

**YHWH, ISRAEL'S MATCHLESS GOD:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE LIVELY ROCK METAPHOR
IN THE SONG OF MOSES (DEUTERONOMY 32:1–43)**

ANDREW T. DVORACEK

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ABSTRACT

One of the distinctive features of the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32:1–43 is the poem’s sevenfold metaphorical use of צִוּר ‘rock’ for the divine (vv. 4, 15b, 18, 30, 31a, 31b, 37). Despite the prominence of this imagery, scholarship has yet to analyse adequately its use in the Song. The lack of methodological clarity and the tendency to generalise are largely to blame. However, the problem has been further compounded by the limited attention given to the metaphor’s place within broader scholarly discussions concerning the Song’s message and other key interpretive issues—the poem’s provenance, text, structure, genre, conceptual background, function within Deuteronomy, place in the Hebrew Bible. The aim of the present study, therefore, is to analyse each occurrence of צִוּר ‘rock’ for God carefully within its immediate literary context (vv. 4–6, 15b–18, 28–31, 36–39), as well as the use of the metaphor within the wider contexts of the entire poem, the book of Deuteronomy, and the Hebrew Bible. This task is governed by a methodology drawn from recent developments in metaphor theory, namely ‘conceptual blending’. Importantly, the metaphorical analysis also proceeds from a thorough treatment of the conceptual domain of צִוּר ‘rock’, as informed by the Hebrew Bible and other ANE literature. This study suggests that, when rigorously analysed, the rock metaphor in the Song is far more nuanced, expressive, and relevant than scholarship has yet to recognise. For instance, each divine use of צִוּר ‘rock’ expresses an array of connotations and—at the same time—exhibits a unique emphasis. It is this multivalent nature that helps develop a great number of the poem’s central themes and animates its lively rhetoric. Furthermore, this study demonstrates how the rock metaphor contributes to key exegetical issues within the ‘rock’ passages and provides direct inroads into some of the Song’s most pressing perennial questions.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed _____

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*He alone is my rock and my salvation
My fortress—I shall never be shaken*

(Psalm 62:2, 6)

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ABBREVIATIONS

AbOTC	Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries
Akk.	Akkadian
ANE	Ancient Near East(ern)
<i>ANET</i>	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i>
ApOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research</i>
BCE	Before the Common Era
BHQ	Biblica Hebraica Quinta
<i>Bsac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>CAD</i>	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBT	Conceptual blending theory
CL	Corpus linguistics
CMT	Conceptual (cognitive) metaphor theory
<i>COS</i>	<i>Context of Scripture</i>
<i>CTA</i>	<i>Corpus des Tablettes en Cunéiformes Alphabétiques</i>
<i>DDD</i>	<i>Dictionary of Demons and Deities</i>
ETCSL	Electronic Textual Corpus of Sumerian Literature
Heb.	Hebrew
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>KTU</i>	<i>Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit</i>
LXX	Septuagint
NAC	New American Commentary
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i>
NIVAC	NIV Application Commentary
OTL	Old Testament Library
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
SP	Samaritan Pentateuch
Sum.	Sumerian
Syr	Syriac, Peshitta

<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
Tg(s)	Targum(s, Targumim)
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
Ugar.	Ugaritic
<i>UT</i>	<i>Ugaritic Textbook</i>
Vg	Vulgate
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

INTRODUCTION

One might say that the rock metaphor for the divine looms large upon the poetic landscape of the song commonly referred to as the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32:1–43 (hereafter simply ‘the Song’). The metaphorical use of צור, a term that denotes a boulder or large rock formation, occurs seven times. Consider these verses as rendered by the NRSV:

- ¹ Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak;
let the earth hear the words of my mouth.
- ² May my teaching drop like the rain,
my speech condense like the dew;
like gentle rain on grass,
like showers on new growth.
- ³ For I will proclaim the name of the LORD;
ascribe greatness to our God!
- ⁴ The Rock [צור], his work is perfect,
and all his ways are just.
A faithful God, without deceit,
just and upright is he;
- ⁵ yet his degenerate children have dealt falsely with him,
a perverse and crooked generation.
- ⁶ Do you thus repay the LORD,
O foolish and senseless people?
Is not he your father, who created you,
who made you and established you?
- ⁷ Remember the days of old,
consider the years long past;
ask your father, and he will inform you;
your elders, and they will tell you.
- ⁸ When the Most High apportioned the nations,
when he divided humankind,
he fixed the boundaries of the peoples
according to the number of the gods;
- ⁹ the LORD’s own portion was his people,
Jacob his allotted share.
- ¹⁰ He sustained him in a desert land,
in a howling wilderness waste;
he shielded him, cared for him,
guarded him as the apple of his eye.

¹¹ *As an eagle stirs up its nest,
and hovers over its young;
as it spreads its wings, takes them up,
and bears them aloft on its pinions,*
¹² *the LORD alone guided him;
no foreign god was with him.*

¹³ *He set him atop the heights of the land,
and fed him with produce of the field;
he nursed him with honey from the crags,
with oil from flinty rock;*
¹⁴ *curds from the herd, and milk from the flock,
with fat of lambs and rams;
Bashan bulls and goats,
together with the choicest wheat—
you drank fine wine from the blood of grapes.*
^{15^a} *Jacob ate his fill;
Jeshurun grew fat, and kicked.
You grew fat, bloated, and gorged!*

^{15^b} *He abandoned God who made him,
and scoffed at the Rock [צור] of his salvation.*
¹⁶ *They made him jealous with strange gods,
with abhorrent things they provoked him.*
¹⁷ *They sacrificed to demons, not God,
to deities they had never known,
to new ones recently arrived,
whom your ancestors had not feared.*
¹⁸ *You were unmindful of the Rock [צור] that bore you;
you forgot the God who gave you birth.*

¹⁹ *The LORD saw it, and was jealous;
he spurned his sons and daughters.*
²⁰ *He said: I will hide my face from them,
I will see what their end will be;
for they are a perverse generation,
children in whom there is no faithfulness.*
²¹ *They made me jealous with what is no god,
provoked me with their idols.
So I will make them jealous with what is no people,
provoke them with a foolish nation.*
²² *For a fire is kindled by my anger,
and burns to the depths of Sheol;
it devours the earth and its increase,
and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.*

²³ *I will heap disasters upon them,
spend my arrows against them:*
²⁴ *wasting hunger,
burning consumption,
bitter pestilence.*
*The teeth of beasts I will send against them,
with venom of things crawling in the dust.*

²⁵ *In the street the sword shall bereave,
and in the chambers terror,
for young man and woman alike,
nursing child and old grey head.*

²⁶ *I thought to scatter them
and blot out the memory of them from humankind;
²⁷ but I feared provocation by the enemy,
for their adversaries might misunderstand
and say, "Our hand is triumphant;
it was not the LORD who did all this."*

²⁸ *They are a nation void of sense;
there is no understanding in them.
²⁹ If they were wise, they would understand this;
they would discern what the end would be.
³⁰ How could one have routed a thousand,
and two put a myriad to flight,
unless their Rock [צור] had sold them,
the LORD had given them up?
³¹ Indeed their rock [צור] is not like our Rock [צור];
our enemies are fools.*

³² *Their vine comes from the vine-stock of Sodom,
from the vineyards of Gomorrah;
their grapes are grapes of poison,
their clusters are bitter;
³³ their wine is the poison of serpents,
the cruel venom of asps.
³⁴ Is not this laid up in store with me,
sealed up in my treasuries?
³⁵ Vengeance is mine, and recompense,
for the time when their foot shall slip;
because the day of their calamity is at hand,
their doom comes swiftly.*

³⁶ *Indeed the LORD will vindicate his people,
have compassion on his servants,
when he sees that their power is gone,
neither bond nor free remaining.
³⁷ Then he will say: Where are their gods,
the rock [צור] in which they took refuge,
³⁸ who ate the fat of their sacrifices,
and drank the wine of their libations?
Let them rise up and help you,
let them be your protection!
³⁹ See now that I, even I, am he;
there is no god besides me.
I kill and I make alive;
I wound and I heal;
and no one can deliver from my hand.*

⁴⁰ *For I lift up my hand to heaven,
and swear: As I live forever,
⁴¹ when I whet my flashing sword,
and my hand takes hold on judgment;
I will take vengeance on my adversaries,
and will repay those who hate me.
⁴² I will make my arrows drunk with blood,
and my sword shall devour flesh—
with the blood of the slain and the captives,
from the long-haired enemy.*

⁴³ *Praise, O heavens, his people,
worship him, all you gods!
For he will avenge the blood of his children,
and take vengeance on his adversaries;
he will repay those who hate him,
and cleanse the land for his people.¹*

It is the high frequency, even distribution, and arresting use of צור for God that makes the rock metaphor an inescapable feature of the poem. It is hardly surprising therefore that scholarship is in general agreement that the metaphor is a leitmotif. Others press the matter further. For example, Richard Nelson understands it to be the “theological axiom that governs the poem.”² Michael Knowles insists that “a proper understanding of this metaphor or divine appellation is integral to a proper understanding of the poem as a whole.”³

However, despite the prominence of the rock metaphor, scholarship has yet to analyse its use in the Song carefully or to explore its contribution to the poem’s message and perennial interpretive issues adequately—that is, its date, text, structure, genre, conceptual background, function within Deuteronomy, place in the Hebrew Bible. The present study aims to address these gaps. It will be argued that, when each use of the metaphor is rigorously examined, צור for God proves far more nuanced, expressive, and relevant to the poem’s perennial questions than interpreters have yet to recognise. The development of this thesis will unfold in three parts.

In the first of these, I will lay the foundations for my metaphorical analysis of the rock metaphor in the Song. Chapter 1 will locate my research in its scholarly context. As will be shown in this chapter, few studies on the metaphor have included a clear articulation of the methodology undergirding their analysis and those that have are

¹ Note the divisions here reflect the strophic divisions adopted in this study (see Chapter 1) rather than those of the NRSV.

² Richard D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 370.

³ Michael P. Knowles, “‘The Rock, His Work Is Perfect’: Unusual Imagery for God in Deuteronomy 32,” *VT* 39, no. 3 (1989): 307.

in need of revision. For this reason, Chapter 2 will outline the theory and method that will govern my metaphorical analysis. Chapter 3 will explore the conceptual domain of צִוּר 'rock' with a special eye to various physical, cultural, and metaphorical aspects of the term within the Hebrew Bible. The goal there will be to identify those qualities that might stand behind the use of the rock metaphor in the Song, as well as a range of attested connotations of the metaphor.

After having laid this necessary groundwork, my study will proceed to the second movement, namely the metaphorical analysis itself. In response to the relative absence of focused and sustained treatments of צִוּר for God in the Song, Chapters 4–7 will analyse of each occurrence of (vv. 4, 15b, 18, 30, 31aA, 31aB, 37) within the context of its immediate rhetorical unit (vv. 4–6, 15b–18, 28–31, 36–39). Note that the metaphor occurs more than once on two occasions (vv. 15b–18 and vv. 28–31). I have chosen therefore to treat these occurrences together. Each chapter will follow the methodology outlined in Chapter 2 and rest on the insights into the 'rock' conceptual domain of Chapter 3.

The third movement of this treatment of the rock metaphor will draw together the findings of Chapters 4–7. Because little has been written on the significance of the metaphor to the Song's message, Chapter 8 will trace the implications of the metaphorical analysis for understanding key aspects of the poem such as its structure, themes, and rhetoric. In the final chapter, the contribution of צִוּר for God to the Song's perennial interpretive issues will be considered to explore questions that have been left unanswered in the literature (Chapter 9).

**PART ONE:
LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS**

CHAPTER 1

A SURVEY OF LITERATURE

Locating the present study within the broader scholarly discussion of the God as Rock metaphor requires traversing a diverse array of literature, though it is possible to organise this literature into one of two categories—the rock metaphor in the Hebrew Bible generally and the metaphor in the Song more specifically. The aim of this chapter is twofold: (1) to survey key works within this rubric and (2) to underscore the need for further research.

1.1 ROCK IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

1.1.1 Dietrich Eichhorn

For many, Eichhorn’s classic study of the use of divine refuge metaphors (צִוֵּר ‘rock,’ קָלַע ‘crag,’ מְחֻסָּה ‘refuge,’ מְצֻדָּה ‘fortress’) in the Psalter serves as a fitting point of departure.⁴ His study aims to identify the ‘I’ speaker in these ‘refuge’ psalms. Eichhorn suggests that this speaker—or mediator (*Mittler*) to use his terminology—is a member of the institutional personnel within the Jerusalem cult who was charged with mediating divine revelation.⁵ Furthermore, he also finds a diachronic movement within Israel’s religious history as this role is taken up by first the king, then cult-prophets and finally levitical singers, preachers, and teachers of wisdom.⁶

With regard to the use of צִוֵּר for God specifically, the prominence he gives this metaphor within this complex of refuge metaphors is evident in the fact that his treatment of it occupies nearly half of his study.⁷ Following Schmidt,⁸ Eichhorn

⁴ Dietrich Eichhorn, *Gott als Fels, Burg, Zuflucht: Eine Untersuchung zum Gebet des Mittleren in den Psalmen* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1972).

⁵ For a critique of this thesis, see Vesta Kowalski (“Rock of Ages: A Theological Study of the Word ‘Tsur’ as a Metaphor for Israel’s God” [Ph.D. diss., Jewish Theological Seminary, 1996], 95–96) and Fabry (“צִוֵּר Šûr,” in *TDOT*, vol. 12 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003], 319).

⁶ Eichhorn, *Gott als Fels, Burg, Zuflucht*, 123–4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 30–91.

understands the metaphorical use of צור ‘rock’ is closely connected to the Zion tradition.⁹ With regard to the use of the rock metaphor, he concludes that “it proves to be a specific theologoumenon of the circles of Jerusalem’s cultic personnel, who were entrusted with the mediation of the revelation of YHWH at the Zion sanctuary.”¹⁰ Moreover, while he acknowledges that YHWH may have been associated with the ‘holy rock’ at an early stage in Israel’s religious history, Eichhorn thinks there is no sign of this in the ‘refuge’ psalms he examines. Rather, he argues that “the ‘holy rock’ . . . is the place, on which Yahweh currently reveals himself as צור, as the one who protects his people, the one who intervenes against the powers of chaos and against ‘the peoples’ (cf. Pss 46; 48; 76).”¹¹

Eichhorn analyses the use of the metaphor based on grammatical, syntactical, and functional characteristics. He offers the following categories:¹²

<p>צור as Title (Epiclesis) of Yahweh (Pss 18:3 [Eng. 2]; 19:15 [Eng. 14]; 28:1; 144:1; Hab 1:12)</p>	<p>צור with the First-Person Singular Suffix as Predicative Description of Yahweh (2 Sam 22:47 = Ps 18:47 [Eng. 46]; Pss 62:3, 7 [Eng. 2, 6]; 73:26; 92:15–16 [Eng. 14–15]; 144:1)</p>
<p>צור as a Description of God Determined by the Plural Nominal-Suffix (Deut 32:30–31; Ps 78:35)</p>	<p>צור as Predicate Description of Yahweh Determined by a Genitive (Deut 32:15; 2 Sam 23:3; Pss 62:8 [Eng. 7]; 89:27 [Eng. 26]; 95:1; Isa 17:10; 26:4; 30:29)</p>
<p>צור as a Description of God Designated Neither by a Suffix nor a Genitive (Deut 32:4, 18, 37–38; 1 Sam 2:2; 2 Sam 22:32 = Ps. 18:32 [Eng. 31]; Isa 44:8)</p>	<p>The Declaration of the Self-Actualization of Yahweh’s צור-Like Nature (Pss 31:3 [Eng. 2]; 71:2–3; 94:22; Isa. 8:14)</p>

It should be noted that, while this approach is helpful for comparing the use of צור in the Song with other similar uses elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, its shortcomings are twofold: First, it seems that far too much weight is given to form rather than content in his decisions concerning the meaning and provenance of the

⁸ Hans Schmidt, *Der heilige Fels in Jerusalem: Eine archäologische und religions-geschichtliche Studie* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1933).

⁹ This is also the view of Ollenburger (*Zion, City of the Great King: A Theological Symbol of the Jerusalem Cult* [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987]).

¹⁰ Eichhorn, *Gott als Fels, Burg, Zuflucht*, 91: “sie erweist sich . . . als ein spezifisches Theologoumenon der Kreise des Jerusalemer Kultpersonals, die mit der Vermittlung der Offenbarung Jahwes am Zionsheiligtum betraut waren.”

¹¹ Ibid.: “der ‘heilige Fels’ ist . . . der Ort, an dem sich Jahwe aktuell als צור, als der, der sein Volk schützt, der gegen die Chaosmächte und gegen “die Völker” (vgl. Ps 46; 48; 76) einschreitet, offenbart.”

¹² Ibid., 30–83.

metaphor. Second, Eichhorn's method awkwardly separates an occurrence from its literary context. This is the case with the Song, where its use of the metaphor is discussed in three different categories: (1) the use of צוֹר as a description of God determined by the plural nominal-suffix (vv. 30, 31), (2) צוֹר as predicate description of Yahweh determined by a genitive and a suffix other than the first-person singular (v. 15), and (3) צוֹר as a description of God that is designated closely neither by a suffix nor a genitive (vv. 4, 18, 37–38). The same is true for 2 Sam 22 (= Ps 18) and Ps 62 as well.

1.1.2 Salvador Fernandes

Fernandes also explores the use of the metaphor in the Psalter. Sensing an overemphasis on personal divine metaphors (God as Father), he turns his attention to the impersonal God as Rock (צוֹר and סֶלֶע).¹³ He proposes that the metaphor is a “loaded” and “emphatic” one; a metaphor that “carries special significance for the tradition of ancient Israel” based on its pervasive use in the Psalter and its apparent popularity throughout the biblical period.¹⁴ Fernandes' study notably charts new territory in two areas.

First, he helpfully underscores the *relational* aspect of the rock metaphor, pointing out the way that the metaphor not only provides a way of understanding its subject (God) but also serves as a window into the world of its *speaker* (poet).¹⁵ Fernandes goes as far as to maintain that צוֹר for God *primarily* provides insight into the prayer, not YHWH.¹⁶ From this perspective, it is closely tied to the poet's experience (or lack experience) of YHWH's presence and expresses the psalmist's loyalty, dependence, and trust.¹⁷

Fernandes' second contribution is his treatment of the placement of the metaphor within these ‘rock’ psalms as well as within the broader context of the book as a whole. Though not the first to do so,¹⁸ he draws attention most emphatically to the way צוֹר for God tends to fall at strategic junctures: the beginning, middle, and ending of

¹³ Salvador Fernandes, *God as Rock in the Psalter* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012), 5, 354–56, 363, 370.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 353–56.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 362–64.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 362.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 353, 358, 362–63.

¹⁸ Knowles, “The Rock, His Work Is Perfect,” 307 n. 2; cf. Georg Fischer, “‘Der Fels’: Beobachtungen im Umfeld einer theologischen Metapher,” in *Sprachen, Bilder, Klänge: Dimensionen der Theologie im Alten Testament und in seinem Umfeld: Festschrift für Rüdiger Bartelmus zu seinem 65. Geburtstag* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2009), 29–30; Arthur W. Walker-Jones, “Honey from the Rock: The Contribution of God as Rock to an Ecological Hermeneutic,” in *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 95.

poems.¹⁹ He comments that this pattern holds at the level of specific collections, Books, and the Psalter as a whole.²⁰ For the prominence of the rock metaphor within the book of Psalms, one needs only to look at its high frequency—of the 36 occurrences of צור for God in the Hebrew Bible, 18 are found in the Psalter.²¹ However, Fernandes also demonstrates how its placement of the metaphor points to its centrality.

1.1.3 Vesta Kowalski

The scope is widened in Kowalski's research, which aims "to present a detailed examination of the word צור as it is used in the Hebrew Scriptures in reference to or address to Israel's God."²² Her analysis turns on two presuppositions: The first is that elements of the 'semantic' (or 'conceptual') domain of צור—that is, the range of physical features, cultural roles, or emotional content attached to rocks ('first-order' characteristics)—inform the metaphorical use of rock imagery ('second order' characteristics).²³ Because of this, she offers arguably the most thorough study of the use of צור within the Hebrew Bible to date.

The second presupposition is that, when employed metaphorically of God, צור contributes to one of three broad conceptual schemes or 'models' that govern the biblical writers' depictions of God.²⁴ Kowalski argues that one of the challenges of studying *divine* metaphor is the fact that such divine elements are not readily available in the same way as rock elements are. Her solution is to understand the 'God' domain in terms of three predominant 'models': These include God as (1) refuge/warrior, (2) creator/parent, and (3) judge/dispenser of justice.²⁵ In this way, צור is employed to depict God as strong and stable, as well as, perhaps more surprisingly, to describe his role as parent and judge.²⁶

Of the studies outlined above, Kowalski reflects perhaps the most thorough treatment of the use of the rock metaphor in the Song but also presents a problematic approach. To be clear, she lends a significant voice to this discussion and will often

¹⁹ Fernandes, *God as Rock*, 41, 61, 351.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 355–56.

²¹ See Chapter 3.

²² Kowalski, "Rock of Ages," 58, emphasis added.

²³ *Ibid.*, 232–34.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 1, 3–4, 232–34, 292.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

reappear in the chapters that follow, devoting nearly twenty pages to the poem and the metaphor. Yet, her methodology, in my opinion, is in need of revision. This evaluation will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 2, but suffice it to say here: recent developments in metaphor theory challenge Kowalski's theoretical underpinnings and interpretive method.

1.1.4 Other Key Studies

Several article-length studies have explored the use of צור for God within the Hebrew Bible as a whole. These include the work of Fabry, van der Woude, Hill, Fischer, Korpel, and Walker-Jones. Of particular note are the contributions of van der Woude and Walker-Jones. While many recognise the prominence of the protection connotation,²⁷ van der Woude furthers the scholarly discussion by pointing out the discernible shades of divine protection. He notes that the rock metaphor represents “a stereotypical image for God’s help (Psa 18:47; 62:3; 89:27; 95:1), the protection that he offers (Isa 17:10; Psa 28:1; 31:3; 62:8; 71:3), the refuge found with him (Psa 18:3, 32; 94:22; 144:1), [and] his saving activity (Psa 19:15; 78:35).”²⁸ Walker-Jones takes the discussion of the metaphor in a unique direction by examining the metaphor through the lens of ecological hermeneutics.²⁹ By doing so, he contends that, while this trope has been adopted and employed with anthropocentric biases by biblical writers with “priestly and royal interests,” there are some uses (Deut 32; Pss 19; 78; 92) that have the potential to not only “subvert the dichotomies that have legitimised exploitation of Earth” by effacing “the distinctions between God and Earth, God and humanity, humanity and Earth, spiritual and material,” but also to correct anthropocentric biases and improve living conditions on Earth.³⁰

1.1.5 Discussion

Together these treatments point to the wide range and nuance of connotations that the

²⁷ Marjo C. A. Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine* (Ugarit-Verlag, 1990); “Rock צור סלע,” in *DDD*, ed. K. van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter Willem van der Horst, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 709–10; cf. Knowles, “The Rock, His Work Is Perfect,” 309; Paul Sanders, *The Provenance of Deuteronomy 32* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 358.

²⁸ A. S. van der Woude, “צור שׁוּר Rock,” in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E Biddle, vol. 2 (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1340; cf. Fischer, “Der Fels,” 30–31.

²⁹ Walker-Jones, “Honey from the Rock,” 92.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 96, 101–2.

rock metaphor can express. All of these scholars recognise in the use of צור for God a conceptualisation of divine protection; many also draw attention to its converse: divine opposition. In addition to van der Woude's distinctions above, Kowalski detects an active and passive dimension to it, namely protection in the sense of providing refuge (passive) and protection via military empowerment (2 Sam 22:32; Ps 18:32 [Eng. 31]; 144:1).³¹ Korpel suggests that the use of the rock imagery to conceptualise a deity as an obstacle is best understood as a reversal of the protection sense (Isa 8:14).³²

Several other connotations have also been suggested. Take for example divine strength and unchangeability.³³ When viewed temporally, these general qualities allow צור to convey a sense of eternity and durability (Isa 26:4; Hab 1:12; cf. Sir 51:12).³⁴ When applied to the relational sphere, they can express divine faithfulness and dependability (Isa 26:4; Ps 73:26; 92:16 [Eng. 15]).³⁵ Many have underscored the way צור is routinely used in comparative statements that express a deity's uniqueness or incomparability (1 Sam 2:2; 2 Sam 22:32 = Ps 18:32 [Eng. 31]; Isa 44:8).³⁶ Perhaps more surprisingly, it has been suggested that the rock imagery cast YHWH as Creator and Provider.³⁷ Fabry finds a moral connotation in Pss 73:26 and 92:16 [Eng. 15] to the rock imagery; a portrayal of YHWH's righteousness.³⁸ Appealing to the great height and hardness of rock, Kowalski argues that the metaphor underscores YHWH's dominance within his relationship with Israel and emphasises his omniscience and efficacy in judging his people specifically and the nations more generally.³⁹

The research of these interpreters is indispensable; yet, they are not without their limitations in terms of scope and methodology. For one, despite acknowledging the importance of צור for God in the Song, and even touching upon its meaning, the scope of these studies simply does not allow for sustained treatment of its expression in the poem specifically. Eichhorn and Fernandes focus their treatment on the use of the metaphor in the Psalter. Others are limited by the breadth of their scope, compounded

³¹ Kowalski, "Rock of Ages," 194; van der Woude, "צור שֵׁר Rock," 2:1340; Fischer, "Der Fels," 31.

³² *A Rift in the Clouds*, 585; "Rock צור סלע," 710.

³³ Fernandes, *God as Rock*, 30–1; Fischer, "Der Fels," 30; van der Woude, "צור שֵׁר Rock," 2:1240.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 31; Fischer, "Der Fels," 30; Martin Selman, "הַר," in *NIDOTTE*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 793; Kowalski, "Rock of Ages," 195.

³⁵ Fabry, "צור שֵׁר," 12:318; Fischer, "Der Fels," 31; van der Woude, "צור שֵׁר Rock," 2:1340.

³⁶ Fabry, "צור שֵׁר," 12:318; Fischer, "Der Fels," 29; Selman, "הַר," 1:793; van der Woude, "צור שֵׁר Rock," 2:1340.

³⁷ Fabry, "צור שֵׁר," 12:319; Kowalski, "Rock of Ages," 232–33, 272–75, 281–84; Selman, "הַר," 1:793; van der Woude, "צור שֵׁר Rock," 2:1340–41.

³⁸ Fabry, "צור שֵׁר," 12:318.

³⁹ Kowalski, "Rock of Ages," 264.

by the brevity of their treatment. Fischer and Walker-Jones take up the use of the metaphor *across* the Hebrew Bible in their respective *article-length* studies. The comments of Fabry, van der Woude, and Hill are even more cursory because their lexical articles include both divine *and non-divine* uses of צור within the whole of the Hebrew Bible.

Of the studies outlined above, Kowalski reflects perhaps the most thorough treatment of the use of the rock metaphor in the Song but also presents a problematic methodology. To be clear, she lends a significant voice to this discussion and will often reappear in the chapters that follow, devoting nearly twenty pages to the poem and the metaphor. Yet, her eclectic methodology, in my opinion, is in need of revision. This evaluation will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 2, but suffice it to say here: recent developments in metaphor theory challenge Kowalski's theoretical underpinnings and interpretive method.

1.2 ROCK IN THE SONG OF MOSES

We now turn to the treatment of צור for God in those works that focus on the Song more intently. Surprisingly few studies have written directly on the use of צור in the Song; two notable exceptions include those of Knowles and Peters.

1.2.1 Melvin Peters

Peters concerns himself with one of the Song's more curious text-critical challenges.⁴⁰ The Greek Septuagint (LXX) and Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT) diverge with regard to the use of divine rock imagery; where the MT employs צור for a deity (vv. 4, 15b, 18, 30, 31, 37), the LXX simply reads θεός 'God'. With his study, he joins the discussion concerning the MT and LXX readings of divine refuge metaphors (Dell'Acqua, Olofsson).⁴¹ However, unlike his predecessors, who have found in the LXX either an example of theological emendation or translation style, he contends quite forcefully that the *Vorlage* of the Greek version of the Song read אֱלֹהִים 'God' instead of צור 'rock'. In this way, he maintains that the LXX faithfully rendered its parent text (אֱלֹהִים 'God')

⁴⁰ Melvin K. H. Peters, "Revisiting the Rock: Tsur as a Translation of Elohim in Deuteronomy and Beyond," in *Text-Critical and Hermeneutical Studies in the Septuagint*, ed. Johann Cook and Hermann-Josef Stipp (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 37–51.

⁴¹ A. Passioni Dell'Acqua, "La metafora biblica di Dio come roccia e la sua soppressione nelle antiche versioni," *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 91 (1977): 417–53; Olofsson, *God Is My Rock*.

with θεός ‘God’ and the MT arose through a more or less ‘find and replace’ process that replaced the original אֱלֹהִים ‘God’ with צוּר ‘rock’. He finds support for his analysis of the use of צוּר in the MT, which he finds to exhibit a general “randomness, ambiguity and inelegance” that one might expect of such a mechanical process.⁴² He bolsters his claim by suggesting that the MT readings arose from a ‘find and replace’ editorial process that substituted the original אֱלֹהִים ‘God’ with צוּר ‘rock’. He believes that this redaction is responsible for the other uses of the rock metaphor in the Hebrew Bible.⁴³

To Peters’ credit, his thesis emerges from a careful analysis of each use of rock imagery in the MT version of the Song. However, his proposal is unconvincing for three reasons. First, Peters seems to overstate the awkwardness of the rock language. Indeed, it does present certain interpretive questions, but so does the Song at countless points more generally. A number of his exegetical comments miss their intended mark of demonstrating how clumsily צוּר sits both grammatically or thematically. The second reason is related to the first. Peters assumes that the disjunction is a sign of editorial activity, but one could argue that the MT reading is the harder reading and should be preferred, based on the text-critical axiom of *lectio difficilior*.⁴⁴ That is, the LXX arose to alleviate the difficulties perceived in the MT ‘rock’ passages.

Thirdly and most importantly the mechanism by which Peters accounts for the emergence of the MT variant is problematic. His ‘find and replace’ theory does not explain why the revisionists would replace some of the occurrences of אֱלֹהִים ‘God’ (vv. 4, 15b, 18, 30, 31, 37aB) but not all of them (vv. 3, 37aA). This becomes all the more dubious when it is extended to the entire Hebrew Bible. Why replace some occurrences of אֱלֹהִים ‘God’ and not others, especially in the psalms that fall in the so-called Elohist Psalter (Pss 62, 71, 78)? Is one to explain the divine use of the closely-related קָלַע in the same way? If so, is one to assume that those poems that read צוּר and קָלַע as parallel divine metaphors in the MT originally both read of אֱלֹהִים ‘God’? The doubt quickly amasses. The findings of this present study raise another critique. Peters’ ‘find-and-replace’ mechanism presumes a clumsy tradent and second-rate MT text. Both are inconsistent with the findings of my metaphorical analysis, which suggests that צוּר is a significant and purposeful metaphor, one that is intimately related to the poem’s

⁴² Peters, “Revisiting the Rock,” 47, cf. 43-47.

⁴³ Ibid., 47-49.

⁴⁴ Ellis R. Brotzman, *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994), 128; Ralph W. Klein, *Textual Criticism of the Old Testament: From the Septuagint to Qumran* (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1974), 75; P. Kyle McCarter, *Textual Criticism: Recovering the Text of the Hebrew Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 21.

narrative, structure, key themes, and rhetoric. Thus, even if the other troublesome aspects of Peters' thesis were to be overlooked for the sake of argument, it would nevertheless have to be modified to argue for a *skilful* 'find-and-replace' redaction.

1.2.2 Michael Knowles

Knowles' research likewise focuses intently on the use of צִיָּר for God in the Song but differs from Peters' in that it is less interested in the text-critical issues surrounding it and more interested in the origin and meaning of the metaphor. He opens with a brief survey of the rock metaphor elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, demonstrating that the majority of these uses express divine protection.⁴⁵ Against this backdrop, Knowles' remarks that the poem employs the rock imagery "in a significantly different manner,"⁴⁶ expressing alternative connotations of righteousness and uniqueness, spiritual parentage and care.⁴⁷ The heart of his work sets out to explain this divergence. In short, he proposes that the Song borrows the rock imagery from the Canaanite religion, which carried the basic sense of strength and refuge.⁴⁸ However, in the process of applying the rock imagery to YHWH, the poet transforms it to suit his own purposes, namely to help distinguish YHWH from other ANE gods by incorporating covenantal themes (righteousness, incomparability, spiritual parentage and care).⁴⁹

1.2.3 Commentaries, Monographs, Focused Studies

Insight into the metaphor can be gleaned indirectly from the expansive literature on the Song. In addition to the many helpful commentaries on the book of Deuteronomy, the relevant literature includes key monographs and focused studies.⁵⁰ With regard to

⁴⁵ Knowles, "The Rock, His Work Is Perfect," 307–10.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 311, cf. 310-314, 316, 321.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 316, cf. 321.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 316–17, 320–22.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 320–22.

⁵⁰ Commentaries consulted include: Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008); Mark E. Biddle, *Deuteronomy* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2003); Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012); Robert G. Bratcher and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on Deuteronomy* (New York: United Bible Society, 2000); Georg Braulik, *Deuteronomium 16, 18–34, 12*, Neue Echter Bibel: Altes Testament (Würzburg: Echter, 1992); Raymond Brown, *The Message of Deuteronomy: Not by Bread Alone* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993); Walter Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001); Pierre Buis and Jacques Leclercq, *Le Deutéronome* (Paris: Librairie Le Coffre, 1963); Ian Cairns, *Word and Presence: A Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992); Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas

monographs on the topic, those of Knight, Lee, and Sanders represent the most recent contributions, though it is important to note that they are built on the research of Boston, Budde, Carrillo Alday, Chong, Eissfeldt, Levy, and Nigosian.⁵¹ Many focused studies that scholarship has produced centre on the exegetical issues within a specific verse (G. R. Driver, Dahood)⁵² or passage (Fullerton, Isigler).⁵³ Others explore aspects of the Song's striking language (Chalmers, Claassens, Crenshaw, de Hulster and Strawn, Mercer, Moran, K. Nielsen, Peels, Vogel, Wüch).⁵⁴

Nelson, 2002); Ronald E. Clements, *Deuteronomy*, vol. 6, Old Testament Guides (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989); Richard J. Clifford, *Deuteronomy* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1982); S. R. Driver, *Deuteronomy*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1900); Michael A. Grisanti, "Deuteronomy," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Vol. 2*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, Revised. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012); Jack R. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013); Thomas W. Mann, *Deuteronomy*, Westminster Bible Commentary (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995); A. D. H. Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981); J. Gordon McConville, *Deuteronomy*, ApOTC (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002); Nelson, *Deuteronomy*; Eduard Nielsen, *Deuteronomium* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1995); Anthony Phillips, *Deuteronomy*, Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973); Horst D. Preuss, *Deuteronomium* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982); Martin Rose, *5. Mose* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1994); J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1974); Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996); Gerhard Von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, OTL (Philadelphia: SCM Press, 1966); Edward J. Woods, *Deuteronomy*, TOTC (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011); Telford Work, *Deuteronomy*, Brazos Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009); Christopher J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, NIBC (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996).

⁵¹ James R. Boston, "The Song of Moses: Deuteronomy 32: 1–43" (Th.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1966); D. Karl Budde, *Das Lied Mose's: Deut. 32: Erläutert und übersetzt* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1920); Salvador Carrillo Alday, *El Cántico de Moisés (Dt 32)* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1970); Joong Ho Chong, "The Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32: 1–43) and the Hoshea-Pekah Conflict" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1990); Otto Eissfeldt, *Das Lied Moses Deuteronomium 32,1–43 und das Lehrgedicht Asaphs Psalm 78 samt einer Analyse der Umgebung des Mose-Liedes* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1958); Abraham J. Levy, *The Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32)* (Paris: [publisher not identified], 1930); Solomon A. Nigosian, "The Song of Moses (Deut. 32:1–43)" (Ph.D. diss., McMaster University, 1975). To this list, one might add the earlier studies of Ewald, Kamphausen, Haupt, and Löhr; for a helpful survey of these works, see Levy, *The Song of Moses*, 1–11.

⁵² "Three Notes," *VT* 2, no. 4 (1952): 356–57; "Northwest Semitic Notes on Dt 32:20," *Biblica* 54, no. 3 (1973): 405–6.

⁵³ "On Deuteronomy 32 26–34," *ZAW* 46, no. 1 (1928): 138–55; "Das Proömium im Moselied Dtn 32 : Struktur, Sprechakte und Redeintentionen von V 1–3," in *Lingua Restituta Orientalis* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1990), 161–74.

⁵⁴ Aaron J. Chalmers, "A Critical Analysis of the Formula 'Yahweh Strikes and Heals,'" *VT* 61, no. 1 (2011): 16–33; Aaron J. Chalmers, "'There Is No Deliverer (From My Hand)'—A Formula Analysis," *VT* 55, no. 3 (2005): 287–92; L. Juliana M. Claassens, "'I Kill and I Give Life': Contrasting Depictions for God in Deuteronomy 32," *OTE* 18 (2005): 35–46; James L. Crenshaw, "Wedorek 'al-bamote 'ares,'" *CBQ* 37 (1972): 39–53; Izaak J. de Hulster and Brent A. Strawn, "Figuring YHWH in Unusual Ways: Deuteronomy 32 and Other Mixed Metaphors for God in the Old Testament," in *Iconographic Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament: An Introduction to Its Method and Practice*, ed. Izaak J. de Hulster, Brent A. Strawn, and Ryan P. Bonfiglio (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015); Samuel A. B. Mercer, "'The Little Man of His Eye' - Deut 32:10," *Anglican Theological Review* 3, no. 2 (1920): 151–52; William L. Moran, "Some Remarks on the Song of Moses," *Biblica* 43, no. 3 (1962): 317–27; Kirsten Nielsen, "Metaphors and Biblical Theology," in *Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Pierre J. P. van Hecke (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 263–73; Hendrik G. L. Peels, "On the Wings of the Eagle (Dtn 32,11)—An Old Misunderstanding," *ZAW* 106 (1994): 300–303; Dan Vogel, "Moses as Poet: Ha'azinu as Poem,"

The striking use of צור for God has not escaped the notice of many interpreters exploring other aspects of the Song. When taken together, their observations echo those presented in connection with the metaphor in the Hebrew Bible more broadly. They too note that the metaphor carries the sense of divine strength⁵⁵ and resistance.⁵⁶ In this way, צור for God has been understood as an expression of divine immovability, stability, and constancy.⁵⁷ Again, the temporal implications of this are YHWH's enduring and eternal nature.⁵⁸ Relationally, the imagery casts YHWH as faithful and, by extension, dependable.⁵⁹ These interpreters also see in the rock metaphor conceptualisations of divine creation,⁶⁰ provision,⁶¹ and protection.⁶² There is even a similar recognition of the various nuances of YHWH's protective function (refuge, security, salvation).⁶³ It is argued that in the Song as elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, the metaphor underscores YHWH's righteousness⁶⁴ and incomparability.⁶⁵

Still other focused studies have fuelled the discussion of broader, perennial interpretive questions. Traditionally, the most pressing of these matters was the question of date, though, in recent years, scholarship has gravitated to others including textual issues (textual-criticism, structure), conceptual influences (genre, conceptual

Jewish Bible Quarterly 31, no. 4 (2003): 211–18; Hans-Georg Wüch, “Like an Eagle Carries Its Young,” *HTS Theological Studies* 72, no. 3 (2016): 1–6.

⁵⁵ Block, *Deuteronomy*, 750; Boston, “The Song of Moses,” 28; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 873; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 453; Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 410; Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 302, 306.

⁵⁶ Levy, *The Song of Moses*, 49.

⁵⁷ Block, *Deuteronomy*, 750; Braulik, *Deuteronomium 16,18–34,12*, 228; Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 799; Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 378; Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 350; Knight, *A Theological Quarry*, 95; Lee, “Narrative Function,” 64; Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 232; Nielsen, “Biblical Theology,” 267; Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 310; Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 306.

⁵⁸ Block, *Deuteronomy*, 750; Boston, “The Song of Moses,” 28–29; Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 378; Knight, *A Theological Quarry*, 21.

⁵⁹ Buis and Leclercq, *Deutéronome*, 195; Claassens, “I Kill and I Give Life,” 37; Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 799; Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 350; Knight, *A Theological Quarry*, 20, 61, 65; Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 227, 230; Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 310; Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 298.

⁶⁰ Braulik, *Deuteronomium 16,18–34,12*, 228; Knowles, “The Rock, His Work Is Perfect,” 313, 316, 321; Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 310; Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 306.

⁶¹ Claassens, “I Kill and I Give Life,” 39–40; Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 799; Knowles, “The Rock, His Work Is Perfect,” 316, 321.

⁶² Boston, “The Song of Moses,” 28; Carrillo Alday, *Cántico*, 42–43; Claassens, “I Kill and I Give Life,” 39–40; Knowles, “The Rock, His Work Is Perfect,” 314; Lee, “Narrative Function,” 102; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 370; Nielsen, “Biblical Theology,” 268; Sanders, *Provenance*, 414; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 300, 312; Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 301.

⁶³ Boston, “The Song of Moses,” 29; Braulik, *Deuteronomium 16,18–34,12*, 228; Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 799; Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 350; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 873; McCarthy, *BHQ*, 453; Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 410; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 370; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 300; Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 310; Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 302, 306.

⁶⁴ Braulik, *Deuteronomium 16,18–34,12*, 228; Knowles, “The Rock, His Work Is Perfect,” 310–11; Sanders, *Provenance*, 358; Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 310; Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 306.

⁶⁵ Knowles, “The Rock, His Work Is Perfect,” 316, 321.

background), and canonical concerns (place in Deuteronomy, relationship to Hebrew Bible).

