

PARASHAT HA'AZINU

Deuteronomy 32:1–52

Parashat Ha'azinu is a prayer-poem that Moses presents to the people of Israel just before he ascends Mount Nebo, where he will die. In these verses, Moses declares that God's "deeds are perfect . . . and just," and God is "never false" but always "true and upright." He warns against those who act dishonestly against God. He tells the Israelites to "remember" their history and their special relationship with God, who guided their ancestors and cared for them despite the many times they turned to idolatry. God, Moses declares, could have obliterated the Israelites many times for their disloyalty but decided against doing so lest their enemies assume Israel's destruction was their doing rather than God's punishment. Indeed, says Moses, it is God who constantly saves Israel from destruction. It is God "who deals death and gives life." God, Moses concludes, will bring vengeance upon Israel's enemies. Moses warns the people to "take to heart" all of the Torah and its laws and to teach the laws to their children. "The Torah is your very life," he tells them, and "through it you shall long endure. . . ." Moses is then told to climb Mount Nebo from which he will be able to see the Land of Israel. There he will die, without entering the land, punishment for his anger at the Waters of Meribath-kadesh.
