past were very different from those that have laboriously matured over the centuries; The common acceptance of a legitimate plurality on the social, civil and religious levels has been achieved with great difficulty. Consideration of age-old cultural conditioning could not, however, prevent us from recognising that acts of discrimination, of unjustified limitation of religious freedom, of oppression also on the level of civil freedom, against Jews, were objectively gravely deplorable manifestations. Yes, once again, through me, the Church, in the words of the well-known decree of Vatican II *Nostra Aetate* (28 October 1965, n. 4), "deplores hatred, persecution and all manifestations of anti-Semitism directed against Jews at all times by anyone"; I repeat: "by anyone".

I would like to express a word of deep loathing once again for the genocide decreed during the last war against the Jewish people, and which led to the holocaust of millions of innocent victims. Visiting the Auschwitz concentration camp on 7 June 1979 and gathering in prayer for the many victims of different nations, I paused in particular before the plaque with the inscription in Hebrew, which so expressed the sentiments of my soul: "*This inscription evokes the memory of the people, whose sons and daughters were destined for total extermination. This people has its origin from Abraham who is the father of our faith as Paul of Tarsus expressed himself. It is precisely this people, who have received from God the commandment "Thou shalt not kill", who have experienced for themselves in a special measure what killing means. In front of this tombstone it is not lawful for anyone to pass by with indifference.*"

The Jewish community of Rome also paid a high price in blood. And it was certainly a significant gesture that, in the dark years of racial persecution, the doors of our convents, our churches, the Roman Seminary, the buildings of the Holy See and Vatican City itself were thrown open to offer refuge and salvation to so many Jews of Rome, hunted by persecutors.

4. Today's visit is intended to make a decisive contribution to the consolidation of good relations between our two communities, in the wake of the examples offered by so many men and women who have committed themselves and are still committed, on both sides, to overcoming old prejudices and making room for an ever fuller recognition of that "bond" and that "common spiritual patrimony" that exist between Jews and Christians. This is the hope expressed in paragraph 4, which I have just recalled, of the conciliar declaration *Nostra Aetate* on relations between the Church and non-Christian religions. The decisive turning point in the relations of

the Catholic Church with Judaism, and with individual Jews, came with this brief but significant paragraph.

We are all aware that, among the many riches of this text, three points are especially relevant. I would like to emphasize them here, before you, on this truly unique occasion.

The first is that the Church of Christ discovers its "link" with Judaism by "scrutinizing its own mystery." The Jewish religion is not "extrinsic" to us, but in a certain way, it is "intrinsic" to our religion. **We therefore have relations with it that we do not have with any other religion.** You are our beloved brothers and, in a way, you could say our elder brothers.

The second point made by the Council is that the Jews, as a people, cannot be imputed any ancient or collective guilt for what "was done in the passion of Jesus." Not indiscriminately to the Jews of that time, not to those who came later, not to those of today. Any alleged theological justification of discriminatory or, worse still, persecutory measures is therefore utterly wrong. The Lord will judge each one "according to his own works", Jews as well as Christians (cf. Romans 2:6).

The third point I would like to stress in the conciliar declaration comes as the consequence of the second: it is utterly wrong to say (despite the Church's awareness of her own identity) that the Jews are "damned" or "cursed," as if this were taught, or could be deduced from the Sacred Scriptures, of the Old or the New Testament. Indeed, the Council had said before, in this same passage of *Nostra Aetate*, but also in the dogmatic constitution *Lumen gentium* (21 November 1964 n. 6), quoting Saint Paul in the Letter to the Romans (Romans 11:28-29), that the Jews "remain very dear to God", who called them with an "irrevocable vocation".

5. Our present relations are based on these convictions. On the occasion of this visit to your Synagogue, I wish to reaffirm them and proclaim them in their perennial value. Indeed, this is the meaning that must be attributed to my visit among you, the Jews of Rome.

It is certainly not because the differences between us are now overcome that I have come among you. We are well aware that this is not the case. First of all, each of our religions, in full awareness of the many bonds that unite it to the other, and in the first place of that "bond" of which the Council speaks, wishes to be recognised and respected in its own identity, beyond all syncretism and all equivocal appropriation.