Provenance

With the emergence of the critical scholarship of the late 19th and early 20th century, Mosaic authorship was largely abandoned, which allowed scholars to date the Song to various periods within Israel's history. Proposals concerning the date of the poem vary widely, including nearly every century between the 12th–4th centuries BCE. Those dating the Song very early (12th–11th century BCE) include Albright, Cassuto, Eissfeldt, and Mendenhall.⁶⁶ Many date the poem to various points during the period of the monarchy spanning from the 10th–6th century BCE (Boston, Chong, Hauri, Nigosian, Reichert, G. E. Wright).⁶⁷ Budde and Carrillo Alday find the time of the Babylonian exile more fitting.⁶⁸ Still others suggest that the Song's origins are to be found in the post-exilic period (Hidal, Meyers).⁶⁹

Of great significance to the discussion of the Song's date is Sanders' monograph *The Provenance of Deuteronomy 32*. Based on his careful analysis, Sanders convincingly dates the poem to the pre-exilic period,⁷⁰ though admittedly he remains cautious beyond this point and proposes Israel's settlement of Canaan as a *terminus a quo* and the exile as a *terminus ad quem*.⁷¹ Indeed, this is a broad conclusion and one that has come under criticism;⁷² however, it should be pointed out that even this range

⁶⁶ William F. Albright, "Some Remarks on the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy XXXII," *VT* 9, no. 4 (1959): 339–46; Umberto Cassuto, "The Song of Moses (Deuteronomy Chapter XXXII 1–43)," in *Biblical and Oriental Studies*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1973), 41–46; Eissfeldt, *Das Lied Moses*; George Mendenhall, "Samuel's 'Broken Rib': Deuteronomy 32," in *A Song of Power and the Power of Song: Essays on the Book of Deuteronomy*, ed. Duane Christensen (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 169–80.

⁶⁷ Boston, "The Song of Moses"; Chong, "Song of Moses"; Rudolph Hauri, *Das Moseslied Deuteronomium 32: Ein Beitrag zur israelitischen Literatur- und Religionsgeschichte* (Zürich: Schaufelberger, 1917); Nigosian, "The Song of Moses"; Andreas Reichert, "The Song of Moses (Dt. 32) and the Quest for Early Deuteronomic Psalmody," in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1986), 53–60; G. Ernest Wright, "The Lawsuit of God: A Form-Critical Study of Deuteronomy 32," in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg*, ed. Bernard W. Anderson and Walter J. Harrelson (London: Harper, 1962), 26–67.

⁶⁸ Budde, *Das Lied*; Carrillo Alday, *Cántico*.

⁶⁹ Sten Hidal, "Some Reflections on Deuteronomy 32," *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 11 (1978): 15–21; Rudolf Meyer, "Die Bedeutung von Deuteronomium 32,8f 43 (4d) für die Auslegung des Moseliedes," in *Verbannung und Heimkehr* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1961), 197–209.

⁷⁰ Sanders writes that "a pre-exilic date is *almost certain* for the song as a whole" (*Provenance*, 431, emphasis added).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 431–33.

⁷² For example, see Lundbom's critique (*Deuteronomy*, 855–56).

of possibilities still challenges the many attempts to date the Song to the exilic or post-exilic period.

In any case, Sanders bases his conclusions on the considerations of the poem's intertextual parallels and conceptual background, as well as its language and literary context. Like Knight, Sanders considers the lexical and thematic parallels between the Song and other biblical texts, though he is more tentative about the relationship between them. Nevertheless, he finds no evidence that contradicts a pre-exilic date or suggests that any of the links are secondary to the poem.⁷³ Further, he understands the intertextual links in vv. 8–9 and 36 as evidence of a “relatively early date.”⁷⁴ With regard to the Song's conceptual background, Sanders points out that the poem's acknowledgement of the relative power of other gods suggests an early date.⁷⁵

Among the most compelling evidence is found in the poem's language and literary context. Sanders notes that the use of the verb *ṣṣm* (v. 39) points to an early date in light of its use exclusively in poetic works generally considered early (Num 24:8, 17; Deut 33:11; Judg 5:26).⁷⁶ In addition, he maintains that the Song's use of the free *yiqtol* for narration in vv. 8–18—a phenomenon common in early texts—betrays an early date, though he does not see this as absolutely decisive since this construction occasionally occurs in late texts as well. Nevertheless, he insists it is corroborated by other data that points to an early date.⁷⁷

Such corroborating evidence includes the poem's narrative frame (31:16–30; 32:44–47). Noting that this frame and the Song itself (32:1–43) share a number of lexical parallels (see below), he thinks that the framework is literarily dependent on the poem, or at least an older version of it. The fact that the narrative frame seems to use the Song in a way that differs from its original message (by ignoring the optimistic latter half of the Song, vv. 26–43)⁷⁸ demonstrates that “the song must be older than the

⁷³ Ibid., 425, 432; *contra* Eckart Otto, “Moses Abschiedslied in Deuteronomium 32. Ein Zeugnis der Kanonsbildung in der hebräischen Bibel,” in *Die Tora: Studien zum Pentateuch: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009), 641–78; “Singing Moses: His Farewell Song in Deuteronomy 32,” in *Psalmody and Poetry in Old Testament Ethics*, ed. Dirk J. Human (New York: T & T Clark, 2012), 169–80.

⁷⁴ Sanders, *Provenance*, 363–74, 412–13, 432.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 426–29, 432.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 322; the Ugaritic cognate *mḥs* is well-attested (L. Alonzo-Schökel, “*ṣṣm māḥs*,” in *TDOT*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, vol. 8 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 235–37; Cornelis van Dam, “*ṣṣm*,” in *NIDOTTE*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, vol. 2 [Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996], 920).

⁷⁷ Sanders, *Provenance*, 314–15, cf. 297–315, 332.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 431–32.

introduction.”⁷⁹ Dating the introduction to the exilic period, he locates the poem in the pre-exilic period.⁸⁰

Scholars are equally divided over implications of the term צור for dating the Song. For instance, Levy sees it as a sign of the Song’s late date, arguing that the designation was employed in response to religious movements of the exilic period and modelled on divine designations of this period.⁸¹ However, the designation ‘great mountain’ was used of Enlil far before the Assyrian and Babylonian times; thus, insisting on an exilic date based on these uses is untenable since the same argument could be made to argue that the early examples of the divine designation, as in Sumerian texts (see Chapter 3), necessitate an early date.

Others favour an early date. For example, Freedman dates the poem to the time of the monarchy⁸² based on the argument that צור reflects a divine epithet that is “distinctive” of songs (1 Sam 2:2; 2 Sam 22:2, 32, 47 = Ps 18:2, 32, 47 [Eng. 1, 31, 46]; 2 Sam 23:3; Ps 78) and in prophetic texts of the period (Isa 17:10; 30:29; Hab 1:12).⁸³ He finds further support in the fact that, with the exception of the songs that have been clearly embedded (Deut 32; 1 Sam 2; 2 Sam 22, 23), the absence of the use of צור for God in the Pentateuch and Historical Books indicates that “there was no tradition associating the epithet [‘Rock’] with the patriarchal religion.”⁸⁴ Moreover, the equivalent epithet is lacking in Ugaritic literature, despite the routine use of *gr* ‘mountain’, a cognate of צור.⁸⁵ Freedman explains both the absence of any mention of the monarchy and the affinities between the Song and early poems (Blessing of Moses, Oracles of Balaam) by positing: “Apparently the poet had in mind a setting in the pre-monarchic period and composed his piece accordingly. A later editor correctly perceived this intention and quite naturally attributed the utterance to the principal figure of early Israel, Moses himself.”⁸⁶

Knowles, Korpel, and Sanders tread more lightly but nevertheless think the use of צור in the Song points to a pre-exilic provenance. Like Freedman, Sanders recognises the Song’s affinities with 2 Sam 22 (= Ps 18) and dates the latter to the monarchical

⁷⁹ Ibid., 352.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 342–48, 432.

⁸¹ Levy, *The Song of Moses*, 49.

⁸² David Noel Freedman, *Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy: Studies in Early Hebrew Poetry* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1980), 93, 114–15.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 93.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 101.

period. He points to the similar connotation of the rock imagery in Deut 32:4 and 2 Sam 22:31–32 (= Ps 18:31–32 [Eng. 30–31]), namely its expression of YHWH’s moral righteousness. On the basis of this, Sanders concludes that “nothing contradicts a date in the early monarchic period.”⁸⁷ Seeming to anticipate an objection that this moral nuance is a late development, he draws attention to the generally held early date of 2 Sam 22⁸⁸ and the fact that “in the ancient Near East the righteousness of specific deities was stressed from a very early stage onward.”⁸⁹ Moreover, Sanders notes that the formulation of the rock language in Deut 32:15b and 2 Sam 22:47 is similar, reading respectively: צור יִשְׁעָתוֹ ‘Rock of his salvation’ and צור יִשְׁעֵי ‘Rock of my salvation’.⁹⁰

The boldness with which the poem applies the צור is also cited as support for an early date. Knowles, Korpel, and Sanders are in agreement that the rather ‘daring’ juxtaposition of צור and birthing language seems to reflect a relatively early date, especially in light of the (relatively late) Jer 2:27, which scoffs at the idea of a begetting rock.⁹¹ The unequivocal application of the rock imagery to gods other than YHWH (Deut 32:31, 37) is equally as bold: צור is only used this way in the Song. Korpel remarks: “The statement that there is no other Rock like YHWH has ancient echoes in 1 Sam. 2:2 and 2 Sam. 22:32 (= Ps 18:32 [Eng. 31]). It is taken up again in Isa. 44:8. But note the subtle difference in wording. In none of these later texts is the existence of a Rock next to YHWH recognised anymore.”⁹² Sanders questions this argumentation,⁹³ but ends up in the same place, concluding that “the uninhibited use of the Rock metaphor suggests a relatively early date rather than a late one.”⁹⁴

⁸⁷ Sanders, *Provenance*, 354.

⁸⁸ Take for example the work of Cross and Freedman, who date the poem to the monarchial period (Frank Moore Cross and David Noel Freedman, “A Royal Song of Thanksgiving: 2 Samuel 22 = Psalm 18,” *JBL* 72, no. 1 [1953]: 15–34; Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997], 123, 158–59).

⁸⁹ Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds*, 286–87; Sanders, *Provenance*, 359.

⁹⁰ Sanders, *Provenance*, 393.

⁹¹ Knowles, “The Rock, His Work Is Perfect,” 313–14; Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds*, 584–85, 623; Sanders, *Provenance*, 397.

⁹² Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds*, 585 n. 440.

⁹³ More specifically, Sanders questions whether there is really as much of a theological difference between v. 31 and 1 Sam 2:2 as Korpel suggests. He points out that 1 Sam 2:2, 2 Sam 22:32, Ps 18:32 [Eng. 31], and Isa 44:8 all appear to use the term ‘rock’ in a generic sense, which implies the existence of other gods. The stress of these texts is YHWH’s incomparability rather than his ontological uniqueness. He writes: “the incomparability of YHWH is expressed both in early and in late parts of the Hebrew Bible [for example, Exod 8:6; 15:11; Deut 33:26; 2 Sam 7:22; 1 Kgs 8:23; Jer 10:6; Ps 86:8; 1 Chr 17:20; 2 Chr 6:14]. It is unwarranted to assume a completely rectilinear development implying that passages where צור is a designation for gods in general (Deut. 32:31, 37; 1 Sam. 2:2) must be older than passages where this designation is less equivocally denied to these gods (2 Sam. 22:32; Isa. 44:8).” Sanders, *Provenance*, 407.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 407–8.

This pre-exilic view is not without its weaknesses. With regard to Freedman, the paucity of the divine mountain (*gr*) metaphor in Ugarit, to which he points as a reason to rule out a pre-monarchical date, is a matter of debate. While it is true that *gr* is not used as a divine epithet in the way צוּר is used of YHWH, there *is* a text that appears to liken Baal to a mountain (*CTA* 1.100.1–3, see Chapter 3). Moreover, a degree of caution is necessary since the relative silence in Ugaritic literature could very well be a gap in extant texts rather than the absence of such divine imagery. A second weakness of the pre-exilic views described above is the reliance of intertextual links between the Song and 2 Sam 22. While all four interpreters—Freedman, Knowles, Korpel, and Sanders—rightly draw attention to the strong affinities between the Song and 2 Sam 22 (= Ps 18), it is not at all clear that the latter should be dated to the monarchical period, a point that strikes at the heart of the argument for a pre-exilic date.

In the final analysis, the foregoing discussion demonstrates that the word-picture adds very little to the discussion of provenance. Rather, it reinforces the scholarly divide concerning the provenance of the Song and underscores the need for tentative conclusions in this area.

Text-Critical Issues

In addition to the diverging readings of the ‘rock’ language in the MT and LXX, as Peters has addressed, the Song contains a number of other curious text-critical challenges. Of them, those in vv. 8 and 43 have attracted the most scholarly attention. Though the MT reads בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל ‘sons of Israel’ in v. 8bB (cf. SP, Tgs, Vg, Syr) interpreters have tended to favour the variants preserved in Qumran (Q) fragments (בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים ‘sons of God’; Q4Deut^l, Q4Deut^q) and the LXX (ἀγγέλων θεοῦ ‘angels of God’).⁹⁵ Verse 43 presents a particularly difficult text-critical quandary since the MT,

⁹⁵ While some defend the reading of the MT (David E. Stevens, “Does Deuteronomy 32:8 Refer to ‘Sons of God’ or ‘Sons of Israel’?,” *BSac* 154 [1997]: 131–41) or suggest the original has been lost (Oswald Loretz, “Die Vorgeschichte von Deuteronomium 32,8f. 43,” *Ugarit-Forschungen* 9 [1977]: 355–57), the vast majority of interpreters agree that the text originally read ‘sons of God’ as in the LXX and Q (Meyer, “Die Bedeutung von Deuteronomium 32, 8f 43 (4d)”); Albright, “Some Remarks”; Michael S. Heiser, “Deuteronomy 32:8 and the Sons of God,” *BibSac* 158, no. 629 [2001]: 52–74; Innocent Himbaza, “Dt 32,8, une Correction tardive des Scribes: Essai d’ Interprétation et de Datation,” *Biblica* 83 [2002]: 527–48; Jan Joosten, “A Note on the Text of Deuteronomy XXXII 8,” *VT* 57, no. 4 [2007]: 548–55; M. Lana, “Deuteronomio e Angelologia Alla Luce di Una Variante Qumranico (4Q Dt 32,8),” *Henoch* 5 [1983]: 179–207; Patrick W. Skehan, “Structure of the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy (Deut 32:1–43),” *CBQ* 13, no. 2 [1951]: 153–63; Patrick W. Skehan, “A Fragment of the ‘Song of Moses’ (Deut. 32) from Qumran,” *BASOR* [1954]: 12–15; Arie van der Kooij, “The Ending of the Song of Moses: On the Pre-Masoretic Version of Deut 32:43,” in *Studies in Deuteronomy: In Honour of C. J. Labuschagne on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday* [Leiden: Brill, 1994], 93–100; Arie van der Kooij, “Ancient Emendations

4QDeut^q, and the LXX all preserve variant versions of this verse (see Table 1).

Table 1: MT, Q, LXX Readings of V. 43

Colon	MT	Q ⁹⁶	LXX
A	—	<i>Praise, O heavens, with his people</i>	<i>Praise, O heavens, with his people,</i>
B	—	<i>Worship him, all you gods!</i>	<i>Worship him, all you gods!</i>
C	<i>Praise, O nations, with his people</i>	—	<i>Praise, O nations, with his people</i>
D	—	—	<i>And strengthen him, all you angels of God</i>
E	<i>For he will avenge the blood of his servants (עֲרֵדֵי)</i>	<i>For he will avenge the blood of his children (בְּנָי)</i>	<i>For he will avenge the blood of his children (τῶν υἱῶν αὐτοῦ)</i>
F	<i>And take vengeance on his adversaries</i>	<i>And take vengeance on his adversaries</i>	<i>and take vengeance on his adversaries</i>
G	—	<i>He will repay those who hate him</i>	<i>he will repay those who hate him</i>
H	<i>And cleanse his land, his people (עֲדָתוֹ עִמּוֹ)</i>	<i>And cleanse the land of his people (עֲדָת עִמּוֹ)</i>	<i>And cleanse the land of his people (τὴν γῆν τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ)</i>

Complicating matters is the fact that defences have been marshalled in favour of four, six, and eight cola readings. For example, Fokkelman tenaciously (but untenably) upholds the MT on the basis of poetic structure. Others accept the notion of a four-colon verse but doubt that the MT has preserved the original ones.⁹⁷ Yet, Skehan and

in MT,” in *L’Ecrit et l’Esprit: Etudes d’histoire du texte et de théologie biblique en hommage à Andrian Schenker*, ed. Dieter Böhler, Immanuel Himbaza, and Philippe Hugo [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005], 152–59; Paul Winter, “Der Begriff ‘Söhne Gottes’ im Moselied (Deut 32:1–43),” *ZAW* 67, no. 1–2 [1955]: 40–48; Paul Winter, “Nochmals zu Deuteronomium 32:8,” *ZAW* 75, no. 2 [1963]: 218–23; Nicolas Wyatt, “The Seventy Sons of Athirat, the Nations of the World, Deuteronomy 32.6b, 8–9, and the Myth of Divine Election,” in *Reflection and Refraction: Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld*, ed. Robert Rezetko [Leiden: Brill, 2006], 547–56).

⁹⁶ Ernst Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 138.

⁹⁷ Jan P. Fokkelman, *Major Poems of the Hebrew Bible: At the Interface of Hermeneutics and Structural Analysis* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1998), 130, cf. 130–132; see also Chong, “Song of Moses,” 41, 79–81; Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 388–89; George A. F. Knight, *The Song of Moses: A Theological Quarry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 129–30;

Rofé questionably propose that the original consisted of cola A / D / E / H,⁹⁸ while Bogaert insists on an equally questionable proposal (A / B / F / H).⁹⁹ Other interpreters like Block see the LXX as the original.¹⁰⁰ He presents a cogent—though ultimately unconvincing—defence of this reading, pointing to the conservative nature of the LXX translation, its status as the harder reading, and the use of the second colon B elsewhere in biblical literature. Furthermore, Block suggests that the Q-reading arose as the result of accidental scribal omission and the MT by means of a combination of theologically and poetically-motivated deletions.

Still others, such as Lorenz and van der Kooij, defend the six-colon reading of the Q fragments. Both correctly find support for this in the fact that the Q variant best explains the emergence of the others, although they differ with regard to the precise mechanisms involved. Van der Kooij attributes the rise of the MT to a nationalistically-motivated emendation and the rise of the LXX to expansion.¹⁰¹ Loretz, on the other hand, envisages the more likely explanation—a theological change (MT) and harmonisation (LXX).¹⁰²

The LXX also preserves additional cola in vv. 15a and 40, which have also been specifically addressed by Barstad, Lust, and McGarry. In v. 15a, the LXX reads καὶ ἔφαγεν Ιακωβ καὶ ἐνεπλήσθη ‘and Jacob ate and was satisfied’. This colon is lacking in the MT but is attested by the Samaritan Pentateuch (SP) and Q fragment, 4QPhyl^a. Barstad strongly favours the latter, suggesting that the LXX reflects an explanatory note that unfortunately misunderstood the Hebrew. However, other interpreters rightly accept the LXX over the MT.¹⁰³ One finds an additional colon after יָדִי in v. 40 in the LXX: καὶ ὁμοῦμαι τὴν δεξιάν μου ‘and I swear with my right hand’. This reading has been promoted in studies by Lust and McGarry, but their arguments are difficult to

Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 852, 903–5; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 450; Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 425; Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 303–4.

⁹⁸ Alexander Rofé, “The End of the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:43),” in *Liebe und Gebot*, ed. R. G. Kratz and H. Spiekermann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 164–72; “The End of the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:43),” in *Deuteronomy: Issues and Interpretation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2002), 47–54; Skehan, “A Fragment,” 12–5.

⁹⁹ Pierre M. Bogaert, “Les Trois Rédactions Conservées et la Forme Originale de l’envoi du Cantique de Moïse (Dt 32,43),” in *Das Deuteronomium: Entstehung, Gestalt und Botschaft*, ed. N. Lohfink (Leuven: Peeters, 1985), 329–40.

¹⁰⁰ Daniel I. Block, *How I Love Your Torah, O LORD!: Studies in the Book of Deuteronomy* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2011), 185–88; cf. Albright, “Some Remarks.”

¹⁰¹ van der Kooij, “The Ending,” 96, 98–100; cf. Meyer, “Die Bedeutung von Deuteronomium 32, 8f 43 (4d),” 200; Lana, “Deuteronomio e Angelologia,” 187.

¹⁰² Loretz, “Die Vorgeschichte,” 356–57.

¹⁰³ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 449; Eissfeldt, *Das Lied Moses*, 10 n. 4; Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, 489 n. 3.

sustain.¹⁰⁴

Structure

Presenting a detailed survey of the views concerning the Song's overall poetic structure is far beyond the scope of this chapter since opinions vary so widely. What can be said is that two broad questions arise from the scholarly discussion—(1) How should the poem's structure be determined? (2) Should it be interpreted as a unified or composite composition?

With regard to the method of structural analysis, three distinct modes can be identified. Some have relied on counting poetic components. Skehan, for example, counts cola and finds a balanced tripartite division of 23 poetic lines each (vv. 1–14 | 15–29 | 30–43).¹⁰⁵ Others look to the thematic movements of the Song. Wright has famously based his understanding of the poem's structure on its "coherent units of thought."¹⁰⁶ This is largely the methodology that undergirds the structural analyses of Labuschagne and Nigosian as well.¹⁰⁷ Levy presses this method to its extreme, rearranging the text in order to create what he suggests is better coherence.¹⁰⁸ Still others rely on a more tenable criterion—linguistic markers. Sanders and Fokkelman take up this approach in what are arguably the most detailed and voluminous analyses of the Song's micro- and macro-structure.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ "For I Lift Up My Hand to Heaven and Swear: Deut 32:40," in *Studies in Deuteronomy: In Honour of C. J. Labuschagne on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday* (Leiden: Brill Academic Pub, 1994), 157–59; "The Ambidextrous Angel (Daniel 12:7 and Deuteronomy 32:40): Inner-Biblical Exegesis and Textual Criticism in Counterpoint," *JBL* 124, no. 2 (2005): 225–26.

¹⁰⁵ Skehan, "Structure," 160; in his commentary, Christensen goes further and bases his delimitation on a complex system of syllable counting (*Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 784–87, 789–94, 800–805, 811–17).

¹⁰⁶ Wright, "The Lawsuit of God," 34, cf. 33–36.

¹⁰⁷ Labuschagne suggests that the poem divides into the following sections: vv. 1–6 | 7–18 | 19–27 | 28–31 | 32–35 | 36–39 | 40–42 | 43 ("The Song of Moses: Its Framework and Structure," in *De Fructu Oris Sui* [Leiden: Brill, 1971], 85–98); Nigosian prefers vv. 1–3 | 4–6 | 7–14 | 15–18 | 19–35 | 36–42 | 43 ("The Song of Moses (Dt 32): A Structural Analysis," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 72, no. 1 [1996]: 5–22).

¹⁰⁸ He proposes the following delimitation *and order*: vv. 3, 1–2, 4 | 7–9 | 10–12 | 13a, 14b, 13b, 14a, 14c, 15a | 5, 17, 6, 18 | 19–21 | 22–23, 25–26 | 27–28, 30a, 29 | 32–35 | 37–39 | 42aA, bA, aB, bB | 36, 43aA, bA, aB, bB (*The Song of Moses*, 44–47, 106–8).

¹⁰⁹ Sanders devotes nearly 200 pages of his monograph to the structure of the poem (*Provenance*, 99–294). Relying heavily on the methodology of the 'Kampen school' (see Willem van der Meer and Johannes C. de Moor, *The Structural Analysis of Biblical and Canaanite Poetry* [Leiden: Brill, 1988]), he identifies three key structural markers (*Provenance*, 258–66): (1) "external parallelism" (that is, correspondence between poetic lines—"responson," "inclusion," and "concentration"); (2) separation markers (such as vocatives or imperatives, emphatic particles or constructions, rhetorical questions); and (3) shifts in grammatical person. Sanders' analysis suggests the poem falls into five units: vv. 1–6 | 7–14 |

With regard to the question of unity, three representative voices emerge: Baumann, Braulik, and Sanders. Baumann proposed that the ‘Song of Moses’ as it has come down to us is a composite of two poems, an early hymn (*Preislied*) and later scourging song (*Scheltlied*). Though they have been thoroughly integrated, Baumann unravels the two, seeing fragments of the hymn in verses 1–3, 4 (possibly), LXX 8, 9–14, 15 (in part), 43c, d and traces of the scourging song in vv. 5–7, 15 (in part), 16–18, 19 (in part), 20–28, 30–42, LXX 43c, d.¹¹⁰ Braulik likewise considers the Song to be a conflation of two separate compositions, vv. 1–25 reflecting a late pre-exilic period poem and vv. 26–43 a late post-exilic one.¹¹¹

Sanders’ careful structural analysis is correct to call both of these suggestions into question. After finding no evidence of clear redactional layers, he regards the poem as a “literary unity” and remarks that, if there were earlier layers, “there has been an extremely careful redaction.”¹¹² Though departing from Sanders’ precise division of the Song at points, this study affirms his conclusion concerning the unity of the poem, as well as his methodology for structural analysis. Chapter 9 will take up the question of how the fact that צורר is evenly distributed within the poem might impact the debate concerning the unity or disunity of the poem. The following pages will assume the structure below (Figure 1.1). This structural hierarchy follows the helpful classification proposed by Fokkelman: colon, strophe, stanza, and poem.¹¹³ This is not to suggest that the poet wrote with these designations in mind; nevertheless, this delineation is helpful for analysis.

15–25 | 26–38 | 39–43. Fokkelman proposes vv. 1–6 | 7–9 | 10–11 | 12–14 | 15–18 | 19–21 | 22–25 | 26–31 | 32–35 | 36–39 | 40–43 (*Major Poems*, 136–37, cf. 54–149).

¹¹⁰ Eberhard Baumann, “Das Lied Moses (Deut 32:1–43) auf seine gedankliche Geschlossenheit untersucht,” *VT* 6, no. 4 (1956): 414–24.

¹¹¹ Braulik, *Deuteronomium 16, 18–34, 12*, 227.

¹¹² Sanders, *Provenance*, 431, cf. 429–431; Otto argues more forcefully, insisting that “there is no reason to suppose that Deut 32:26–43 represents a later insertion into the poem, which would contradict its uniform structure” (“Singing Moses: His Farewell Song in Deuteronomy 32,” in *Psalmody and Poetry in Old Testament Ethics*, ed. Dirk J. Human [New York: T & T Clark, 2012], 173).

¹¹³ Fokkelman, *Major Poems; Reading Biblical Poetry: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); *The Psalms in Form: The Hebrew Psalter in Its Poetic Shape* (Leiden: Deo, 2002).

Figure 1.1: Poetic Structure of the Song

STANZA	STROPHE	COLON		STANZA	STROPHE	COLON		STANZA	STROPHE	COLON		
4–18	1–3	1	B	19–25	19–22	19	B	36–42	36–39	36a	B	
		2	Q			20a	B			36b	B	
		3	B			20b	B			37	B	
	4–6	4a*	B		21a	B	38a			B		
		4b	B		21b	B	38b			B		
		5	B		22a	B	39a			B		
		6a	B		22b	B	39b			T		
		6b	B		23–25	23	B			40–42	40	B
		7–9	7a			B	24a				T	41a
	7b		B			24b	B	41b	B			
	8a		B		25a	B	42	Q				
	8b		B		25b	B	43	43a	B			
	9	B	26–35		26	B		43b	B			
	10–12	10a			B	27a		B	43c	B		
		10b			B	27b	B					
		11a			B	28–31	28	B				
		11b			B		29a	B				
	13–15a	12			B		29b	B				
13a		B	30a	B								
13b		B	30b*	B								
14a		B	31*	B								
14b		T	32–35	32a	B							
15a	T	32b		B								
15b–18	15b*	B		33	B							
	16	B	34	B								
	17	Q	35	Q								
	18*	B										

With regard to the use of צור and the Song’s structure, two further points are necessary. First, note that the seven occurrences of the rock metaphor (*) fall within four strophes (bold). These ‘rock’ passages will serve as the immediate context for the metaphorical analysis in Chapters 4–7. Second, many interpreters have drawn attention to the *casus pendens* construction in v. 4, which sets the rock imagery in an emphatic and governing position over vv. 4–6.¹¹⁴ Others have pointed out that צור, as well as

¹¹⁴ For example, Craigie argues the syntax serves to signal that the following lines are intended to “systematically elaborate the attributes of God as the Rock of Israel” (*Book of Deuteronomy*, 378; cf. Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, 473; Block, *Deuteronomy*, 750–51; Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 227). Even more broadly, Fokkelman and Robson understand this use of צור as an introduction to the poem proper (*Major Poems*, 70; James Robson, *Honey from the Rock: Deuteronomy for the People of God* [Nottingham: Apollos, 2013], 56).

אֱלֹהִים/אֵל in vv. 15b and 18 form the outer frames of the following chiasmic structure:¹¹⁵

- A Israel forsook the God (אֱלֹהִים) who made them (v. 15bA)
- B They spurned their Rock (צִוֵּר) who saved them (v. 15bB)
- B' They neglected their Rock (צִוֵּר) who begot them (v. 18a)
- A' And forgot the God (אֵל) who gave you birth (v. 18b)

On a broader structural level, Boston understands the use of the rock metaphor in v. 4 and in v. 18 as forming an inclusio around vv. 4–18.¹¹⁶

Genre

Much has been written on the Song's genre, but it is altogether fitting to begin with the father of form-criticism: Gunkel accurately classified it as a 'mixed' poem, seeing prophetic elements in YHWH's expression of vengeance, cessation of wrath, and restoration of his people, as well as hymnic elements in the concluding call to praise in v. 43.¹¹⁷ He also detected features typical of historical, eschatological, and wisdom genres.¹¹⁸ While many follow Gunkel in seeing multiple generic forms in the Song, the scholarly discussion has tended to elevate one over the others as primary, especially legal, didactic, and hymnic features.¹¹⁹

Many scholars, under the influence of Wright's study, have stressed how the poem follows the form of a covenant lawsuit or *rib*. Wright shows that the Song primarily reflects a covenantal lawsuit that had been based on a covenant-renewal form (vv. 7–14), the components of which he identified as follows:¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Boston, "The Song of Moses," 68, 70; Carrillo Alday, *Cántico*, 85; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 866; Sanders, *Provenance*, 278–79.

¹¹⁶ Boston, "The Song of Moses," 68.

¹¹⁷ Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998), 23, 255, 274.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 247–48, 251, 300.

¹¹⁹ Meyer and Weitzman have suggested another genre. Meyer is perhaps justified in describing the Song as valedictory literature (*Vermächtnis-Literatur*) in a general sense ("Die Bedeutung von Deuteronomium 32, 8f 43 (4d)"); More recently, Weitzman has less convincingly suggested that—within its final literary context of the Book of Deuteronomy—the Song is intended to be read as an example of the so-called "last-words topos." ("Lessons from the Dying: The Role of Deuteronomy 32 in Its Narrative Setting," *Harvard Theological Review* 87, no. 4 [1994]: 377–93). That is to say, the poem and its narrative frame evince general hallmarks of this well-attested literary genre of the ancient world, such as prefacing the words of the dying with a formal introduction (31:14–30) and casting them as prophetic teaching (32:2). This is reinforced by the striking parallels between the Song and one particular example of the "last-words topos," the Hellenistic work *Words of Ahiqar* (*Song and Story in Biblical Narrative: The History of a Literary Convention in Ancient Israel* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997], 37–58).

¹²⁰ "The Lawsuit of God," 26–67, esp. 41–54.

Call to Witnesses (v. 1)
Introductory Statement of Case (vv. 4–6)
Recital of the Suzerain’s Benevolent Acts (vv. 7–14)
Indictment (vv. 15–18)
Declaration of Sentence (vv. 19–29)

He explained the additional verses (vv. 2–3, 30–43) as expansions that incorporate other generic elements—especially wisdom (v. 2) and hymnic features (vv. 3, 43)—in order to help move the hearer from confession to hope of deliverance (hymn) and to cast the entire poem as a “tool for teaching” (wisdom).¹²¹

While agreeing with Wright’s classification of the poem as a lawsuit, Wiebe rightly expressed dissatisfaction with his explanation of the ‘expanded’ sections, especially the latter half of the poem (vv. 30–43).¹²² He proposed that a more suitable description of its form is a modification covenant *rīb*, namely a *deliberative* lawsuit.¹²³ In addition to the legal elements echoing those outlined by Wright (see above), he maintains that this form includes three additional components based on his analysis of other examples of the lawsuit form in the Hebrew Bible:¹²⁴

Lamentation or Repentance (vv. 30–33)
Divine Deliberation (v. 34)
Decision of Deliberation (vv. 35–42)

Other interpreters see the Song as an example of wisdom literature. Like Wiebe, Boston thought Wright’s account of the poem’s expansions unsatisfactory. Instead, he argued that the primary aim of the Song was instruction and exhibits clear signs of being influenced by Israel’s ‘court’ or ‘royal’ wisdom tradition.¹²⁵ In support of this claim, Boston underscored the ultimate didactic function of the *rīb*.¹²⁶ Moreover, he suggested a better understanding of the summons to heaven and earth in v. 1, namely as

¹²¹ Ibid., 66, cf. 54–58.

¹²² John M. Wiebe, “The Form, Setting and Meaning of the Song of Moses,” *Studia Biblica et Theologica* 17 (1989): 122–23.

¹²³ Ibid., 127.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 128–43.

¹²⁵ Boston, “The Song of Moses,” 165–73; James R. Boston, “The Wisdom Influence upon the Song of Moses,” *JBL* 87, no. 2 (1968): 198–202.

¹²⁶ More specifically, Boston argued that it *functioned* differently than a typical *rīb*, namely as an explanation of calamity rather than an announcement of judgment (“The Song of Moses,” 187).

an invocation of a teacher rather than a call to witnesses.¹²⁷ He pointed to the paucity of legal or covenantal language in the immediate context and the presence of wisdom themes in v. 2. He also noted that double appeals to hear are common to didactic introductions not only in Israelite literature but also to the literature of the broader ANE world. Boston also draws attention to the pervasive wisdom language¹²⁸ and themes within the poem,¹²⁹ especially in the teaching language of v. 2 and the foolishness motif in vv. 5–7, 20–21, 28–29 (cf. Carrillo Alday, Hidal).

More recently, Wikander has pointed out a possible ANE wisdom influence. His analysis traces the literary parallels between the Song’s depiction of Israel’s astonishing rejection (‘kicking’) of YHWH, their gracious Provider, in vv. 13–15a and the ancient parable of the ungrateful grazing animal preserved in the wisdom sections of the Hurrian-Hittite *Epic of Liberation*.¹³⁰ He is correct in concluding that the poem likely alludes to this Hurrian-Hittite text or, at the very least, draws upon a common wisdom tradition from the ancient world.¹³¹

Still other scholars emphasise the hymnic qualities of the poem. Though “the Song evinces qualities of a number of different forms,” Thiessen has persuasively shown that “it broadly fits the category of a hymn.”¹³² He points to the way the poem follows this general form of this type of psalm:¹³³

Call to Worship (v. 3)

Introductory Summary (v. 4)

Reason for Praise: YHWH’s Goodness (vv. 8–14, 30–42), Greatness (vv. 8, 12, 39)

¹²⁷ Ibid., 151–58; Boston, “Wisdom Influence,” 198–200; cf. James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 421, 440.

¹²⁸ The majority of uses of the lexemes אָמַר ‘word’, אָמַרָה ‘speech’, אָמוּן ‘faithfulness’, and אָכַזַר ‘cruel, fierce’ occur in the Psalter, Job, and Proverbs. In addition, the terms לָקַח ‘teaching’, תְּהַפְּכוּת ‘perversity’, להֹם ‘to eat’, and מְרָרָה ‘bitterness, poison’, as well as the expressions desert land (אֶרֶץ מִדְבָּר), the apple (אֵישׁוֹן) of one’s eye (עֵיִן), and to discern (בִּיִן) one’s end (אֶחָרִית) are found only in these books (Boston, “Wisdom Influence,” 200–201; von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 207).

¹²⁹ Wisdom themes are seen in the way apostasy and wickedness are cast as ‘foolishness (vv. 6, 28–29), as well as in the way fathers and elders are portrayed as wisemen (v. 7) (Boston, “Wisdom Influence,” 200–201, 207).

¹³⁰ For example, Wikander notes that both texts employ imagery of an animal rejecting the very rock (or mountain) that had provided abundantly for them. Both texts also serve to condemn human disloyalty or to justify the resulting divine cursing. He suggests that the most prominent difference between these texts—namely, the divine epithet ‘Rock’ in the Song instead of the generic mountain imagery in the Hurrian-Hittite parable—is best understood as transformation of the older wisdom text (“Ungrateful Grazers: A Parallel to Deut 32:15 from the Hurrian/Hittite Epic of Liberation,” *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* 78 [2013]: 141).

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Matthew Thiessen, “The Form and Function of the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:1–43),” *JBL* 123, no. 3 (2004): 401.

¹³³ Ibid., 420–21.

He also finds (more speculative) evidence for this in several signs of the Song's liturgical use such as its designation as שִׁיר 'song'.¹³⁴ To this, he adds the frequent shifts in person and speaker (which seem to presume cultic performance) and the punctuating imperatives and rhetorical questions (which seem to presume a congregation or liturgical ceremony).¹³⁵ Block follows Thiessen in this classification of the poem, finding additional support in the hymnic conclusion in v. 43¹³⁶ and concluding that "the Song exhibits a strong liturgical stamp, and bears a stronger resemblance to several psalms in the Psalter than to prophetic lawsuits."¹³⁷ In this way, rather than seeing the poem as a *riḅ* with hymnic expansion as Wright did, both Thiessen and Block characterise it as a hymn with an inserted lawsuit.¹³⁸

Conceptual Background

In addition to these prophetic, didactic, and cultic worlds that undergird these generic observations, two additional conceptual backgrounds have been proposed. Some have focused on the view of salvation history expressed within the Song. For example, Luyten locates the poem firmly within a group of biblical poems that have in common "a certain continuous survey of Israel's salvation history" (Exod 15; Pss 78; 105; 106; 114; 135; 136; Isa 63–64).¹³⁹ At the same time, he insightfully demonstrates that its prominent primeval and eschatological motifs (which echo a number of other passages in the Hebrew Bible) break the conventions of these psalms of historical retrospection. While these texts typically begin with deliverance from Egypt and conclude with the settlement of the Land, the Song breaks free of this upper limit (deliverance from Egypt) by locating Israel's national formation in primeval times (vv. 8–9)¹⁴⁰ and extends beyond this lower limit (possession of the Land) by moving beyond reflection on the past to reflection on the future, namely the coming expression of divine vengeance (upon the enemy) and restoration (of Israel).¹⁴¹ Seybold likewise draws

¹³⁴ Ibid., 407–8.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 408–10.

¹³⁶ Block, *How I Love Your Torah*, 173, 175–76.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 166.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 173; Thiessen, "Form and Function," 407.

¹³⁹ Jos Luyten, "Primeval and Eschatological Overtones in the Song of Moses," in *Das Deuteronomium: Entstehung, Gestalt und Botschaft*, ed. Norbert Lohfink (Leuven: University Press, 1985), 341.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 342–43.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 344–46.

attention to the poem's continuity and discontinuity with typical accounts of Israel's history, though his study regrettably lacks the insight of Luyten's.¹⁴²

The Song makes clear reference to YHWH's place among other gods (vv. 8, 12, 16–17, 21, 31, 37–39, 43). Again, the scholarly consensus is that vv. 8 and 43 originally referred to other deities ('sons of god'). In vv. 16–17, 21, 37–38, the poem likewise describes the gods (underlined) that Israel foolishly pursued.

- ¹⁶ *They made him jealous with strange gods,
with abhorrent things they provoked him.*
- ¹⁷ *They sacrificed to demons, not God,
to deities they had never known,
to new ones recently arrived,
whom your ancestors had not feared.*
- ²¹ *They made me jealous with what is no god,
provoked me with their idols.
So I will make them jealous with what is no people,
provoke them with a foolish nation.*
- ³⁷ *Then he will say: Where are their gods,
the rock in which they took refuge,*
- ³⁸ *who ate the fat of their sacrifices,
and drank the wine of their libations?
Let them rise up and help you,
let them be your protection!*

YHWH's superiority over these gods is also boldly expressed in vv. 12 and 39a:

- ¹² *the LORD alone guided him;
no foreign god was with him.*
- ³⁹ *See now that I, even I, am he;
there is no god besides me.*

In light of this, it should not be surprising that a number of scholars have detected mythological elements and undertones in the Song.

There has also been a lively discussion concerning the possibility of mythological elements in vv. 23–24. The NRSV renders these verses as follows:

¹⁴² Though it echoes the general features of historical narration found in the Pentateuch and Deuteronomistic History, Seybold demonstrates that the historical narration within the Song diverges in quite significant ways ("Krise der Geschichte: geschichtstheologische Aspekte im Moselied DT 32," in *Das alte Testament—ein Geschichtsbuch?! Geschichtsschreibung oder Geschichtsüberlieferung im antiken Israel* [Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2005], 175–77, 187). Instead, he suggests that the poem resembles more closely the "idiosyncratic" approach to history found of the psalms of Asaph (Pss 50, 78, 81, 82, 105, 106).

