

Tsur means rock, sharp, firm, stable and durable. It conveys the sense of reliability and dependability, even unyielding, unchangeable and, by extension, a foundation.

Jesus advocated the need to build a house upon a firm foundation of rock in contrast to the uncertain sand which cannot withstand the storms of life: Matthew 7v24-27. He understood that no building will last if not built upon a proper foundation. He made sure he built upon his God, the Rock of Israel. As Robert Roberts points out in *Nazareth Revisited*, Jesus was more accurately a builder rather than the more popularly understood carpenter. He did not work just in wood. He knew the materials of stone and rock very well. They were his medium to achieve purpose. As the Father so the Son, these traits are his also.

As sharp Tsur carries with it the idea of breaking what hits it. The rock of stumbling, the stone of offence: Romans 9v33. God crushes those that go against Him.

This divine title is well known but perhaps less common than some others. It is first used in Deuteronomy 32v4 and perhaps its late usage reflects the need for God to be established at least in the eyes of His children as One who is utterly dependable and unyielding. This was not straight away but after the formation of the nation in the wilderness during whose sojourn, He provided water from the struck rock.

Tsur is used 33 times in all as a title of deity, but also is used more commonly just as rock. Some of these are as false gods. Five times in the KJV it is translated as strength rather than rock. All are associated with the Eternal. Psalm 18v2, 19v14, 73v26, 144v1 and Isaiah 26v4. Isaiah is the earliest of the major prophets. By the time of the later ones, Jeremiah Ezekiel and Daniel, Israel had firmly moved away from Tsur their foundation. Isaiah has

*“Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength”*. The phrase “everlasting strength” has been rendered – Rock of Ages.

Deuteronomy 32 and 2 Samuel 22 group the use of Tsur together more than any other passages. Both these passages emphasize the dependability of God in His dealings with mankind. First in the nation of Israel, the people He selected above all others, then with the special individual, the man after God’s own heart.

Deuteronomy has the following:

(Yahweh) He is the Rock, His work is perfect. V4

Then he forsook God (Eloah) which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. V15

Of the Rock that begat thee, thou art unmindful and hast forgotten God (El) that formed thee. V18

How should one chase a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight except their Rock had sold them and the LORD (Yahweh) had shut them up. V30

For their rock is not as our Rock even our enemies themselves being judges. V31

And he shall say where are their gods their rock in whom they trusted? V37

2 Samuel 22 has:

The God is my Rock in Him will I trust. V3

For who is God (El) save the LORD (Yahweh) and who is a rock save our God? V32

The LORD liveth and blessed be my Rock; and exalted be the God of the Rock of my salvation. V47

Also, in Isaiah is 44v8 *"Is there a God (Eloah) beside me? Yea there is no God (Tsur) I know not any"*.

In 2 Samuel 22 verse 2 Rock is translated from the Hebrew word Sela, meaning lofty, thus crag or cliff. *"Yahweh is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer"*. Sela is the word used for the Rock in Numbers 20 when Moses brought out the water. It was a rock face or cliff then rather than a low-lying rock underfoot which produced the water of life. A rock soaring high into the sky above the mundane affairs of men, where we sometimes go to, to look for God in the solitude of majestic creation, the natural heights which can lift our thoughts higher. Masada would be one such place, a Sela, but polluted in the mind's eye by other associations now.

The next chapter in 2 Samuel also contains that expression already used *"The Rock of Israel"* Tsur. It is used by the Spirit to add weight to the statement made by King David under inspiration, the man *"raised up on high"*, when delineating the attributes of an acceptable ruler on behalf of God. *"Although my house be not so with God (El) yet hath He made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although He make it not to grow"*.

The last place it is used is in Habakkuk 1v12. There Tsur is translated as mighty God! Certainly, He is mighty but that is more the meaning of the title Abiyir which is used six times in all, including twice in Psalm 132v2 & 5. Here it is rendered *"O mighty God thou hast established them for correction"*. It goes on to contrast the dependability of God with the treacherousness of men. *"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil. Thou canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously"*.

Although not cited in the prophecy of Malachi the idea of Tsur is found there. *"I am YHWH I change not therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed"* 3v6.

A Voice from the Altar

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