It is also necessary to say that the road taken is still at the beginning, and that therefore it will still take a long time, despite the great efforts already made by both sides, to suppress every form, albeit subtle, of prejudice, to adapt every way of expressing oneself and therefore to present always and everywhere, to ourselves and to others, the true face of Jews and Judaism, as well as Christians and Christianity, and this at every level of mentality, teaching and communication.

In this regard, I would like to remind my brothers and sisters of the Catholic Church, including in Rome, of the fact that the instruments for applying the Council in this specific field are already available to all, in the two documents published respectively in 1974 and 1985 by the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. It is only a matter of studying them carefully, of empathising with their teachings and putting them into practice.

Perhaps there are still practical difficulties among us, waiting to be overcome on the level of fraternal relations: they are the fruit both of centuries of mutual misunderstanding, and also of different positions and attitudes in complex and important matters that are not easily reconciled.

It escapes no-one that the fundamental divergence from the beginning is the adherence of us Christians to the person and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, son of your people, from whom were also born the Virgin Mary, the apostles, "foundation and pillars of the Church", and the majority of the members of the first Christian community. But this adherence is placed in the order of faith, that is, in the free assent of the intelligence and of the heart guided by the Spirit, and can never be the object of external pressure, in one sense or another. This is why we are willing to deepen dialogue in loyalty and friendship, with respect for the intimate convictions of both, taking as a fundamental basis the elements of revelation that we have in common, as a "great spiritual patrimony" (cf. *Nostra Aetate* n.4).

6. It must be said, then, that the paths open to our collaboration, in the light of the common heritage drawn from the Law and the prophets, are varied and important. Let us recall, above all, a collaboration in favour of man, of his life from conception to natural death, of his dignity, of his freedom, of his rights, of his development in a society that is not hostile, but friendly and favourable, where justice reigns and where, in this nation, on the continents and in the world, peace reigns, the "shalom" advocated by the lawmakers, prophets and sages of Israel.

There is, more generally, the moral problem, the great field of individual and social ethics. We are all aware of how acute the crisis is on this point in the time in which we live. In a society often lost in agnosticism and individualism, and suffering the bitter consequences of selfishness and violence, Jews and Christians are depositories and witnesses of an ethic marked by the Ten Commandments, in the observance of which man finds his truth and freedom. Promoting common reflection and collaboration on this point is one of the great duties of the hour.

And finally, I would like to turn my thoughts to this city where the community of Catholics lives with its Bishop, the community of Jews with its authorities and with its Chief Rabbi. May ours not only be a "coexistence" of narrow measure, almost a juxtaposition, interspersed with limited and occasional encounters, but may it be animated by fraternal love.

7. Rome's problems are many. You know it well. Each one of us, in the light of that blessed heritage to which I referred earlier, knows that he is obliged to collaborate, to some extent at least, in their solution. Let us try, as far as possible, to do it

together. May my visit and our harmony and serenity flow from this, like the river which Ezekiel saw flowing from the eastern gate of the Temple of Jerusalem (cf. Ezekiel 47:1ff.), a fresh and beneficial spring that helps to heal the wounds from which Rome suffers.

In doing so, I venture to say, we will be faithful to our respective most sacred commitments, but also to what most profoundly unites and gathers us: faith in one God who "loves strangers" and "does justice to the orphan and the widow" (cf. Deuteronomy 10:18), committing ourselves also to love and help them (cf. Leviticus 19:18,34). Christians have learned this will of the Lord from the Torah, which you venerate here, and from Jesus who carried to the extreme consequences the love demanded by the Torah.

8. It only remains for me now to turn, as at the beginning of my address, my eyes and mind to the Lord, to thank and praise him for this happy meeting and for the goods that already flow from it, for the rediscovered brotherhood and for the new deeper understanding between us here in Rome, and between the Church and Judaism everywhere, in every country, for the benefit of all. Therefore, I would like to say with the psalmist, in his original language which is also your hereditary: "Celebrate the Lord, because he is good: because his mercy is eternal. Let Israel say that he is good: his mercy is eternal. Let him who fears God say so: his mercy is eternal (Psalm 118:1-2.4). Amen.