²³*I will heap disasters upon them,
 spend my arrows against them:*
²⁴*wasting hunger (מְזִי רָעָב),
 burning consumption (לְהַמִּי רִשְׁפָּה),
 bitter pestilence (קָטָב מְרִירִי).*
*The teeth of beasts I will send against them,
 with venom of things crawling in the dust.*

De Moor and Greenfield correctly insist that some of these ‘arrows’ are best understood as allusions to deities or demons of the broader ANE world, while Kató adamantly contests this suggestion.¹⁴³

Hidal provides a broader treatment, identifying mythological allusions throughout the Song.¹⁴⁴ In addition to ‘sons of God’ in v. 8 and the god *Resheph* in v. 24, he detects mythical undertones in the depiction of YHWH as an eagle in v. 11 (a symbol of the god *Ba‘al šamem*) and reference to the mythological serpent *tannîn* (Isa 27:1; Job 7:6; Pss 74:13; 148:7).¹⁴⁵ Hidal’s study highlights two ways the use of צִוּר intersects the scholarly discussion of the Song’s conceptual background. First, he argues that rock imagery, generally speaking, was likely drawn from ANE religion (cf. Knowles).¹⁴⁶ More specifically, he connects the poem’s use of צִוּר with myth. He notes that the reference to honey from the צִוּר in v. 13b is a possible allusion to the Canaanite cult, pointing to the great significance of honey to the Ugaritic cult and the prohibition against the offering of honey as a possible critique of Canaanite practice.¹⁴⁷ Despite the fact that the divine use of צִוּר elsewhere in Hebrew Bible has lost all mythological undertones, Hidal is most likely correct in thinking that the Song is an exception.¹⁴⁸ It is unlikely, however, that the rock metaphor—as well as the entire complex of mythological echoes—is an archaizing literary device and betrays the poem’s late date, as he suggests.¹⁴⁹

Second, like others, he envisages the juxtaposition of rock and birthing imagery in vv. 15b and 18 as an allusion to a creation myth, one perhaps very similar to attested

¹⁴³ Johannes C. de Moor, “O Death, Where Is Thy Sting?,” in *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical & Other Studies in Memory of Peter C. Craigie*, ed. J. Glen Taylor and Lyle M. Eslinger (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 99–107; Jonas C. Greenfield, “Smitten by Famine, Battered by Plague (Deuteronomy 32:24),” in *Love & Death in the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of Marvin H. Pope* (Guilford: Four Quarters Publishing Company, 1987), 151–52; Szabolcs Ferencz Kató, “Entdämonisierung von Dtn 32:24,” *VT* 62, no. 4 (2012): 636–41.

¹⁴⁴ Hidal, “Some Reflections,” 16–19.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 16–18.

¹⁴⁶ Hidal, “Some Reflections,” 15–21; Knowles, “The Rock, His Work Is Perfect,” 316–17, 320–22.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

ANE myths that portrayed rocks as the birthplace of humans, gods, and demi-gods.¹⁵⁰ However, Hidal goes as far as to suggest that this type of *Steingeburtmythus* likely informed the use of צור not only in this verse but also in *all* occurrences of צור for God in the poem (vv. 4, 15b, 18, 30, 31, 37).¹⁵¹ Of course, others adamantly reject the idea of an underlying generative rock myth.¹⁵² Van der Woude, for example, questions interpreting the rock imagery “cosmologically or mythologically in the sense of the divine progenitor” on the basis that most “passages emphasise Yahweh’s protection and majestic strength” and that it should be understood “as the God to whom Israel owes its existence as the people of God.”¹⁵³ Still others, like Sanders and Korpel, are more tentative but nevertheless leave the option open.¹⁵⁴ This debate will be taken up further in Chapter 3.

Function within Deuteronomy

Labuschagne comments that “the most striking feature with regard to the Song of Moses is the way it is set in its context,” that is to say, the way the poem “is supplied with an extensive introduction (Deut. 31:16–30) and a postscript (32:44–47).”¹⁵⁵ The many lexical and thematic links between the Song and its narrative frame have been well documented (see especially Sanders).¹⁵⁶ This close relationship between these passages has understandably suggested to Eissfeldt and Sanders that the frame was composed at a later date with the express purpose of introducing the poem. This is not universally accepted, however. For example, Otto has recently argued that the parallels between the Song and its introduction demonstrate that they were composed at the same

¹⁵⁰ Fabry, “צור Şûr,” 12:320; Ithamar Gruenwald, “God the ‘Stone/Rock’: Myth, Idolatry, and Cultic Fetishism in Ancient Israel,” *Journal of Religion* 76, no. 3 (7): 437.

¹⁵¹ Hidal, “Some Reflections on Deuteronomy 32,” 18.

¹⁵² Helmer Ringgren, *Israelite Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 85; van der Woude, “צור Şûr Rock,” 2:1340.

¹⁵³ van der Woude, “צור Şûr Rock,” 2:1340.

¹⁵⁴ Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds*, 584–85; “Rock צור, סלע,” 709–10; Sanders, *Provenance*, 397.

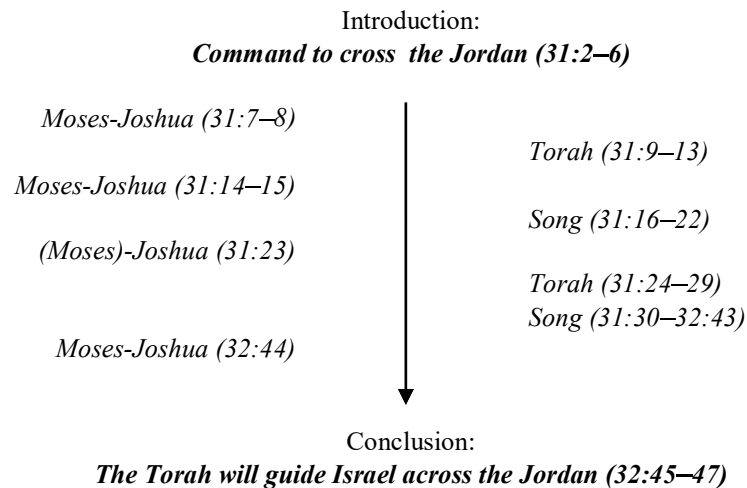
¹⁵⁵ Labuschagne, “Framework and Structure,” 85–86.

¹⁵⁶ Sanders outlines the following lexical and thematic links common to the Song and its narrative frame (*Provenance*, 334–35): (1) הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת ‘this song’ before and after (31:30, 32:44) the Song itself (32:1–43); (2) the expression ‘to eat and be sated’ (31:20, 32:15 LXX, Q); (3) fertility of the land, especially reference to הַלֵּב ‘milk’ and דְּבַשׁ ‘honey’ (32:20, 32:13–14); (4) Israel’s apostasy after experiencing the lavish blessing and the resulting divine anger (31:16–22, 32:15–18); (5) calamity (רָעוֹת ‘evils’) as divine punishment (31:17–18, 21, 32:19–25); (6) invocation of heaven and earth (31:28, 32:1); (7) Israel’s corrupt actions (שָׁחַת, 31:29, 32:5) and provocation (כַּעַס, 31:29, 32:16, 19, 21); (8) pejorative depictions of idols (31:29, 32:16, 21); and (9) reference to Israel’s אֲחֵרִית ‘end’ (31:29; 32:20, 29).

time.¹⁵⁷

Against Otto, it is generally (and accurately) acknowledged that Deut 31–32 is a composite text.¹⁵⁸ Amidst the abrupt shifts back and forth between scenes and subjects, several scholars have found an editorial agenda. Carrillo Alday envisions the Song as part of a well-structured discourse intended to underscore the necessity of Torah in crossing the Jordan (see Figure 1.2):¹⁵⁹

Figure 1.2: Editorial Agenda of Deut 31–32 (Carrillo-Alday)



As Figure 1.3 illustrates, Britt observes a similar alternating pattern involving the themes of Joshua, Torah, and Song.¹⁶⁰ He differs from Carrillo Alday, however, in several regards. In addition to assigning these themes differently, Britt insightfully sees in the concluding section, 32:44–47, a *harmonisation* of the three literary ‘strands’.¹⁶¹ However, he less convincingly, explains that the function of this arrangement, namely to elevate Torah over Joshua.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁷ Eckart Otto, “Moses Abschiedslied in Deuteronomium 32: Ein Zeugnis der Kanonsbildung in der hebäische Bibel,” in *Die Tora: Studien zum Pentateuch: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), 651–57, 676; “Singing Moses,” 171–74.

¹⁵⁸ Salvador Carrillo Alday, “Contexto redaccional del Cantico de Moises (Dt 31,1–32,47),” *Estudios Bíblicos* 26 (1967): 383; Carrillo Alday, *Cántico*, 135; Sanders, *Provenance*, 338.

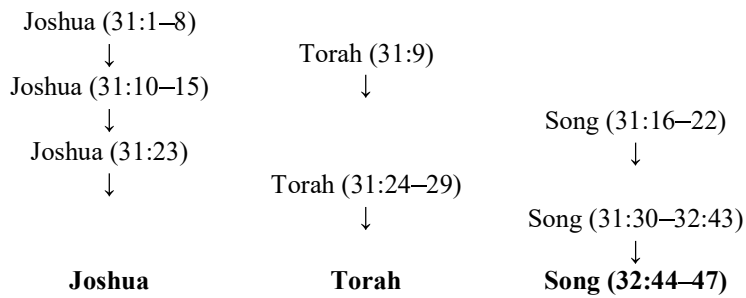
¹⁵⁹ More specifically, Carrillo Alday argues that the Song serves as a witness to the *Torah* (“Contexto,” 387; *Cántico*, 139).

¹⁶⁰ Brian M. Britt, “Deuteronomy 31–32 as a Textual Memorial,” *Biblical Interpretation* 8, no. 4 (2000): 360, 366.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 367–68.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 364–65.

Figure 1.3: Editorial Agenda of Deut 31–32 (Britt)



Moving to the function of the poem within the book of Deuteronomy as a whole,¹⁶³ several suggestions have been put forth. For example, in understanding the structure of the book as resembling a Hittite suzerain-vassal treaty, Kline pointed out how the Song fittingly functions as one of the key features of this pattern—a divine witness. He also is right in showing how it not only invokes witnesses (heaven and earth, 32:1) but also serves as a witness itself (עֵד ‘witness’, 31:19).¹⁶⁴ Leuchter has put forth a second (and certainly less convincing) suggestion: the Song was a product of the northern Levites that was inserted into Deuteronomy during the reign of Josiah as a propagandistic tool to bolster the king’s ambitions in the north.¹⁶⁵

Others find in the Song a fitting summary. For example, Watts rightly sees it as a “popular synopsis of the law” and a “summary of Deuteronomic themes in a memorable form.”¹⁶⁶ He finds support for this in the lexical and thematic affinities between the poem and the rest of the book.¹⁶⁷ He also finds support in the way the

¹⁶³ Labuschagne and Olson fall somewhere in the middle and explore the relationship between the Song and concluding chapters of Deuteronomy (29–34). On the one hand—like Carrillo Alday and Britt—Labuschagne suggests that the Song represents one of three “intimately” and “mutually connected” themes, namely (1) Moses’ imminent death and his succession by Joshua, (2) the law as Moses’ legacy, and (3) the Song as the *grand finale* of Moses’ legacy (“Framework and Structure”). On the other hand, Olson goes in a different direction, focusing his attention on the rhetorical function of the “Moab covenant” in Deut 29–32 (“How Does Deuteronomy Do Theology? Literary Juxtaposition and Paradox in the New Moab Covenant in Deuteronomy 29–32,” in *A God so Near: Essays on Old Testament Theology in Honor of Patrick D. Miller*, ed. Nancy R. Bowen and Brent A. Strawn [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003], 201–14).

¹⁶⁴ Meredith G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy: Studies and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 35; cf. Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 373. Kline notes that the Song—as a part of Deuteronomy—not only takes on a role within this treaty pattern, but the poem itself is structured along the lines of this form (*Treaty of the Great King*, 138–39; cf. Jeffrey J. Niehaus, “Deuteronomy: Theology of,” in *NIDOTTE*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 538–39].

¹⁶⁵ Mark Leuchter, “Why Is the Song of Moses in the Book of Deuteronomy?,” *VT* 57, no. 3 (2007): 295.

¹⁶⁶ James W. Watts, *Psalm and Story: Inset Hymns in Hebrew Narrative* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 67, 79, cf. 186–187, 193.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 67–69.

narrative frame equates the Song and Torah, a fact that, to him, signals a relationship between the poem and the large portions of the preceding chapters of Deuteronomy.¹⁶⁸ Schweitzer reinforces this conclusion, suggesting that the Song, as well as the Blessing (Deut 33), represent ‘proto-Deuteronomistic’ texts that have been “preserved by the Deuteronomistic movement and incorporated into the book of Deuteronomy because both poems contain a majority of the concerns of the Deuteronomistic ideology.”¹⁶⁹ He supports this claim by showing how they touch upon six of the nine tenets of Deuteronomistic thought that Weinfeld outlines in his classic study, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*.¹⁷⁰ From this, he even posits—perhaps accurately—that these texts may have been “source material” or “base texts” for such ideology.¹⁷¹

Lee represents one of the most recent voices in the discussion concerning the relationship between the Song and its broader context, exploring the poem’s literary, theological, and hermeneutical function within Deuteronomy and within the broader swath of Genesis–Kings. With regard to the poem’s place in Deuteronomy, he essentially echoes the sentiments of Watts and Schweitzer in seeing it as an expression of the book’s “heart” and a reiteration of key Deuteronomistic concerns, namely

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 79.

¹⁶⁹ Steven J Schweitzer, “Deuteronomy 32 and 33 as Proto-Deuteronomistic Texts,” in *Proceedings of Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Biblical Societies*, 2002, 79–81, cf. 86.

¹⁷⁰ See a summary of this argument below (ibid., 83–84):

1. The struggle against idolatry	<i>In the verses listed, the nations have other gods, while Israel has YHWH; Israel has worshipped false gods who are useless; verse 13 is possibly a reference to the taking over of high places by Israel.</i>
2. The centralization of the cult	<i>Absent</i>
3. Exodus, covenant, and election:	<i>YHWH has Israel as his inheritance; Exodus imagery in the poem accompanies statements about Israel’s election.</i>
4. The monotheistic creed	<i>YHWH is righteous; he alone exists as God for the people of Israel.</i>
5. Observance of the law and loyalty to the covenant	<i>Israel has failed to be loyal to YHWH and to his commands.</i>
6. Inheritance of the land	<i>The Israelites enjoy the fruitful and luxuriant provision of the land after YHWH has lead them into it</i>
7. Retribution and material motivation	<i>Punishment is exacted on Israel for their idolatry in material terms of military defeats and famine or plague; their foes will be punished in similar ways.</i>
8. Fulfillment of prophecy	<i>Absent, although the Dtr frame interprets the poem as a prophetic utterance.</i>
9. The election of the Davidic dynasty	<i>Absent</i>

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 81–83.

“YHWH’s supremacy and Israel’s loyalty to him.”¹⁷²

At the same time, Lee’s study goes further in two significant ways. First, it provides a thorough examination of the continuity as well as the discontinuity between the Song and Deuteronomy. Concerning the former, Lee outlines ten shared themes: (1) Israel as YHWH’s inheritance; (2) the father-child relationship between YHWH and Israel; (3) guidance in the wilderness; (4) entry into a fertile land; (5) Israel’s rebellion and foreign worship; (6) YHWH’s jealous anger and role as warrior; (7) YHWH’s presence; (8) YHWH’s defence of his integrity and reputation; (9) YHWH’s control of history; and (10) salvation after judgment.¹⁷³ At the same time, what he calls the “ostensible differences” between the Song and Deuteronomy include (1) the poem’s account of Israel’s beginning in the wilderness rather than the exodus from Egypt, (2) its silence concerning the land as an inheritance and Israel’s conquest, (3) its lack of the key Deuteronomic themes of Sinai, Moab, Torah, and (4) place of worship.¹⁷⁴ Without explaining away the differences, Lee ultimately concludes that “the redaction of the Song into Deuteronomy by itself suggests that final redactors did not see the disparity between them.”¹⁷⁵ It seems that one might easily add the poem’s leitmotif—which is altogether absent elsewhere in Deuteronomy—to this list.

Second, Lee insightfully brings his analysis of the Song to bear on a number of common scholarly proposals concerning the book’s chief concerns. For example, he is right to question the argument that Deuteronomy constitutes a demythologization program, arguing that such a view “neglects the witness of the Song in the final form of Deuteronomy” since the poem often speaks of YHWH in anthropomorphic language (vv. 10, 13, 20–21, 28–33, 39–41) and “is not concerned with a distinction between divine transcendence and immanence.”¹⁷⁶ Similarly, he convincingly points to how the Song’s silence about cult centralization and kingship seems to indicate that these features were of secondary concern.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² Boon-Hui Andrew Lee, “The Narrative Function of the Song of Moses in the Contexts of Deuteronomy and Genesis-Kings” (Ph.D. diss., University of Gloucestershire, 2010), 184, cf. 229–230.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 156–63.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 164–81.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 182, 229.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 183, cf. 229–230.

Literary and thematic parallels between the Song and other segments of the Hebrew Bible have been long noted. Older research has tended to make much of the echoes with prophetic and wisdom literature, especially in connection with dating the poem.¹⁷⁸ In recent years, there has been a renewed (and welcome) interest in the topic as demonstrated by the flurry of studies tracing the Song's relationship to other biblical and religious texts. A number of studies—many in the last twenty years—focus on the affinities between the poem and the Prophets, especially Isaiah¹⁷⁹ and Ezekiel.¹⁸⁰ Others have addressed the literary links between the Song and the book of Job.¹⁸¹ This trend is not limited to Hebrew Bible but extends to early Jewish¹⁸² and Christian writings.¹⁸³

In his monograph on the Song, Knight admirably sets out to elucidate the poem's theological significance, which leads him to devote considerable attention to the

¹⁷⁸ Cassuto, "Song of Moses"; Eissfeldt, *Das Lied Moses*; William L. Holladay, "Jeremiah and Moses: Further Observations," *JBL* 85, no. 1 (1966): 17–27; J. Alberto Soggin, "Jeremias 12:10a : eine Parallelstelle zu Deuteronomy 32:8/LXX?," *VT* 8, no. 3 (1958): 304–5.

¹⁷⁹ Ronald Bergey, "The Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32.1–43) and Isaianic Prophecies: A Case of Early Intertextuality?," *JSOT* 28, no. 1 (2003): 33–54; Thomas A. Keiser, "The Song of Moses: A Basis for Isaiah's Prophecy," *VT* 55, no. 4 (2005): 486–500; Hyun Chul Paul Kim, "The Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32.1–43) in Isaiah 40–55," in *God's Word for Our World: Volume 1: Biblical Studies in Honor of Simon John De Vries*, ed. J. Harold Ellens (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 147–71; cf. Gale A. Yee, "A Form-Critical Study of Isaiah 5:1–7 as a Song and a Juridical Parable," *CBQ* 43, no. 1 (1981): 30–40.

¹⁸⁰ Jason Gile, "Ezekiel 16 and the Song of Moses: A Prophetic Transformation?," *JBL* 130 (2011): 87–108; Gosse addresses the poem's relation to both Isaiah and Ezekiel ("Deutéronome 32,1–43 et les rédactions des livres d'Ézéchiel et d'Isaïe," *ZAW* 107, no. 1 [1995]: 110–17).

¹⁸¹ James L. Crenshaw, "Divine Discipline in Job 5:17–18, Proverbs 3:11–12, and Deuteronomy 32:39 and Beyond," in *Reading Job Intertextually*, ed. Katherine Dell and Will Kynes (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012), 178–89; Edward L. Greenstein, "Parody as a Challenge to Tradition: The Use of Deuteronomy 32 in the Book of Job," in *Reading Job Intertextually*, ed. Katherine Dell and Will Kynes (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012), 66–80.

¹⁸² Herbert W. Basser, *Midrashic Interpretations of the Song of Moses* (New York: Peter Lang, 1984); Moshe J. Bernstein, "The Aramaic Versions of Deuteronomy 32: A Study in Comparative Targumic Theology," in *Targum and Scripture: Studies in Aramaic Translations and Interpretation in Memory of Ernest G. Clarke*, ed. Ernest G. Clarke and Paul V. M. Fleisher (Brill, 2002), 29–52; J. T. van Ruiten, "The Use of Deuteronomy 32:39 in Monotheistic Controversies in Rabbinic Literature," in *Studies in Deuteronomy: In Honour of C. J. Labuschagne on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 223–41; Steven Weitzman, "Allusion, Artifice, and Exile in the Hymn of Tobit," *JBL* 115, no. 1 (1996): 49–61; cf. Jonathan Kearney, "Rashi's Commentary on the Song of Moses: Soundings in Medieval Jewish Exegesis," *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association* 29 (2006): 57–77.

¹⁸³ Richard H. Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy: The Origin and Purpose of the Jealousy Motif in Romans 9–11* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), especially pages 200–85; Brandon D. Crowe, "The Song of Moses and Divine Begetting in Matt 1, 20," *Biblica* 90 (2009): 47–58; Matthew Thiessen, "'The Rock Was Christ': The Fluidity of Christ's Body in I Corinthians 10.4," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 36, no. 2 (2013): 103–26; David M. Allen, *Deuteronomy and Exhortation in Hebrews: A Study in Narrative Representation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); David Lincicum, *Paul and the Early Jewish Encounter with Deuteronomy* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010); Guy Prentiss Waters, *The End of Deuteronomy in the Epistles of Paul*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

numerous lexical and thematic affinities between the Song and other passages within the Hebrew Bible. Sanders too devotes considerable space to a vast array of literary parallels, though he is less forceful than Knight concerning the priority of the Song.¹⁸⁴ Tracing the oral origin of the poem to Moses and its written form to the early monarchical period,¹⁸⁵ Knight understands these echoes as evidence of the ancient song's profound influence on subsequent biblical writers (both OT and NT). In perhaps his most succinct articulation of this point, Knight writes, "Because of its pictorial quality, the Song became for any later generation and changing culture a 'quarry' that was easily hewn, which has in fact been done throughout the whole of the Scriptures."¹⁸⁶

The question of the Song's place within the canonical structure of the Hebrew Bible has also been taken up. With regard to the poem's position within the Pentateuch, Lee argues that it reiterates "the heart of the Torah" by drawing attention to the central command undergirding all other laws (wholehearted devotion to YHWH).¹⁸⁷ Moreover, he thinks that the Song "validates all the laws of Moses" and at the same time "shows that all laws are subordinate to the essential commands to worship YHWH alone."¹⁸⁸ Zenger and Heskett draw attention to other aspects of the relationship. Zenger helpfully notes that, in addition to the poem serving as a summation of Torah,¹⁸⁹ it reinforces the characterisation of Moses as a 'mediator of revelation' and 'teacher' *par excellence*.¹⁹⁰ As part of the concluding chapters of Deuteronomy (29–34), Heskett is likely correct that the Song serves as the literary key to understanding the Torah by helping to cast Genesis–Deuteronomy as 'Mosaic' and 'eschatological'. The former gives the Pentateuch a sense of authority, while the latter allows it to be taken up by the next generation.¹⁹¹

When read in light of Genesis–Kings, Lee similarly proposes that the Song serves as a hermeneutical compass.¹⁹² That is to say, its overarching theme of loyalty to

¹⁸⁴ Sanders, *Provenance*, 353–426.

¹⁸⁵ Knight, *A Theological Quarry*, 6.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁸⁷ Lee, "Narrative Function," 224; cf. Knight, *A Theological Quarry*, 7.

¹⁸⁸ Lee, "Narrative Function," 224, cf. 230.

¹⁸⁹ Erich Zenger, "Mose/Moselied/Mosesegen/Moseschriften I," in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. 23 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), 338.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ Randall Heskett, "Deuteronomy 29–34 in the Formation of Torah," in *The Bible as a Human Witness to Divine Revelation: Hearing the Word of God Through Historically Dissimilar Traditions*, ed. Brian P. Irwin and Randall Heskett (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 32–50.

¹⁹² Lee, "Narrative Function," 221, 225, 231–32.

YHWH provides a way to navigate the “thematic multiplicity” of Joshua–Kings.¹⁹³ What is more, the poem’s emphasis on YHWH’s sovereignty over human history—for good or for ill—serves as a reminder to readers of Genesis–Kings that the disintegration of monarchy and eventual exile is not “because YHWH had lost control over history but because of the unrighteousness of his people.”¹⁹⁴ It also holds out hope and a promise of restoration, however. Lee notes that the restoration of YHWH’s servants in the later verses of the Song reminds the “readers of Genesis–Kings . . . that Israel’s destruction does not represent the final destiny for the people of YHWH.”¹⁹⁵ Finally, the poem helps provide a balanced reading of Genesis–Kings.¹⁹⁶ Lee explains:

To those who promote the importance of monarchical kingship, the Song emphasises the idea that all human leadership is subservient to the ultimate rule of YHWH. To those who see an absence of hope in the exile, the Song highlights YHWH’s faithfulness and supreme power as the basis for the people’s future vindication and restoration.¹⁹⁷

Schmitt likewise addresses the place of the Song within Genesis–Kings.¹⁹⁸ Though it is doubtful that the poem draws heavily on the written prophets (especially Deutero-Isaiah), as he suggests, Schmitt is certainly correct in suggesting that the Song’s insertion into the Pentateuch (1) sketches the entirety of Israel’s history (from prehistory to exile, cf. 32:8–25), (2) gives the first five books of the Hebrew Bible a clear “eschatological dimension,” and (3) forges a critical theological link between the ‘Torah’ and ‘Nebi’im’.¹⁹⁹ The second of these affirms Heskett’s conclusion concerning the Pentateuch. The third is essentially the position of Taschner as well, who concludes that the Song “stands at the juncture between Torah and Nebiim and represents something of an essential connecting brace between these two segments of the canon.”²⁰⁰

¹⁹³ Ibid., 231.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 225–26, 232.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 226.

¹⁹⁸ Hans-Christoph Schmitt, “‘Eschatologie’ im Enneateuch Gen 1–2 Kön 25: Bedeutung und Funktion der Moselieder Dtn 32,1–43* und Ex 15,1–21*,” in *Studien zu Psalmen und Propheten* (Freiburg: Herder, 2010), 131–49.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 137, cf. 143–145.

²⁰⁰ “Das Moselied als Verbindung zwischen Tora und Propheten,” in *Der Bibelkanon in der Bibelauslegung: Methodenreflexionen und Beispielexegesen*, ed. Egbert Ballhorn and Georg Steins (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2007), 197: “steht an der Nahtstelle zwischen Tora und Nebiim und stellt so etwas wie eine wesentliche Verbindungsstrebe zwischen diesen beiden Kanonteilen dar.”

Otto sees an even further reaching function. He argues that the Song serves as an ‘amphibolic bridge’ that connects *all three* major divisions of the Hebrew Bible: Torah, Prophets, and Writings. In other words, the poem represents an essential part of “the canon building of the Hebrew Bible.”²⁰¹ He finds valid support for this in the fact that the Song exhibits various generic elements (prophetic influence, hymnic-liturgical elements, wisdom themes) but is unjustified in suggesting that the poem draws upon and draws together a diverse array of biblical texts from throughout the Hebrew Bible.²⁰² Moreover, Otto rightly stresses the inseparable relationship between date and function (calling them “two sides of one coin”),²⁰³ but his conclusion that the poem’s function as a means of connecting the canonical segments of the Hebrew Bible necessitates a late date remains questionable (suggesting that the Song, along with its narrative frame, was “one of the latest texts in the Hebrew Bible”).²⁰⁴

If these scholars are correct that Deut 32 serves as a canonical ‘bridge’ or ‘compass’ in some capacity, how does the poem’s rock imagery relate to other segments of the Hebrew Bible—especially, where significant clusters of the metaphor occur like in 2 Sam 22–23 and Pss 92–95? How might his relationship affirm or correct Fischer’s assertion that the rock metaphor in the Song serves as “a *pithy prelude* for the broader discussion of God in other books of the OT?”²⁰⁵

1.2.4 Discussion

The strengths of the studies surveyed in this section are clear. They highlighted the importance of the rock imagery in the poem. Moreover, when read together, they present a wide array of possible connotations of צור for God. At the same time, four limitations arise. The first of these is that insight into the metaphor is scattered among disparate sources and have yet to be drawn together to form a more robust picture of the multifaceted discussion concerning the use of the metaphor in the Song.

A second limitation is that, more often than not, scholarship has provided an incomplete analysis of the metaphor, incomplete in two ways. Very rarely are *all* of the

²⁰¹ Otto, “Singing Moses,” 180.

²⁰² Otto draws attention to the most notable literary affinities “Singing Moses” (174–80) and provides a more extensive survey in “Moses Abschiedslied,” 657–77.

²⁰³ Otto, “Singing Moses,” 169.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 180.

²⁰⁵ ““Der Fels,”” 23, emphasis original: “einen *prägnanten Auftakt* für die weitere Rede von Gott in anderen Büchern des AT.”

occurrences of צִוֵּר for God treated. The use of the metaphor in v. 4 receives a fair amount of attention because of its introductory position and vv. 31 and 37 because of their rhetorical-charge, but vv. 18 and 30 are quite often overlooked. This oversight is curious in light of the striking use of צִוֵּר in these verses: YHWH *giving birth* to his people (v. 18) and *selling* them into the hands of their enemy (v. 30). There are even some studies that do not address the rock metaphor at all. Among the more surprising representatives of this group are G. E. Wright's classic article, Brueggemann and von Rad's theologically-driven commentaries, and Nigosian's monograph.²⁰⁶ Only Claassens, Knowles, and Woods address each of the uses of צִוֵּר for God; however, even here Claassens and Knowles' treatment of the occurrences is anaemic and reduces all four occurrences in the latter half of the poem (vv. 30, 31, 37) under the rubric of ironic protection.²⁰⁷ However, as the present study will demonstrate, even these examples of the metaphor are used in multiple distinct ways.

Underdeveloped treatments reflect another example of incomplete analysis. That is to say, often only select aspects of metaphorical analysis are addressed. When read together, these treatments create a robust picture of (a) the origin or background behind the metaphor, (b) the way it conceptualises YHWH and the other deities, and (c) the contribution it makes to the literary context. The problem is that all three of these important elements of metaphorical analysis are rarely brought together by any given interpreter, let alone for each occurrence that he or she treats. Moreover, there is a tendency to focus on the second aspect without developing the divine imagery, exploring the concepts that undergird it, or reflecting the role it plays in its literary context. As a result, if the interpreter has worked out all three, he or she leaves his or her reader with few criteria with which to weigh a reading's soundness.

The third limitation of the literature on the Song is the often disproportionate treatment of the metaphor. By this, I mean that striking gaps nevertheless emerge, despite the rock metaphor's status as a leitmotif. For instance, agreement concerning the significance of the metaphor is surprisingly inconsistent with the scholarly attention given to it. Within the sea of literature on the Song, only Knowles and Peters devote their undivided attention to its use in the poem. Moreover, even here only Knowles is entirely satisfactory for the purposes of this study. While Peters' work is a welcome treatment of one of the Song's more curious text-critical issues, one that often receives

²⁰⁶ Also Mann and Preuss.

²⁰⁷ Claassens, "I Kill and I Give Life," 37; Knowles, "The Rock, His Work Is Perfect," 310–15.

little more than a passing comment, it proves of limited value. Its thesis that צִיָּר arose as a result of redaction is unconvincing. Even if for the sake of argument it was to be accepted, it still contributes little to furthering our understanding of the metaphor's connotation and contribution to the poem.

Acknowledgement of the rock imagery's prominence is also often met with a rather brief treatment of metaphor. It could be argued that the brevity of many commentaries and article-length studies is likely to account for the lack of sustained development. However, this does not account for the clipped analysis of more comprehensive commentaries and monographs. Sanders' otherwise thorough research is perhaps the most poignant example. Though he does note that the rock metaphor represents one of the central themes of the poem, he pays relatively little attention to the *meaning and contribution* of צִיָּר as a divine metaphor, as is clearly seen in the fact that only three pages of this massive tome are devoted to it. Similar proportions are reflected in works of Budde, Levy, Knight, Lee, and Lundbom.

Furthermore, one wonders why such a weighty metaphor has not been brought into dialogue with some of the Song's key interpretive questions—its so-called perennial issues. Scholars have helpfully brought the metaphor into their discussions of the poem's date, conceptual background, and relationship with other segments of the Hebrew Bible. However, other critical questions have not been fully explored.

A fourth and final limitation is the tendency toward reductionism. Walker-Jones laments that “commentators seldom discuss Rock as an image for God at length, and, when they do, their interpretations tend to be conceptual reductions.”²⁰⁸ By this, he means that the metaphor is often understood simply in terms of strength or protection and—in doing so—denies any mythological undertones or ecological associations.²⁰⁹ Walker-Jones speaks more broadly than the interpretation of the metaphor in the Song, though his comments certainly include it. While a case can be made that the state of the field is not as bleak as this statement implies, he nevertheless is justified in his critique on two counts. As already discussed, there is indeed a notable need for more thorough treatments of the metaphor in the Song. Moreover, it is true that many have applied the same handful of connotations across all seven uses of צִיָּר for God—strength and protection being cited most consistently. The conclusion of an equal number of interpreters who detect a more varied range of senses would seem to suggest that

²⁰⁸ Walker-Jones, “Honey from the Rock,” 96.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

reading the same connotation or set of connotations across the poem is a generalisation and conflation of the rock imagery.

1.3 SUMMARY

This chapter has reviewed some of the key literature on the use of צור for God in the Hebrew Bible in general and in the Song more specifically. These works have contributed greatly to our understanding of the metaphor. However, in the course of this survey, it has become apparent that the pitfalls of the previous research (limited scope, outdated methodology, disparate comments, incomplete analysis, disproportionate treatment, reductionistic conclusions) call for further study of the topic as it relates to the use of the rock metaphor in Deut 32.

What is needed is a study that focuses intently on the use of צור in the Song and rests on renewed and rigorous methodology in order to allow *each* use of the metaphor to speak fully. Further research is warranted that draws together scattered insights into a coherent picture of past scholarship and, at the same time, introduces the rock metaphor into overlooked discussions concerning the poem's perennial issues. This is precisely the goal of this present study, which will attempt to show that the rock metaphor in Deut 32 is more multifaceted and complex than scholarship has yet to appreciate fully.

CHAPTER 2

A METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter 1 has invited further study of the God as Rock metaphor in the Song; yet, before analysis of the metaphor can commence, a fundamental question must be addressed, namely, how does one analyse metaphor? What are the theoretical underpinnings and practical steps for such a task? Three approaches to metaphorical analysis have been adopted in connection with the study of צוּר for God in the Hebrew Bible, though it should be noted that the vast majority of interpreters give no indication of the methodology that lies behind their conclusions.

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the theory and method that will guide the metaphorical analysis since, as I hope to demonstrate, ultimately none of the previous treatments of the rock metaphor (Eichhorn, Kowalski, Fernandes) rests on a fully satisfactory methodology. Constructing a more satisfactory methodology will involve three tasks: (1) I will begin with a survey and evaluation of several key developments in metaphor theory; (2) I will then address the nexus of this research and the interpretation of the biblical metaphor before (3) outlining the theoretical presuppositions and interpretive method this study will employ.

2.1 CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR THEORIES

Since the field of metaphor theory is so varied and vast, I have limited the following paragraphs to an avenue that holds the most promise, namely a conceptual (or cognitive) perspective.

2.1.1 Traditional View of Metaphor

It is against the backdrop of what has been called the traditional or substitution approach that this one has emerged. The former, which has predominated history and is still found in some (usually non-literary) circles, defines metaphor as a non-literal use of a word primarily for literary flair or variety. This understanding of metaphor

underscores two important presuppositions: (1) metaphors reside at the level of the *word* and (2) are *ornamental* in nature.¹

According to this approach, the process of interpreting a metaphor first involves recognising that a word is being used metaphorically rather than literally. Then, the interpreter looks for a fitting literal equivalent or substitute for the metaphorical word based on the similarities between it and its referent. Take for example ‘God is a rock’. First, one would recognise that ‘rock’ is not being used in a literal sense when connected to God. One would then find a suitable substitute for ‘rock’ based on the qualities that God and a rock share like ‘strength’ or ‘source of refuge.’ From this perspective, the rock metaphor would be understood as a poetic means of saying that God is ‘strong’ or a ‘source of refuge.’

2.1.2 Birth of Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Divergence from the traditional approach and the birth of a conceptual one is often traced back to the metaphor theories of Richards, Black, and Ricoeur. Their understanding of metaphor differs from a traditional understanding in three significant ways. First, they reject a purely ornamental understanding of metaphor. Richards does this by pointing to the pervasiveness of metaphor in everyday life. He forcefully insists that “metaphor is the omnipresent principle of language,” a fact that can be demonstrated in that one “cannot get through three sentences of “ordinary fluid discourse without it.”² The critique of Black and Ricoeur takes the form of demonstrating the rich conceptual import or informative value of metaphor.³

Second, rather than highlighting the literary role of metaphor, they emphasise its cognitive function. For Richards and Black, metaphor involves “an intercourse of *thoughts*,”⁴ and an intellectual exercise whereby one concept fosters insight into another and allows us to express ideas that literal language simply is unable to express.⁵ This is at the very heart of Ricoeur’s theory of metaphor, which envisages one—by means of imagination—moving from the verbal to the non-verbal; that is, from words to

¹ I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 100.

² *Ibid.*, 95.

³ Max Black, *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962), 45–46; Paul Ricoeur, “The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling,” *Critical Inquiry* 5, no. 1 (1978): 143, cf. 143–59.

⁴ Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 95.

⁵ Black, *Models and Metaphors*, 46; Max Black, “More about Metaphor,” in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 34.

pictures.⁶

Finally, and perhaps most profoundly, while the traditional view locates metaphor in the word being used figuratively (the *rock* in ‘God is a rock’), they point out that the trope is the interaction between *two* ideas (*God* and *rock*).⁷

To aid in analysing and discussing metaphor, Richards introduced the now stock terms ‘tenor’ and ‘vehicle’ to describe respectively the concept being explained (God) and the concept responsible for the explanation (rock).⁸ This approach differs significantly from the traditional method, not only in the number of concepts (one *vs.* two) and the relationship between them (interaction) but also in the *result* of the metaphor and its interpretation, which Richards asserts is the new meaning rather than the linguistic equivalence.⁹ This, he theorises, is because the juxtaposition between the ‘tenor’ and ‘vehicle’ forces the interpreter to consider their similarities and disparities in order to connect these concepts, arriving at a new idea.¹⁰ Ricoeur speaks of this in terms of metaphor expressing both how the concepts are alike and are not alike.¹¹

The rock metaphor, then, involves the interaction between the concepts, ‘God’ (tenor) and ‘rock’ (vehicle). The meaning of the metaphor is found in the interaction between them as the juxtaposition of these distinct concepts forces the hearer to make the connections; one that readily comes to mind is the way both provide refuge: rocks for human refugees and wildlife, and God for his people.

It is at this point that Black takes the interaction theory further than Richards, providing an account of the nature of the interaction between a metaphor’s focus and frame in greater detail. At the heart of this interaction are what he calls ‘associated commonplaces,’ that is, those aspects that one holds true concerning the concepts reflected in the ‘focus’ (tenor) and frame (vehicle).¹² Taking up Black’s example of ‘man is a wolf,’ the ‘associated commonplaces’ of a wolf denote all those things that one holds to be true about a wolf. “The effect of calling a man a ‘wolf,’” Black notes,

⁶ Ricoeur, “The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling,” 151, cf. 144–55.

⁷ Black, *Models and Metaphors*, 38–39, 44; “More about Metaphor,” 27–28; Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 92–93, 96–97, 100; Ricoeur, “The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling,” 144–46.

⁸ Black, “More about Metaphor,” 27–28; Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 90, 96.

⁹ Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 67, 100; cf. Black, “More about Metaphor,” 29; Ricoeur, “The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling,” 146, 154.

¹⁰ Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 125.

¹¹ Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny (London: Routledge, 1978), 7; “The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling,” 153, 155.

¹² Black, *Models and Metaphors*, 39–44; “More about Metaphor,” 29.

“is to evoke the wolf-system of related commonplaces.”¹³ That is to say, “If the man is a wolf, he preys upon other animals, is fierce, hungry, engaged in constant struggle, a scavenger, and so on.”¹⁴ This is not to say that everything that could be said of a wolf is at work in the interaction; rather Black explains that only *select* or *highlighted* commonplaces are involved, leaving other commonplaces hidden. Metaphor, then, involves viewing the frame in terms of the highlighted associated commonplaces of the focus.¹⁵ In this way, the interpreter’s understanding of the frame concept ‘organises’ one’s view of the focus and gives meaning to the metaphor.¹⁶

2.1.3 Development of Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Richards and Black drew attention to the cognitive (as opposed to the linguistic) nature of metaphor, but it was Lakoff and Johnson who developed this aspect most comprehensively. Under the influence of cognitive linguistics, they argue that metaphor is not just—or even primarily—a literary phenomenon but a *cognitive* (or *conceptual*) one, but go further to suggest that it is an essential aspect of the way humans conceptualise, experience, and respond to their environment.¹⁷ Their approach—set out in their landmark work, *Metaphors We Live By*, and developed by the subsequent studies¹⁸—became known as *conceptual* (or *cognitive*) *metaphor theory* (CMT). It understands metaphor as the interaction between two concepts (or, more precisely, conceptual domains or schemata),¹⁹ whereby one is conceptualised in terms of the other; or more simply stated, “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.”²⁰

CMT labels the conceptual domain being described as the ‘target’ and the domain doing the describing as the ‘source’ (which corresponds to Richards’ vehicle

¹³ Black, *Models and Metaphors*, 41.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 39–42, 44; “More about Metaphor,” 29.

¹⁶ Black, *Models and Metaphors*, 41.

¹⁷ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 3.

¹⁸ See especially Kövecses (*Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* [Oxford University Press, 2002]) and Lakoff and Turner (*More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989]).

¹⁹ Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 4; Lakoff and Turner, *More Than Cool Reason*, 63.

