

Deuteronomy 31:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel: put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel.

Analysis

Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel: put it in their mouths—God commanded Moses to compose and disseminate the song recorded in Deuteronomy 32. **That this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel**—the song would serve as legal testimony in Israel's future covenant lawsuit. The Hebrew *le-ed* (לעד, 'for a witness') indicates the song's forensic function: documenting Israel's obligations and God's warnings before the predicted rebellion occurred.

Setting theology to music ensured memorability and transmission—songs persist in memory longer than prose. The command to 'put it in their mouths' meant the song should become so familiar that Israelites would spontaneously recall and recite it. When apostasy came, the song's words would echo in memory, providing both explanation for their suffering and hope for restoration. This principle—Scripture memorization through song—continues in church tradition through hymns and worship music that teach theology while shaping affections.

Historical Context

Commanded circa 1406 BC in Moses's final weeks. Deuteronomy 32, the Song of Moses, became a lasting part of Israel's worship and instruction. Its themes—God's faithfulness, Israel's rebellion, divine judgment, eventual restoration—summarized covenant dynamics. Ancient peoples used poetry and song extensively for cultural

transmission, recognizing their mnemonic superiority over prose. The song persisted through Israel's history, cited or alluded to by prophets (Isaiah 1:2, Jeremiah 2:32) and referenced in Revelation 15:3 as 'the song of Moses' sung by victorious saints.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. Why does God use poetry and song, not merely prose, to convey crucial theology? What unique benefits do songs provide?
2. How does memorizing Scripture through music shape both doctrine and devotion? What's the relationship?
3. What criteria should guide selecting worship songs—theological accuracy, memorability, emotional engagement, or what balance?

Interlinear Text

הַזֹּאת	אֶת	הַשִּׁירִי	כָּתֹב וְ	וְעַתָּה
H2063	H853	H7892	H3789	H6258
		that this song	Now therefore write	
שִׁמָּה הַ	יִשְׂרָאֵל:	בְּבִנִי י	אֶת	וְלַמָּד הַ
H7760	H3478	H1121	H853	H3925
put	of Israel	for me against the children		for you and teach
הַזֹּאת	אֶת	הַשִּׁירִי	לִי	תְהִיָּה לְמַעַן
H2063		H7892	H0	H4616
		that this song		it in their mouths
יִשְׂרָאֵל:	בְּבִנִי י	לֵעֵד		
H3478	H1121	H5707		
of Israel	for me against the children	may be a witness		

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 6:7 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Deuteronomy 31:26 (Witness): Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee.

John 12:48 (Parallel theme): He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

Deuteronomy 11:19 (Parallel theme): And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

2 Samuel 14:3 (Parallel theme): And come to the king, and speak on this manner unto him. So Joab put the words in her mouth.

