

Deuteronomy 32:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.

Analysis

This verse opens the Song of Moses with a profound declaration of God's character. The title *hatsur* (הַצֹּר, 'the Rock') emphasizes God's unchanging stability, reliability, and strength—a foundation that cannot be shaken. This metaphor recurs throughout Scripture (Psalm 18:2; Isaiah 26:4) and contrasts with human instability and false gods' impotence. The declaration *tamim pa'alo* (תָּמִים פָּעָלוֹ, 'His work is perfect') uses *tamim* (תָּמִים), meaning complete, whole, without defect—nothing in God's actions is flawed or inadequate.

The phrase *ki khol-derakhav mishpat* (כִּי כָל-דֶּרֶכָיו מִשְׁפָּט, 'for all His ways are justice') asserts that every divine action conforms to perfect justice—God never acts arbitrarily, capriciously, or unjustly. *El emunah* (אֱלֹהֵי אֱמוּנָה, 'a God of faithfulness/truth') emphasizes God's absolute reliability—He keeps every promise and never deceives. *Ve'ein avel* (וְאֵין עָוֹל, 'and without iniquity') uses the strongest negative—absolutely no moral wrong exists in God. The final pair *tsaddiq veyashar hu* (צַדִּיק וְיָשָׁר הוּא, 'just and upright is He') summarizes: God embodies perfect righteousness and moral straightness.

This comprehensive character declaration establishes the foundation for Moses' subsequent indictment of Israel's unfaithfulness (v. 5-6). God's perfection highlights Israel's perversity, His faithfulness their fickleness.

Historical Context

The Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32) was delivered on the plains of Moab shortly before Moses' death (circa 1406 BC). God commanded Moses to write this song and teach it to Israel (31:19-22) as a witness against them—prophetically warning of future apostasy and its consequences. The song served as covenant lawsuit (riv), calling heaven and earth as witnesses (32:1) to Israel's coming rebellion against their faithful God.

Moses' characterization of God as 'Rock' was particularly meaningful in ancient Near Eastern context where peoples attributed deity to natural phenomena and forces. Unlike storm gods like Baal or fertility goddesses like Asherah—capricious, changing, limited—Yahweh is the unchanging Rock, utterly reliable and infinitely powerful. Archaeological evidence shows Canaanite religion portrayed gods as petty, quarrelsome, morally compromised—the opposite of verse 4's description.

The song's subsequent fulfillment throughout Israel's history—apostasy, judgment, preservation of a remnant, ultimate restoration—validates its prophetic character. Paul quotes this song in Romans 15:10, showing its ongoing relevance. Christian theology sees God's perfect justice and faithfulness ultimately revealed in Christ, who satisfies divine justice while maintaining divine faithfulness to covenant promises.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does the metaphor of God as 'Rock' address human needs for security, stability, and reliable foundation?
2. What does it mean that God's work is 'perfect'—how should this affect our response when we don't understand His providence?
3. How does God's absolute justice ('without iniquity') relate to His mercy and grace toward sinners?
4. In what ways does God's faithfulness provide assurance when we face our own unfaithfulness and failure?
5. How does this comprehensive description of God's character serve as foundation for worship, obedience, and trust?

Interlinear Text

הַצֹּר	תָּמִּיּם	פְּעֵל וְ	כֹּל	דְּרָכָיו	מִשְׁפָּט	
He is the Rock	is perfect	his work	H3588	H3605	for all his ways	are judgment
H6697	H8549	H6467			H1870	H4941
אֱלֹהִים	אֱמוּנָה	וְאֵין	עֲוֹל	צַדִּיק	יָשָׁר	הוּא:
a God	of truth	H369	and without iniquity	just	and right	H1931
H410	H530		H5766	H6662	H3477	

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 92:15 (Righteousness): To shew that the LORD is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

Isaiah 26:4 (Parallel theme): Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:

Psalms 18:2 (References God): The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

Daniel 4:37 (Judgment): Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

Psalms 100:5 (Truth): For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

Matthew 5:48 (Parallel theme): Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

James 1:17 (Parallel theme): Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Genesis 18:25 (Righteousness): That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Jeremiah 9:24 (Righteousness): But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.

1 Corinthians 10:4 (Parallel theme): And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.