²⁰ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 5. This idea also lies at the heart of Eva F. Kittay’s ‘perspectival’ theory of metaphor which stresses the “function metaphor serves,” namely “to provide a perspective for which to gain an understanding of that which is metaphorically portrayed” (*Metaphor: Its Cognitive Force and Linguistic Structure* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1987], 13–14).

and tenor, as well as Black's focus and frame respectively). Conceptualisation occurs as specific elements of the source domain are projected onto corresponding elements of the target. In this way, the source provides the framework or structure of the metaphor.²¹ For this reason, the source domains are typically more concrete and target domains more abstract.²² CMT refers to these corresponding elements as 'mappings,' that is, "systematic correspondences between the source and the target."²³ As Black had already remarked,²⁴ not all of the possible correspondences between the domains are expressed in any given metaphor, but rather only *some* elements are in view. In other words, some mappings are 'highlighted', but others are 'hidden'.²⁵ From the perspective of CMT, then, the rock metaphor involves the conceptualisation of God (target) by means of certain elements (highlighted mappings) of rock (source). For example, God could be conceptualised as a source of refuge if the highlighted mapping was the way rocks served as a natural source of refuge in the ANE.

CMT is built on three additional theoretical underpinnings. Three examples desired particular attention. First, CMT emphasises strongly the cognitive dimension of metaphor, especially its importance in organising human experience: the way humans conceptualise and reason about the world around them and the way it even shapes how they communicate and act.²⁶ Second, CMT makes an important distinction between 'conceptual metaphor' and 'metaphorical linguistic expression,'²⁷ which distinguishes an abstract metaphorical idea from the specific ways that this idea is expressed in words. Lakoff and Johnson illustrate this with the 'conceptual metaphor' ARGUMENT IS WAR, which helps organise the way one thinks and talks about arguments and is manifested through a variety of 'metaphorical linguistic expressions.'²⁸ Claims are considered *indefensible* or *right on target*. Arguments are said to be *vulnerable to attack*, *demolished*, or *won*. Often, the act of arguing involves *strategy* or is described as statements *shot* back and forth. Third, CMT grounds metaphor securely in human

²¹ Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 24–25; Lakoff and Turner, *More Than Cool Reason*, 131–35.

²² Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 15–25; George Lakoff, "The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor," in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 208–9.

²³ Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 6–9; Lakoff and Turner, *More Than Cool Reason*, 4.

²⁴ Black, *Models and Metaphors*, 41–42.

²⁵ Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 79–90; Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 10–13, 52–55; Lakoff and Turner, *More Than Cool Reason*, 38–39.

²⁶ Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 115; Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 4–5, 8–9, 68, 77–86; Lakoff and Turner, *More Than Cool Reason*, xi–xii, 63–65.

²⁷ Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 4; Lakoff and Turner, *More Than Cool Reason*, 50–51, 107–8, 137–38.

²⁸ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 4.

experience and suggests that it is environmentally conditioned. This includes both physical stimuli (bodily senses, physical environment), as well as cultural ones (cultural knowledge, belief systems, social customs).²⁹

2.1.4 Refinement of Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Corpus Linguistics and Metaphor

A further development in metaphor theory is the *corpus linguistic* approach to metaphor (CL). This approach examines the way metaphors are used across a given language by analysing all the occurrences of a specified metaphor within a defined corpus. Deignan, perhaps the most notable proponent of this approach, defines a ‘corpus’ as “any collection of spoken or written texts.”³⁰ A corpus linguistic analysis as outlined by her involves two steps, beginning with a compilation of a list of all the uses of the metaphor found within a corpus, usually with the aid of specialised computer software.³¹ Next, these occurrences are examined one by one and patterns in usage are identified.³² Study of the rock metaphor from a CL approach would involve analysing the way it is used across a given corpus, such as the Psalter (Eichhorn, Fernandes) or the Hebrew Bible (Kowalski, Fabry, van der Woude, Hill, Walker-Jones, Fischer).

CL takes the basic tenets of contemporary metaphor theories such as CMT as its framework, yet differs from them at significant points. For example, while Deignan accepts a definition of metaphor that coheres with CMT (an interaction between a source and a target domain, whereby one is conceptualised in terms of the other), she insists that the specific ways that the source and target relate are borne out only in analysis of actual uses of the metaphor across a given corpus rather than considered in the abstract, devoid of actual usage or context. There are other important distinctions.

First, CL sets forth a more balanced understanding of the nature of metaphor. Deignan acknowledges that metaphor is a cognitive phenomenon, but stresses that it is a *textual* and *social* one as well, being influenced by factors such as linguistics, genre,

²⁹ Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 67–76, 117, 243–44; Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 19–21, 56–68; Lakoff and Turner, *More Than Cool Reason*, 60, 65–67.

³⁰ Alice Deignan, “Corpus Linguistics and Metaphor,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Raymond W. Gibbs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 282.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 283.

³² *Ibid.*, 284.

culture, and ideology.³³ In this way, CL agrees with CMT, which likewise acknowledges the textual or linguistic nature of metaphor in the idea of ‘metaphorical linguistic expressions’ and the social nature in the notion of cultural ‘grounding’. However, CL does differ from CMT in the emphasis that these aspects receive. In CMT, the stress falls on the conceptual nature. CL seems to present a more balanced emphasis, insisting that all three factors are important. As Deignan comments:

Much current research stresses the cognitive dimension of metaphor, and tends to explore its informational content. Corpus linguistic studies show that the informational message to be conveyed is only one of the factors that will affect metaphor choice. Other factors are textual, that is, the linguistic co-text, and social, that is, the function of the text, and its cultural and ideological context.³⁴

Second, CL stresses the importance of analysing metaphor in context; that is, its place in the greater discourse where it is found (co-text) and the broader usage of the metaphor within a given corpus (pattern of usage). In this way, instead of illustrating theoretical assumptions with linguistic examples as Lakoff and Johnson tend to do, CL draws theoretical conclusions from a careful analysis of all data. Moreover, collocation and syntactic patterns in which words are found are important cues in a reader’s search for meaning.³⁵ Deignan maintains that “the association of collocations and fixed expressions with a single meaning of a word is not predicted by cognitive metaphor theory [CMT].”³⁶

Conceptual Blending and Metaphor

A final model to consider is *conceptual blending theory* (CBT), which finds expression in the work of Fauconnier and Turner.³⁷ They locate metaphor in a broader theory of human cognition, which they call the ‘network’ model. They posit that human cognition involves an instantaneous, imaginative, and (largely) unconscious process called conceptual blending.³⁸ In this process, well-established concepts are brought together

³³ Ibid., 287–91, 293.

³⁴ Ibid., 291, 293.

³⁵ Ibid., 293.

³⁶ Ibid., 288.

³⁷ Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, “Conceptual Integration Networks,” *Cognitive Science* 22, no. 2 (1998): 133–87; Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, “Rethinking Metaphor,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Raymond W. Gibbs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 53–66; Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind’s Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

³⁸ Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, iv–v, 18.

and combined to create a new concept. Fauconnier and Turner suggest that ‘conceptual blending’ stands behind all forms of human thought (language, math, music, etc.) and makes possible the remarkable ability of humans to conceptualise complex concepts, to manipulate them, and to extend them in innovative ways.³⁹

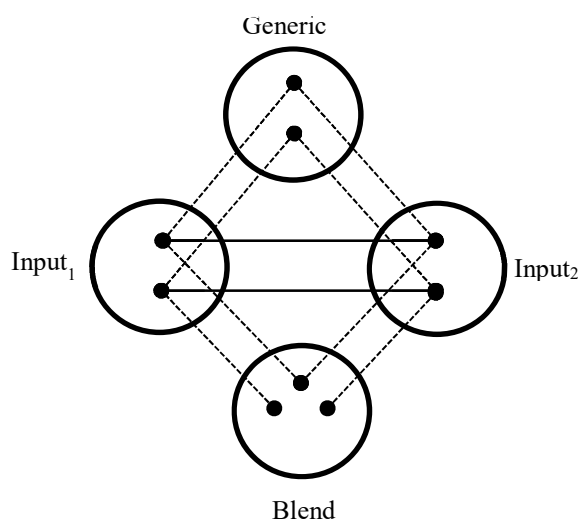
The ‘network’ model envisages the blending of ‘mental spaces,’ collections of information that are brought together or ‘built up’ in one’s mind at the moment of cognition.⁴⁰ The ‘network’ consists of three types of mental spaces: input, blended, and generic (see Figure 2.1).⁴¹ In its most basic sense, a conceptual blend involves two input spaces; more complex concepts may require more than two input spaces. These spaces represent the well-established concepts being blended. Elements from each of the ‘input’ concepts are brought together and fused in the ‘blended’ space to create a new conceptual structure.⁴² The generic space contains the general (and often abstract)

characteristics that both concepts from the input spaces share.⁴³ In this way, the input spaces may reflect very different concepts, but they are linked by very basic structural correspondences.

As noted, CBT sees metaphor as a specific case within the broader cognitive phenomenon of conceptual blending,⁴⁴ whereby the input spaces approximate the source and target domain of CMT⁴⁵ and the ‘blended’ space corresponds to the conceptual

metaphor.⁴⁶ The generic space, then, identifies the general characteristics (such as

Figure 2.1: Network Model (Fauconnier and Turner)



³⁹ Ibid., 6, cf. 4–6.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 40–41, 102–103; Fauconnier and Turner, “Rethinking Metaphor,” 133, 137–138; cf. Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 227.

⁴¹ Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 46, cf. 40–50.

⁴² Ibid., 42–44; cf. Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 228–30.

⁴³ Fauconnier and Turner, “Conceptual,” 138–39, 144; Fauconnier and Turner, “Rethinking Metaphor,” 41–42.

⁴⁴ Fauconnier and Turner, “Conceptual,” 183; Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 142–43; cf. Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 227.

⁴⁵ Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 228–29. In a strict sense, ‘mental spaces’ differ from the ‘conceptual domains’ of CMT in that they are more specific—often representing only a part of their broader conceptual domain.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 227–28, cf. 229–32.

agent, characteristics, roles, object) underlying the specific elements reflected in the source and target spaces. The rock metaphor, then, involves the blending of the well-established elements of source and target spaces (rock and God respectively). In any given occurrence of the metaphor, the specific elements of the rock and God will be undergirded by general characteristics in the generic space. For instance, if the protective nature of rocks and God are in view, the general idea of the *relationship* between an *agent* and *object* in the generic space might be more specifically expressed in the way rocks (agent) serve as a natural source of refuge (relationship) for refugees (object) from the source and YHWH's (agent) provision of refuge (relationship) for his people, Israel (object). The metaphor is created when these well-established elements of rock (source) and God (target)—bound by their common general correspondence (generic)—are brought together and merged to create the new concept 'God as rock' (blend), meaning that he represents a source of refuge for his people.

CBT coheres with the basic theoretical tenets of CMT⁴⁷ but understands its simple two-domain model as ultimately inadequate to account for all types of metaphors, especially more complex ones.⁴⁸ Fauconnier and Turner distinguish between several types of blends; for the purpose of this study, I will focus on two: 'single-scope' and 'double-scope' blends.⁴⁹ Single-scope blends involve blending of *two* concepts, a 'source' and a 'target' space. The majority of metaphors are single scope blends, including the God (source) as Rock (target).⁵⁰ Double-scope blends are more complex and refer to those blends that reflect three (or more) input spaces. In this type, instead of a one-to-one correlation between the source and target spaces, elements from *two* (or more) source spaces are combined with the target, resulting in a blend that contains the mark of multiple distinct frameworks.⁵¹ The resulting blend reflects what is often referred to as a 'mixed' metaphor.

⁴⁷ Joseph Grady, Todd Oakley, and Seana Coulson, "Blending and Metaphor," in *Metaphor in Cognitive Linguistics*, ed. Gerard J. Steen and Raymond W. Gibbs (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1999), 101–24; Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 227–37; Blake E. Wassell and Stephen R. Llewelyn, "'Fishers of Humans,' the Contemporary Theory of Metaphor, and Conceptual Blending Theory," *JBL* 133, no. 3 (2014): 627–46.

⁴⁸ Fauconnier and Turner, "Rethinking Metaphor"; cf. Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 227–28.

⁴⁹ Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 120–35.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 126.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 131–35.

2.1.5 Evaluation of Conceptual Metaphor Theories

In the preceding section, I have surveyed various developments in metaphor theory; in what follows, I will provide a brief evaluation of these approaches. Though historically significant, the traditional understanding of metaphor as an ornamental literary phenomenon has been rejected by nearly all metaphor theorists. Beginning with Richards, Black, and Ricoeur, scholars have instead rightly emphasised the pervasive, cognitive, and interactive nature of metaphor. However, while the work of these theorists was foundational, CMT has developed their seminal ideas further and more systematically, adding key theoretical considerations along the way.

This is not to say that CMT does not have its weaknesses. For example, while CMT helpfully distinguishes between conceptual metaphor and linguistic expression of this metaphor, the linguistic dimension is typically diminished. CL provides a more balanced view, recognising in metaphor cognitive, linguistic, and social dimensions. With regard to the interactive nature of metaphor, while CMT has importantly addressed the mechanics at work by suggesting that metaphor involves the projection or mapping of certain elements of one domain (source) onto another domain (target), this one-to-one interaction unfortunately does not fully account for the complexity that is often observed in metaphor, especially in ‘mixed’ metaphors. This is where CBT proves particularly helpful since it allows for multiple input domains which are required for more complicated metaphors.

In the final analysis, CBT holds the most promise for the purposes of my study for two reasons: First, CBT supersedes CMT by providing a model that accounts for the complexity and creativity of metaphor, which is necessary for analysing the ‘mixed’ metaphors in the Song (vv. 15b, 18). Second, despite the strengths of CL, it is ultimately ill-suited for my specific study since it involves the analysis of the rock metaphor within a single poem. This approach is better suited for studies that involve analysis of a metaphor across a broader corpus (Psalter, Hebrew Bible).

2.2 CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR THEORY AND BIBLICAL STUDIES

The foregoing survey demonstrates the growing focus on the conceptual dimension of metaphor, but how has this insight influenced the study of biblical metaphors for God? The study of biblical metaphor is a quickly developing field. Posing this question to the vast body of literature on the subject would be far beyond the scope of this study, so I

have limited the inquiry to the more relevant sub-category: *divine* metaphors in the *Hebrew Bible*.

Biblical studies have responded to this movement in a variety of ways, though it is possible to see three general paths. Some have rejected it. Janet Soskice has been a sharp critic of a conceptual view, arguing that metaphor is primarily a linguistic rather than cognitive process on the basis that the spoken and written word are the only dimensions of metaphor that can be observed and verified.⁵² Aaron too has sharply critiqued current conceptual metaphor theories, though his issue is with—what he sees as—their overly simplistic and binary classification of language as either literal or metaphorical.⁵³

Others have recognised the insights of recent developments in metaphor research and have appropriated them either (1) into an alternative proposal or (2) into a methodology with very different emphases. Examples of the former include Macky and Klingbeil, both of whom critique CMT for its failure to take a metaphor's context into consideration (especially as it pertains to the process of determining whether an expression is intended literally or metaphorically) and propose an intermediate theory that appreciates the importance of metaphorical language and also acknowledges that there is a genuine distinction between literal and metaphorical expression.⁵⁴ On the other hand, Basson accepts much of CMT but supplements it significantly with insights from the field of cultural anthropology to form the basis of his 'cognitive-anthropological' approach.⁵⁵

Still others have taken one of the approaches outlined above as their theoretical basis, typically gravitating to either CMT or CBT. Two parade examples of those embracing CMT are the classic works of Brettler and Brown.⁵⁶ DesCamp and Sweetser represent early advocates of CBT in their ambitious study "Metaphors for God: Why and How Do Our Choices Matter for Humans." Several more recent works on divine

⁵² Janet M. Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 15–16.

⁵³ David H. Aaron, *Biblical Ambiguities: Metaphor, Semantics, and Divine Imagery*. Leiden: Brill, 2002.

⁵⁴ Peter W Macky, *The Centrality of Metaphors to Biblical Thought: A Method for Interpreting the Bible* (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 1990), 161, 183; Martin Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven: God as Warrior and as God of Heaven in the Hebrew Psalter and Ancient Near Eastern Iconography* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 15–16.

⁵⁵ Alec Basson, *Divine Metaphors in a Selection of Biblical Hebrew Psalms of Lamentation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 24–62.

⁵⁶ Marc Zvi Brettler, *God Is King: Understanding an Israelite Metaphor* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989); William P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

metaphor have followed suit including those of LeMon, Stovell, and van Hecke.⁵⁷

2.2.1 God as Rock

Returning now to the studies of Eichhorn, Kowalski, and Fernandes, the foregoing survey of metaphor research has great bearing on evaluating the methodology of these past treatments of the God as Rock metaphor.

Dietrich Eichhorn

In addition to the lack of any explicit theoretical considerations concerning the nature of God as refuge metaphor, a further weakness of Eichhorn's study comes to the fore. His treatment of צור according to its grammatical, syntactical, and functional features highlights the primacy that he gives linguistic elements for understanding the metaphor and—in this way—works from a more traditional view of metaphor.

Vesta Kowalski

Though the eclectic nature of Kowalski's approach can prove challenging to locate her methodology within the broader stream of scholarship, the survey above helps give some orientation. She joins the ranks of Macky, Klingbeil, and Basson in that she too recognises the conceptual dimension of metaphor, as developed by Lakoff and Johnson, but only draws upon CMT as one component of her theoretically heterogeneous approach. One of the greatest distinctions of her methodology is the role of divine 'models' (parent, warrior, judge), which at the same time seems to be her greatest liability on two counts.

First, in addition to resting on somewhat outdated approaches (Soskice, McFague), her 'model' approach seems to make her interpretive method unduly complicated.⁵⁸ For example, one wonders if such specific domains (parent, warrior, judge) are necessary; could the interpreter not envision more generic ones such as his

⁵⁷ Joel M. LeMon, *Yahweh's Winged Form in the Psalms: Exploring Congruent Iconography and Texts* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010); Beth M. Stovell, *Mapping Metaphorical Discourse in the Fourth Gospel John's Eternal King* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Pierre J. P. van Hecke, "Conceptual Blending: A Recent Approach to Metaphor: Illustrated with the Pastoral Metaphor in Hos 4,16," in *Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Pierre J. P. van Hecke (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 215–31.

⁵⁸ Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (London: SCM Press, 1983); *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (London: SCM Press, 1987).

character, his deeds, or his relationships? As a result, these models introduce volumes of additional characteristics and qualities to an already dense analysis. It is not always clear what aspects of YHWH she sees as being “emphasized, enriched or reconceptualized” through the juxtaposition between the ‘first order’ characteristics of צור and the primary ‘model’ of God.⁵⁹ In short, it lacks the simplicity and analytical precision of CMT or CBT-based studies.

Second, Kowalski’s approach is also too restricting in its analysis of the use of צור in texts that exhibit more than one ‘model’. Her analysis of the Song of Moses is a case in point. Though she acknowledges that the Song possesses imagery indicative of the ‘warrior’ and ‘judge’ models, she focuses on the interaction of צור with the ‘controlling’ parent model.⁶⁰ This proves problematic since it does not adequately address the use of צור in the second half of the poem (vv. 30, 31, and 37), verses that lack the strong emphasis on the parent-child motif of the first half and instead are replete with judge (vv. 36, 40) and warrior imagery (vv. 30, 35, 37–39, 41–42, Q, LXX 43).

Salvador Fernandes

Fernandes’ approach is considerably less variegated than Kowalski’s and rightly draws upon the insights of CBT.⁶¹ Figure 2.2 visualises his basic framework for understanding the rock metaphor in the Psalter.⁶² In adopting this approach, he intimates its usefulness for analysing the uses of צור for God. However, he neither addresses the fruitfulness of CBT directly nor does he bring it into his analysis chapters explicitly.

Among the advantages of the CBT model is the way it serves as a systematic means of analysing the metaphor—identifying and exploring its constituent elements (spaces, entailments). It also allows one to establish and examine the relationships between them (especially between conceptual domains and generic analogy, specific mappings between corresponding entailments, input spaces and the blend). This

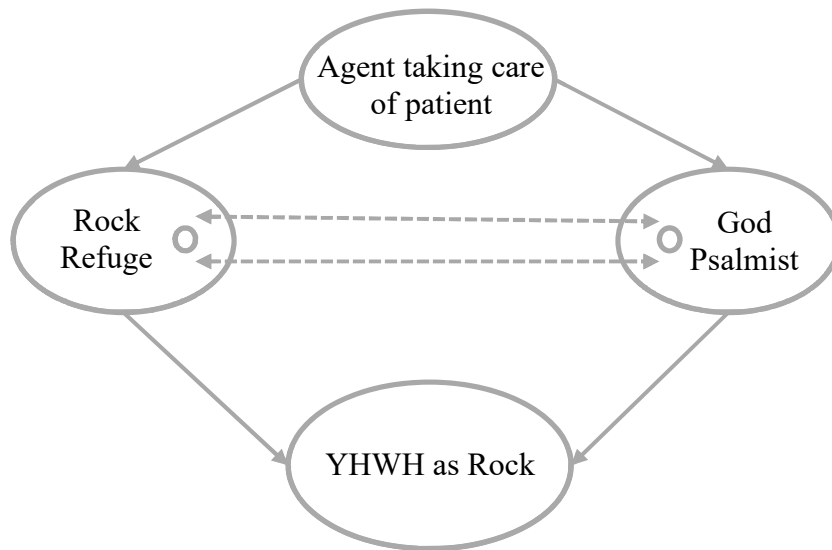
⁵⁹ Kowalski, “Rock of Ages,” 51.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 196, cf. 200, 213, 230, 298–299. Though she does concede that צור for God also exhibits characteristics of the warrior and judge models (*ibid.*, 200), she argues that they are “subordinate . . . to the parent/feeding imagery” (*ibid.*, 204).

⁶¹ Fernandes, *God as Rock*, 19–22, 26.

⁶² Fernandes, *God as Rock*, 21, cf. 19–22.

Figure 2.2: CBT Model for God as Rock (Fernandes)



analytic framework paves the way for a more careful and detailed study. Analysing the metaphor from a CBT perspective also has heuristic value by providing an avenue for recognising aspects and relationships that might otherwise be overlooked. Finally, the CBT approach provides the language to describe one's analysis with more precision and to substantiate one's interpretation more convincingly.

Indeed, Fernandes laudably calls for a balance of theory (CBT) and praxis (sound exegesis) in analysing biblical metaphor. Unfortunately, he stops short of explaining what this balance entails and how it is accomplished in practice.⁶³ More specifically, Fernandes leaves two crucial methodological questions unanswered. First, how does the study of a divine metaphor's words through exegesis lead to an understanding of the resultant blend or mental picture of God as proposed by CBT? Second, how does the consideration of the literary context (exegesis) inform an understanding of the conceptual world of the metaphor (theory)?

2.2.2 Alison Ruth Gray

It is at this point that Gray's recent treatment of metaphorical language in Psalm 18 is a welcome addition to the scholarly discussion.⁶⁴ Like Fernandes, she recognises the difficulty of "bridg[ing] the gap between metaphor theories and the exegesis of

⁶³ Ibid., 21.

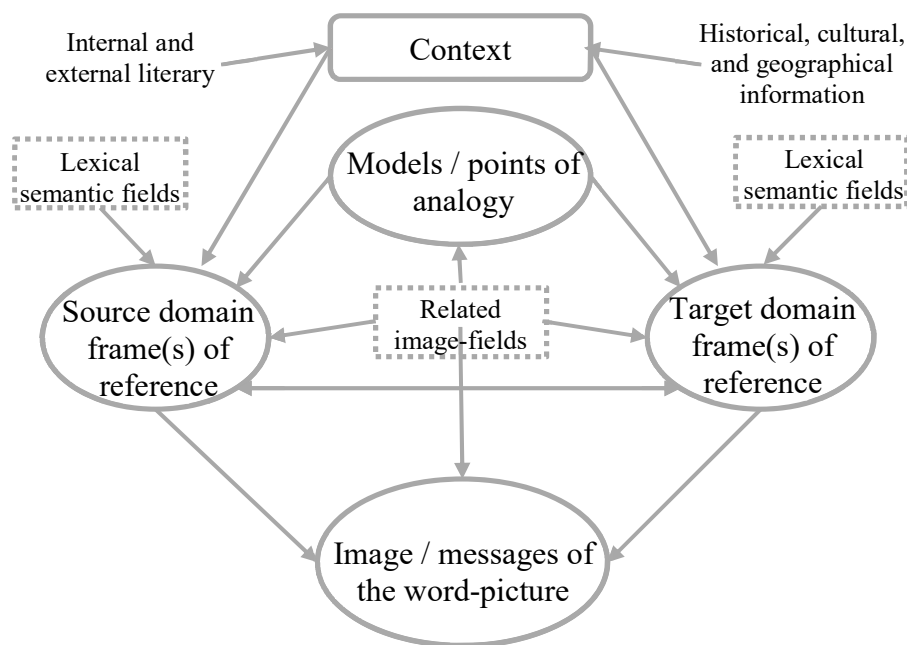
⁶⁴ Alison R. Gray, *Psalm 18 in Words and Pictures: A Reading through Metaphor* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

particular biblical metaphors.”⁶⁵ In overcoming this gap, as well as the more specific challenges outlined above, however, her methodological considerations have made great strides, especially with regard to her helpful working conception of metaphor and her innovative interpretive model.

Gray envisions metaphor as ‘an analogical word-picture’.⁶⁶ Understanding biblical metaphor as a word-picture preserves the idea that metaphor is both a linguistic (written expression, ‘word’) and cognitive phenomenon (mental image, ‘picture’). This echoes the CMT distinction between ‘metaphorical linguistic expression’ (word) and ‘conceptual metaphor’ (picture). Qualifying metaphor as ‘an *analogical* word-picture’ is significant on two levels. It describes the corresponding relationship between the written metaphor (word) and the conceptual metaphor (picture) that the metaphorical text evokes. On another level, ‘analogy’ captures well the relationship between the concepts involved in the metaphor. From the perspective of CBT, though the source and target represent distinct concepts, they share general correspondences (generic space) that serve as the basis for more specific correspondences (mappings).

Her interpretive model is equally enlightening and is reproduced in Fig. 2.3 below.⁶⁷

Figure 2.3: CBT-Based Interpretive Model (Gray)



⁶⁵ Ibid., 9.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 9–10.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 33.

There are several unique contributions of this model: First, she bridges the gap between the *words* of a metaphor and its resulting *picture* by showing the way lexical semantic fields inform the *conceptual domains* of the source and target domains, which—as CBT theorises—create the blend, the conceptualisation of the target in terms of the source. Traditional study of lexical semantics has sharply distinguished between linguistic meaning and broader encyclopaedic knowledge—that is to say, “knowledge shared within a speech community about a particular object or experience.”⁶⁸ However, recent research has challenged such a distinction. For example, Shead, in his study of lexical semantics in the Hebrew Bible, thinks it “inconceivable” that encyclopaedic knowledge can be divorced from linguistic meaning and therefore concludes that “any contemporary approach to [Biblical Hebrew] lexicology must find a way of incorporating encyclopaedic knowledge into lexical description.”⁶⁹ Gray suggests that “the same is true for word-pictures: encyclopaedic knowledge must be considered when exploring a metaphor’s meaning.”⁷⁰ This, however, is problematic for the modern interpreter of ancient metaphor. Gray puts her finger on the challenge precisely: “How can biblical scholars possibly access ancient Israelite ‘encyclopaedic knowledge’ and ‘world-experience’?”⁷¹ This problem will be addressed below.

Gray’s contribution also includes addressing the nature of the relationship between metaphor and its various contexts (‘internal and external literary frames’, ‘historical, cultural, and geographical information’). While Fernandes draws upon the literary and cultural contexts, he does not explicitly address the role of these contexts in the interpretation of metaphor. Gray, on the other hand, illustrates that these contexts directly contribute to the content of the source and target domains. Moreover, she points out the contribution of accompanying metaphorical language (‘related image-fields’) to various aspects of a conceptual blend.

2.3 METHODOLOGY

In light of the preceding sections, it only remains to outline the methodology that will guide this present study. The discussion divides into two parts: theory and praxis.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 28, cf. 28–31.

⁶⁹ Stephen L Shead, *Radical Frame Semantics and Biblical Hebrew Exploring Lexical Semantics* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011), 42–43.

⁷⁰ Gray, *Psalm 18*, 29.

⁷¹ Ibid.

2.3.1 Theory

With regard to theory, Gray's theoretical underpinnings will be adopted in this study. In its most basic sense, then, the God as Rock metaphor reflects the mental *picture* of God that arises from the metaphorical *words* when analogous elements of rock (source) and God domain (target) are brought together. This study will refer to the *process* by which the 'picture' is created by the conceptual domains that the metaphor's 'words' evoke as the 'conceptualisation'. More specifically, I mean envisaging God based on established knowledge of the elements of rock. This knowledge is a cultural one. It is important to note that it is these elements that give structure or definition to the understanding of God.

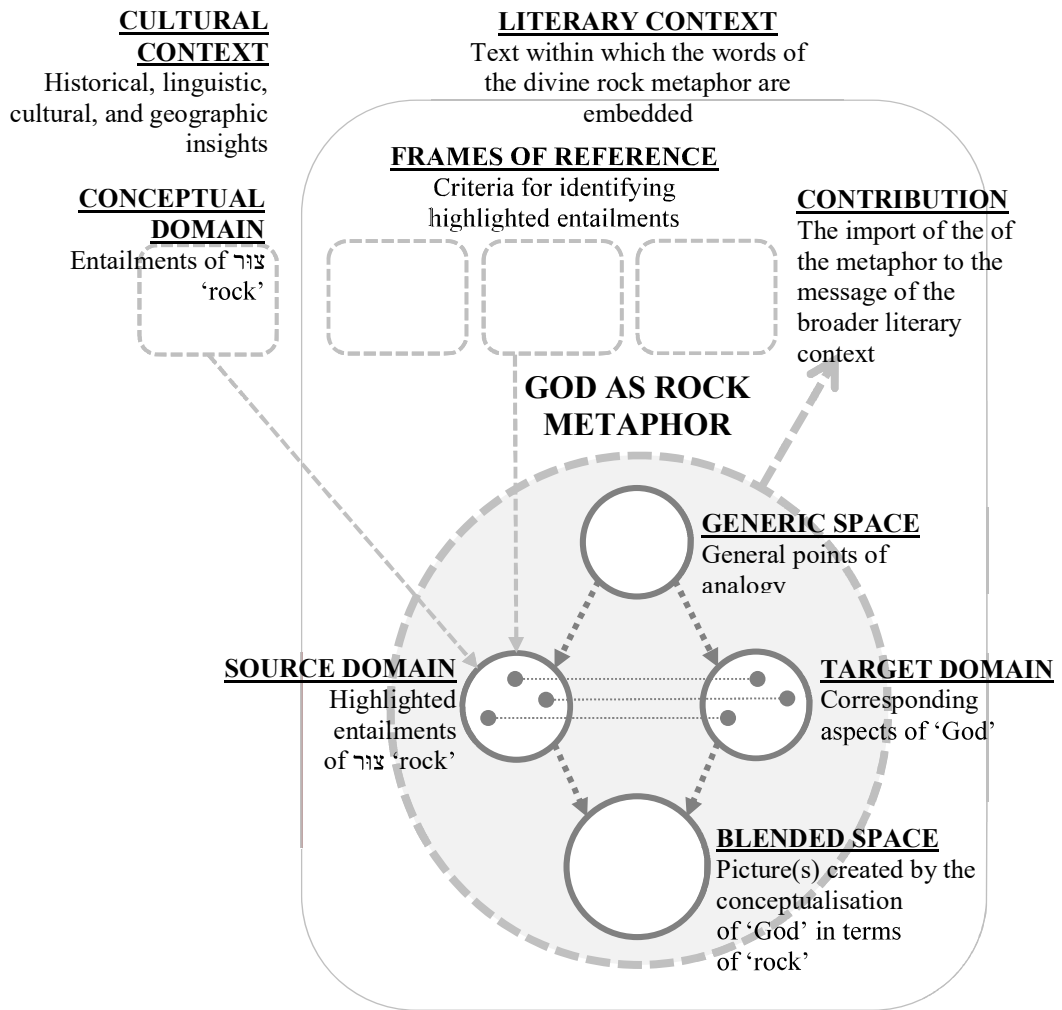
The benefits of this definition are twofold: First, as Gray notes, it presents a simple yet effective depiction of metaphor, one that avoids "getting unduly weighed down" in "technical terms."⁷² Second, this definition affirms the insight of recent metaphor research, which has underscored the various dimensions of metaphor—linguistic ('words'), conceptual ('picture'), and cultural (elements of צור 'rock'). The definition also helps to trace the relationship between these various dimensions. Take for example the way it improves upon CMT's somewhat cumbersome distinction between 'conceptual metaphors' and 'metaphorical linguistic expressions' by simultaneously (1) recognising the importance of the distinction between linguistic and conceptual aspects of the metaphor, (2) pointing to their analogous relationship, and (3) doing so simply yet effectively.⁷³

Figure 2.4 visualises the interpretive model that will guide the metaphorical analysis in this present study. Though this model is presented somewhat differently, it is deeply indebted to Gray's. Its additional elements will be addressed further below.

⁷² Gray, *Psalm 18*, 10.

⁷³ Ibid.

Figure 2.4: CBT-Based Interpretive Model (Present Study)



2.3.2 Praxis

Among studies of divine metaphors in the Hebrew Bible, most begin with an exegetical treatment of the metaphor's literary context and move to an analysis of the metaphor itself; this study will follow this same progression.

Textual Analysis

The aim of the initial textual analysis is twofold: (1) to place the rock metaphor in its literary context and, as I will address below in more detail, (2) to lay the vital groundwork for metaphorical analysis. Textual analysis or exegesis will consider a number of aspects of the biblical text. It will include textual criticism and translation. Textual analysis will also elucidate the message of the text through a 'close reading,' a

detailed analysis of its words, phrases, syntax, structure, themes, and rhetorical devices. Wassell and Llewelyn have noted the importance of traversing all of the layers of a text: clause, sentence, and paragraph.⁷⁴ A poetic equivalent to Wassell and Llewelyn's prosaic classification is Fokkelman's colon, strophe, and stanza (see Chapter 1). As a rule, my exegesis and analysis will travel in ever-widening circles, starting with the metaphor's place in its poetic colon, moving to its strophe, to its stanza, and finally to the poem as a whole.

'Literary context' is of course variable. Gray has emphasised this fact and demonstrated how shifting contexts can yield new meanings. I would like to suggest that this is tied to a symbiotic relationship between context and metaphor: changing the context opens up new ways for it to inform the metaphor and, in turn, opens new possibilities for the metaphor to contribute to the message of the context. In the course of my study, I will explore the use of צור for God within several literary contexts: Chapters 4–7 will analyse each occurrence of the metaphor (vv. 4, 15b, 18, 30, 31aA, aB, 37) within the context of its 'strophe' (vv. 4–6, 15b–18, 26–31, 36–39) and 'stanza' (vv. 4–18, 26–35, 36–42). In Chapter 8, the literary context will be extended to the poem as a whole (32:1–43). Finally, in discussing the significance of the word-picture in order to understand the relationship between the Song and the book of Deuteronomy (Chapter 9), literary context will expand further to include the poem's narrative framework (31:16–30, 32:44–47) and even the book as a whole.

Metaphorical Analysis

Having explored the literary context, I will then analyse the rock metaphor in detail. This analysis presumes the interpretive model outlined above and will unfold in three analytical tasks.

The first of these is to identify the highlighted rock entailments (see below). By taking the 'words' of the metaphor as a point of departure for the interpretive process, this task makes the first move toward its 'picture' by identifying those aspects of rock that are brought into the blend and used to conceptualise the deity. By rock 'entailments' I mean those aspects of rock that animate the metaphor. They essentially correspond to the 'associated commonplaces' of Black or the 'mappings' of CMT. From the perspective of CBT, they are the elements of rock that are brought into the

⁷⁴ Wassell and Llewelyn, "Fishers of Humans," 630.

‘blend’ from the source domain in order to create the metaphor’s picture of God.

Rock entailments reflect all that is held to be true about rocks by a given culture, so the entailments of צִוּר include all that is *entailed* in the word to the ancient Israelite world. This naturally means aspects of rock-like physical characteristics (hard, high, large) and cultural conceptions (military lookout, source of refuge). Yet, entailments are not limited to these types of knowledge but may include a vast array of concepts that a culture attaches to ‘rock’, such as religious beliefs. Nielsen insists that צִוּר for God “derives meaning not only from what everybody knows about a rock but also from the stories told about rocks in the Old Testament.”⁷⁵ Take YHWH’s provision of water from the rock in the wilderness for example. To this, we could add the mythological beliefs of neighbouring ANE cultures (Knowles, Hidal).⁷⁶ In this way, one might say that such a rich complex of entailments reflects the content of the conceptual domain or lexical semantic-field of צִוּר.

Though the conceptual domain of צִוּר contains a wide array of entailments, contemporary metaphor theory, beginning with Black, has argued that not all of them are conveyed in a given expression of the rock metaphor. Rather only a select number of them are active or ‘highlighted’ in the metaphor’s source and target domain; the rest are inactive or ‘hidden’. In short, then, one must make the distinction between potential entailments and realised ones. The implications of this are twofold: Drawing attention to this fact is one of the advances of this model since it helps to explain more precisely the nature of the relationship between conceptual domain of צִוּר (potential, hidden) and the ‘source domain’ (realised, highlighted). It also helps to underscore the great potential that metaphor possesses. Brettler refers to metaphor as a “storehouse” of entailments, “any of which may be evoked in particular contexts.”⁷⁷

It is up to the interpreter, therefore, to identify which of the potential entailments of rock from the צִוּר conceptual domain are expressed or highlighted in a given occurrence of the rock metaphor. In his theory of metaphorical interpretation, Harshav explores an interesting feature of metaphor, namely that entailments not explicitly evoked by the language of the metaphor can often be expressed. Identifying precisely what aspects of metaphor are evoked (rather than explicitly stated) is what he calls

⁷⁵ Nielsen, “Biblical Theology,” 270.

⁷⁶ See also Anne Moore, *Moving beyond Symbol and Myth: Understanding the Kingship of God of the Hebrew Bible through Metaphor* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009), 40–41.

⁷⁷ Marc Zvi Brettler, “Images of YHWH the Warrior in Psalms,” *Semeia*, no. 61 (1993): 137.

‘gap-filling’.⁷⁸ Cast in the language of CBT, highlighted entailments in the source and target spaces are not only those explicitly identified by the language of the metaphor but are often entailments drawn from the broader conceptual domains. In the process of interpretation, these ‘tacit’ entailments must be ‘filled in’. This is particularly important with regard to the rock metaphor in the Song, since explicit aspects of the metaphor are no more than a few Hebrew words (הַצֹּר ‘the rock’, v. 4; צֹר יִשְׁעָתוֹ ‘the rock of his salvation’, v. 15b; צֹר יִלְדֶךָ ‘the rock who gave birth to you’, v. 18; צֹרָם ‘their rock’, vv. 30, 31aB; צֹרֵנוּ ‘our rock’, v. 31aA; צֹר הִסְיִי בוֹ ‘the rock in whom they sought refuge’, v. 37).

The task of identifying highlighted entailments rests on two presuppositions. First, it assumes that one has knowledge of the צֹר conceptual domain as it would have been conceived in ancient Israel. Very often this knowledge must be acquired.⁷⁹ Since the entailments are culturally-bound, exploring them involves consulting cultural materials for clues as to how they might have been understood in the world of the biblical writers and hearers.⁸⁰ It should be noted that such a task is not without its challenges: a conceptual domain was undoubtedly more extensive than can be gleaned from cultural materials like the Hebrew Bible and other relevant ANE literature, leaving some entailments obscured.⁸¹ Nevertheless, looking to these sources represents the most reliable means of reconstructing such ancient cultural knowledge. Reconstruction of a working conceptual domain of צֹר will be the undertaking of Chapter 3.

Second, the task of identifying highlighted entailments presumes that the interpreter possesses some criteria for delineating between expressed (highlighted) and unexpressed (hidden) ones. Brettler rightly argues that a metaphor’s literary context provides the most reliable clues.⁸² Gray points to this connection by intimating the influence of context on the source and target spaces in her model.

Yet, the nature of this relationship and the means by which the interpreter traces it remains to be explained more precisely. Here again, the work of Harshav is helpful. He posits that the most “basic unit of semantic integration” within a poetic text is the ‘frame of reference’, which he formally defines as “any semantic continuum of two or

⁷⁸ Benjamin Harshav, *Explorations in Poetics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 45–46.

⁷⁹ Van Hecke, “Conceptual Blending,” 230.

⁸⁰ Sarah J. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors: God as Mother and Father in Deutero-Isaiah* (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 7.

⁸¹ Van Hecke, “Conceptual Blending,” 230.

⁸² Brettler, *God Is King*, 102.

more referents that we may speak about.”⁸³ Stated differently, a ‘frame of reference’ refers to a mental scene that two or more words create when taken together. Moreover, Harshav maintains that a word is not limited to a single frame of reference, but simultaneously may contribute to multiple frames within a literary text.⁸⁴

A poem’s ‘frames of reference’ serve as a helpful criterion for identifying highlighted entailments in that, when צור is viewed as part of a specific frame, certain entailments of rock prove more fitting in this context than others. In this way, then, identifying key frames of reference helps indicate what entailments are most likely highlighted. It is worth noting that, because a word can form multiple ‘frames of reference’, the potential of a great variety of highlighted entailments is made possible. Looking to ‘frames of reference’ that arise from the literary context as criteria for identifying highlighted entailments will form an essential aspect of the metaphorical analysis of this study.

To illustrate this task, take for example the rock metaphor in 2 Sam 22:3 (cf. the parallel text in Ps 18:3 [Eng. 2]). There, David declares:

*YHWH is my rock (סלעי) and my fortress (מצודתי) and my deliverer (ומפלט)
my God, my rock (צירי), in whom I take refuge (אֶתְקַהֵּבּוּ)
my shield (מגני) and my horn of salvation (קַרְנֵי יְשׁוּעָה) my stronghold (משגב)*

In this text, the expression צורִי ‘my rock’ (v. 3b) evokes the conceptual domain of ‘rock’; the referent, ‘YHWH,’ which appears in the previous line (v. 3a), evokes the conceptual domain of ‘God.’

