

Thursday Evening Bible Class. Name and Titles of God**Study No. 9 – Tsur or Rock****28th April 2022****Introduction**

This Hebrew word Tsur is mentioned in the Old Testament 118 times but very often (42 times) it is applied to God Himself.

Tsur is Hebrew for A Rock or a Cliff. Strong's Concordance definition says this

TSUR a cliff (or sharp rock, as compressed); generally, a rock or boulder; figuratively, a refuge; also an edge (as precipitous):—edge, × (mighty) God (one), rock, × sharp, stone, × strength, × strong.

In the above definition note: there are two translations of Tsur to Mighty God/One in the King James Version. This occurs in Isaiah 30:29 and Habakkuk 1:12. We will mention these later.

Key Passage

One passage that introduces the use of Rock as a title for the God of Israel is in Deuteronomy 32. In that chapter, the title is used many times.

- Verse 4: *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.*
- Verse 15: *But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.*
- Verse 18: *Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.*
- Verse 30: *How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the Lord had shut them up?*

- Verse 31; *For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.*

What is a Rock?

What are the characteristics of a Rock, that make it likened to God, and even used as a Title of God?

- The Rock is immoveable. It is impenetrable, it is mysterious. It seems as if it has always been there. Compared to man, it seems immortal. How often we look at rocks and think why is it that shape, or the geological markings and try and imagine how the rock was formed. But we cannot. Nor can scientists. Job also was forced to except the sovereignty of God, and that His ways are far higher than our ways. Ephesians 3:19: *And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.* Philippians 4:7: *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,* Matthew 11:27 *neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.*
- The Rock is enduring, outlasting man for countless generations. It is unchanging, the same yesterday, today , and for a long time to come. Deuteronomy 32:4 *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.*
- The Rock can be high, and climbing up high upon, it seems to leave all the worries and cares of this life behind Psalm 61:2 *From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I.*
- The Rock is hard, so hard it is used as an anvil to break lesser elements in pieces. Daniel 2:45 *the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces.*
- The Rock is so heavy and huge, it can be used as a firm foundation for the flimsy structures men call houses. Matthew

7:25: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

- The Rock can provide shelter from the wind and the rain and storm, a covert from the tempest. (Isaiah 32:2) Psalm 31:2 *Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me.* Psalm 18:2 *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.*

The Rock of Israel

We can see the appropriateness then for the rock being ascribed as a title to God. In Deuteronomy, the nation are described by the inspired writer of Moses, as he comes to the end of his life, he is caused to proclaim the word of God. As the nation has come to the birth, and endured so many different experiences in the wilderness. A whole generation has perished in the wilderness because of their corruption and rebellion, even after they witnesses the complete humiliation and destruction of the biggest empire of the time – Egypt. Even Moses in his ancient years, looking back could see the unchanging nature of God, and His constancy. The dryness and barrenness of the wilderness is the life without God. In the life of the nation, it was out of the rock that God gave honey, and out of the flinty rock He gave oil, water out of the rock of flint (Deut 8: 15) If God could do this for his people in a dry land, what would He do for them in a green? (cp Luke 23:31) The Rock being the source of life, whereas to others, the rock is just part of the landscape, hardly noticeable. Yes, to many God is a challenge, an obstacle. To His people, The Rock is a revelation, and can be understood. It was why God chose a rock to teach a lesson, for the lives of the nation to be saved. He could have chosen the sand of the desert, or a tree, or a

ravine, an animal, a river. But He chose a Rock, the least likely object to be of use.

Moses in Exodus 17:6 was commanded to smite the Rock in Horeb with his rod, and water would come from it. He did so in the sight of the elders of Israel, and all the people could drink. It was a stunning miracle, but the nation did not seem terribly impressed, as they resorted back to their grumbling ways. A new generation arose, with a fresh outlook, but needed the same lessons. Moses was commanded to show the kindness of God again. This time he was just to speak to the Rock, and water would flow from it. (Numbers 20) But Moses was angry. Instead he shouted *Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.* Moses was sanctioned for this action. He would not be allowed to enter the land, because he had disobeyed God, hitting the rock twice, instead of speaking to the rock. Being angry, and taking credit for the miracle. Poor Moses, in his distress he showed the flimsy nature of man, shifting like the sands of the desert. God was unchangeable, and still delivered the life-giving water.

The Rock of Ages

The Titles of God that we are looking at, are such that they teach the Gospel. We recall from looking at Elohim, the Mighty Ones, how in scripture it begins by describing the plural power of The Mighty One, - God Himself and the angels, His agents he created specially to carry out His purpose. After a while Elohim came to include humans as well, and in the future we know that the Saints in glory will be the Elohim.

It is the same with the title Rock. The nation of Israel were promised to the fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that they would be as the grains of the sand of the sea shore for number. So many. All many

little individuals. A huge mass of people, moving and shifting, migrating, and changing. Yes, in many ways that prophecy has been fulfilled. But as Jesus points out, believing in the power of human ability is vain. Matthew 7: 26 -27 *And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*

The nations around offered their version of the Rock. Deuteronomy 32:31: *For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.* Deuteronomy 32:37 *And he shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted.*

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul writes: 1-6: *Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples...*

That Rock was Christ

So the title applied now also to more than One, shared with one other.