Deuteronomy 32:1-47

Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak;
let the earth hear the words of my mouth.
May my teaching drop like the rain,
my speech condense like the dew;
like gentle rain on grass,
like showers on new growth.
For I will proclaim the name of the Lord;
ascribe greatness to our God!
The Rock, his work is perfect,
and all his ways are just.
A faithful God, without deceit,
just and upright is he;
yet his degenerate children have dealt falsely with him,
a perverse and crooked generation.
Do you thus repay the Lord,
O foolish and senseless people?
Is not he your father, who created you,
who made you and established you?
Remember the days of old,
consider the years long past;
ask your father, and he will inform you;
your elders, and they will tell you.
When the Most High apportioned the nations,
when he divided humankind,
he fixed the boundaries of the peoples
according to the number of the gods;
the Lord's own portion was his people,
Jacob his allotted share.
He sustained him in a desert land,
in a howling wilderness waste;
he shielded him, cared for him,
guarded him as the apple of his eye.
As an eagle 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 Lord alone guided him;
no foreign god was with him.
He set him upon the heights of the land,
and fed him with produce of the field;
he nursed him with honey from the crags,

with oil from flinty rock;
curds from the herd, and milk from the flock,
with fat of lambs and rams;
Bashan bulls and goats,
together with the choicest wheat—
you drank fine wine from the blood of grapes.
Jacob ate his fill;
Jeshurun grew fat, and kicked.
You grew fat, bloated, and gorged!
He abandoned God who made him,
and scoffed at the Rock of his salvation.
They made him jealous with strange gods,
with abhorrent things they provoked him.
They sacrificed to demons, not God,
to deities they had never known,
to new ones recently arrived,
whom your ancestors had not feared.
You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you;
you forgot the God who gave you birth.
The Lord saw it, and was jealous;
he spurned his sons and daughters.
He said: I will hide my face from them,
I will see what their end will be;
for they are a perverse generation,
children in whom there is no faithfulness.
They made me jealous with what is no god,
provoked me with their idols.
So I will make them jealous with what is no people,
provoke them with a foolish nation.
For a fire is kindled by my anger,
and burns to the depths of Sheol;
it devours the earth and its increase,
and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.
I will heap disasters upon them,
spend my arrows against them:
wasting hunger,
burning consumption,
bitter pestilence.
The teeth of beasts I will send against them,
with venom of things crawling in the dust.
In the street the sword shall bereave,
and in the chambers terror,
for young man and woman alike,

nursing child and old grey head.
I thought to scatter them
and blot out the memory of them from humankind;
but I feared provocation by the enemy,
for their adversaries might misunderstand
and say, 'Our hand is triumphant;
it was not the Lord who did all this.'
They are a nation void of sense;
there is no understanding in them.
If they were wise, they would understand this;
they would discern what the end would be.
How could one have routed a thousand,
and two put a myriad to flight,
unless their Rock had sold them,
the Lord had given them up?
Indeed their rock is not like our Rock;
our enemies are fools.
Their vine comes from the vine-stock of Sodom,
from the vineyards of Gomorrah;
their grapes are grapes of poison,
their clusters are bitter;
their wine is the poison of serpents,
the cruel venom of asps.
Is not this laid up in store with me,
sealed up in my treasuries?
Vengeance is mine, and recompense,
for the time when their foot shall slip;
because the day of their calamity is at hand,
their doom comes swiftly.
Indeed the Lord will vindicate his people,
have compassion on his servants,
when he sees that their power is gone,
neither bond nor free remaining.
Then he will say: Where are their gods,
the rock in which they took refuge,
who ate the fat of their sacrifices,
and drank the wine of their libations?
Let them rise up and help you,
let them be your protection!
See now that I, even I, am he;
there is no god besides me.
I kill and I make alive;
I wound and I heal;

and no one can deliver from my hand.
For I lift up my hand to heaven,
and swear: As I live for ever,
when I whet my flashing sword,
and my hand takes hold on judgement;
I will take vengeance on my adversaries,
and will repay those who hate me.
I will make my arrows drunk with blood,
and my sword shall devour flesh—
with the blood of the slain and the captives,
from the long-haired enemy.
Praise, O heavens,¹⁴ his people,
worship him, all you gods!
For he will avenge the blood of his children,
and take vengeance on his adversaries;
he will repay those who hate him,
and cleanse the land for his people.

Moses came and recited all the words of this song in the hearing of the people, he and Joshua, son of Nun. When Moses had finished reciting all these words to all Israel, he said to them: 'Take to heart all the words that I am giving in witness against you today; give them as a command to your children, so that they may diligently observe all the words of this law. This is no trifling matter for you, but rather your very life; through it you may live long in the land that you are crossing over the Jordan to possess.'