Interpretation of this metaphor requires one to determine, firstly, what frames of reference arise from the broader context (vv. 2–7) and secondly, what potential entailments are most likely highlighted. Two frames (refuge, strength) and two possible rock entailments (source of refuge, symbol of strength) arise. Note how a ‘refuge’ frame is built up by not only the clause אֶתְקַהֵּבּוּ ‘in whom I take refuge’ but also the barrage of refuge terms in parallel lines (סלעי ‘my rock,’ מצודתי ‘my fortress,’ v. 3a; מגני ‘my shield,’ משגב ‘my stronghold,’ v. 3c). This suggests צור as a source of refuge is in view here.⁸⁵ Similarly, the reference to YHWH as David’s תִּזְקָה ‘strength’ (v. 2) and קַרְנֵי

⁸³ Harshav, *Explorations in Poetics*, 5, 43.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁸⁵ Creach identifies all of these terms as significant members of the ‘refuge’ word-field (*Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996], 24–30).

‘horn’ (v. 3) help to develop a ‘strength’ frame,⁸⁶ which points to the possibility that rock as a symbol of strength is at work in this use of the rock metaphor.

After identifying highlighted entailments, the second analytical task is to explore how they conceptualise God. Recall that the CBT model posits that these highlighted entailments of צור help create the blend, the conceptualisation of God in terms of rock imagery. A specific way that the rock entailments conceptualise God (strong, immovable, refuge) corresponds to what scholarship has commonly referred to as a metaphor’s ‘sense,’ ‘tenor,’ or ‘connotation.’ It also corresponds to the metaphorical ‘picture’ in the language of Gray. In this way, then, this analytical task finalises the move from ‘words’ to ‘picture’.

Returning to 2 Sam 22:3 again: both of the highlighted rock entailments cited above (source of refuge, symbol of strength) appear to conceptualise YHWH as a large, high, and immovable geological formation in order to underscore his ability to protect David as well as the king’s confidence in YHWH’s protection.⁸⁷ These characteristics of rocks make them a natural place of safety and equally cast YHWH as a natural source of refuge for the psalmist. The great size, height, and stability of rocks make them a symbol of strength and portray YHWH as a God whom the royal poet can wholeheartedly trust.

The third and final analytical task is to reflect on the significance of this ‘picture’. How does it contribute to the message of its broader literary context, especially to key themes and rhetorical devices? Answering this question extends the movement from the metaphor’s ‘words’ to its ‘picture’ a step further by moving into the realm of its ‘significance’. Admittedly, the significance of metaphor depends largely on the perspective from which it is approached. One can speak of its historical or contemporary significance. It can have ideological or theological significance. This study will focus on the significance of צור for God in its *literary* context, though, as noted above, this still leaves open multiple avenues of inquiry.

Take 2 Sam 22 again as an example. In vv. 2–7, David praises YHWH for rescuing him in his time of need. In the course of doing so, the king touches upon themes of refuge, deliverance, and distress. Though David speaks of his distress in ambiguous (צרה ‘distress’, קרא ‘to cry out’, v. 7) and highly figurative language (חֲבִלֵי־מָוֶת)

⁸⁶ Horns often served as symbols of strength in ancient Israel as well as the broader ANE world (Michael L. Brown, “קַרְוִי,” in *NIDOTTE*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, vol. 3 [Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996], 990–92; cf. Fernandes, *God as Rock*, 40; Staffan Olofsson, *God Is My Rock: A Study of Translation Technique and Theological Exegesis in the Septuagint* [Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1990], 96).

⁸⁷ Gray, *Psalms* 18, 63.

‘cords of death,’ נְהַלֵּי בְּלִיעַל ‘floods of destruction’, v. 5; מִקְשֵׁי חַבְלֵי שְׁאוֹל ‘cords of Sheol,’ מְנוֹת ‘snares of death’, v. 6), the reference to his אֹיְבִים ‘enemies’ (v. 4) makes it likely that threats from his foes reflect the source of his trouble.

The rock metaphor contributes most directly to the passage by reinforcing the depiction of YHWH as a sure source of refuge from the king’s enemies, though it also contributes significantly to YHWH’s role as a deliverer. There are two inseparable aspects of YHWH’s salvation of David from his enemy: from the perspective of the king, it removes him from the threat of his enemy; from the perspective of the enemy, it thwarts their advances against David. The metaphor relates to both of these aspects. With regard to the former, the conceptualisation of YHWH as a source of refuge can be seen as one of the ways that he keeps the royal poet from harm. The rock metaphor also relates to the thwarting aspect of YHWH’s salvation in that it conceptualises YHWH as an obstacle in the path of David’s enemy.

The word-picture also relates to the theme of distress. The relationship between them is signalled by the likely word play between צוּר ‘rock’ (v. 3) and צָרָר ‘to be distressed’ (v. 7). The depiction of YHWH as a rock, in one sense, represents David’s means of escaping his distress. In another sense, their juxtaposition draws special attention to the great distance that YHWH’s intervention has brought the king. David’s feelings of instability as the ‘torrents’ plague him have given way to the stability found in YHWH, his rock. The threats of death and Sheol, two terms that often evoke the depths of the earth, stand in sharp contrast to refuge found in YHWH, his high rock.

In addition to playing an important role in the content of the passage, a metaphor can contribute greatly to a writer’s rhetorical goal, as Nelson’s study of the rhetoric of the divine warrior imagery in the book of Deuteronomy demonstrates.⁸⁸ Thus, reflection on a metaphor’s meaning should also consider its relation to a passage’s rhetoric. These two aspects of metaphorical meaning are the metaphor’s informative (content) and performative functions (rhetoric).⁸⁹ Rhetorically, the various dimensions of YHWH’s role as David’s rock in 2 Sam 22:3 serve two purposes. First, they represent part of the reason for David to praise YHWH. At the same time, they function as a statement of the king’s confidence in his God.

⁸⁸ Richard D. Nelson, “Divine Warrior Theology in Deuteronomy,” in *A God so Near: Essays on Old Testament Theology in Honor of Patrick D. Miller*, ed. Nancy R. Bowen and Brent Strawn (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 241–59.

⁸⁹ Gray, *Psalms 18*, 32; Moore, *Moving beyond Symbol and Myth*, 54.

2.4 SUMMARY

Establishing the theoretical and practical underpinnings for the metaphorical analysis to follow has been the primary aim of this chapter. While the methodologies of Eichhorn, Kowalski, and Fernandes have allowed these scholars to further our knowledge of the rock metaphor, each is problematic. Though not specifically focused on צוּר for God, Gray's model offers the most potential and will be followed closely in the metaphorical analysis that follows. Her CBT-based methodology is consistent with the evaluation of the recent developments in the metaphor theory above, namely the helpfulness of CBT for analysing metaphor. It also boasts of clarity, but—perhaps more importantly—it overcomes the difficult task of balancing theory and exegesis that challenges the interpreter of biblical metaphor. At a few points, the interpretive model implemented in this study has built upon Gray's. Two of the most notable examples include (1) the use of 'frames of reference' as criteria for identifying highlighted entailments and (2) tracing the contribution of the word-picture to the broader context as an additional step in metaphorical analysis.

CHAPTER 3

A CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN OF צוּר

As noted in the previous chapter, analysis of the rock metaphor from the perspective of CBT requires a consideration of the potential entailments from the source (rock) by which the target domain (God) is conceptualised. This assumes that the interpreter possesses a working knowledge of the צוּר conceptual domain as preserved in the Hebrew Bible, and when necessary, gleaned from other ANE sources.

By way of overview, צוּר occurs 74 times in the Hebrew Bible.¹ Moreover, the Aramaic cognate טור occurs twice in Dan 2:35 and 45. The term serves as a personal name fifteen times for both Canaanite (Num 25:15; 31:8; Josh 13:21) and Israelite individuals (1 Chr 8:30; 9:36). צוּר is also closely related to a number of Hebrew terms. It is a member of broader *geological* (הַר, 'mountain', גְּבֵעָה 'hill', סֶלֶמִישׁ 'flint')² and *refuge* word-fields (מְצוּדָה 'fortress', מְשֻׁגָּב 'refuge', מְעוּז 'stronghold').³ Moreover, it finds a close semantic affinity to סֶלֶע 'rock'. In fact, the conceptual domain of סֶלֶע is remarkably similar to צוּר, sharing nearly all the same key characteristics, functions, and associations. Perhaps the most striking discontinuity, however, is the uneven distribution of divine uses; while צוּר occurs as divine designations 36 times, סֶלֶע occurs in this way only five times (2 Sam 22:3 = Ps 18:3 [Eng. 2]; Pss 31:4 [Eng. 3]; 42:10 [Eng. 9]; 71:3). There is perhaps also a stronger emphasis on the steepness of סֶלֶע as a rock formation (Cant 2:14; Isa 7:19).⁴

The goal of this brief chapter is to sketch the conceptual domain of the source domain, צוּר 'rock', including the physical characteristics, cultural conceptions, associated themes, and metaphorical extensions the term might have evoked in the ancient Hebrew mind. Toward this aim, the following pages will (1) revisit the

¹ Fabry, "צוּר Šûr," 12:314.

² Fabry, "צוּר Šûr," 12:314; Fernandes, *God as Rock*, 32–36; Fischer, "Der Fels," 25–26; Samuel L. Terrien, "The Metaphor of the Rock in Biblical Theology," in *God of the Fray: A Tribute to Walter Brueggemann*, ed. Tod Linafelt and Timothy K. Beal (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 158; van der Woude, "צוּר Šûr Rock," 2:1338.

³ Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge*, 25–31, esp. 28–29; Fabry, "צוּר Šûr," 12:314; Fernandes, *God as Rock*, 36–41; van der Woude, "צוּר Šûr Rock," 2:1338.

⁴ In Cant 2:14, 'the clefts of rock' stands parallel to סֶתֶר הַמְקֻרָּה 'the hiding place of the steep place'. In Isa 7:19, the expression נְקִיטֵי הַסֶּלְעִים 'clefts of the rock' echoes נְחָלֵי הַבְּתוּחַת 'steep ravines'.

scholarly discussion concerning the various shades of the divine use of צור and (2) move to the treatment of the non-divine uses of the term. The chapter will conclude by (3) addressing the debated relationship between the צור for God and the use of mountain imagery for deities in ANE religious thought. I would like to suggest that a wide range of connotations of the metaphor are attested in the Hebrew Bible, and an even wider range of physical and cultural entailments are found there, including those from the ANE world.

3.1 DIVINE USE OF צור

Turning to the use of צור for God, it is interesting to note that this usage is limited to the Psalter (18:3, 32, 47; 19:15; 28:1; 31:3; 62:3, 7, 8; 71:3; 73:26; 78:35; 89:27; 92:16; 94:22; 95:1; 144:1), the poetic sections of Deuteronomy (32:4, 15b, 18, 30, 31, 37), 1–2 Samuel (1 Sam 2:2; 2 Sam 22:3, 32, 47; 23:3), and Isaiah (8:14; 17:10; 26:4; 30:29; 44:8). The one outlier is its use in Hab 1:12. Moreover, in the vast majority of these uses, צור as a divine designation refers to YHWH, though in a few texts it denotes other gods (Deut 32:31, 37) or a ‘god’ in a generic sense (1 Sam 2:2; 2 Sam 22:32 = Ps 18:32 [Eng. 31]; Isa 44:8).⁵ With regard to the diachronic distribution of the word-picture, Fischer argues that its use in the Hebrew Bible reflects “broad chronological variation,” being found in texts spanning “nearly the entire last half of millennium BCE.”⁶

As seen in Chapter 1, scholarship has identified many connotations of the rock metaphor. Though there is not complete agreement on the details, when taken together, the treatments of Eichhorn, Fernandes, Fabry, van der Woude, Hill, Fischer, and—especially—Kowalski have presented a robust picture of the nuance of the metaphor as it is used across the Hebrew Bible. To summarise their results: צור for God can express divine strength,⁷ and by extension, a sense of unchangeability.⁸ In light of this constancy, it is perhaps not surprising that, when viewed temporally, the word-picture underscores YHWH’s durability⁹ and eternity.¹⁰ His rock-like character in the

⁵ Kowalski, “Rock of Ages,” 303, 309; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 453.

⁶ “Der Fels,” 28: “eine breite zeitliche Streuung” and “nahezu über das ganze letzte halbe Jahrtausend vor unserer Zeitrechnung.”

⁷ Fernandes, *God as Rock*, 31; Fischer, “Der Fels,” 30; van der Woude, “צור שֵׁר Rock,” 2:1340.

⁸ Fernandes, *God as Rock*, 31–32.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁰ Fischer, “Der Fels,” 30; Selman, “הָרֵי,” 1:793; Kowalski, “Rock of Ages,” 195.

relational sphere means that he is faithful¹¹ and dependable.¹² Some have also seen in the metaphor a means of portraying YHWH's moral righteousness.¹³ Without question the most prominent picture painted by the use of the rock metaphor is that of divine protection;¹⁴ however, these interpreters have detected various shades of this, both in terms of the passive sense of offering refuge and more active roles of providing help, salvation, and military empowerment.¹⁵ צור for God can also be used negatively to portray divine opposition.¹⁶ It has even been suggested that this particular use of צור is best read as a reversal of the protection sense.¹⁷ In addition to depicting YHWH's role as Protector, the metaphor can cast him as Creator¹⁸ and Provider.¹⁹ Finally, צור is commonly employed in expressions of YHWH's incomparability, which seems quite natural in light of the wide array of elevating connotations of the word-picture above.²⁰

To this list, one might add yet another sense. The use of temporal language such as עולם 'forever' and עד 'forever' in connection with several uses of צור for God (Pss 73:26; 89:27 [Eng. 26]; 92:16 [Eng. 15]; Isa 26:4; Hab 1:12) supports the suggestion that the metaphor conceptualises YHWH as eternal. While this connotation speaks of timelessness with regard to the future, the metaphor can also communicate divine timelessness with regard to the *past*. That is, it underscores the antiquity of a god. This sense is found in Isa 44:6–8, where in the same breath YHWH asserts his unrivalled superiority as Israel's 'rock' (צור, v. 8) and announces his timelessness in the self-disclosing statement: אָנִי רִאשׁוֹן וְאֲנִי אַחֲרֹן 'I am the first and last' (v. 6). Here his timelessness goes in both directions, past and future. Of particular interest here is the antiquity reflected in YHWH's status as the *first* (ראשון). This is reinforced by YHWH's role in appointing an ancient people (עַם-עוֹלָם) in v. 7; his participation in this act underscores the antiquity of this relationship. Smith and Pitard note that the Ugaritic

¹¹ Fischer, "Der Fels," 31; van der Woude, "צור Şûr Rock," 2:1340.

¹² Fabry, "צור Şûr," 12:318; Fischer, "Der Fels," 31.

¹³ Fabry, "צור Şûr," 12:318.

¹⁴ Ibid.; Fernandes, *God as Rock*, 31–32; Selman, "הַר," 1:793; Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds*, 585; Korpel, "Rock, צור, סלע," 710; Walker-Jones, "Honey from the Rock," 93–94.

¹⁵ Fischer, "Der Fels," 31; Kowalski, "Rock of Ages," 194; van der Woude, "צור Şûr Rock," 2:1340.

¹⁶ Fabry, "צור Şûr," 12:318; Fernandes, *God as Rock*, 31; Kowalski, "Rock of Ages," 264.

¹⁷ Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds*, 585; "Rock, צור, סלע," 710.

¹⁸ Fabry, "צור Şûr," 12:319; Kowalski, "Rock of Ages," 272–75, 281–84; van der Woude, "צור Şûr Rock," 2:1340–41.

¹⁹ Selman, "הַר," 1:793; Kowalski, "Rock of Ages," 232–33.

²⁰ Fabry, "צור Şûr," 12:318; Fischer, "Der Fels," 29; Selman, "הַר," 1:793; van der Woude, "צור Şûr Rock," 2:1340.

cognate *gr* can carry this sense as well.²¹

In light of the discussion above, the use of צור for God in the Hebrew Bible can be summarised as follows (Table 3.1):

Table 3.1: Connotations of Divine Use of צור

Eternality (Isa 26:4; Hab 1:12; Sir 51:12)	Strength (Ps 62:3, 7, 8 [Eng. 2, 6, 7])	Obstacle, opposition (Isa 8:14, 30:29)
Antiquity (Isa 44:8)	Protection (Isa 17:10; Pss 28:1; 31:3 [Eng. 2])	Creation (Ps 89:27 [Eng. 26])
Constancy, faithfulness (Isa 26:4; Pss 73:26; 92:16 [Eng. 15])	Refuge (2 Sam 22:3 = Pss 18:3 [Eng. 2]; 94:22)	Provider (Ps 95:1)
Dependability (2 Sam 23:3; Ps 19:15 [Eng. 14])	Help, Salvation (2 Sam 22:47 = Pss 18:47 [Eng. 46]; 19:15 [Eng. 14]; 78:35)	Incomparability (1 Sam 2:2; 2 Sam 22:32 = Ps 18:32 [Eng. 31]; Isa 44:8)
Righteousness (Pss 73:26; 92:16 [Eng. 15])	Military Empowerment (2 Sam 22:32 = Pss 18:32 [Eng. 31]; 144:1)	

3.2 NON-DIVINE USE OF צור

In reconstructing the conceptual domain, then, one must consider the non-divine uses of צור as well as the divine use of the term. Unlike the latter, the former are evenly distributed throughout the Hebrew Bible, occurring in the Pentateuch (Exod 17:6, 33:21, 22; Num 23:9; Deut 8:15), historical narratives (Judg 6:21; 7:25; 13:19; 1 Sam 24:3; 2 Sam 21:10; 1 Chr 11:15), wisdom literature (Job 14:18; 18:4; 19:24; 24:8; 28:10; 29:6; Prov 30:19), the Psalter (Pss 27:5; 61:3 [Eng. 2]; 78:15, 20; 81:17 [Eng. 16]; 105:41; 114:8), and prophetic books (Isa 2:10, 19, 21; 10:26; 48:21; 51:1; Jer 18:14; 21:13; Nah 1:6).

From these texts, scholarship has discerned key entailments of the צור conceptual domain, though there is some disagreement as to the number of such elements. For example, among the forty-four divine metaphors from the Hebrew Bible analysed by DesCamp and Sweetser in their industrious study, they cite God as Rock as

²¹ Mark S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle: Volume I* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 675; cf. Johannes C. De Moor, *An Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 63; Nicolas Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 109.

an example of a metaphor with “very sparse mappings.”²² Indeed their work bears this out, finding only three potential entailments: (1) hard, (2) passive, and (3) place of refuge.²³ It is perhaps not surprising then that they identify divine protection as the sole connotation of the rock metaphor.

Kowalski’s study of the metaphor, on the other hand, challenges this reading, finding not only a wide array of physical and cultural entailments attached to the non-divine use of צור in the Hebrew Bible but also a wide array of connotations in the divine use of the term.²⁴ Undoubtedly Kowalski provides the most thorough treatment of the topic, so the following discussion of the non-divine uses of צור will interact with her work most directly. The list below summarises some of the most salient points of her research, namely key physical characteristics of צור and cultural roles attached to the term (Table 3.2):²⁵

Kowalski’s careful study contributes greatly to the reconstruction of a צור domain; however, a few additional words are necessary at this point. First, one curious omission from Kowalski’s analysis is the mention of the great size of rock, especially since she does address the evidence and implications of large size.²⁶ It is generally agreed that צור denotes a large rock mass or boulder.²⁷ This is supported by passages where rocks are described as having clefts and caverns large enough to conceal a human (Exod 33:22; 1 Sam 24:3; 1 Chr 11:15; Isa 2:19, 21).²⁸ Moreover, the close association between large rocks (קלע) and mountains (הר) also suggest the great size of צור. These terms form poetic word-pairs in multiple passages (צור || קלע, Deut 32:13; Ps 78:15–16; Isa 2:21; צור || הר, Job 14:18; Isa 30:29; cf. Job 24:8). Elsewhere צור is interchangeably used with הר (2 Sam 21:9–10) and קלע (Judg 6:19–20).

²² Mary T. DesCamp and Eve E. Sweetser, “Metaphors for God: Why and How Do Our Choices Matter for Humans? The Application of Contemporary Cognitive Linguistics Research to the Debate on God and Metaphor,” *Pastoral Psychology* 53, no. 3 (1): 226.

²³ *Ibid.*, 228.

²⁴ In addition to these physical and cultural entailments, Kowalski studies the ‘emotional content’ of צור in its various contexts. In this way, she demonstrates that a wide range of emotions are connected with non-divine uses of the term—both positive (security, comfort, confidence, hope, satisfaction, awe, gratitude, joy) and negative (uneasiness, struggle, tension, fear, terror, despair). This careful reading of the texts is insightful in shedding light on the affective dimension of the metaphor. However, these entailments do not seem to work in isolation of the physical or cultural ones, but rather in close connection with them. It is unclear how ‘comfort’ or ‘fear’ might be associated with צור without recourse to another entailment such as ‘place of refuge’. For this reason, I have chosen not to present them in the summary of the צור conceptual domain, but will draw upon this aspect of Kowalski’s work when appropriate in the analysis to follow (Chapters 4–7).

²⁵ Kowalski, “Rock of Ages,” 52–90.

²⁶ Kowalski, “Rock of Ages,” 56, 60, 63, 72, 82, 87.

²⁷ Selman, “הר,” 1:793.

²⁸ Kowalski, “Rock of Ages,” 56.

Table 3.2: Non-Divine Entailments of צוֹר (Kowalski)

High (Num 23:9; Pss 27:5, 61:3 [Eng. 2])	Remote, undomesticated (Isa 2:10, 19, 21; Job 24:8)	Place of sacrifice (Judg 6:21, 13:19; 2 Sam 21:10)
Hard, immovable (Job 14:18; 18:4; Prov 30:19; Nah 1:6)	Natural habitat of wildlife (Prov 30:19)	Source of (liquid) provisions ²⁹ (Deut 32:13; Ps 81:17 [Eng. 16]; Job 29:6)
Barren (Exod 17:6; Deut 8:15; 32:13; Ps 81:17 [Eng. 16]; Job 29:6)	Place name (Judg 7:25; 1 Sam 24:3; Isa 10:26)	Water from the rock tradition (Exod 17:6; Deut 8:15; Pss 78:15, 20; 105:41; 114:8; Isa 48:21)
Permanent (Job 19:24)	Vantage point (Num 23:9)	Place of mining (Job 28:10)
Cavernous, crannied (Exod 33:21–22; Isa 2:10, 19, 21)	Place of escape, refuge (Exod 33:21–22; Isa 2:10, 19, 21; Job 24:8)	

Second, it is necessary to draw attention to several other entailments that are not discussed by Kowalski. Note that rocks can serve as the place of execution.³⁰ Judges 7 chronicles Gideon’s defeat of Israel’s Midianite oppressors. At the climax of this narrative, Gideon and his men capture and execute two of Midian’s leaders, Oreb and Zeeb.³¹ Both were put to death at the places that came to bear their names, namely the ‘Rock of Oreb’ (צוֹר־עוֹרֵב) and the ‘Winepress of Zeeb’ (יִקְב־זַעֵב). The enduring significance of this event is seen in the fact that the execution of these men is memorialised in the toponyms, the Rock of Oreb and the Winepress of Zeeb. It is also seen in the way that the narrative is recalled by the prophet Isaiah in Isa 10:26 as a parade example of divine deliverance. Note that it is significant enough to be used in tandem with the paradigmatic crossing of the Re(e)d Sea as symbolised by the drowning of Pharaoh’s army (Exod 14–15). The execution of seven of Saul’s relatives recorded in 2 Sam 21 also occurs on a rock (צוֹר). This connection between rocks and execution is affirmed when the use of קָלַעַ is considered (2 Chr 25:12; Ps 137:9; Jer 51:25). In the Aramaic work, *The Story of Ahiqar*, Esarhaddon commands that Ahiqar be found and executed ‘between two mountains’ (*byn twry*), opening up the possibility that this connection was reflected in the broader ANE.³²

²⁹ See also Brown, *The Message of Deuteronomy*, 294–95.

³⁰ Fabry, “צוֹר Şûr,” 12:316; Selman, “הַר,” 1:793.

³¹ Robert G. Boling, *Judges*, Anchor Bible (Garden City: Doubleday, 1975), 284; J. Alberto Soggin, *Judges: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), 147.

³² Fabry, “צוֹר Şûr,” 12:313; Pritchard, *ANET*, 428.

In addition to serving as a place of industrious mining (Job 28:10), צור also served as a place of quarrying. Daniel 2 records how Daniel alone was able to interpret a dream of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. In the dream, a stone (אֶבֶן) topples a great statue made of various materials: a head of gold, a chest and arms of silver, an abdomen and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of a mixture of iron and clay. The stone then becomes a great mountain (טוֹר) that fills the whole earth. Daniel explains that the eclectic statue represents various world powers that will follow Babylon (the head of gold) and the stone, an eternal kingdom that will supplant them all. Of particular interest to the discussion at hand is the fact that, while v. 34 simply records that the stone (אֶבֶן) was quarried (גִּזַּר), v. 45 adds that it was hewn (גִּזַּר) *from the rock or mountain* (מִטּוֹרָא).

This type of quarrying is employed metaphorically in Isa 51. In vv. 1b–2a, YHWH exhorts his people, saying:

*Look (הִבִּיטוּ) to the rock (צוֹר) from which you were hewn (חֲצַב),
And to the quarry (בְּקָרָה) from which you were dug (בִּקַּר)!*

*Look (הִבִּיטוּ) to Abraham your father,
And to Sarah who bore you!*

Though the identity of the rock is debated, the parallelism of these poetic lines and the catch-word link between them (the imperative הִבִּיטוּ ‘look!’) suggest that here the patriarch is cast as the rock from which Israel had been hewn, and the matriarch as the quarry from which they were dug.³³ In this way, Israel is to consider their beginnings from Abraham and Sarah, especially the way YHWH brought forth a numerous and great nation from one man, the patriarch Abraham (v. 2b). As seen in Chapter 1, some detect behind the use of צור here “the mythological and legendary concept of the rock as birthplace.”³⁴ While it is difficult to dismiss this suggestion outright, it seems more likely that the more straightforward process of literal quarrying rock underlies the figurative language.

As Kowalski and others have rightly demonstrated, rocks can serve as sources of physical refuge or can be used for God to cast him as a Protector; however, it is also important to point out the way צור is employed to depict a symbol of refuge more broadly. This is true of the use of the metaphor in Jer 21:11. In this passage, the prophet pointedly warns the king of Judah (vv. 11–12a) to uphold justice (v. 12b) or expect

³³ Korpel, “Rock צור, טלע,” 710.

³⁴ Fabry, “צור, Şûr,” 12:319; van der Woude, “צור, Şûr Rock,” 2:1341.

YHWH's anger to burn hot against him (v. 12c). The oracle continues by addressing the *יֹשֶׁבֵת הַעֲמֻק* 'inhabitant of the valley' and the *צוּר הַמִּישֶׁר* 'rock of the plain' directly (v. 13a). There is some debate concerning the identity of these titles, particularly the latter. While some have argued that this rock refers to a specific (though unnamed) military fortress or stronghold, it seems more likely that the title refers to the king of Judah for two reasons. First, the parallel epithet *יֹשֶׁבֵת הַעֲמֻק* 'inhabitant of the valley' supports a referent that is an individual. Second, the stated addressee of the rebuke is, in fact, the king of Judah (v. 11a). If this reading is correct, the epithet *צוּר* 'rock' casts the king as a source of refuge for his people. This is in keeping with the ANE expectations of kingship.³⁵ Ultimately, though, the title is ironic since the oracle underscores that not even those who think they are well-protected (v. 13a) and secure (v. 13b) will escape divine wrath (v. 14).

Another example of *צוּר* as a symbol of refuge is the very likely way it serves as a veiled reference to the Temple in Jerusalem or to Mount Zion in Pss 27 and 61. In both of these poems, the poet confidently seeks safety from enemies upon a high rock (*צוּר*). The temple imagery in these poems would seem to support this suggestion. For example, with regard to Ps 27, Clifford thinks that 'shelter' (*בֵּית*), 'tent' (*אֹהֶל*), and by extension 'rock' (*צוּר*) all refer to the Temple³⁶ and express the poet's "practical and everyday" hope of experiencing "protection from enemies in the Temple."³⁷ In Ps 61, Kraus similarly argues that *אֹהֶל* is an "ancient designation for temple" and the expression *סֹתֵר כַּנְּפֵיךָ* in v. 5 evokes the outstretched wings of the cherubim over the ark.³⁸ In this way, he suggests that 'refuge' (*מִמְקוֹה*) and 'strong tower' (*מִגְדָּל-עִז*) in v. 4 and 'rock' in v. 5 are best understood as "asylum and protective area of the sanctuary" at the Temple.³⁹ The connection is perhaps one of metonymy: the rock referring to the rock precipice upon which the Temple is built. It is also possible that 'rock' here is

³⁵ Helmer Ringgren and Heinz-Josef Fabry, "מֶלֶךְ *melek*," in *TDOT*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 349–52.

³⁶ The link is made clear by the fact the poet anticipates making sacrifices in YHWH's tent (*וְאֶזְבְּחָהּ בְּאֹהֶל־וָיֹ*), v. 6).

³⁷ Richard J. Clifford, *Psalms 1-72*, AbOTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 147–48; Kowalski suggests that the use of tent imagery in vv. 5–6 (*בֵּית*, *אֹהֶל*) evokes the Israel's wilderness wandering ("Rock of Ages," 62–63). This is possible, but it seems more likely that the temple is in view in light of the other terms in v. 4 ('house of YHWH' [*בַּיִת-יְהוָה*] and 'his temple' [*הַיְקִלֹּ*]). These clear temple markers suggests then that 'his shelter' (*בֵּית*) and 'his hiding place' (*סֹתֵר*), as well as the rock (*צוּר*) in v. 5 also refer to the temple; this is further supported by the use of 'tent' (*אֹהֶל*) in v. 6, where it represents a site of sacrifice and joyful worship.

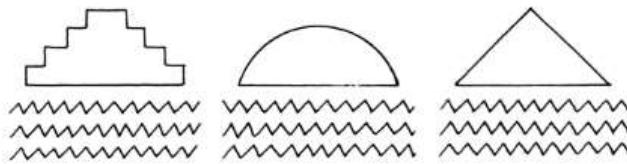
³⁸ Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60–150: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1989), 9.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

metaphorical, expressing the asylum found in the Temple.

Moving in a slightly different direction, some have understood the rock in these passages as mythical rocks. Fabry detects mythological undertones in these psalms, positing that perhaps the notion of “the mythical primal rock” underlies the characterisation of Zion as a rock of refuge.⁴⁰ Kraus concurs, seeing in Ps 27:5 a reference to the “mythically surrounded archetypal rock,” a place where “the breaking waves of chaos could not reach.”⁴¹ Similarly, of Ps 61:3 [Eng. 2], he writes: “צור, as a place of safety, to which the waters of destruction cannot penetrate, is the

Illustration 3.1: Primeval Hill (Keel)



(mythological) designation for the foundation of creation and the name of the holy place.”⁴²

This type of belief is reflected in ANE iconography. Keel illustrates this belief with

common depictions of the primeval hill taken from Egyptian iconography (see Illustration 3.1).⁴³

3.3 ANE RELIGION

Fabry, Kraus, and Keel introduce a much wider question concerning the relationship between the use of צור as a word-picture in the Hebrew Bible and ANE mythology. As discussed in Chapter 1, Knowles and Hidal have proposed that the divine use of צור finds its origin in the religion of the ANE. To this, one may add Eichhorn, Fabry, Hill, Fernandes, Korpel, and Sanders. Together these interpreters open up the possibility of additional entailments.

3.3.1 Generative Rock Myth

Again, as mentioned in Chapter 1, some have suggested that the use of צור for God casts

⁴⁰ Fabry, “צור שׁוּר,” 12:318.

⁴¹ Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1–59: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 335.

⁴² Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 9.

⁴³ O. Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 114.

him as a divine progenitor similar to ANE creation myths⁴⁴ against the objection of others (van der Woude).⁴⁵ For example, Korpel draws attention to a Hittite ‘Song of Ullikumi’, which depicts a rock as the parent of a deity.⁴⁶ Moreover, though affirming the metaphorical use of rock imagery for God in connection with creation, she also remarks that it “comes close to the theogony of the Ugaritic text in which the Stone was the male deity who begot the first animated creature.”⁴⁷

3.3.2 Cosmic Mountain

Fabry and Fernandes connect the use of צֹרֶר for God with the cosmic mountain motif, an idea that pervades ANE mythology.⁴⁸ At its heart was the belief that mountains were the sacred dwelling places of powerful high deities.⁴⁹ For example, in his study *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament*, Clifford has traced this theme within the religious texts from Ugarit and demonstrates the great significance of Mount Zaphon, the seat of both El and Baal.⁵⁰ ‘Cosmic mountains’ like these were understood to be the very the epicentre of the cosmos.⁵¹ Because of this, they were naturally understood as the foundation of sacred spaces, such as temples, and marked the place where the high god presided over the divine council that convened there.⁵²

Moreover, cosmic mountains were seen as the place where “the creator-god defeated the powers of chaos at the primeval battle.”⁵³ In Egyptian mythology, the primal mount was the source of life.⁵⁴ Wilson writes that “Amun-Re began his creation upon a primeval hillock arising out of the abysmal waters, Nun.”⁵⁵ He continues: “Any

⁴⁴ Fabry, “צֹרֶר Šûr,” 12:320; Gruenwald, “God the ‘Stone/Rock’,” 437; Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds*, 584–85; “Rock צֹרֶר, סלע,” 709–10; Sanders, *Provenance*, 397.

⁴⁵ van der Woude, “צֹרֶר Šûr Rock,” 2:1340; cf. Ringgren, *Israelite Religion*, 85.

⁴⁶ Korpel, “Rock צֹרֶר, סלע,” 709.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 709–10.

⁴⁸ Fabry, “צֹרֶר Šûr,” 12:318; Fernandes, *God as Rock*, 46–47, 358; cf. Cairns, *Word and Presence*, 281.

⁴⁹ Cairns, *Word and Presence*, 281; Gruenwald, “God the ‘Stone/Rock’,” 436; Kowalski, “Rock of Ages,” 119–20.

⁵⁰ Richard J. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 35–79.

⁵¹ Gruenwald, “God the ‘Stone/Rock’,” 437; Kowalski, “Rock of Ages,” 119; Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985), 111–42.

⁵² Kowalski, “Rock of Ages,” 119; Pritchard, *ANET*, 130; Shemaryahu Talmon, “הַר har,” in *TDOT*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 441.

⁵³ Clifford, *Cosmic Mountain*, 3; Kowalski, “Rock of Ages,” 120; Ollenburger, *Zion*, 54–58; Talmon, “הַר har,” 3:440.

⁵⁴ Clifford, *Cosmic Mountain*, 29.

⁵⁵ Pritchard, *ANET*, 4; cf. Clifford, *Cosmic Mountain*, 26.

important cult-center was regarded by the Egyptians as potentially a place of creation and therefore had its own hill of creation, symbolised in its holy of holies.”⁵⁶ One text recounts the creation of Shu on the primeval hillock located in Hermopolis.⁵⁷ In another text, the god Atum of Heliopolis created the gods from a primeval hillock rising out of chaos:

O Atum Kheprer, thou wast on high on the (primeval) hill; thou didst arise as the *ben*-bird of the *ben*-stone in the *ben*-House in Heliopolis; thou didst spit out what was Shu [god of the air], thou did sputter out what was Tefnut [goddess of dew and rain].⁵⁸

The mountain could also symbolise divine protection and provision. In Ugaritic mythology, Baal’s mountain is impregnable (*CTA* 3.3.34–4.48; 4.7.25–47; 5.1).⁵⁹ Despite the onslaught of enemy kings and peoples (*Völkerkampf*), his presence on Mount Saphon keeps it secure. Moreover, El’s mountain is depicted as a source of life-giving water and fruitfulness (*CTA* 3.5.13–15; 4.4.20–24; 6.1.32–36; 17.6.46–49).⁶⁰ Clifford writes: “The fertility of the earth was bound up with the mountain. The shifting balance between rainfall and lack of rainfall was decided here. Here was the source of life-giving rivers and the underground waters which fed the wells and springs.”⁶¹ This is seen in Phoenician iconography as well.⁶²

3.3.3 Divine Designations

It has also been suggested that the use of צור for God finds its origin and rhetorical power in the common use of mountain imagery as divine designations elsewhere in the ANE.⁶³

⁵⁶ Pritchard, *ANET*, 4.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 3–4.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁹ Clifford, *Cosmic Mountain*, 131.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 51, 97, 191; cf. Kowalski, “Rock of Ages,” 119.

⁶¹ Clifford, *Cosmic Mountain*, 191.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 96.

⁶³ William F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: A Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1968), 188–89; Boston, “The Song of Moses,” 28–29; Cairns, *Word and Presence*, 281; Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 351; Stephen Langdon, *Sumerian and Babylonian Psalms* (Paris: Geuthner, 1909), 126, 220; Selman, “הַר,” 1:1052.

Enlil

For instance, the Sumerian expression *kur gal* ‘great mountain’ is routinely used as an epithet for Enlil.⁶⁴ In some passages, it is not possible to ascertain the meaning of the mountain imagery; in other places, its connotation is hinted at in accompanying titles and themes.

One finds that ‘great mountain’ is often employed in connection with the designation ‘father’.⁶⁵ This collocation seems to suggest that the mountain imagery in this context carries a creative sense. He is depicted as the progenitor of the gods. For example, the death of Gilgameš from Nibru (*ETCSL* 1.8.1.3, line 12) reads:

*Oh Gilgameš! Enlil, the Great Mountain, the father of gods, has made kingship your destiny, but not eternal life.*⁶⁶

This creative role naturally extends to human nations, as another hymn celebrates (‘Eršemma No. 53’, lines 1–4):

*Great mountain, father Enlil, unsurpassed one, [in lament]!
Father Enlil, lord of the lands!
Father Enlil, lord whose pronouncement is true!
Father Enlil, father of the nation!*⁶⁷

‘Great mountain’ is used of Enlil elsewhere in close connection with the deity’s role as abundant provider, suggesting that the mountain imagery expresses not only divine creation but also divine provision. In one hymn of Enlil, the ‘great mountain’ is praised for his crucial role in sustaining the world order—among other things his

⁶⁴ John A. Halloran, *Sumerian Lexicon: A Dictionary Guide to the Ancient Sumerian Language* (Los Angeles: Logogram Publishing, 2006), 151; Samuel N. Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology: A Study of Spiritual and Literary Achievement in the Third Millennium B.C.* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 44, 60; Jeremy Black et al., *The Literature of Ancient Sumer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 108–9, 322; Mark E. Cohen, *Sumerian Hymnology: The Eršemma* (Cincinnati: KTAV, 1981), 52–57, 60–61, 106–7, 132, 134, 140, 142, 145–46. The epithet is found in the following list of Sumerian narratives and poems (often multiple times within a passage): *ETCSL* 1.1.3; 1.2.1–2; 1.5.1; 1.6.1–2; 1.8.1.3; 2.2.4; 2.3.1; 2.4.1.2, 4; 2.4.1.4; 2.4.2.07; 2.4.2.a; 2.4.5.4; 2.5.2.1; 2.5.3.4; 2.5.4.02–03, 05, 15–16, 23; 2.5.5.5; 2.5.6.1, 3; 2.5.7.1–2; 2.6.2.1; 2.6.9.1–2; 2.8.2.1; 4.05.1; 4.08.06; 4.12.2; 4.13.12; 4.13.a; 4.16.1; 4.17.1; 4.22.1, 5–6; 4.24.1; 4.25.2; 4.29.1; 4.32.e; 4.80.1–2; 5.3.3.

⁶⁵ Cohen, *Sumerian Hymnology*, 52–57, 60–61, 145–46.

⁶⁶ Speaking of Ninazu, god of the underworld and healing, one hymn reads: ‘The father who engendered you, the Great Mountain Enlil, has made your name glorious’ (*ETCSL* 4.17.1, line 18). In another place, the goddess of fertility is said to have been ‘born in wisdom’ by the Great Mountain, Enlil (William W. Hallo, *The World’s Oldest Literature: Studies in Sumerian Belles-Lettres* [Leiden: Brill, 2009], 32; William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger Jr., *The Context of Scripture: Volume One: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World* [Leiden: Brill, 1997], 531).

⁶⁷ Cohen, *Sumerian Hymnology*, 145–46.

governance of creation (lines 115–119).⁶⁸ Without him, the passage goes on, agriculture would collapse and abundant harvests would cease (lines 120–123).⁶⁹ In this way, his role as creator and provider merge, reinforcing his elevated status as creator and speaking of his place as provider. In another text, we read (*ETCSL* 1.5.1, lines 328–330):

O Great Mountain, father who begot me, I am indeed satisfied with what you have given me to drink. Wherever you lift your eyes, there is kingship. O Enlil, your abundance is . . .

The text unfortunately breaks off before the description of Enlil’s ‘abundance’ is complete; yet, it seems clear enough that lavish provision of some variety is in view in light of the preceding context, which speaks of satisfaction (‘I am indeed satisfied’) in Enlil’s provision (‘what you have given me to drink’). Furthermore, abundant provision appears to be at the heart of exclamation ‘O lord of the storehouse, Great Mountain Enlil’, which occurs three times to punctuate the hymn ‘A šir-namšub to Utu’ (*ETCSL* 4.32.e, lines 3, 13, 52).

Bel

In Sumerian hymnody, Bel is likewise referred to as a *kur* ‘mountain’ with apparent connotations of divine creation and provision. One particular poem addresses him as ‘O mountain, the lord of life’ (line 16).⁷⁰ As with Enlil, the context connects this designation with the title *a-a* ‘father’ (lines 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 20, 25), as well as with Bel’s role as creator and provider. He is given the titles ‘the lord of creation’, ‘the creator’, and ‘the true head of the land’ and depicted as a source of fertility and bountiful provisions from the land (lines 10, 20).