God was telling Moses under Divine inspiration to ascribe the Title of Rock to Himself. Deut 32:4 *He is the Rock, His work is perfect...* But at the same time God was demonstrating to His people – as the sand of the seashore for number, as they crossed the sandy deserts, that the huge Rocks that stood out from the landscape, giving them shade, and defence against their enemies, contrasted to their own lives of transience, and passing, the permanence of the Rock. The smiting of the Rock gave them water. That Rock was Christ. Yes, the Son of

God, the way of salvation was being preached. The source of Living water Jesus taught John 4:14: *But whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.* But for the Rock to deliver the life saving truth, he had to be smitten. Moses was told to smite the Rock, and Jesus Christ was crucified. Rivers in the desert, in a dry and thirsty land. *They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them.* Jesus work was done. He died once, was resurrected and ascended to the Father. The water, and comfort from the Rock is still available. Prayer is all that is required to receive that comfort and solace. But instead of speaking to the Rock, Moses struck it again twice in his loss of temper. It is a reminder of those who crucify the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame through rebellion and disobedience, who trust in their own abilities – their rock, their gods, and idols. So, Deuteronomy 32:18 *Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.*

Trust in Tsur

Many in Israel saw the Rock as dark looming forbidding, and rejected Him through their lack of faith and understanding. However not all. Enough trusted in their Tsur, for Hannah prayed 1 Samuel 2: 2 *There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God;* and King David: 2 Samuel 2 -3: *And he said, The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence. 32 For who is God, save the Lord? and who is a rock, save our God? 47 The Lord lives; and blessed be my Rock; and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation.*

The Title is also used by the prophet Isaiah in 26:4 *26:4 Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah (Yah, Yahweh) is everlasting strength:* This can be quite rightly also translated as Trust in the

LORD for ever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock. The word for strength in Hebrew is sometimes also Tsur. Likewise in *Habukkuk 1:12 Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction.* Mighty God here is also Rock.

Hannah, David, Isaiah, Habakkuk they use the title of Rock, to rejoice and proclaim the permanent foundation, the only source of enduring strength and power, the place of shelter, calm, and safety – salvation. The Title of Rock, Yah, Yahweh has designated to His son. The same Rock upon which Isaac was offered was the same rock where Jesus was crucified. The same rock that Jesus departed will be the same rock to which he returns. He is the same yesterday, today and – for ever. That Rock was Christ. Jesus showed how. The foundation is spiritual, it is the doctrine which is truth, unshakeable, unmoveable, the Word of God is immutable, it cannot lie, it cannot change – like a Rock. Luke 6: 47,48 *Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.*

The disciples hearing his teachings were convinced. Peter said *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* Matthew 16.17 *And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. Jesus then added the words: 18 -20. And I say also unto thee, That you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven:*

Which Rock?

Some believe that this was Peter being told that Jesus would build his church upon Peter, that Peter was the Rock, the first Bishop of Rome. Billions of people follow this teaching today. They are wrong. Their church is built upon sand. Mere men.

Jesus had previously told Simon: *Thou art Cephas*. This is Aramaic for 'stone'. Then he said the same to him again, but this time in Greek And I say unto thee you are 'Peter' (Petros as it is in Greek meaning a small rock). From this time on Simon is referred to as Peter in the gospels, but Jesus still calls him Simon, but often calls him Peter as well. Not just Cephas, a stone, but now Petros, a small rock, one taken from a larger base. *Upon this rock (or petra) will I build my church* said Jesus.

Jesus was quite clear here. Thou art Petros, and upon this petra will I build my ecclesia. Peter means a small rock, but *petra* means a large rock, a mass of rock, bedrock. Upon this petra will I build my ecclesia. Not upon petros, but petra. True they are similar sounding, but not the same word. The disciples didn't misunderstand, they didn't go along afterwards kissing Peters feet, or slobbering on his slippers, like they do the pope. For Peter in standing and boldly declaring thou art the Christ, the son of the Living God, he was being the petros, the little stone, declaring the petra, the unshakeable foundational faith of all Christs true disciples. **It is the belief that Jesus Christ is the Christ the son of the Living God, that is the Rock.** Christ Himself is that Rock.

Peter himself gives the answer. In his first letter he writes: 1 Peter 2:4-8 *To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but*

unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. The true church, the ecclesia of the Living God, is made up of living stones upon a living Rock, the chief corner stone, the Lord Jesus Christ.

God manifestation

God was The Rock. He gave the title to His Son, when he was smitten before men, providing the water of life. Now others are included in this Title Rock. Lively stones, living stones, a holy priesthood. The time will come when the Rock will be cut out of the mountain without hands, hewed by God Himself. He has chosen out of all the grains of sand. Some have been marked out through their faith to be coalesced, into metamorphic rock as it were, to be part of that Stone power which will smash the image on the feet, and grind it to powder. One into a multitude. God manifestation again, the gospel seen in the titles of God.

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