At the same time, this hymn seems to point to another dimension of the mountain imagery: divine strength. A prominent theme in the poem is Bel’s great strength (lines 8, 14, 23, 25). Certainly, such power would undergird his role as creator and provider; however, it seems particularly fitting of his designation ‘Great Mountain’ in light of the great height, size, and hardness of mountains (see below).

⁶⁸ Black et al., *The Literature of Ancient Sumer*, 323–24; Pritchard, *ANET*, 575.

⁶⁹ Black et al., *The Literature of Ancient Sumer*, 323–24; Pritchard, *ANET*, 575.

⁷⁰ Frederick Augustus Vanderburgh, *Sumerian Hymns from Cuneiform Texts in the British Museum: Transliteration, Translation and Commentary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1908), 21–23, cf. 21–42.

The same title in Akk. *šadû rabû* ‘great mountain’ is also applied to the Assyrian god Aššur. Boston has suggested that the use of צור in the Hebrew Bible is best understood against the ascription of the epithet to not only Enlil and Bel but also Aššur, which draw upon the “rugged” and “enduring” nature of mountains” to express divine protection and refuge.⁷¹ However, it seems to overreach the textual evidence on two counts, the first being that, though certainly Sum. *kur* finds *šadû* as its Akk. equivalent,⁷² the former is primarily used of Enlil and Bel and the latter of Aššur.⁷³ A second challenge is that the mountain imagery is connected with themes of protection in the case of Aššur alone.

This deity is called the ‘great mountain’ in the annals of Sennacherib, where the king credits the deity with giving him protection in the sense of political and military success.⁷⁴ Grayson and Novotny render lines 10–12 from column 1 of the Oriental Institute Prism Inscription (H2) as follows:

*The god Aššur, the great mountain, granted to me unrivalled sovereignty and made my weapons greater than (those of) all who sit on (royal) daises.*⁷⁵

The broader context fills this in by envisaging Sennacherib smiting ‘the wicked with lightning’ and people falling ‘under his feet’.⁷⁶ As a result, even ‘powerful kings feared [his] onslaught’ and his dominion extends ‘from the upper sea of the west to the lower sea of the east’.⁷⁷

There are striking similarities between this passage and 2 Sam 22:31–45 (= Ps 18:32–46 [31–45 [MT]]). Just as the king of Assyria received strength and dominion from his ‘great mountain’, so too the Israelite king received strength and dominion from

⁷¹ Boston, “The Song of Moses,” 29; Langdon, *Sumerian and Babylonian Psalms*, 126, 220; Pritchard, *ANET*, 390.

⁷² Vanderburgh, *Sumerian Hymns from Cuneiform Texts in the British Museum: Transliteration, Translation and Commentary*, 29.

⁷³ “Kur [MOUNTAIN],” *The Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary*, 2006, <http://psd.museum.upenn.edu>; Vanderburgh, *Sumerian Hymns from Cuneiform Texts in the British Museum: Transliteration, Translation and Commentary*, 27.

⁷⁴ John A. Brinkman et al., eds., “Šadû A,” in *The Assyrian Dictionary*, vol. 17 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1989), 57.

⁷⁵ *The Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib, King of Assyria (704-681 BC), Part 1* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 172; cf. Daniel D. Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1924), 23.

⁷⁶ Grayson and Novotny, *Royal Inscriptions*, 172.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

his Rock. The royal poet reflects:

- ³² *For who is God, but the LORD?
And who is a rock, except our God?*
³³ *The God who has girded me with strength
has opened wide my path.*
³⁴ *He made my feet like the feet of deer,
and set me secure on the heights.*
³⁵ *He trains my hands for war,
so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.*
³⁶ *You have given me the shield of your salvation,
and your help has made me great.*
³⁷ *You have made me stride freely,
and my feet do not slip;*

With this military advantage, the king's enemies were struck down and fell under his feet (v. 39, cf. vv. 38–43):

- ³⁸ *I pursued my enemies and destroyed them,
and did not turn back until they were consumed.*
³⁹ *I consumed them; I struck them down, so that they did not rise;
they fell under my feet.*
⁴⁰ *For you girded me with strength for the battle;
you made my assailants sink under me.*
⁴¹ *You made my enemies turn their backs to me,
those who hated me, and I destroyed them.*
⁴² *They looked, but there was no one to save them;
they cried to the LORD, but he did not answer them.*
⁴³ *I beat them fine like the dust of the earth,
I crushed them and stamped them down like the mire of the streets.*

The outworking of this victory echoes that of Sennacherib, namely great fear and sweeping dominion:

- ⁴⁴ *You delivered me from strife with the peoples;
you kept me as the head of the nations;
people whom I had not known served me.*
⁴⁵ *Foreigners came cringing to me;
as soon as they heard of me, they obeyed me.*
⁴⁶ *Foreigners lost heart,
and came trembling out of their strongholds.*

3.3.4 Evaluation

Though not definitive, there is good reason to suspect these or comparable mythological associations occupied a place in the צור conceptual domain. With regard to the generative rock myth, Sanders rightly points to Jer 2:27, where it appears that the idea

of animate creatures emerging from rock had taken root (albeit wrongly) in Israel.⁷⁸

Concerning the latter two mythological associations (cosmic mountain, divine designations) one finds two lines of evidence: lexical and conceptual.

Korpel understands צור as etymologically related to both Hebrew (הר) and Ugaritic mountain terms (*gr*).⁷⁹ The Ugaritic *gr* ‘mountain’ is generally viewed as a cognate of צור.⁸⁰ On this basis, some have even insisted that צור be rendered ‘mountain’ rather than the typical ‘rock’ (Mayes)⁸¹ or *gr* as ‘rock’ (Gibson).⁸² This is, however, not unequivocally accepted.⁸³ Kowalski, for example, strongly opposes characterising צור as a mountain, insisting that, while *gr* and צור likely share an etymological connection, *gr* is more closely related to הר semantically.⁸⁴ Yet, Dreyer has convincingly affirmed Korpel’s suggestion against Kowalski’s.

In the course of arguing that the Semitic roots *qr*, ‘r, *gr* and *ṣ/tr* all arose from a common ‘proto-Semitic ancestor’, he draws etymological ties not only between צור and *gr*, but also between הר and *gr*.⁸⁵ With regard to the latter, he explains: “The Ugaritic use of the symbol *g* and *h*, as well as the fact that *g* and *h* can interchange, renders it possible to connect the Ugaritic *gr* with the Canaanite gloss *harri*.”⁸⁶ He continues: “Since the velar fricative *h* became the pharyngeal fricative *ħ* in Hebrew and Aramaic and the latter could be softened to the laryngeal *h*, therefore *gr/ħr* could become the Hebrew הר ‘mountain’.”⁸⁷ Furthermore, he insists that צור and Aram. טור must be connected with the Ugaritic *gr*, though not by means of “the normal mutation of the Ugaritic consonants” but rather under the influence of Hurrian, which was spoken in

⁷⁸ Sanders, *Provenance*, 397; cf. Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds*, 584–85, 623.

⁷⁹ Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds*, 578.

⁸⁰ Mitchell Dahood and Tadeusz Penar, “Ugaritic-Hebrew Parallel Pairs,” in *Ras Shamra Parallels*, vol. I (Roma: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1972), 96, 125, 305–8; Fabry, “צור, *Ṣûr*”; William Lee Holladay and Ludwig Köhler, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Based upon the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 1016–17; Gregorio del Olmo Lete and Joaquín Sanmartín, “*Gr* (I),” in *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*, vol. 1, 3rd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 324; van der Woude, “צור, *Ṣûr* Rock,” 2:1337.

⁸¹ Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 383.

⁸² John C. L. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1978), passim.

⁸³ For example, Smith thinks that *gr* is more closely related to the Epigraphic South Arabic term ‘r, ‘mountain’ and צור more closely related to the Ugar. *ṣrrt* ‘peaks, heights’ (Smith, *Volume I*, 173). However, others have argued against such a suggestion (Korpel, “Rock צור, טלע,” 709).

⁸⁴ *Contra* Kowalski, who resists such a connection and who argues that there is no clear lexical relation between צור and mountain language of the broader ANE—namely Ugaritic *gr* and Akkadian *ṣadû* (“Rock of Ages,” 123–27).

⁸⁵ H. J. Dreyer, “The Roots *Qr*, ‘r, *Gr*, *Ṣ/tr* = Stone, Wall, City, Etc.,” in *De Fructu Oris Sui* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 17–25.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Ugarit, on Ugaritic consonants” or perhaps of “a coalescing of *z/ṭ* and *ḡ* in pronunciation.”⁸⁸ In any case, the correspondence between *ḡ* and *צ* in Hebrew (and *ṭ* in Aramaic) is well attested. Take the following cognates for example: the Ugaritic *mḡy* ‘to find’ and its Hebrew cognate מצא ‘to find’ (Aram. מטה ‘to find’)⁸⁹ or Ugaritic *nḡr* ‘to guard’ and Hebrew נצר ‘to guard’ (Aram. נטר ‘to guard’).⁹⁰

In addition to this lexical link between rock and mountain language, there is considerable conceptual overlap among צור, הר, *ḡr*, *kur* and *šadû*. This includes their physical characteristics and cultural conceptions. This is intimated by the use of צור and הר as synonyms (2 Sam 21:9–10) or as a poetic word-pair (Job 14:18; Isa 30:29), but Table 3.3 illustrates their similarities more clearly. Note that the conceptual overlap extends to *ḡr* and *šadû* as well.⁹¹

Table 3.3: Conceptual Overlap between צור and ANE Mountain Language

Heb. צור	Heb. הר ⁹²	Ugar. <i>ḡr</i>	Sum. <i>kur</i> ⁹³	Akk. <i>šadû</i> ⁹⁴
Large	Large	Large ⁹⁵	Large ⁹⁶	—
Hard, solid	Solid	—	Hard, Solid ⁹⁷	Hard, Solid ⁹⁸
Flat, broad	—	—	Broad ⁹⁹	—
High	High	—	High ¹⁰⁰	High
Barren	—	—	—	—

⁸⁸ Ibid., 22–23.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 23.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 23 n. 3.

⁹¹ Talmon also points to the similar—and apparently interchangeable—expressions in Job 9:5 (הַמְעֵתִיקַי (הָרִים) and 14:18 (צוֹר יַעֲתִיק) (“har,” 3:431).

⁹² Selman, “הר,” 1:1051–55; Talmon, “הר,” 3:427–47.

⁹³ This list is based on the over 500 uses of *kur* in *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature* (“The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature,” 2006, <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk>).

⁹⁴ Brinkman et al., “Šadû A.”

⁹⁵ In *KTU* 1.4 vii 32, the voice of Ba‘al causes the *ḡrm* ‘mountains’ to quake (Dahood and Penar, “Ugaritic-Hebrew Parallel Pairs,” 1:125; Fabry, “צור Ṣûr,” 12:312; Gibson, *Canaanite Myths*, 65; Pritchard, *ANET*, 135). The poetic pairing of *ḡrm* ‘mountains’ here with *arṣ* ‘earth’ in lines 31–32 seems to suggest that the *ḡrm* are of considerable size.

⁹⁶ *ETCSL* 1.3.2; 2.1.7; 2.4.2.05; 4.07.3.

⁹⁷ *Kur* is regularly employed in a highly rhetorical way to underscore divine strength (*ETCSL* 1.1.3; 1.3.2; 1.6.1–2; 1.8.1.3; 1.8.2.3; 2.1.7; 2.2.5; 2.4.2.17, 24; 2.5.3.3; 2.5.4.15; 2.6.6.5; 4.05.1; 4.07.7; 4.27.03; 4.80.1; cf. Hallo and Younger, *COS*, 565). In these passages, mountains are typically depicted as quaking in fear or as being utterly destroyed by the deity. The implication seems to be that, if even the mountains—symbols of strength and stability—are shaken or razed, then the power of the god must be indeed exceedingly great. In this way, it appears that *kur* was chosen because of the great size, hardness, strength of mountains, and—by extension—their relative immovability and permanence. Note that this is precisely the rhetorical use of צור in Job 14:18, 18:4, and Nah 1:6.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 461.

⁹⁹ *ETCSL* 2.1.5; 2.3.2.21; cf. 2.2.5.

¹⁰⁰ *ETCSL* 1.1.4; 1.3.2–3; 1.6.1–2; 1.8.2.1–3; 2.1.7; 2.2.5; 2.4.1.2; 2.4.2.01–02, 05; 2.4.5.4; 4.07.3; 4.13.10; 4.13.12; 4.14.3; 4.19.1; 4.27.01.

Strong	Strong, resistant	—	Strong ¹⁰¹	—
Immovable	Immovable ¹⁰²	Immovable ¹⁰³	Stable, immovable ¹⁰⁴	Immovable
Ancient	Ancient ¹⁰⁵	Ancient ¹⁰⁶	—	—
Place name	Place name	Place name ¹⁰⁷	Place Name ¹⁰⁸	Place name
Vantage point	Vantage point	—	—	Vantage point
Place of refuge	Place of Refuge	Place of refuge ¹⁰⁹	Place of Refuge ¹¹⁰	Place of refuge
Crannied, cavernous	—	Cavernous ¹¹¹	Crannied, cavernous ¹¹²	—
Habitat for wildlife	Habitat for Wildlife	—	Habitat for wildlife ¹¹³	Habitat for wildlife
Place of sacrifice	—	Place of sacrifice ¹¹⁴	Place of sacrifice ¹¹⁵	—
Place of execution	Place of execution	—	—	—

¹⁰¹ *ETCSL* 1.6.2, cf. 2.4.2.24

¹⁰² Mountains were considered the roots or foundations of the earth (Deut 32:22; Ps 18:8 [Eng. 7]; Job 28:9; Jon 2:6) (Selman, “הַר,” 1:1051; Talmon, “הַר har,” 3:439–40).

¹⁰³ Fabry, “צוּר Šûr,” 12:125; Pritchard, *ANET*, 135.

¹⁰⁴ *ETCSL* 2.1.7; see also the rhetorical use of *kur* above.

¹⁰⁵ Selman, “הַר,” 1:1051; Smith and Pitard add that “the idea of ancient mountains is a formula found in [Biblical Hebrew], especially in the phrase *harêrê qedem* ‘ancient mountains,’ in Deut 33:15” (*The Ugaritic Baal Cycle: Volume II* [Leiden: Brill, 2009], 675). Talmon notes the way that the mountains predate creation in Prov 8:25 and Job 15:7 (“הַר har”).

¹⁰⁶ Smith and Pitard write: “Line 32 refers to mountains (*grm*), and 34 talks about ‘the high places of the earth’ *bmt ’ars*. It seems probable that [the damaged] line 33 referred to a geographical feature of a similar type. We have thus reconstructed *grm] qdmym*, ‘the ancient mountains’” (*The Ugaritic Baal Cycle: Volume II*, 675; cf. De Moor, *An Anthology*, 63; Wyatt, *Religious Texts*, 109).

¹⁰⁷ In *KTU* 1.4 viii 2, one finds mention of specific landmarks: *gr tr’zz* ‘Rock of Targhizizi’ and *gr trmg* ‘Rock of Tharumagi’ (vocalization follows Gibson). Fabry explains that it was believed that these mountains marked the boundary between the inhabited world and the realm of Mot (“צוּר Šûr,” 12:312; cf. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths*, 66; Hallo and Younger, *COS*, 263; Pritchard, *ANET*, 135).

¹⁰⁸ Take for example the Lulbi, Zubi, and Zabu Mountains (*ETCSL* 1.3.2; 1.8.2–3; 2.2.3). One also finds the Mountain Range of Ebîḥ (1.3.2) and the Mountains-of-Cedar-Felling (1.8.1.4; 1.8.1.5.1; 2.1.5).

¹⁰⁹ In *KTU* 1.4 vii 37, the enemies of Baal seek refuge, clinging to ‘forests’ and the ‘hollows of the rock’ at sound of his voice and the catastrophic shaking the earth, rocks, and high places (Fabry, “צוּר Šûr,” 12:312; Gibson, *Canaanite Myths*, 12, 65; Pritchard, *ANET*, 135).

¹¹⁰ Both humans (*ETCSL* 1.6.1; 2.4.1.3) and animals seek refuge in mountains (1.8.2.2, 4).

¹¹¹ Returning to *KTU* 1.4 vii 37, note that the enemies of Baal seek refuge in ‘hollows of the rock’, suggesting that *gr* can be cavernous; Gibson draws attention to the similarities between this depiction and Isa 2 (Gibson, 65 n. 8).

¹¹² *ETCSL* 1.3.2; 1.8.1.5.1; 1.8.2.1; 2.1.6.

¹¹³ Mountains are home to animals generally (*ETCSL* 2.1.5) or deer (1.3.2–3; 1.8.2.1), gazelle (6.1.01), ibex (2.1.5), sheep (1.3.4; 1.8.1.2–3), snake (1.4.1.1; 1.8.2.1; 2.1.5–7; 2.2.3), cattle (1.3.4; 1.6.1; 1.8.1.2; 1.8.2.1–2; 2.4.2.24; 6.1.01, 07), goat (1.8.2.1, 3; 2.4.1.1; 2.4.2.01; 3.1.21; 4.33.2), donkey (1.8.2.1, 3) horse (1.8.2.1; 3.1.21), leopard (1.8.2.4), and even elephant (6.2.1) more specifically.

¹¹⁴ In *KTU* 1.41:24, 34, sacrifices are offered to Mount Sapanu as they are to other important gods, presumably *on* the mountain (Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds*, 578).

¹¹⁵ *ETCSL* 1.8.2.3.

Place of (liquid) provisions	Place of (liquid) provisions ¹¹⁶	—	Place of abundant provisions ¹¹⁷	Source of (liquid) provisions ¹¹⁸
Place of quarrying (for ‘stone’)	Place of Quarrying	—	Place of quarrying (for ‘stone’) ¹¹⁹	Place of quarrying (for ‘stone’)
Place of mining (for precious gems and metals)	Place of mining (metal)	Place of mining (for precious gems and metals) ¹²⁰	Place of mining (for precious metals and semi-precious stones) ¹²¹	Place of mining (for precious gems and metals)
Sacred mount (with Temple)	Sacred mount (with Temple)	Sacred mount (with Temple)	Sacred mount (with Temple) ¹²²	—
Symbol of permanence	Symbol of permanence	—	Symbol of permanence ¹²³	—
Symbol of inner strength ¹²⁴	Symbol of inner strength ¹²⁵	—	—	—

From this one may reasonably conclude that, while each term maintains its unique qualities, too sharp of a distinction between צור and other mountain language is unwarranted (*contra* Kowalski) and seems to justify the overlapping translations of צור and *gr* (Gordon, William F. Albright, Gibson).

The conceptual overlap among these terms is also seen in their metaphorical use. One indication of this is the theophoric names of the ANE world, that is, those names that have embedded the name of a deity (from the Greek θεόφορος meaning ‘bearing of a god’). Fowler maintains these divine elements of these names were meant

¹¹⁶ Take Joel 4:18 [Eng. 3:18] for example, where the mountains are the source of wine and milk (Talmon, “הר har,” 3:446).

¹¹⁷ Mountains are said to be sources of water (*ETCSL* 1.6.2; 1.7.6; 1.8.2.2; 4.32.f), wine (1.6.2), and liquor (4.13.06). Like צור in the Song (v. 13) and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, *kur* represents a source of honey (1.6.2; 2.6.9.5) and oil (1.8.2.3; 4.13.05). In addition to these liquids, mountains provided fruit (2.6.7.1) and grain (1.7.6; 5.3.2). In short, mountains are depicted as places of abundance (2.4.1.5–6; 2.4.5.4; 2.6.7.1; 2.6.9.2; 4.03.1; 4.05.1; 4.80.1–2).

¹¹⁸ Wine, beer, honey, and oil are found there (Brinkman et al., “Šadû A,” 17:54).

¹¹⁹ *ETCSL* 1.8.2.2–3; Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Harps That Once—: Sumerian Poetry in Translation* (Yale University Press, 1997), 80.

¹²⁰ In *KTU* 1.4 v. 15, the construction of Ba‘al’s palace requires that the rocks and hills be quarried for silver, gold, and gems (lines 80–81, see Fabry, “צור Šûr,” 12:312; Hallo and Younger, *COS*, 260; Gibson, *Canaanite Myths*, 61; Lete and Sanmartín, “Ĝr (I),” 1:324; Pritchard, *ANET*, 133): *tblk grm.mid.ksp* ‘the rocks shall yield you much silver’ and *gb^m.mhmd.hrs* ‘the hills the choicest of gold’. The subject of the next line—*yblk.údr.ilqsm* ‘they shall yield you the noblest of gems’—is not entirely unclear, but it is quite possible that both the rocks and hills are in view. What is clear from this passage, in any case, is that *grm* were places of quarrying and mining.

¹²¹ ‘Treasures’ are found in mountains (*ETCSL* 4.27.02), including ore (6.1.09), precious metals (6.1.16; such as gold, 1.8.2.3; silver, 1.8.2.3; 2.1.7; 4.27.02; 4.32.f; copper, 1.6.1–2; 1.8.2.3; tin, 1.6.2; 1.8.2.3), and semi-precious stones (like gypsum, 1.6.1; 6.1.10, 17, 19; lapis lazuli, 1.8.2.3; 4.07.a; 4.27.02; 4.32.f; cornelian, 4.07.a).

¹²² *ETCSL* 1.1.4; 1.2.2; 2.1.5; 2.4.1.6; 2.4.2.02

¹²³ See also the rhetorical use of *kur* above.

¹²⁴ See Ps 73:26.

¹²⁵ If הר is the correct reading in Ps 30:8 [Eng. 7], then Selman thinks the term represents “a symbol of inner strength and security” (Selman, “הר,” 1:1054).

to convey something about the deity.¹²⁶

A wide range of geological examples can be provided, which suggests that צור for God is part of a much wider ANE trend of applying geological language to gods. For instance, the Amorite *šr* ‘rock, mountain’ as a divine element is attested in the name *šūrā-ḥammū* ‘Ḥammu-is-the-Rock/Mountain’, as are Amorite *šd* ‘mountain’ and *’bn* ‘stone’ (*ḥa-ab-ni-Il* ‘Il-is-My-Stone’, *Ab-nu-ra-pi* ‘A-Stone-is-Rapi’). Korpel points out the Ugar. name *bn abn* ‘Son-of-the-Stone’.¹²⁷ In Phoenician literature, both *hr* ‘mountain’ and *’bn* ‘stone’ serve as divine elements of theophoric names (*’bnšmš* ‘The-Sun-is-a-Stone’, cf. *’bnb’l* ‘Baal-is-a-Stone’ in the closely-related Punic).¹²⁸ This trend is found in Akkadian and Aramaic names as well. The Akkadian *šadû* ‘mountain’ as well as the Old Akkadian *ḥuršānum* ‘mountain’ and, the more common, *šadunum* ‘mountain’ are attested divine elements.¹²⁹ With regard to the Aramaic צור ‘rock’, Fowler points to several names from the 8–7th centuries BCE: *A-a-ṭu-ri*, *A-du-ni-ṭur*, and *Si-’-ṭur* ‘mountain’ is an attested divine element.¹³⁰ She also draws attention to an Aramaic inscription that reads *bršwr* ‘Son-of-a-Rock’ and the use of Aramaic *qtr* ‘rock’ as a divine element (*’ēlqatar*).¹³¹

Early theophoric names with צור as a divine element are also found with some frequency in the Hebrew Bible. They include the Reubenite *’elīšûr* ‘My-God-is-a-Rock,’ (Num 1:5; 2:10, 7:30, 35, 10:18), the Merarite *šûrî’el* ‘My-Rock-is El/God’ (Num 3:35), the Simeonite *šûrīšadday* ‘Shaddai-is-My-Rock’ (Num 1:6, 2:12, 7:36, 41, 10:19), and the Manassite *p^edāhšûr* ‘The-Rock-has-Ransomed,’ (Num 1:10, 2:20, 7:54, 59, 10:23). Interestingly, though רב never occurs as a divine element in the Hebrew Bible, Fowler cites a seal that bears the Hebrew name *hryhw* ‘YHWH-is-a-Mountain’.¹³²

A further sign of the common divine use of geological imagery in the ANE is the attested divine epithets and conceptualisations. Albright comments that “since ‘mountain’ was often a synonym for ‘god’ in Syria and Anatolia, it is not surprising to

¹²⁶ Jeaneane D. Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names in Ancient Hebrew: A Comparative Study* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 17.

¹²⁷ Marjo C. A. Korpel, “Stone אבן,” in *DDD*, ed. K. van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter Willem van der Horst, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 818; cf. Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 204.

¹²⁸ Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 191.

¹²⁹ Robert A Di Vito, *Studies in Third Millennium Sumerian and Akkadian Personal Names: The Designation and Conception of the Personal God* (Roma: Pontificio Istituto biblico, 1993), 64, 206, 213–14, 302–3, 312, 315; Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 232.

¹³⁰ Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 221, 286.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 221, 224–25.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 73.

find that *Ṣûr* is simply a synonym of *El* in early Hebrew literature.”¹³³ In addition to the use of צוּר, *ṣadû*, and *kur* as divine epithets, as seen above, both צוּר and *ḡr* are used to conceptualise divine constancy. The latter is seen in the way that the צוּר casts YHWH as constant and unchanging in his dealings with his people.¹³⁴ In several passages, the rock imagery occurs in close connection with expressions of YHWH’s unchanging character (2 Sam 22:32; 23:3; Pss 18:32 [Eng. 31]; 19:15 [Eng. 14]; 92:16 [Eng. 15]; Hab. 1:12). For example, in 2 Sam 22 (= Ps 18), the poem outlines the consistency of his moral character, as well as perfection of his word and deed. Verses 26–27 read:

²⁶ *With the loyal you show yourself loyal;
with the blameless you show yourself blameless;*
²⁷ *with the pure you show yourself pure;
and with the crooked you show yourself perverse.*

A few verses later, in v. 31, the psalmist declares that אִמְרַת־יְהוָה צְרוּפָה ‘the word of YHWH proves true’ and תְּמִים דְּרָכּוֹ ‘his way is perfect’.

Though not as an expression of the constancy of his moral character, mountain imagery does express the constancy of Baal’s *dominion* in the mythology of Israel’s near neighbour, Ugarit (CTA 1.101.1–3). In this text, Baal is likened to a mountain (*ḡr*). Dahood and Penar render lines 1–3:¹³⁵

*Baal sits enthroned like the sitting of a mountain (ḡr)
Hadd the Shepherd like the flood
Amid his towering mountain (ḡr) Zapān
Amid his mountain (ḡr) of victory*

Mark Smith translates them similarly:¹³⁶

*Baal sits (enthroned) like a sitting of a mountain (ḡr)
Haddu . . . like the (cosmic) ocean
In the midst of his mountain (ḡr), divine Sapan
In [the midst of?] the mount (ḡr) of victory*

Despite their minor differences, the two renderings agree in depicting Baal’s enthronement as embodying the characteristics of a mountain. These scholars, however, differ slightly in their explanations of the meaning of this description. Dahood and

¹³³ Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, 188–89.

¹³⁴ Cairns, *Word and Presence*, 281; Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 378; Fischer, “‘Der Fels,’” 31–32; Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 300.

¹³⁵ Dahood and Penar, “Ugaritic-Hebrew Parallel Pairs,” I:222–23.

¹³⁶ Smith, *Volume I*, 65.

Penar think that it underscores that “the point of the comparison seems to be that Baal’s dominion is as high as the mountain’s [dominion] and as wide as the sea’s.”¹³⁷ Smith proposes the point is that Baal is “superhuman in size.” He writes:

1.101.1–3 describes Baal as large as his own mountain, Sapan. It has been suggested that this text ‘describes Baal’s [*sic*] sitting on his throne in such a way so as to highlight his enormous size.’ On the whole, the text seems to identify features of the god with those of his mountain, again implying the god’s superhuman size. In the Ugaritic Baal Cycle, Baal is the focus of the expressions of strength and size.¹³⁸

These explanations rightly draw attention to the use of mountain imagery to conceptualise Baal and his enthronement; however, both seem to overlook the significance of the word play. The repetition of the notion of sitting—to express Baal’s enthronement and to describe the mountain—suggests that the stress lies in the positioning of the mountain. Indeed the great height, size, and strength of mountain are defining characteristics of mountains, but they only indirectly describe the way they ‘sit’. It seems more likely that it is the immovability of such a high, large, and hard geological formation that is in view.¹³⁹ If so, the point appears to be the constant and unswerving nature of Baal’s dominion.

3.4 SUMMARY

The purpose of this chapter has been to develop a working conceptual domain of צור ‘rock’ and establish a starting point for the analysis in Chapters 4–7 by presenting a range of possible connotations and undergirding entailments. Far from a ‘sparse’ source of entailments (DesCamp and Sweetser), the analysis of צור in the Hebrew Bible here has unearthed a rich collection of physical characteristics, cultural conceptions, associated themes, and metaphorical extensions (Kowalski, Fabry, van der Woude, Hill, Korpel, Fischer). It was also argued that the צור conceptual domain includes associations drawn from the broader ANE world. When these entailments are added to the metaphorical use of צור for God discussed in Chapter 1, the following composite picture of the conceptual domain can be sketched (Table 3.4).

¹³⁷ Dahood and Penar, “Ugaritic-Hebrew Parallel Pairs,” I:222–23.

¹³⁸ Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel’s Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 84.

¹³⁹ De Moor, *An Anthology*, 1.

Table 3.4: Conceptual Domain of צור

Large	Remote, undomesticated	Place of escape, refuge	Geological or refuge word-fields	God as strong	Human, Temple, or god as refuge
High	Strong	Place of sacrifice	Temple, Zion	God as constant	God as help, saviour
Hard	Immovable	Place of execution	Water-from-the-rock tradition	God as ancient	God as source of military empowerment
Broad, Flat	Permanent	Source of (liquid) provisions	Generative myth	God as eternal	God as obstacle, opposition
Cavernous, crannied	Natural habitat of wildlife	Place of mining, quarrying	Cosmic mountain	God as faithful, dependable	Human or god as progenitor
Barren	Place name, landmark	Vantage point	Divine designations	God as incomparable	God as provider

PART TWO:
ANALYSING THE METAPHOR

Having laid the foundation for the metaphorical analysis in Chapters 1–3, the following four chapters will take up the analysis itself (Chapters 4–7). Each will follow the same pattern, based on the methodology outlined in Chapter 2, namely textual analysis of the immediate context followed by metaphorical analysis of the use of צִוּר for God.

Additionally, each chapter focuses on one or more key interpretive challenges of the strophe. I have intentionally studied each ‘rock’ passage in isolation; only after each has been explored in its own right are they read together and their place within the Song allowed to speak (Chapters 8–9).

CHAPTER 4

AN ANALYSIS OF צוּר IN DEUTERONOMY 32:4–6

Of all its occurrences in the Song, the divine use of צוּר in v. 4 has received the most scholarly attention. This is in large part because of its privileged position as the opening words of the poem proper (vv. 4–42) and as the head of a long series of uses of צוּר as a divine metaphor (vv. 15b, 18, 30, 31, 37). A second reason is the ambiguous relationship between the metaphor and its immediate context (vv. 4–6), which lends very few unequivocal clues as to the sense of the rock metaphor. This has led to diverging opinions.

Some interpreters read this use of צוּר for God as an expression of divine protection and refuge, as it very often does elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, especially in the Psalms. This is the sense advocated by Eichhorn,¹ as well as by Driver, Tigay, and Nelson in their respective commentaries on this passage.² Of these, Driver alone addresses the possible origin of the rock imagery, which he suggests is drawn from the Palestinian landscape.³

Others have argued that the rock metaphor is a picture of moral righteousness or, from a relational perspective, of *covenantal* righteousness.⁴ Though Knowles acknowledges that the word-picture is used consistently to depict YHWH's protection and deliverance, he concludes that this sense is not present here in v. 4. He writes:

Rather than celebrating a salvific personal encounter with God, the Rock of deliverance and refuge, we find instead an emphasis on the moral character and righteousness of God. The explicative parallels to *šûr* are not 'refuge', 'stronghold', 'fortress', and the like, but refer rather to the perfection of his work, the justice (*mišpāṭ*) of his ways, his faithfulness (*'ēmûnâ*), righteousness (*šaddiq*) and uprightness (*w^eyāšār*).⁵

¹ Eichhorn, *Gott als Fels, Burg, Zuflucht*, 77.

² Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 350; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 370; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 300.

³ Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 350.

⁴ Knowles, "The Rock, His Work Is Perfect," 311.

⁵ *Ibid.*

Fernandes and Sanders follow Knowles in this, but both take the discussion further by addressing the imagery undergirding the metaphor.⁶ Fernandes notes that, in order to gain “a better understanding of the deity and his actions,” the “physical world” of rocks is taken up, namely the “geography of the land [of Canaan]” with its many “rocky hills and craggy cliffs.”⁷ Sanders sees more specifically the natural stability of rocks as animating the metaphor here in v. 4.⁸

Still others understand רָצַד for God as a symbol of constancy, though within this general rubric several nuances have been proposed. It has been taken as an expression of strength and permanence. McConville, for example, is an advocate of the former.⁹ Craigie and Lee remark that this solidity is easily pressed into metaphorical service to portray YHWH as unchanging and permanent.¹⁰

Extending this stable and unchanging quality of rock to the relational sphere, some understand the focus of the metaphor to be the *faithfulness* that YHWH demonstrates toward his people. Knight discusses this at length. Like Driver and Fernandes, Knight understands the Palestinian landscape as the source of the rock imagery; like Sanders, he sees the stability of these rocks as giving the metaphor its life. However, rather than rocks in general, he argues that it is the stability of the rock city of Sela (in Greek, Petra) more specifically that serves as the conceptual background. Knight argues that this imagery of the ancient rock city conceptualises YHWH as faithful, steadfast, and reliable.¹¹

Claassens, Miller, and Lundbom continue this train of thought. Claassens remarks that the use of rock metaphor (v. 4) in close connection with father imagery (vv. 5–6) underscores that YHWH’s unshakable faithfulness (rock) that can be traced all the way back to the birth of Israel as a nation (parent).¹² Miller likewise takes the

⁶ This appears to be the basic conclusion of Fernandes, though his formulation is somewhat confusing (*God as Rock*, 23). Quoting Knowles, he too affirms the moral and covenantal sense of the metaphor. Yet, in the same paragraph, he explains that the purpose of the inactive imagery of rock is to portray YHWH as refuge.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 21–23.

⁸ Sanders, *Provenance*, 357–60.

⁹ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 453.

¹⁰ Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 378; Lee, “Narrative Function,” 64; Block, *Deuteronomy*, 750; Braulik, *Deuteronomium 16,18–34,12*, 228; Dennis T. Olson, *Deuteronomy and the Death of Moses: A Theological Reading* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 140.

¹¹ Knight—like Craigie and Lee—sees a sense of timelessness in the rock metaphor that reinforces YHWH’s divine faithfulness. He writes: “The picture of God as Rock conveys to the unscientific mind that idea of timelessness. The Rock had been there before Moses’ day. In fact, it had been there from the ‘beginning’ and so would be there at the ‘end’” (*A Theological Quarry*, 20–21).

¹² Claassens, “I Kill and I Give Life,” 37.

word-picture as a depiction of YHWH's faithfulness but sees the conception of rock as a source of refuge—rather than Sela—as standing behind the metaphor.¹³ Of particular note are his thoughts on the contribution of צִיֹּר for God to the broader context. He suggests that YHWH's faithfulness, when read within vv. 4–6, casts YHWH's character and deeds as trustworthy.¹⁴ He cogently explains: Just as a rock of refuge is steadfast and thus reliable, so too is YHWH steadfast and thus his moral perfections trustworthy.¹⁵ It is this very fact, Lundbom comments, that sets up a painful contrast between faithful God (v. 4) and fickle people (vv. 5–6).¹⁶

With regard to the relationship between the rock metaphor and moral language, Knowles suggests that the meaning of the word-picture is characterised or informed by the description of YHWH's moral perfection.¹⁷ Craigie sees the reverse: that the rock imagery informs the meaning of the moral perfections. He insists that the title *the Rock* “is placed at the very beginning of the verse for emphasis” and that the following lines “systematically elaborate the attributes of God as the Rock of Israel.”¹⁸ While understanding the primary connotation of צִיֹּר for God to be YHWH's constancy, Claassens argues that the word-picture is additionally defined by the following verses (vv. 8–14).¹⁹

This brief survey shows that interpreters are divided over the connotation of the rock metaphor in v. 4, as well as its contribution to the broader context, especially in relation to the moral language in this verse. The aim of this chapter is to analyse the use of צִיֹּר in v. 4 in order to revisit the questions of connotation and contribution for the purpose of better assessing the merit of these competing views. Toward this end, my analysis here will unfold in two broad movements. First, I will lay the crucial exegetical foundation by presenting a close reading of the immediate context, vv. 4–6. Then, I will examine the metaphor with a special eye toward the key interpretive questions. Surprisingly, this will show that צִיֹּר carries *multiple* connotations and that, perhaps less surprisingly, it contributes significantly to the message of v. 4 specifically and vv. 4–6 more generally.

¹³ Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 227.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*; cf. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 298.

¹⁵ Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 227.

¹⁶ Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 873; cf. Braulik, *Deuteronomium 16,18–34,12*, 228; Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 378.

¹⁷ Knowles, “The Rock, His Work Is Perfect,” 322; cf. Block, *Deuteronomy*, 750–51.

¹⁸ Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 378; cf. Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 227.

¹⁹ Claassens, “I Kill and I Give Life,” 37.

4.1 TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Turning now to a textual analysis of vv. 4–6, it should be noted that there is good reason to take these verses together as a coherent poetic unit: First, vv. 1–3 form a defensible unit, suggesting v. 4 marks the upper limit of a new unit.²⁰ This boundary is reinforced by the *casus pendens* (הַצִּיּוֹר), a construction that Sanders argues often lies at the beginning of rhetorical units.²¹ Regarding the lower limit, the exhortation to consider Israel’s past in v. 7 serves as a fitting introduction to the next set of strophes (vv. 7–18),²² intimating that v. 6 closes the unit. Such delineation is further supported by the coherence of vv. 4–6. Though the connection among these verses will be addressed in detail below, suffice it to say here: vv. 4–5 are bound lexically, thematically, and structurally. Verse 6 is logically linked with vv. 4–5 since it presumes YHWH’s goodness to his people (v. 4) and Israel’s corruption (v. 5).²³ For these reasons, it is best to read vv. 4–6 together.

4.1.1 Verse 4

Moving to the close reading of these verses, v. 4 presents a glowing depiction of YHWH’s flawless character and deeds through a highly-concentrated web of theologically pregnant terms in order to demonstrate his faithfulness towards Israel.²⁴

²⁰ Three grammatical and syntactical observations support this: First, the poet’s use of the first-person in vv. 1–3 sets these verses apart from those that follow (Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 370; Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 798; Fokkelman, *Major Poems*, 67). Moreover, the heavy use of the volitional mood also links these verses. Six of the seven verbs in vv. 1–3 are modal—one cohortative (וַאֲדַבְרָה), two imperatives (הִצִּיּוֹר, הִבֵּן), and three jussives (יַעֲרֶה, תִּזְלֶה, יִשְׁמַע). Related to this point, Petersen and Richards suggest that imperatives in vv. 1 and 3 form an inclusio (*Interpreting Hebrew Poetry* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992], 72). Robson takes this suggestion even further by drawing attention to the ABB’A’ pattern in the verbal forms (*Honey from the Rock*, 56):

- A Imperative (הִצִּיּוֹר, 1a)
- B First-person (וַאֲדַבְרָה, 1b)
- B’ First-person (אֶקְרָא, 3a)
- A’ Imperative (הִבֵּן, 3b)

²¹ Sanders, *Provenance*, 268; for a further discussion of the *casus pendens* as a separation marker, see Johannes C. De Moor, “Narrative Poetry in Canaan,” *Ugarit-Forschungen* 20 (1988): 149–71, esp. 156, 159, 169.

²² Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 355; Block, *Deuteronomy*, 752.

²³ Block, *Deuteronomy*, 752.

²⁴ Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, 473.

The first two cola of v. 4 focus upon the nature of his deeds:

הַצִּוּר תָּמִים פָּעֵלוֹ 4a *The Rock*²⁵—*his work is blameless*
כִּי כִלְדָּרְכָיו מִשְׁפָּט 4b *Indeed*²⁶ *his ways are just*

The poet introduces YHWH with an emphatic *casus pendens* construction (הַצִּוּר ‘the Rock’).²⁷ In light of the wider context, the referent here is almost certainly YHWH. This is seen in the poet’s announcement that he will ‘proclaim the name of YHWH’ in the immediately preceding verse (v. 3). The natural transition from this expression of praise to the pregnant depiction of the Rock’s praise-worthy attributes strongly supports this. It has been argued that הַצִּוּר ‘the Rock’ is the ‘name of YHWH’.²⁸ While this is conceivable,²⁹ it is unlikely since the same epithet is applied (albeit sarcastically) to rival gods later in the poem (vv. 31, 37).³⁰

The expression פָּעֵלוֹ ‘his work’ can broadly denote YHWH’s governance of the natural world (Job 36:24, cf. 36:24–37:24).³¹ However, in a more narrow sense, the term often refers to his dealings with Israel.³² Standing parallel to YHWH’s work is the expression *his ways* (דְּרָכָיו), which also very likely refers to his rule³³ over the world and his people.³⁴ His deeds are depicted as both תָּמִים and מִשְׁפָּט. When used of people, the former often denotes “reliable, proper, healthy relationships,” suggesting here that the

²⁵ See Chapter 1 for a discussion of the diverging readings (הַצִּוּר in the MT; θεός in the LXX).

²⁶ Interpreters are divided over whether to understand this כִּי as emphatic ‘indeed, certainly’ (Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 363; Sanders, *Provenance*, 141; Wright, “The Lawsuit of God,” 27) or causal ‘for, because’ (Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 790; Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 377; Eissfeldt, *Das Lied Moses*, 9). A decision is difficult since both senses fit the context, though the tight parallelism seems to favour the former slightly. This is consistent with the emphatic nature of the corresponding constituent, הַצִּוּר.

²⁷ Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 378; Fokkelman, *Major Poems*, 70.

²⁸ Braulik, *Deuteronomium 16,18–34,12*, 228; cf. Fernandes, *God as Rock*, 23; von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 196.

²⁹ Knowles, “The Rock, His Work Is Perfect,” 310–11.

³⁰ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 453.

³¹ Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 351.

³² The term elsewhere denotes a wide range of divine actions on behalf of his people, including their creation (Isa 45:11; cf. 45:9), their general redemption and providence (Ps 111:3), and specific salvific acts in their past (exodus and wilderness wandering, Pss 77:13–21 [Eng. 12–20]; 95:9 [Eng. 8]; conquest, Ps 44:2 [Eng. 1]). It can also refer to their judgment (Hab 1:5), their vindication (Pss 64:10 [Eng. 9]; 92:5 [Eng. 4]) and even their ultimate restoration (Ps 90:13–17). The related verb פָּעַל—with YHWH as the subject—is employed in largely the same way in Exod 15:17; Num 23:23; Job 33:29; 36:3; Pss 31:20 [Eng. 19]; 44:2 [Eng. 1]; 68:29 [Eng. 28]; Prov 16:4; Isa 26:12; 41:4; 43:13.

³³ The use of דְּרָכָיו elsewhere in Deuteronomy might suggest that YHWH’s instruction for this people is in view (5:29, 31–33, 6:1–2, 8:6, 9:12, 16, 10:12–13, 11:22, 27–28, 13:6, 19:9, 31:29); however, the parallelism with פָּעַל ‘work’ points to divine *action*.

³⁴ Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 873.

term underscores YHWH's integrity; his deeds are morally flawless and sound.³⁵

Though מִשְׁפָּט has a wide range of meanings, here it likely casts YHWH's ways as right, fair, and serving the cause of justice.³⁶ In short, then, every aspect of YHWH's dominion (פְּעָלוֹ 'his works', כָּל־דְּרָכָיו 'all his ways')—especially his dealings with this people—is just as it should be; it is never lacking or driven by questionable motives.

While the first two cola described YHWH's deeds, the final two advance parallel depictions of the Rock's *character*. They run:

אֵל אֱמוּנָה וְאֵין עָוֹל 4bA *A God of faithfulness and no injustice*³⁷
צַדִּיק וְיָשָׁר הוּא 4bB *Righteous and upright is he*

One reads that he is faithful (אֱמוּנָה) and lacks injustice (אֵין עָוֹל). YHWH's faithfulness here expresses his relational integrity and dependability.³⁸ The term עָוֹל envisions the general idea of injustice,³⁹ though the poetic structure suggests that עָוֹל stands as the antithesis of faithfulness (אֱמוּנָה) and therefore likely carries the more nuanced meaning of wrong-doing that might justify abandoning a relationship (Ps 7:15 [Eng. 14]; Jer 2:5).⁴⁰ There is not a hint of this with YHWH (אֵין עָוֹל).

He is not only faithful but also righteous (יָשָׁר and צַדִּיק). The first of these underscores that he intrinsically conforms to all that is right. He is, in fact, the very standard of righteousness, which naturally extends to all he does (Ps 145:17). יָשָׁר depicts YHWH as being morally straight as opposed to being crooked (Deut 6:18; 12:25; 13:19 [Eng. 20]; 21:9), and, by extension, casts him as reliable and trustworthy (Deut 9:5; 1 Kgs 3:6, 9:4; 1 Chr 29:17; Ps 7:11 [Eng. 10]).

As has been intimated above, it is likely that these expressions of divine perfection are intended to be understood in relational terms. Biddle—whose work on this section is particularly insightful—notes that “as is characteristic of Old Testament thought, this ascription of praise does not praise God for God's abstract ‘attributes,’ but

³⁵ Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, 473; Block, *Deuteronomy*, 750; Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 795; Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 351; von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 188.

³⁶ Block, *Deuteronomy*, 751; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 453.

³⁷ This expression literally reads ‘and there is no injustice’ but is rendered more smoothly as ‘and no injustice’ (Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 350).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 351; though the language differs slightly, God (אֵל) is similarly depicted as faithful in Deut 7:9 (הָאֵל הַנֶּאֱמָר) and Ps 31:6 [Eng. 5] (אֵל אֱמֶת). For a broader treatment of divine faithfulness, see Edmund Perry, “The Meaning of ‘Emuna in the Old Testament,” *Journal of Bible and Religion* 21, no. 4 (1953): 252–56.

³⁹ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 410.

⁴⁰ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 300.

for God’s faithfulness *as expressed in relationship*.⁴¹ It is also possible though that they form part of an indirect argument that runs: if God is perfect, he simply cannot deal with Israel falsely or faithlessly. Either way, this verse carries strong relational undertones and ultimately conveys the same idea: a perfect God means a faithful relationship with Israel.⁴²

4.1.2 Verse 5

As this strophe continues, the exposition of YHWH’s deeds and character in v. 4 gives way to an exposition of Israel’s in v. 5. First, however, text-critical and translation challenges must be addressed. The textual witnesses diverge significantly at this point, but the MT emerges as the harder reading and therefore has been upheld here:⁴³

שָׁחַת לוֹ לֹא בָנָיו מוֹמָם	5a	<i>They</i> ⁴⁴ <i>acted corruptly toward him</i> — <i>his-no-sons with their blemish</i>
דֹּר עָקָשׁ וּפְתִילָתַל	5b	<i>A crooked and twisted</i> ⁴⁵ <i>generation</i>

The syntax of the Hebrew is difficult. What *is* clear however is that the expression שָׁחַת לוֹ לֹא בָנָיו מוֹמָם stands parallel to דֹּר עָקָשׁ וּפְתִילָתַל. Elsewhere in the poem בָּן stands in parallel with דֹּר (v. 20). Moreover, conceptually both highlight the corruption and wickedness of Israel. Perhaps then *both* function as the subject of the double-duty expression שָׁחַת לוֹ. In Hebrew, a double subject (even if plural) can take a singular verb (Gen 12:16). This suggestion not only resolves the apparent subject-verb disagreement (singular שָׁחַת, plural לֹא בָנָיו ‘not-his-sons’) but provides poetic balance by envisioning

⁴¹ Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, 473, emphasis original.

⁴² Ibid., 474; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 370.

⁴³ Many of the Versions differ from the MT at this point. Notably the SP, which reads שָׁחַתוּ לֹא לוֹ בְנֵי מוֹם; this is presumably close to the *Vorlage* of the LXX, which runs ἠμάρτωσαν οὐκ ἀδὲ τὰ τέκνα μωμητά. Unfortunately, the Tgs are highly midrashic and offer little help in recovering the original. The way forward appears to be the smoothness of the SP and LXX. In other words, while it is difficult to imagine how the MT reading might have arisen, the SP and LXX variants seem to be attempts to ease the difficult Hebrew. In other words, the plural שָׁחַתוּ / ἠμάρτωσαν agrees with the (most natural) subject, plural בְנֵי / τέκνα. Transposing לוֹ and לֹא avoids the somewhat awkward nominal phrase ‘not-his-children’ (לֹא בָנָיו) and the potentially scandalous suggestion that Israel’s sonship could essentially be revoked. The construct chain מוֹם בְנֵי מוֹם clarifies the ambiguous relationship between בָּנָיו and מוֹמָם (McCarthy, BHQ, 141*).

⁴⁴ The Song often employs the masculine singular form ‘him’ to refer to Israel. In order to capture the sense of Israel as a nation, the translation here and elsewhere will depict Israel with the plural ‘they.’ This also helps to clearly differentiate between God and Israel in situations where both are referred to with the 3ms suffix and where the referent is somewhat ambiguous.

⁴⁵ פְתִילָתַל occurs only here, but the related noun נִפְתוּלִים ‘wrestlings’ is found in Gen 30:8 and the related verb פָתַל ‘to twist’ in Gen 30:8, Job 5:13; Ps 18:27 [Eng. 26]; Prov 8:8. In Gen 30, the word group seems to depict strenuous struggle and wrestling, perhaps suggesting that the other occurrences also describe the actions of one who is exhaustingly and tortuously contentious.

an elliptic bicolon, a construction found elsewhere in the poem (vv. 6, 7, 29, 36, 37).⁴⁶ This line is difficult to render into English, but the translation here attempts to preserve the sense of the double subject.

With regard to Israel's deeds, the poet employs striking language to cast them as debased. This is sensed immediately with the opening verb שָׁחַת, a term well-known from elsewhere in Deuteronomy (Deut 4:16, 25; 9:12; 31:29) and the familiar golden calf account (Exod 32:7). Although it often carries the idea of destruction, here, it likely denotes acting wickedly or corruptly.⁴⁷ The crime is not explicitly stated, but there is little doubt that Israel's pursuit of other gods is in view. This is signalled not only by the subsequent verses in the poem (vv. 15b–18, 21) but also the use of the verb elsewhere in Deuteronomy (4:16, 25; 9:12; 31:29).⁴⁸ While the Song does fault Israel for being foolish (v. 6), the primary critique levelled against them is the way they abandoned YHWH *for other gods* (vv. 15b–18, 21); this helps to fill in the meaning of שָׁחַת. It is worth noting that the depth of their corruption is reinforced by the biting moniker לֹא בְנֵי לַיהוָה 'not-his-sons'. This is especially true in light of their election (Deut 7:6–8) and privileged status as YHWH's children (Deut 1:31; 8:5; 14:1).⁴⁹ In short, this title underscores that their behaviour is so out of step with their status that they cannot even be called his children,⁵⁰ or perhaps even more seriously, that their behaviour represents the grounds for revoking their status altogether.

Israel's corruption is reinforced even further by the pictorial מוֹם. In the majority of cases, it denotes a physical defect or deformity, especially that of a sacrificial animal (Deut 15:21; 17:1). Interestingly, such animals are characterised as either blameless (תָּמִים) or blemished (מוֹם, see Num 19:2). This is precisely the dichotomy that the poem sets up between blemished (מוֹם) Israel and their morally blameless (תָּמִים) Rock (v. 4). This contrast suggests that מוֹם expresses Israel's bent toward moral failure here. Furthermore, in light of the close link between שָׁחַת and idolatry as well as their entanglement with other gods in the broader context of vv. 16–17 (cf. 21, 37–38) it is likely that this moral 'blemish' is their proclivity to abandon YHWH for other gods.

⁴⁶ Eissfeldt, *Das Lied Moses*, 8 n. 1; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 383; McCarthy, BHQ, 140*.

⁴⁷ Cornelis van Dam, "שָׁחַת," in *NIDOTTE*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 92–93.

⁴⁸ Block, *Deuteronomy*, 751.

⁴⁹ Block, *Deuteronomy*, 752; Cairns, 281.

⁵⁰ Tigay, 301.

The negative picture of Israel is continued with the terms עקש and פתלתל elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible functions as the foil of purity (ברר, 2 Sam 22:27 = Ps 18:27 [Eng. 26]), uprightness (ישר, Prov 8:8–9), blamelessness (תמים, Prov 11:20), and integrity (תם, Prov 19:1). Here too it stands in striking contrast to the blamelessness (תמים) and uprightness (ישר) of the Rock (v. 4) and highlights Israel’s moral perversity and sinful tendencies.⁵¹ The adjective פתלתל occurs only here, though the related verb פתל is used in connection with עקש in 2 Sam 22:27 (= Ps 18:27 [Eng. 26]), where the psalmist remarks that just as YHWH shows himself pure with those who are pure, so too will he prove himself tortuous (פתל) to those who are crooked (עקש). This use of the פתל root suggests that פתלתל here in v. 5 describes Israel as morally twisted and troublesome, a far cry from their distinctive calling to be a holy people (Deut 7:6).

4.1.3 Verse 6

The strophe concludes with two rhetorical questions (v. 6). The first draws attention to Israel’s incongruent and inappropriate response (v. 5) to YHWH, their just, faithful, and righteous God (v. 4) with the incredulous query.⁵² The poet asks:

הֲדַלִּיתָהּ תַּגְמִלּוּ-זֹאת	6aA	<i>How could you do this to YHWH,</i>
עַם נְבִלָל וְלֹא חָכָם	6aB	<i>You foolish and unwise people?</i>

The incongruent and inappropriate nature of their behaviour is signalled by the verb גמל, as well as the accompanying wisdom language. Though the verb can connote either a positive action (as in the sense of ‘to reward’, see 2 Sam 22:21) or a negative one (as in ‘responded with evil’, see Gen 50:15), it almost certainly has the latter here. Within the Pentateuch, the verb in the *qal* denotes “an act of sin against God or a human being.”⁵³ This is reinforced by זאת ‘this’ likely refers back to Israel’s corrupt behaviour in v. 5. Finally, the unflattering vocative, עַם נְבִלָל וְלֹא חָכָם ‘you foolish and unwise people’ underscores Israel’s lack of understanding and prudence⁵⁴ and can only be taken as a criticism of absurdity of their moral impropriety⁵⁵ against their covenant-bound and

⁵¹ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 453.

⁵² Block, *Deuteronomy*, 752.

⁵³ Eugene Carpenter, “גמל,” I: 872.

⁵⁴ Chou-Wee Pan, “נבלל,” 3:11-13.

⁵⁵ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 453; S. R. Driver adds that YHWH’s superiority over other gods and the sobering consequences of Israel’s apostasy to the list of realities that they foolishly overlooked (*Deuteronomy*, 354). There is perhaps another level to the use of נבלל here. In a few passages, the term connotes one who rejects God—either by denying his existence (Ps 14:2 [Eng. 1] = 53:2 [Eng. 1]) or

loving God.⁵⁶

The rhetorical force of this question is inescapable. The phrase *הֲלֹא־הִנֵּה* is fronted to give it special emphasis, which helps to underscore the fact that YHWH is the *least* deserving recipient of Israel’s corrupt treatment (v. 5).⁵⁷ The rhetorical question stresses the absurdity of Israel’s behaviour. Biddle remarks: “Only a foolish people, totally devoid of wisdom, would return rebellion for constancy in this manner.”⁵⁸ The shift from the third-person (vv. 4–5) to second-person (v. 6) makes the rebuke more pointed and strengthens its force.⁵⁹

This first rhetorical question is quickly followed by a second, which highlights yet another reason why Israel’s response to YHWH (v. 5a) was so grievous (v. 6a), namely their rebellion against the very one who brought them into existence. After all, the poet demands:

<i>הֲלֹא־הוּא אֲבִיךָ קָנָה</i>	6bA	<i>Is he not your Father who</i> ⁶⁰ <i> created you,</i> ⁶¹
<i>הוּא עָשָׂה וַיַּכְנִנֶנְךָ</i>	6bB	<i>The one who made you and established you?</i>

Based on Ugaritic parallels and the broader context of the stanza (vv. 4–18), it is very likely that both *קנה* (Gen 14:19, 22; Exod 15:16) and *כּוּן* (Ps 119:73) carry a creative sense here.⁶² This is not only the sense suggested by the related Ugaritic *knh* and *knn* but also by use of *עשה* ‘to make’ in the parallel colon.⁶³ Further support is found in the use of the father imagery (*אב*). With regard to *קנה*, the idea of creating—in the sense of begetting (cf. v. 15b, 18)—rather than the more common sense of acquiring

mocking him (Ps 74:18, 22). Considering Israel’s corrupt behaviour toward God in v. 5, there is indeed a sense in which Israel’s foolish behaviour can also be characterised as ‘godless’ (Holladay and Köhler, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 225).

⁵⁶ Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 379.

⁵⁷ *Provenance*, 149; cf. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 875.

⁵⁸ Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, 474.

⁵⁹ Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 874.

⁶⁰ Joüon and Muraoka note that a relative clause may be asyndetic (*A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* [Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblio, 1991], §158a; cf. W. Gesenius, E. Kautzsch, and A. E. Cowley, *Gesenius’s Hebrew Grammar* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949], §155e, f). This is likely the case here—the relative clause *קָנָה* modifies *אֲבִיךָ* and *וַיַּכְנִנֶנְךָ* modifies *הוּא* without relative particles. Note the same is true of the expressions *לֹא אֵלֶּהֶם לֵשׂוּדִים*, *לֹא יְדֻעוֹם*, and *אֵלֶּהֶם לֹא יִדְעוֹם*, and *מִקְרִב בָּאוּ* (v. 17).

⁶¹ It is not entirely clear why *קָנָה* has received a *dagesh*. Gesenius, Kautzsch, and Cowley understand this example as “anomalous” (*Gesenius’s Hebrew Grammar*, §20g). Perhaps it is intended to emphasise the fact that *קָנָה* modifies the previous term (*אֲבִיךָ*).

⁶² Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 796; Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 379; Grisanti, “Deuteronomy,” 782; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 875; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 448; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 384; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 371; Sanders, *Provenance*, 150; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 402 n. 37.

⁶³ Grisanti, “Deuteronomy,” 782; Lee, “Narrative Function,” 67.

seems more fitting of the paternal imagery.⁶⁴ Note that two Ugaritic texts (*UT* 51, iv, 47–48; 76, iii, 6–7) even employ the verb in connection with ‘father’ (*’ab*) and ‘creator’ (*knh*).⁶⁵

There is some question concerning what event in Israel’s history underlies this creation language. Some associate Israel’s formation more closely with their redemption out of Egypt. The use of קָנָה here (as in Exod 15:16—the great poetic retelling of the crossing of the Re(e)d Sea) perhaps alludes to the exodus⁶⁶ or the events surrounding Sinai more broadly.⁶⁷ Though poetic, and thus understandably vague, vv. 10–12 appear to envision the exodus and wilderness wanderings. This is the sense of the verb in Ps 74:2, where it reflects YHWH’s redemptive acts in Israel’s early years (קָנָה ‘days of old’).⁶⁸ In the final analysis, either seems possible and one wonders if the interpreter must choose between these proposals. The structure of vv. 4–18 suggests that perhaps a complex of events is in view (exodus, wandering, conquest). The use of divine rock-father imagery in vv. 4–6 and vv. 15b–18 forms an *inclusio* binding these verses together. Furthermore, the way that vv. 4–6 is further elaborated in vv. 8–18 gives reason to suspect that the various stages of Israel’s formative years that v. 6 anticipates, vv. 15b, 18 presuppose, and vv. 8–14 chronicle are in view—namely, the actualising their election (vv. 8–9) through the exodus, wilderness wanderings (vv. 10–12), and possession of the land (vv. 13–14).⁶⁹

In any case, the father metaphor here as elsewhere in Deuteronomy (Deut 1:31; 8:5; 14:1) highlights not only the intimacy of the relationship between YHWH and his people but also their dependence on him for their very existence.⁷⁰ This should have elicited Israel’s love for him and galvanised their loyalty to him, but instead they responded with the exact opposite: ingratitude and apostasy (vv. 15b–18).⁷¹ YHWH’s

⁶⁴ Nigosian, “The Song of Moses,” 45.

⁶⁵ Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 796; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 402 n. 38.

⁶⁶ Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 384.

⁶⁷ Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 379.

⁶⁸ Lee, “Narrative Function,” 67.

⁶⁹ It should be noted that the language of vv. 13–14 is highly figurative, making a precise historical reconstruction difficult. Nevertheless, it appears that YHWH’s rich provision is located in the period of the wilderness wanderings or early years in the land of Canaan (Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, 475; Block, *Deuteronomy*, 754; Lee, “Narrative Function,” 57; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 385; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 455; Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 228; Sanders, *Provenance*, 168; Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 300). This finds support in the fact that the agricultural bounty listed is indeed characteristic of the region (Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 754; Frank S. Frick, “‘Oil from Flinty Rock’ (Deuteronomy 32:13): Olive Cultivation and Olive Oil Processing in the Hebrew Bible—A Socio-Materialist Perspective,” *Semeia* 86 [1999]: 4; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 305; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 372).

⁷⁰ Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 278.

⁷¹ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 301.

role as father and creator serves to underscore the audacity of Israel’s rebellion against him (v. 5).⁷²

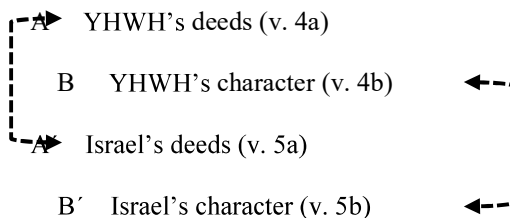
4.1.4 Synthesis

Rhetorically, vv. 4–6 work together to rebuke Israel by bringing their sinfulness into painfully sharp focus. This is explicitly seen in the pointed rhetorical questions. However, this critique is also expressed implicitly—though equally as powerful—by the contrast between YHWH and his people, in particular, the disparity between YHWH as perfect Father and Israel as corrupt ‘not-his-sons.’ This contrast is observable on multiple levels including language, structure, and genre.

This disparity is highlighted by a web of antithetical word-pairs and themes in vv. 4 and 5. YHWH’s perfection (תְּמִים) and uprightness (יָשָׁר) stand in stark contrast to Israel’s corrupt behaviour (שָׁחָת) and crooked, twisted nature (פְּתִילֵת ל, עִקָּשׁ). As discussed above, these terms are used as antonyms elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. Thematically, Israel’s corrupt behaviour (שָׁחָת) is fundamentally incongruent with YHWH’s moral perfection. The parallelism between שָׁחָת and עֲוֹן ‘iniquity’ in Ps 53:2 [Eng. 1] helps cast Israel’s corruption (שָׁחָת) as a fitting antithesis to YHWH’s lack of iniquity (אֵין עֲוֹן). Moreover, their behaviour is utterly at variance with YHWH’s faithfulness (אֱמוּנָה) in that, while YHWH remains unshakably committed to his people, Israel wanders off after other gods.⁷³ In short, then, Biddle summarises well the sentiments of many interpreters concerning these verses when he writes: “Whereas YHWH is the Rock of fidelity, Israel acts corruptly; whereas YHWH acts with integrity, Israel is blemished; whereas YHWH is a reliable God, Israel is a perversely . . . unreliable generation; whereas YHWH is just and upright, Israel is ‘twisted.’”⁷⁴

In addition to the language and themes of vv. 4 and 5, the poetic structure of these verses underscores the contrast between YHWH and Israel. This is perhaps most readily observed in

Figure 4.1: ABAB Structure of Vv. 4–6



⁷² Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 278.

⁷³ Robson, *Honey from the Rock*, 58.

⁷⁴ Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, 474; cf. Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 378; Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 350–51; Lee, “Narrative Function,” 57; Kowalski, “Rock of Ages,” 202; Labuschagne, “Framework and Structure,” 85–88, 94; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 873; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 453; Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 227; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 371; Robson, *Honey from the Rock*, 58; Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 299.

the ABA'B' structure of vv. 4–5 (see Figure 4.1). Note that v. 4a focuses on YHWH's *actions* ('his work' and 'his ways') and v. 4b on his *character* ('faithfulness,' 'lack of iniquity,' 'righteous,' and 'upright'). V. 5 unfolds in precisely the same way as v. 4a considers Israel's *actions* ('acted corruptly') and v. 5b their *character* ('crooked' 'twisted'). It is this symmetry that invites comparison between the deeds and character of YHWH and Israel.

This contrast is perhaps even detected on the level of genre, namely the hymnic character of v. 4 and the prophetic tone of vv. 5–6. Gunkel and Westermann argue that the terse syntax and extolling language of v. 4 give it a hymnic feel.⁷⁵ Similar structure and terminology are typical of other hymnic passages. Take for example again the resemblance between v. 4 and Ps 92:15 [MT 16], where the righteous will declare:

¹⁴ *In old age they still produce fruit;
they are always green and full of sap,*
¹⁵ *showing that the LORD is upright (יָשָׁר);
he is my rock (צוּרִי), and there is no unrighteousness in him (לֹא-עֲוֹלָתָהּ בּוֹ).*

The positive and hymnic tone of this verse is abruptly replaced by the critical and prophetic feel of vv. 5–6.⁷⁶ Note the way Isa 1:4 very similarly critiques Israel's corrupt behaviour, sinful nature, and rejection of their God:

*Ah, sinful nation,
people laden with iniquity,
offspring who do evil,
children who deal corruptly (בְּנֵיִם מְשַׁחֲתִים),
who have forsaken the LORD,
who have despised the Holy One of Israel,
who are utterly estranged!*

When the prophetic vv. 5–6 are read against the backdrop of the hymnic v. 4, the genre helps characterise YHWH as worthy of praise and Israel as in dire need of rebuke.

⁷⁵ Gunkel and Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms*, 22, 33–35, 60; Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 82–83, 90, 141.

⁷⁶ Bovati and those who likewise read vv. 4–6 as part of a larger *rib* form (G. E. Wright, Weibe, Merrill) detect strong courtroom imagery in these verses and suggest they reflect judicial protocol (*Re-Establishing Justice: Legal Terms, Concepts and Procedures in the Hebrew Bible* [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994], 77, 103, 105). Others—like Boston—have downplayed this imagery (“Wisdom Influence,” 198–200). Yet, regardless if one reads these verses in a strictly legal sense or not, Bovati is still likely correct in suggesting that the aim of these verses is to declare YHWH right in his accusations against Israel (*Re-Establishing Justice*, 103, 105). He is right in the sense that “the case against Israel is airtight” (Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, 474), as well as in the sense that their apostasy and resulting judgment is in no way “due to any failing or imperfection on God’s part, but to [their] own delinquencies” (Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 351).

4.2 METAPHORICAL ANALYSIS

Having laid an exegetical foundation by presenting a close reading of vv. 4–6, the remainder of this chapter will explore how צור for God is used in v. 4 more carefully. A number of possible connotations of the metaphor arise when key frames, entailments, and resultant conceptualisations are considered.

4.2.1 YHWH as a Constant God

He is cast as a constant God. Within v. 4, a frame of reference is built that characterises YHWH as a God of moral perfection, with particular emphasis on his moral *constancy*. This is seen perhaps most clearly in the language used of YHWH, the Rock, but also in the structure of v. 4. He is a just (מִשְׁפָּט), righteous (צְדִיק), and upright God (יָשָׁר)—all terms that stress his moral consistency. Similarly, he is a God of *faithfulness* (אֱמוּנָה), that is, a God who is relationally committed. This theme of immovability seems to extend even to the poetic structure of v. 4. Robson observes that the construction of the verse subtly reinforces YHWH’s rock-like character. He explains: “In the rest of verse 4 there is not one finite verb or participle. There is no action, no movement; only realities. Rocks also do not change—they are permanent.”⁷⁷ Observing the same phenomenon, Fokkelman comments, “The content [of v. 4] is static, which here in a positive sense means: exceeding the limits of time. God’s perfections are timeless.”⁷⁸

When the rock metaphor is considered within the context of this ‘moral perfection’ frame, entailments that underscore the stability and constancy of rock come to the fore. In ancient Israel, because of their sheer size, height, and solidity, rocks were considered immovable and virtually unchanged over time (Job 14:18, 18:4; Nah 1:6). Of course, from a strictly scientific perspective, rocks do erode and, from a divine perspective, they are easily destroyed. Yet, from a human perspective, they were considered the quintessence of constancy. This frame, and especially the use of אֱמוּנָה ‘faithfulness’, suggests that characteristics of immovability and permanence are likely highlighted and animate the metaphor here in v. 4.⁷⁹ If so, these qualities of rock conceptualise YHWH as stable and eternal—unchanging, unwavering, and constant in

⁷⁷ Robson, *Honey from the Rock*, 56–57.

⁷⁸ Fokkelman, *Major Poems*, 70.

⁷⁹ Fabry argues that this use of אֱמוּנָה ‘faithfulness’ suggests a divine use of צור that takes up “the traditional metaphor of the stability of such rocks” (“צור” Sûr,” 12:319).

his character and deeds.⁸⁰ This reading of the metaphor is strengthened by the fact that YHWH is conceptualised in this fashion elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (2 Sam 22:32; 23:3 = Ps 18:32 [Eng. 31]; Pss 19:15 [Eng. 14]; 92:16 [Eng. 15]; Hab 1:12). Of particular interest is Ps 92:15–16, whereas seen above the rock metaphor occurs in close connection with a statement of YHWH’s perfections, a statement that some have argued echoes—or perhaps even consciously draws upon—Deut 32.⁸¹

4.2.2 YHWH as Creator

צוֹר also conceptualises YHWH as Israel’s Creator. Note the frame of reference in vv. 4–6 that portrays him as Parent, especially as it relates to the way he brought Israel into existence and established them as a nation. As seen in the close reading, Israel are his sons (בְּנָיִו, v. 5, cf. vv. 19, 20, 43 LXX); YHWH is their Father (אָב, v. 6) and progenitor (קָנָה ‘to create’, עָשָׂה ‘to make’, כּוֹן ‘to establish’, v. 6). The wider context of vv. 7–18 is replete with parental imagery as well. In v. 15b, YHWH is again portrayed as Israel’s Father. This is made clear by the repetition of the verb עָשָׂה ‘to make’ (cf. v. 6). In addition to paternal imagery, these verses use strong maternal language to describe YHWH. His creation of Israel is likened to a mother who begets (יָלַד, v. 18a) and gives birth through labour pains (הֵייל, v. 18b) and his rich provision for them to a mother nursing her child (יָנַק, v. 13). There are further parental undertones in the eagle imagery in v. 11, where YHWH is cast as the (parent) eagle protectively hovering over its young (קִנּוֹ ‘its nest’ and גּוֹזְלֵייוֹ ‘its eaglets’).⁸²

⁸⁰ Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, 473; Block, *Deuteronomy*, 750; Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 378; Lee, “Narrative Function,” 64; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 453; Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 227; Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 300.

⁸¹ Erich Zenger writes: “With a quotation from the ‘theodicy psalm in Deuteronomy 32 (cf. Deut 32:4), which Moses, aged 120, gives to his people before his death as a ‘summary of life,’ the psalm encapsulates its ‘teaching’ in v. 16” (*Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, trans. Linda M. Maloney, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2005], 441; cf. Fischer, “‘Der Fels,’” 30). See also 2 Sam 22:32 (= Ps 18:32 [Eng. 31]), which also echoes the language of the Song (Knowles, “The Rock, His Work Is Perfect”):

With the merciful, you [YHWH] prove yourself merciful
With the blameless (תָּמִים) man, you act blamelessly (תָּמַם)
With the pure, you show yourself pure
And with the crooked (שָׁקֵט), you act tortuously (פִּתְלֵם)

⁸² De Boer argues that the eagle motif may be *maternal* as it is in Egyptian sources (*Fatherhood and Motherhood in Israelite and Judean Piety* [Leiden: Brill, 1974], 35). It could also be neutral, however. In any case, there the imagery exhibits significant overlap between the protection and parenting themes.

Reading the rock metaphor against the backdrop of the strong childbearing and rearing undertones of this frame, the intersection of creation and rock themes serves as an apt place to begin looking for highlighted entailments. Several emerge.

There is the idea of rock as a *place of quarrying*. This conceptual background coheres well with the birthing imagery since both envision the emergence of a new entity (child, quarried stone) out of an existing one (parent, rock). It is possible that, in a similar way, this function of rock conceptualises YHWH as the source of Israel's existence. It was from him—'the Rock'—that they were hewn. Few would describe the process of quarrying as an intimate one. However, when this imagery is employed figuratively, the relationship between the 'parent' rock (YHWH) and hewn stone (Israel) carries a sense of intimacy since it is out of the existing rock itself that the new piece of stone emerged. Though it is unclear whether this cultural conception of rock undergirds any other uses of צור for God in the Hebrew Bible, it almost certainly undergirds the use of the word-picture in Isa 51:1 to depict Abraham as the father of Israel, the rock (צור) from which they were hewn.⁸³

Another place that birthing and rock themes come together is in the mythology of the ANE world. It is possible that behind this use of צור for God lies a generative rock myth in the vein of those found in Ugarit, where the first animate creator emerges from rock (*KTU* 1.100). If so, this conception of rock as a place of creation conceptualises YHWH as one from whom Israel came into existence. They owe their existence to him. Portraying YHWH as the (mythological generative) Rock perhaps highlights the personal and intimate relationship he shares with his people.⁸⁴ Along with this type of myth, it could be that the use of צור here in v. 4 evokes the cosmic mountain motif of the ANE, in particular, the belief that the sacred mountain was the site of creation. As seen in Chapter 3, Egyptian mythology envisions Amun-Re initiating creation on a *primaeval* mount that arose out of the chaos.⁸⁵ Interestingly, v. 10 employs chaos language (תהו 'empty' and ילל 'howling') in describing the wilderness where YHWH 'found' (מצא) his people, perhaps supporting this suggestion. If so, the creative associations with the cosmic mountain are utilised to conceptualise YHWH—Israel's cosmic mountain—as their Creator, the one who overcame the threat of chaos and established his people as a nation.

⁸³ See Chapter 3.

⁸⁴ Grisanti notes that "by forming them as a nation, [YHWH] has brought them into the special status of being a 'son' of Yahweh" ("Deuteronomy," 781).

⁸⁵ Pritchard, *ANET*, 3–4.

Divine designations found in the mythologies of the broader ANE world serve as a potential background behind the rock metaphor here. Perhaps most striking is the use of the epithet ‘great mountain’ for Enlil and Bel since, as seen in Chapter 3, it is routinely employed in connection with their other titles (father) and roles (divine provision and sustenance). The collocation of these same themes in vv. 4–18—Rock (vv. 4, 15b, 18), Father (vv. 6, 15b), Provider (vv. 13–14)—would seem to suggest the poet was aware of this type of divine designations and that such divine imagery was common cultural currency of the ANE world. In any case, it is possible then that ‘rock’ (or ‘mountain’) as divine designation underlies the conceptualisation of YHWH as a God who is responsible for the same tasks as other ANE gods, especially in the creation of his people and his provision for them.

4.2.3 YHWH as Protector

The rock imagery also conceptualises YHWH as Israel’s Protector. This is signalled by the frame of reference that describes YHWH’s protective nature, especially during their formative years in the wilderness. This is seen primarily in the rich protection language in vv. 10–11. YHWH surrounds (סבב) and cares for (בין) helpless Israel in the chaotic and howling wilderness (תהו וְלַל יְשֻׁמֹן, v. 10). Employing particularly picturesque language, the poet depicts YHWH guarding them as the pupil—or apple—of his eye (יִצְרָהוּ כְּאֵי שׁוֹן עֵינֹו, v. 10bB), an idiom that “symboliz[es] that which is precious and particularly worthy of protection.”⁸⁶ In other words, YHWH lovingly guarded Israel with the same tenacious protection that one devotes to guarding his or her eye.⁸⁷ The eagle imagery in v. 11 continues this theme. YHWH is likened to a (parent) eagle protecting (עיר) ⁸⁸ its young, hovering closely over them (רחף) and standing ready to rescue them on its wings and pinion (יִפְרֹשׁ כַּנְּפָיו יִקְחֵהוּ) ‘he spreads his wings, he catches him’; יִשְׂאֵהוּ עַל־אֲבָרְתָו ‘he lifts them up on his pinions’.⁸⁹ Finally, in light of this characterisation of YHWH as Israel’s Protector, it seems likely that the salvation in v.

⁸⁶ Basson, *Divine Metaphors*, 92–93; Cairns, *Word and Presence*, 283; Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 797; Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 357; Grisanti, “Deuteronomy,” 785; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 385; Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 414; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 403 n. 63; for a detailed discussion of this idiom, see Mercer (“The Little Man”).

⁸⁷ Block, *Deuteronomy*, 753; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 367.

⁸⁸ Reading עיר ‘to protect’ instead of the MT עור ‘to rouse’ should be preferred. This decision rests on the fact that the parallel verb, רחף ‘to hover,’ seems to imply protection and is corroborated by the general essence of the broader context vv. 10–12, namely YHWH’s *protection* of Israel. The LXX reading of this verse—σπάζω ‘to protect, watch over’—also points in this direction.

⁸⁹ Claassens, “I Kill and I Give Life,” 37.

15b ('Rock of *salvation*')—at least in part—refers back to YHWH's protective care in the wilderness. This will be addressed further in connection with the use of צור for God in vv. 15b and 18, though suffice to say here: this connection further builds that protection frame. Furthermore, if those who see military undertones behind the expression יַרְבֵּהוּ עַל־בְּמֹתַי אֲרָץ 'he caused them to mount the high places of the earth' in v. 13 are correct, it is probable that this line extends the protection motif to include YHWH protecting his people *by ensuring their victory in battle*.⁹⁰

This frame points to three potential entailments. It could be that the cultural conception of rocks as *physical* places of refuge lies behind this use of צור for God here in v. 4. The great height, size, hardness, immovability of rocks—along with their often cavernous and crannied exterior—made them natural sources of protection. This idea is well attested in the Hebrew Bible (Exod 33:21, 22; 1 Sam 24:3; 1 Chr 11:15; Job 24:8; Pss 27:5, 61:3 [Eng. 2]; Isa 2:10, 19, 21).

This is seen in the broader ANE world as well. Creach argues that it is unlikely that seeking refuge in rocks was unique to Israelite experience⁹¹ and points to the archaeological excavations at Tell el-Hibr, which reveal that rocks and cliffs “served as lookout points, temporary shelters, and even dwellings during periods of siege.”⁹² Rock as a place of refuge is also in an Assyrian inscription from the 13th-century that recounts how, fearing the military prowess of Tukulti-Ninurta I (1243–1207 BCE), the Šubarū army ‘ran to the rocky mountains to save their lives’.⁹³ Something similar is implied in the Ugaritic text *KTU* 1.4 vii. 35–37, where the enemies of Baal seek refuge in the forest and the foes of Hadd in the mountain side.⁹⁴ Finally, Keel confirms this use of rock by pointing to two relevant Egyptian reliefs. In the first, dated to the reign of the Egyptian pharaoh, Seti I (1317–1301 BCE), Canaanites are portrayed as seeking refuge upon a rock from the pursuing Egyptians (not pictured), though it is clear from this scene that the rock will not save them (see Illustration 4.1).⁹⁵ In another relief, Libyans take flight to a rock or mountain to escape Ramses III (1197–1165 BCE), see

⁹⁰ Block, *Deuteronomy*, 754–55; Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 381; Crenshaw, “Wedorek,” 52; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 455; Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 415; Rose, *5. Mose*, 569; Sanders, *Provenance*, 168–69.

⁹¹ Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge*, 63.

⁹² *Ibid.*; cf. Alison V. G. Betts, “Tell El-Hibr: A Rock Shelter Occupation of the Fourth Millennium B.C.E. in the Jordanian Baydiya,” *BASOR* 287 (1992): 5–16.

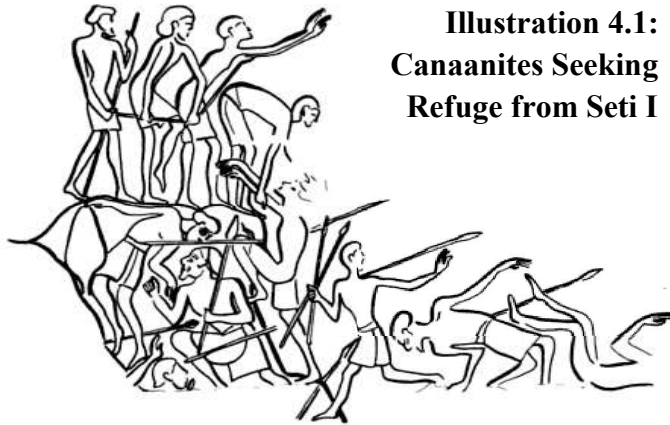
⁹³ Albert Kirk Grayson et al., *Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennia BC (to 1115 BC)* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 236.

⁹⁴ Kowalski, “Rock of Ages,” 55 n. 6.

⁹⁵ Keel, *Symbolism*, 180.

Illustration 4.2.⁹⁶

The conception of rocks as natural sources of safety then conceptualises YHWH as the ideal source of refuge for Israel. The complex of topological references in the following verses (‘desert land’, ‘wilderness’, ‘high places of the earth’ ‘field’, ‘rock,

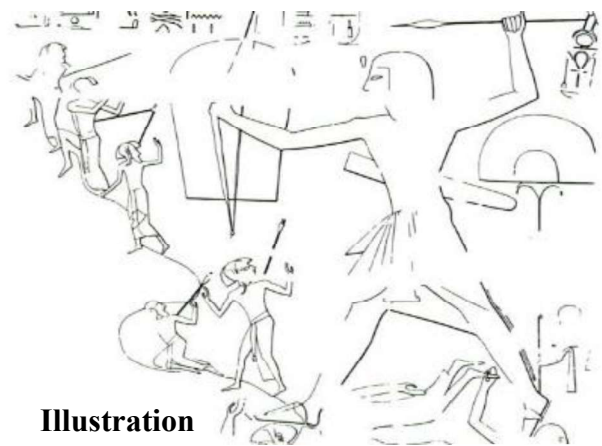


**Illustration 4.1:
Canaanites Seeking
Refuge from Seti I**

‘flinty rock’) would seem to support this reading. One might add to this the fact that protection is the most common sense of the divine use of צִוּר in the Hebrew Bible. It is a connotation that is evenly distributed over the key sections of the Hebrew Bible (Torah, Prophets, Writings),⁹⁷

as well as throughout the various periods of Israel’s literary history.⁹⁸ This makes it difficult to believe that a use of צִוּר for God would not have evoked a connotation of divine protection. The presence of the ‘protection’ frame in the context of vv. 4–18 makes it very likely that the rock imagery here in v. 4 conceptualises YHWH as a place of refuge.

The ‘protection’ frame also opens up the possibility of mythological associations. צִוּר may evoke the cosmic mountain motif again, in particular, the commonplace belief that it was impregnable (CTA 3.3.43–4.47). If in view here, YHWH is cast as an impregnable source of protection for his people. It could also be that the rock imagery serves as an allusion to divine designations. It is known that the Assyrian god, Aššur, was called ‘great mountain’, especially in the context of his role as divine guardian.



**Illustration
4.2: Libyans Seeking
Refuge from Ramses III**

⁹⁶ Ibid., 182.

⁹⁷ Otto, “Singing Moses”; see also his fuller treatment “Moses Abschiedslied.”

⁹⁸ Fischer, “Der Fels,” 28.

Support for a similar use here in v. 4 is found in the possible allusion to Israel’s military success in v. 13. If correct, this reading would correspond closely to the military success orchestrated by Aššur and would conceptualise YHWH as the Protector of his people, one who guards his people and empowers them to overcome physical (vv. 10–11) and political dangers (v. 13a).

4.2.4 YHWH as Provider

In addition to portraying YHWH as Creator and Protector, צור express his role as Provider. This conceptualisation is rooted in the frame of reference in vv. 4–18 that depicts YHWH’s lavish provision for Israel from the harvest of the land of Canaan. In v. 13a, he gives them ‘produce of the field’ to eat (v. 13a). This provision is extended further by the maternal imagery discussed above: YHWH nurses Israel with דבש מפלע ‘honey from rock’ and שמן מן סלע צור ‘oil from the flinty rock’ (v. 13b). This non-divine use of rock imagery here is significant. In light of the prominence of צור in the poem (vv. 4, 15b, 18, 30, 31, 37), this occurrence can hardly be divorced from the others. Such a link certainly opens up the possibility that the cultural conception of rocks as sources of provision stands behind the use of צור here in v. 4. Claassens observes that this verb governs v. 14, adding to the list of YHWH’s provisions: curds, milk, fat of lambs, rams of Bashan, goats, the very finest wheat, foaming wine.⁹⁹ In addition to the direct account of YHWH’s provisions in vv. 13–14, Israel’s reception of these divine blessings also contributes to the ‘provision’ frame. Israel not only eats but eats *to satiety*.¹⁰⁰ YHWH’s provisions are so rich and abundant that Israel grew fat (שמן), a fact that is underscored by the repetition of this verb (vv. 15bA, B).

When the use of צור for God is considered within this context, mythical and non-

⁹⁹ Claassens, 38-39.

¹⁰⁰ As noted in Chapter 1, the LXX reads καὶ ἔφαγεν Ἰακωβ καὶ ἐνεπλήσθη ‘and Jacob ate and was satisfied’ at the beginning of v. 15. This line is also attested in the SP and 4QPhylⁿ, but is lacking in the MT. It is possible that this ‘plus’ reflects an expansion (Hans M. Barstad, “En Bemerkning til Deuteronomium 32:15,” *Norsk Teologisk Tidsskrift* 76, no. 2 [1975]: 103–6), perhaps under the influence of the similar language found in the poem’s narrative frame (Deut 31:20) or elsewhere in Deuteronomy (6:11; 8:10, 11; 11:15; 14:29; 26:12). On the other hand, at a number of points the LXX likely preserves the original text, most notably vv. 8 and 43 (Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, 489 n. 3). Moreover, as Nelson rightly notes, this expression “does not have the character of a scribal addition” (*Deuteronomy*, 367). Sanders objects to the additional line, arguing that “it is hard to conceive good reasons for elimination” (*Provenance*, 179). However, he does not seem to have considered haplography (McCarthy, BHQ, 144*; cf. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 883; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 367). In light of this discussion, reading of the SP, LXX, and Q should be tentatively preferred (Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, 489 n. 3; Eissfeldt, *Das Lied Moses*, 10 n. 4; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 449; Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 792; Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 382; Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 360–61; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 849, 883; Robson, *Honey from the Rock*, 55; Sanders, *Provenance*).

mythical entailments related to rock as a source of provision come to the fore. Let us consider the mythical first. One should not rule out that the metaphor evokes yet again cosmic mountains or divine designations. Indeed, Ugaritic texts depict El's sacred mountain abode as the head of two cosmic rivers and more generally the source of fertility (see Chapter 3). If this entailment is indeed highlighted, the allusion to the irrigating and fructifying cosmic mountain conceptualises YHWH himself as a fruitful source of provision for Israel. In other words, just as life-giving rivers and fertility flow from the cosmic mountain, so too life-giving provisions flow from YHWH. With regard to divine epithets of the ANE world, as discussed above, the gods Enlil and Bel were routinely referred to as 'great mountain' in contexts that praise his divine provision and sustenance. Applying this divine designation to YHWH conceptualises him as a God who—like (or perhaps surpassing) Enlil—richly provides for his people, Israel.

It could also be that the non-mythical conception is in view. One could envisage rocks as places of luxurious provisions like gold, silver, gems (Job 28:10ff.), honey (Ps 81:16), and oil (Job 29:6). However, it seems more likely that צור here alludes to YHWH's miraculous provision of water for Israel from rock (Exod 17:6; Deut 8:15; Pss 78:15, 20; 105:41; 114:8; Isa 48:21) based on the 'rock' language in v. 13b, דְּבַשׁ מִסֵּלַע, 'honey from rock' and שֶׁמֶן מִחֲלָמִישׁ צוּר 'oil from the flinty rock'. Some have seen in the expressions an allusion to YHWH's provision of water from rock.¹⁰¹ The language occurs elsewhere in the book (Deut 8:15), where it is an unmistakable reference to the water-from-the-rock event:

[The LORD your God] led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid wasteland with poisonous snakes and scorpions. He made water flow for you from flint rock (מצור החלמיש).

This use of rock imagery seems to support this reading, though it raises questions concerning its precise allusion here in v. 4. The expressions are perhaps poetic references to the event itself. That is to say, 'honey' and 'oil' are figures of the water. It is also possible that the poet employs language evocative of the water-from-the-rock episode here in v. 13 (cf. Deut 8:15) in order to depict this provision in the Land as likewise miraculous, life-giving, and abundant. Either way, the conceptualisation of YHWH in terms of this tradition then depicts him as a God to whom Israel can turn for provision. In this way, just as the rock produced abundant,

¹⁰¹ Fabry, "צור, Şûr," 12:317; Andrew Hill, "צור," in *NIDOTTE*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 793; Kowalski, "Rock of Ages," 78–79.

life-giving water to the needy Israelites in the wilderness, so too YHWH provides abundantly for his people.

This imagery appears to be at work in the use of the rock metaphor in Psalms 78 and 95 as has been addressed elsewhere. A close connection between the Song and these psalms has been suggested by scholars. The relationship between Ps 78 and Deut 32 lies at the heart of Eissfeldt's study of these didactic poems.¹⁰² Howard draws attention to the resemblance between Ps 95 and the Song, noting that both poems make reference to the miraculous water from the rock event (Deut 32:13; Ps 95:8–11).¹⁰³ Moreover, Howard observes that both recount the mistakes of the wilderness generation for the benefit of the current generation; the rebellious nature of the past generation is underscored so that the present one might not make the same missteps.¹⁰⁴ The same can be said of Ps 78. The commonality among these poems only further supports seeing an allusion to the water-from-the-rock tradition in the use of צִוּר here in v. 4.

4.2.5 Discussion

The results of this metaphorical analysis are significant for understanding the connotation and contribution of the rock metaphor. With reference to the former, the evidence paints a picture of a complex trope. It is complex in that it is polyvalent.

On the one hand, it appears that the conceptualisation of YHWH as an immovable and permanent rock to underscore his moral constancy is particularly pronounced, based on the concentration of moral language in v. 4 and its close proximity to the use of צִוּר. This reading is in accordance with a number of scholars. In particular, my analysis agrees with Craigie and Lee in seeing the physical solidity of rock as the basis of the conceptualisation of YHWH as an unchanging God. Though his proposed conceptual background (the rock city of Sela) seems unlikely, Knight rightly underscores the relational dimension of this portrayal to cast YHWH as a *faithful* God.

On the other hand, it is difficult to dismiss any of the other connotations, leaving open the possibility that all four are expressed simultaneously to varying degrees. When viewed against the backdrop of the scholarly discussion concerning the use of צִוּר in v. 4, the implications of this conclusion are threefold. First, it introduces otherwise overlooked connotations (creation, provision). Second, it affirms those who detected a

¹⁰² *Das Lied Moses*.

¹⁰³ David M. Howard Jr., *The Structure of Psalms 93–100* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 60–61.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 60.

protection connotation (Driver, Eichhorn, Tigay, Nelson) under heavy critique from others (Knowles, Sanders, Fernandes), while at the same time challenging the idea that this is the *only* sense. Third, this polyvalence suggests that rather than ‘competing’ views, interpreters have generally aligned themselves with one of several ‘complementary’ senses of the metaphor; in this way, the various suggestions reflect an ‘incomplete’ reading rather than an ‘incorrect’ one.

It is also important to note that ‘moral righteousness’ is conspicuously missing from the list of identified connotations. While there is little doubt that that צור is inseparably linked with the moral language of v. 4, the metaphorical analysis here challenges such a reading as Knowles, Sanders, and Fernandes have outlined it. The problem with this proposal is brought into sharper focus when one asks what entailment(s) of rock are utilised to portray YHWH as a morally righteous God. Both Sanders and Fernandes cite the physical characteristics of rock as the likely conceptual background behind the use of צור in v. 4; but it is unclear how these features of rock conceptualise YHWH as morally righteous.

In addition to this variation among connotations, there is a great degree of coherence. This is seen on the level of entailment. Interestingly, multiple frames (parent, protection, provision) point to the same possible backgrounds to the rock metaphor, namely the cosmic mountain motif and ANE divine designations. This convergence seems to support reading this entailment here in v. 4, as do the strong mythological undertones throughout the poem (vv. 8–9, 12, 24, 31, 37–38, 43). Creach indeed anticipates this, in part. He writes:

The idea of ‘Yahweh as refuge’ perhaps arose from the common ancient Near Eastern belief in a ‘cosmic mountain’, an elevation made secure as the abode of the gods and serving as the centre of world government. This view would explain texts like Deuteronomy 32 that label God *šûr* and *šēla* (‘rock’ or ‘mountain’).¹⁰⁵

There is also coherence among the conceptualisations of YHWH as Creator, Protector, and Provider in that together they touch upon key aspects of loving parenthood, a particularly prominent characterisation of YHWH in vv. 5–6. Stated differently, conceptualising YHWH in these ways serves to reinforce his status as אב ‘father’ and gives definition to this role. The dialogue between the divine rock and father (as well as mother) metaphors will be taken up in greater detail in connection

¹⁰⁵ Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge*, 62.

with the צִוּר in vv. 15b and 18.

This complex metaphor contributes greatly to the message of this strophe (vv. 4–6). The foregoing analysis demonstrates that the word-picture sets the trajectory for reading the rest of v. 4. This is signalled by its syntactical prominence (*casus pendens*), which leaves the rock metaphor—as Robson so vividly describes it—towering at the entrance of the poem.¹⁰⁶ Returning to Craigie’s conclusion, it indeed seems best to understand this emphatic position and form of הַצִּוּר as a sign that the following lines are meant to “systematically elaborate the attributes of God as the Rock of Israel.”¹⁰⁷ In other words, it gives definition to the verse’s moral language. The constancy of Israel’s Rock means that he is *always* morally perfect. The creating, protecting, and providing roles of Israel’s Rock illustrate how his perfections are seen in practice.

In addition to contributing to the reading strategy of v. 4, צִוּר for God also plays an important role in developing the rhetoric of vv. 4–6. In one sense, it serves to elevate YHWH by characterising him as a God of rock-like constancy, thereby drawing attention to the fact that he is *always* morally upright in his relationship with his people, Israel.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, it reinforces the picture of YHWH as a loving parent, the one who brought Israel into existence and sustained them with his protection and provision. In this way, the picture of YHWH as Israel’s tenacious Protector (vv. 10–11) and lavish Provider (vv. 13–14) represents the outworking of his moral perfection (v. 4) and his parental care (vv. 5–6, cf. 15b, 18).

At the same time, the various connotations of the rock metaphor help set up the painful contrast between YHWH and Israel that underscores the depth of their corruption and foolishness in abandoning such a constant and caring God. It is possible that spatially the depiction of YHWH as a hard and immovable rock mass is intended to serve as a foil to the twisted and tortuous nature of Israel. Moreover, the metaphor—by underscoring YHWH’s unswerving commitment to Israel, special relationship with them, and loving care for them—provides unimpeachable grounds to respond to him with love and devotion. “Such a privileged position out of all the nations of the world (Ex 19:5; Dt 7:6; 14:2, 21),” Grisanti writes, “should surely motivate his chosen people to conduct themselves as loyal citizens.”¹⁰⁹ Certainly, this is what one would naturally

¹⁰⁶ Robson, *Honey from the Rock*, 56; cf. Fokkelman, *Major Poems*, 70.

¹⁰⁷ Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 378; cf. Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, 473; Block, *Deuteronomy*, 750–51; Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 227.

¹⁰⁸ Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, 473; Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 350; Robson, *Honey from the Rock*, 57.

¹⁰⁹ Grisanti, “Deuteronomy,” 784.

expect. So, the fact that Israel met YHWH's faithfulness, intimacy, and care with corruption, blemish, and perversion stresses the shameful incongruence between their actions and his.¹¹⁰

4.3 SUMMARY

The goal of this chapter has been to revisit the questions of connotation and contribution of צור for God in v. 4 through textual and metaphorical analysis. With regard to connotation, the metaphorical analysis has demonstrated that the metaphor is polyvalent and therefore wields power to convey volumes in a word. This polyvalence is the result of a number of frames (moral perfection, parent, protection, provision), each of which points to an even wider range of possible entailments. Interestingly, these rock entailments are drawn from a number of spheres including physical characteristics (immovability, permanence, places of quarrying, refuge, and provision), cultural conceptions (symbols of refuge, provision), as well as ANE mythical associations (generative rock myth, cosmic mountain, divine designations) and Israelite religious traditions (water-from-the-rock).

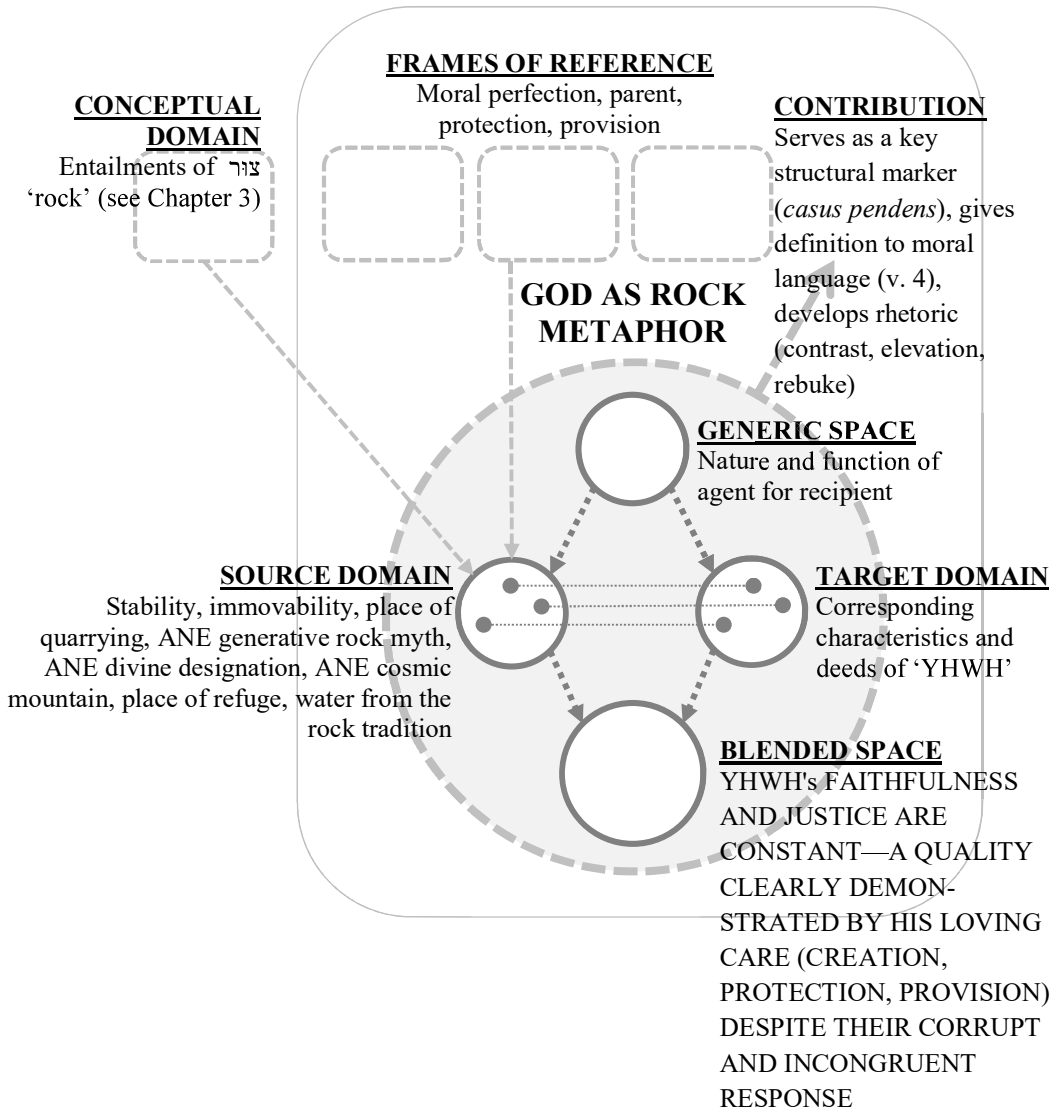
This chapter has also shown that this complex of entailments conceptualises YHWH in a number of significant ways (see Figure 4.2). The immovability and permanence of rock portray YHWH as unchanging in his character and deeds. Though this conceptualisation is especially pronounced, a wide array of cultural, traditional, and mythological entailments also cast him as Israel's Creator, Protector, and Provider. Noteworthy is the prominence of the mythological entailments (ANE cosmic mountain, divine designations) in conceptualising YHWH in these ways, as well as the coherence among these conceptualisations (aspects of divine parenthood). Within the broader scholarly discussion, these findings are significant in that they (1) challenge the commonly held 'moral righteousness' connotation, (2) put forth additional ones (creation, provision), and (3) suggest that 'competing' senses of the metaphor are better understood as expressing *complementary* divine conceptualisations.

This chapter has also highlighted the important ways that the word-picture helps to develop the message of v. 4 specifically and vv. 4–6 more generally. It gives definition to YHWH's moral perfections in v. 4, underscoring that he is *always* morally perfect (constancy) and expresses his goodness in history (creation, protection,

¹¹⁰ Lee, "Narrative Function," 67–68.

provision). Within the context of vv. 4–6, it helps to develop the rhetoric of the passage (elevation, rebuke).

Figure 4.2: Conceptual Blend of the Rock Metaphor in Vv. 4–6



CHAPTER 5

AN ANALYSIS OF צוֹרֵר IN DEUTERONOMY 32:15B–18

The occurrences of צוֹרֵר in vv. 15b and 18 constitute some of the most enigmatic imagery in the Song. This is particularly true of the juxtaposition of rock and birthing language but is also seen in the combination of passive (rock) and active imagery (salvation). The relationship between צוֹרֵר for God and these themes has served as the starting point for a discussion of the sense of the rock metaphor. Past research has largely categorised these uses of צוֹרֵר into one of three connotations.

Some interpreters see a protection sense in the use of צוֹרֵר in vv. 15b and 18, largely because of the close connection between צוֹרֵר and יְשׁוּעָה ‘salvation.’ This is the view of Eichhorn. In keeping with his belief that the Song represents a “programmatically teaching poem” of a prophetic-cult movement in Jerusalem, he understands the use of צוֹרֵר in both vv. 15b and 18 to be a prophetic reflection on the protective function of YHWH.¹¹¹ Kowalski and Nelson similarly read a protection connotation, though only in v. 15b, based on the use of salvation language.¹¹²

Others conclude that the word-picture carries a creative sense in light of the ‘imaginative’ and evocative use of this rock imagery in tandem with birthing language (v. 18). Miller moves in this direction, commenting that “the imaginative freedom of the poetry is heightened” by the fact it is an inanimate object—rock—giving birth (יָלַד, חָיִל).¹¹³ More adamant are Knowles and Fernandes. In light of the lack of the typical expression of danger in connection with divine refuge, they reject a protection interpretation and insist that the metaphor is best understood in light of the creation motif inherent to these verses.¹¹⁴

Sanders and Kowalski go still further in their treatment of this mixed imagery in v. 18 and address possible conceptual backgrounds behind it. Both agree that the birth

¹¹¹ Eichhorn, *Gott als Fels, Burg, Zuflucht*, 70, 74, 77; cf. Hill, “צוֹרֵר,” 3:793.

¹¹² Kowalski, “Rock of Ages,” 207; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 370.

¹¹³ Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 230.

¹¹⁴ Fernandes, *God as Rock*, 24; Knowles, “The Rock, His Work Is Perfect,” 313.

language helps colour the rock imagery and gives it a creative connotation.¹¹⁵ They diverge, however, in their account of the conceptual background undergirding this sense of the metaphor. As seen elsewhere, Sanders leaves open the possibility that it evokes ANE generative rock myth.¹¹⁶ On the other hand, Kowalski thinks the metaphor alludes to the water-from-the-rock tradition, arguing that just as the water-producing צֹרֶר in the wilderness was a source of life, so too YHWH, Israel's צֹרֶר, is a source of life.¹¹⁷

Still others, taking the discussion in a different direction, suggest that the primary point of צֹרֶר is YHWH's unchanging nature, especially with regard to his unswerving commitment to Israel. Knight and Claassens read the metaphor in this way, though each focuses on a particular aspect of this rock-like constancy. Knight emphasises the remarkable way that YHWH's faithfulness stands unchanged despite the unfaithfulness of his people.¹¹⁸ Claassens understands the interaction between the rock and parent metaphors as an expression of the antiquity of this relationship.¹¹⁹

As this brief survey illustrates, the field consists of a number of competing views concerning the sense of the word-picture in vv. 15b and 18 and its contribution of the broader context; the aim of this chapter is to analyse the use of צֹרֶר for God in vv. 15b and 18 in order to revisit the questions of connotation and contribution and to better evaluate these seemingly diverging views. I will attempt to show that the rock imagery is polyvalent and includes not only the first two senses outlined above (protection, creation) but also connotations yet to be proposed. The analysis upon which this conclusion rests will unfold in two parts. It will begin with a close reading of vv. 15b–18 (textual analysis). This task will serve to set the stage, exegetically speaking, for the second: a detailed examination of the word-picture specifically (metaphorical analysis).

5.1 TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Let us begin the textual analysis of vv. 15b–18 with a brief word on the structure of this unit.¹²⁰ As mentioned in Chapter 1, many consider these verses a defensible unit; their coherence is both thematic and structural. Vv. 16–17 are closely tied by the depiction of

¹¹⁵ Kowalski, "Rock of Ages," 196, 200, 213–14; Sanders, *Provenance*, 397; cf. Hill, "צֹרֶר," 3:793.

¹¹⁶ Sanders, *Provenance*, 397; cf. Korpel, "Rock צֹרֶר סֵלֶע," 584–85, 623.

¹¹⁷ Kowalski, "Rock of Ages," 232.

¹¹⁸ Knight, *A Theological Quarry*, 65.

¹¹⁹ Claassens, "I Kill and I Give Life," 37.

¹²⁰ Boston, "The Song of Moses," 68, 70.

Israel’s illicit worship of other gods.¹²¹ These verses, moreover, are enveloped by vv. 15b and 18. In addition to all four of these cola sharing rejection language (‘to forsake’, ‘to spurn’, ‘to neglect’, and ‘to forget’), the divine designations and creation imagery in v. 15b mirror those in v. 18. When taken together, vv. 15b–18 form the chiasmic structure below.¹²² This effectively marks these verses off from both the preceding and following poetic strophes (v. 15a and vv. 19–21).

- A* Israel forsook the **God** (אֱלֹהִים) who made them (v. 15bA)
B They spurned the **Rock** (צִוֵּר) who saved them (v. 15bB)
C They worshipped other gods (vv. 16–17)
B’ They neglected the **Rock** (צִוֵּר) who begot them (v. 18a)
A’ They forgot the **God** (אֱלֹהִים) who gave birth to them (v. 18b)

Having sketched the general shape of these verses, let us proceed to a more detailed reading of them. In light of the chiasmic structure, this close reading of these verses will examine the outer frame (vv. 15b, 18) and then the inner one (vv. 16–17).

5.1.1 Verses 15b, 18

The strophe opens with a serious accusation: Israel has rejected their God. It reads:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|------|--|
| וַיִּטֹּשׁ אֱלֹהִים עֲשָׂהוּ | 15bA | <i>And they</i> ¹²³ <i>forsook the God who made him</i> |
| וַיִּבְבֵּל צִוֵּר יִשְׁעָתוֹ | 15bB | <i>And they treated the Rock of their salvation with disdain</i> |

In light of the lengthy account of YHWH’s gracious acts on behalf of his people (vv. 4–18), this response is startling, though not completely surprising in view of the hints of rebellion in v. 15a and the apparent foreshadowing of this in vv. 5–6.

This rejection entailed more than mere abandonment; it involved disdain and scorn. The verb נִטַּשׁ expresses the idea of abandoning or forsaking something and is virtually synonymous with the more routine עָזַב ‘to abandon’.¹²⁴ נִבְבֵּל in the *pi’el* carries the sense of treating someone with disdain,¹²⁵ as it does elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible

¹²¹ Sanders, *Provenance*, 270.

¹²² Sanders, 278–279; Lundbom, 866; Carrillo Alday, *Cantico*, 85.

¹²³ As in vv. 4–6, both YHWH and Israel are referred to by the masculine singular ‘he, him’. However, throughout this passage, I have chosen to render the singular forms for Israel as a plural ‘they, them’ in order to capture the sense of Israel as a nation and to differentiate between God and his people clearly.

¹²⁴ Alden “נִטַּשׁ” *NIDOTTE* 3:99. See also the use of these verbs as poetic word-pairs in 1 Kgs 8:57; Pss 27:9; 94:14; Isa 32:14; Jer 12:7.

¹²⁵ Holladay and Köhler, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 225.

(Jer 14:21; Mic 7:6; Nah 3:6).¹²⁶ Here, then, it portrays Israel returning salvation with contempt. Many interpreters have noted the use of the related adjective נָבָל elsewhere in the Song (vv. 6, 21).¹²⁷ These uses of נָבָל to depict the foolishness of Israel and the enemy nation respectively seem to give further dimension to the use of נָבָל here. It underscores Israel's foolishness in rejecting their God. Perhaps it even expresses subtly the effect on YHWH: Israel's disdain for him makes him look like a fool for such devoted care.

The colourful descriptions of YHWH only heighten the shock of Israel's behaviour. He is the God who brought them into existence (Father) and the Rock who saved them (Saviour). With regard to the first of these, the context of the broader stanza (vv. 4–18) makes it clear that the expression אֱלֹהֵי עֲשָׂהוּ 'the God who made him' is intended to evoke his role as Father.¹²⁸ In v. 6, the same verb is embedded in a string of creation terms (כֹּהֵן, קִנְיָה) that explicate YHWH, Israel's Father (אָבִיךָ). The father metaphor here underscores the closeness of the relationship between YHWH and his people, as well as their dependence on him for their very existence.¹²⁹ At the same time, as Dille suggests, it likely also speaks of his authority of YHWH over his 'sons and daughters' (cf. vv. 6, 20, 43 LXX, Q) and serves to remind Israel of their obligation to obey him.¹³⁰

Concerning the designation צִוֵּר יִשְׁעָתוֹ 'the Rock of their salvation,' it is not entirely clear what 'salvation' is envisaged. The expression is used of YHWH elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible with relative frequency (2 Sam 22:47; Pss 62:3, 7 [Eng. 2, 6]; 89:27 [Eng. 26]; 95:1, cf. Ps 18:47 [Eng. 46]; Isa 17:10), though Israel's disdain toward their saving Rock is unique to this verse.¹³¹ It is apparent that 'salvation' here denotes some form of deliverance or protection, but is it a general or specific sense is in view?¹³² It could be understood as a general description of YHWH's deliverance; that is

¹²⁶ One rabbinic tradition interprets v. 15b as an example of measure-for-measure justice: "Rabbi Dostaye the son of Yehuda says: Do not read 'And he forsook God who made him' and he dishonored' but rather 'And he forsook God who made him *that the Rock should dishonour his salvation*'" (Sifre Deuteronomy Piska 318, Basser, *Midrashic Interpretations*, 181, emphasis added). However, the strong parallelism of vv. 15b and 18 makes this unlikely since all three of the other rejection verbs find Israel not YHWH as their subject.

¹²⁷ Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 362; Lee, "Narrative Function," 85; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 306.

¹²⁸ Boston, "The Song of Moses," 76.

¹²⁹ Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 278.

¹³⁰ Dille, *Mixing Metaphors*, 36–37.

¹³¹ The language varies only slightly—צִוֵּר יִשְׁעָתִי (Ps 62:3, 7 [Eng. 2, 6]); צִוֵּר יִשְׁעָתִי (Ps 89:27 [Eng. 26]); צִוֵּר יִשְׁעִי (2 Sam 22:47); לְצִוֵּר יִשְׁעָנוּ (Ps 95:1).

¹³² Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 306.

to say, his protective nature (cf. vv. 10–14). This is fitting of the accompanying father image, since—as de Boer notes—protection was an expected part of divine fatherhood.¹³³ However, it seems more likely that a specific instance of YHWH’s protection is in view since the corresponding act of creation appears to envisage the specific event, namely Israel’s ‘birth’ as a national entity. Lundbom suggests that this may refer to YHWH’s deliverance of Israel in the wilderness.¹³⁴

This reading of ‘salvation’ seems to be supported by the highly structured nature of vv. 15b and 18, which draws together Israel’s birth and salvation inextricably (see Table 5.1):

Table 5.1: Creation and Salvation Language within the Structure of Vv. 15b–18

<i>A</i>	<i>Israel forsook</i> (נטש)	<i>the God</i> (אֱלֹהִים)	<i>who made them</i> (עשה)
<i>B</i>	<i>They spurned</i> (גבל)	<i>the Rock</i> (צור)	<i>of their salvation</i> (ישועה)
<i>B'</i>	<i>They neglected</i> (גשה)	<i>the Rock</i> (צור)	<i>who begot them</i> (ילד)
<i>A'</i>	<i>They forgot</i> (שכח)	<i>the God</i> (אל)	<i>who gave birth to them</i> (זיל)

As noted above, all four cola depict Israel’s rejection of their God—their Rock—whom the first, third, and fourth qualify with creation language. Though it is possible to take the reference to ‘salvation’ as the sole departure from the pattern, the regularity would seem to suggest that indeed Israel’s birth and salvation are connected. In light of the context of the stanza (vv. 4–18), these actions are most likely tied to YHWH’s loving rescue and care for Israel in vv. 10–12, verses that many scholars rightly understand as a poetically veiled account of the exodus and wilderness wanderings. It appears then that the poem envisions these paradigmatic events as the crucible out of which Israel was brought into existence as a nation.

As the mirrored image of v. 15b, v. 18 further reiterates Israel’s rejection of their Creator God. The shift to the second person adds emphasis to these accusations.¹³⁵

¹³³ de Boer, *Fatherhood and Motherhood*, 25.

¹³⁴ Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 885; cf. Kowalski, “Rock of Ages,” 229.

¹³⁵ Boston, “The Song of Moses,” 76.

צור ילדה תשי	18a	<i>The Rock who bore you, you neglected</i>
בתשפח אל מחללה	18b	<i>And forgot the God who gave birth to you</i> ¹³⁶

The parallel verbs—ילד ‘to bear, beget’ and חיל ‘to give birth’—routinely denote childbearing from the perspective of the mother.¹³⁷ While the former carries a more general sense, the latter—and the more arresting of the two—conveys the notion of giving birth *through labour pains*.¹³⁸ God is the subject of חיל elsewhere only in Prov 8:22–26, Ps 90:1–2, and Isa 45:9–11.¹³⁹ Though some have attempted to avoid conceptualising him in terms of maternal imagery,¹⁴⁰ this bold application of חיל to YHWH unequivocally casts YHWH as a mother.¹⁴¹ As many rightly point out, this seems to highlight the tender affection YHWH has for his people and the intimacy they share.¹⁴²

There is some debate over the MT תשי. The form is difficult in that the verb שיה

¹³⁶ It is best to continue with the MT since it is likely that the LXX reading—τοῦ τρέφοντός σε—reflects an intentional emendation in order to avoid “the comparison of God with a child-bearing woman” (חיל). A similar change appears to have taken place in v. 13, where the MT depicts God as causing Israel to suckle (ינק).

¹³⁷ Some interpreters alternatively suggest that ילד is masculine, citing the fact that the verb can be used of either a father or mother. Further support is found in the balance that the masculine imagery (v. 18a) creates when read against the unmistakably feminine reference in the parallel verb חיל (v. 18b) (Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 279; Cairns, *Word and Presence*, 285; Carrillo Alday, *Cántico*, 85; Claassens, “I Kill and I Give Life,” 37; Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 383; Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 230; Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 300; Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 313; Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 279). However, it is more likely that the term casts YHWH as a mother in light of the fact that 85% of occurrences of ילד are used in reference to a mother (Robson, *Honey from the Rock*, 58 n. 56; cf. Bratcher and Hatton, *Handbook on Deuteronomy*, 546; de Boer, *Fatherhood and Motherhood*, 42; Julia A. Foster, “The Motherhood of God: The Use of חיל as God-Language in the Hebrew Scriptures,” in *Uncovering Ancient Stones: Essays in Memory of H. Neil Richardson*, ed. Hopfe, Lewis M. [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994], 100; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 388; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 307). Moreover, the tight parallelism within v. 18 would pair ילד with the feminine חיל (Prov 23:22–25, Isa 45:10) (see Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978], 63–64). Indeed this seems to be the stronger argument.

¹³⁸ Cairns, *Word and Presence*, 285; Robson, *Honey from the Rock*, 58 n. 56; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 307.

¹³⁹ See Foster, “The Motherhood of God,” 93–102.

¹⁴⁰ For example, one rabbinic tradition understood the divine birthing imagery as underscoring the particularly painful process when YHWH brought Israel into existence; the logic runs: while the pain is great for a woman during childbirth, the pain of childbirth for a man (God) would be “doubly doubled” (Basser, *Midrashic Interpretations*, 189, cf. 188–192); a contemporary example includes Knight (*A Theological Quarry*, 66–67).

¹⁴¹ Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 806; Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 383; Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 383; John C. L. Gibson, *Language and Imagery in the Old Testament* (London: SPCK, 1998), 133–34; Knowles, “The Rock, His Work Is Perfect,” 313; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 386; Robson, *Honey from the Rock*, 58; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 307; for more on the divine mother metaphor, see de Boer, *Fatherhood and Motherhood*; Dille, *Mixing Metaphors*; Foster, “The Motherhood of God”; Sallie McFague, “God as Mother,” in *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality*, ed. Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 139–50; Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 62–63.

¹⁴² Boston, “The Song of Moses,” 76; Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 383; Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 383–84; Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 230.

is otherwise unattested in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁴³ It is certainly possible that it is simply one of the poem's many *hapax legomena*. Other suggests reconsidering the verbal root. For example, Ibn Ezra argued that תשי be equated with תטה (to forget) on the basis of Prov 4:5, where תטה likewise stands parallel to שכח.¹⁴⁴ The reading of the SP (תשא) and the parallelism with שכח (Jer 23:39–40) have led many to suspect textual corruption and to propose reading תשי, תשי, or תשי from נשה 'to forget' instead of the form תשי from נשי.¹⁴⁵ In light of the evidence, reading נשה seems preferable; though the proposed changes to the consonantal text are unnecessary, if one explains the final *yod* as part of a lingering archaic form, analogous to that found in v. 37 (תשי). If correct, both verbs express the idea of Israel forgetting their God; for variety, I have chosen to render as 'to fail to remember' on the basis of the use of תשי and 'to remember' as conceptual antonyms in Deuteronomy.

The use of both paternal (עשה 'to make', v. 15b) and maternal (ילד 'to bear' and הילד 'to give birth through labour pains', v. 18) language of YHWH is striking. What is one to make of this? It could be that the combination of paternal and maternal imagery is simply an example of ANE convention.¹⁴⁶ Yet, it seems more likely that it serves to heighten the poetic effect of these verses.¹⁴⁷ What is more, the portrayal of YHWH as both Father and Mother underscores the fact that Israel owes their existence completely to him.¹⁴⁸ At the same time, it highlights the full range of his parental love and underscores the great extent of YHWH's care.¹⁴⁹

Both verbs in v. 18 cast Israel's rejection in terms of forgetting. However, this forgetfulness is not a mere mental lapse, but rather conveys the sense of relational and moral neglect (cf. Jer 23:39).¹⁵⁰ The warning against forgetting YHWH is a common theme in Deuteronomy and is unique to this book within the Pentateuch.¹⁵¹

¹⁴³ Gesenius, Kautzsch, and Cowley, *Gesenius's Hebrew Grammar*, §75s.

¹⁴⁴ Basser, *Midrashic Interpretations*, 189.

¹⁴⁵ Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 802, 806; Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 383 n. 40; Holladay and Köhler, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 367; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 387; McCarthy, BHQ, 145; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 367; Nigosian, "The Song of Moses," 76; Sanders, *Provenance*, 186.

¹⁴⁶ ANE gods were regularly depicted as both fathers and mothers (de Boer, *Fatherhood and Motherhood*, 39, cf. 39–42; Dille, *Mixing Metaphors*, 35; McFague, "God as Mother," 141).

¹⁴⁷ Von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 301.

¹⁴⁸ Block, *Deuteronomy*, 757; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 388; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 307.

¹⁴⁹ Cairns, *Word and Presence*, 285; Urs Winter, *Frau und Göttin: exegetische und ikonographische Studien zum weiblichen Gottesbild im Alten Israel und in dessen Umwelt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 536–37.

¹⁵⁰ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 456.

¹⁵¹ Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 886; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 373.

Remembering YHWH (6:12; 8:11, 14, 19), as well as his covenant (4:23), commands (26:13), and salvific acts (4:9; 25:19), represents one of the keys to Israel’s success in the Land; Moses therefore repeatedly exhorts them to take care not to forget lest they fall into apostasy and judgment (8:19). Forgetting YHWH here in v. 18, then, refers to Israel’s abandonment of their filial and covenantal relationship with him for an illegitimate one with other gods, in clear violation of the first commandment (Exod 20:3; Deut 5:7; cf. 6:4).¹⁵²

5.1.2 Verses 16–17

The inner frame (vv. 16–17) begins with not only a more concrete description of *how* Israel abandoned their God but also YHWH’s response (v. 16):

יִקְנְאוּהוּ בְּזָרִים	16a	<i>They stirred him to jealousy with foreign gods</i>
בְּתוֹעֵבֹת יִקְעִיטוּהוּ	16b	<i>With abominable gods, they provoked him</i> ¹⁵³

Their betrayal involved turning to foreign and detestable gods. The adjective זָר can denote something that is ‘strange’ or ‘foreign’, or by extension ‘illegitimate,’ but here most scholars agree that it functions substantively, referring to foreign or illegitimate *gods*.¹⁵⁴ Concerning the meaning of תוֹעֵבָה, interpreters are less united. Some think it means abominable *practices*.¹⁵⁵ Others understand them to be detestable *idols* or *gods*.¹⁵⁶ תוֹעֵבָה is used to denote illicit idols on a number of other occasions in the Hebrew Bible, most often in close connection with other common idolatry terminology

¹⁵² Block, *Deuteronomy*, 755; Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 279; Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 382; Lee, “Narrative Function,” 84; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 456; Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 230; Phillips, *Deuteronomy*, 217–18; von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 198.

¹⁵³ The LXX reads παρώξυνάν με and ἐξέπικρανάν με (cf. 4QPhyl^a). The first-person singular objects are surprising. It is possible that they arose under the influence of v. 21, where the same verbs occur but with first-person suffixes (παρεζήλωσάν με and παρώργισάν με). For this reason, the MT should be slightly preferred (Boston, “The Song of Moses,” 69).

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 70 n. 163; Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 382; Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 362; Lee, “Narrative Function,” 85; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 885; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 387; Nigosian, “The Song of Moses,” 50 n. 24; Sanders, *Provenance*, 181, 394; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 306; internal support for this reading is found in the close connection between v. 16 and v. 17—the latter, a verse that focuses intently on the other gods Israel sought. External evidence includes passages elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible where the term is used in this way. For example, in Pss 44:21 [Eng. 20] and 81:10 [Eng. 9], it serves as an adjective, casting a deity as strange or foreign (זָר אֱלֹהִים). Isaiah and Jeremiah employ זָר as a substantive (Isa 44:12; Jer 2:25; 3:13), just as it is here in v. 16. In each case, it carries strong negative connotations and casts these gods as rivals to YHWH. Lee also draws attention to the strong resemblance between v. 16 and Ps 78:58 as further support; both verses unfold in the same chiasmic pattern and employ the word-pair זָרָה and כַּעַס in connection with illicit worship of the other gods (“Narrative Function,” 85–86).

¹⁵⁵ Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 362; Lee, “Narrative Function,” 86; Nigosian, “The Song of Moses,” 50.

¹⁵⁶ Boston, “The Song of Moses,” 70 n. 164; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 885; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 387; Sanders, *Provenance*, 181, 394; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 306.

גליל (2 Kgs 21:11; Ezek 6:9; 14:6; 16:36; 18:12) or שקויץ (2 Kgs 23:13; Jer 16:18; Ezek 5:11; 7:20; 11:18, 21). In Isa 44:19, תועֵבָה stands parallel to an idol of wood (בִּיל עֵץ). Moving closer to the Song, it is likely that the term carries this meaning in Deut 27:15 as well. A definitive decision is difficult; however, in light of the parallelism with זָרִים, the latter seems preferable here.

Reading ‘gods’ here is further supported by the accompanying verbs, which are both routinely used to describe YHWH’s response to the idolatry of his people. Here, as elsewhere in the Song (v. 21) and in the Hebrew Bible, the verb קנא underscores his deep desire for Israel’s undivided loyalty and the burning jealousy that their betrayal stirs in him.¹⁵⁷ This draws attention to the desire for exclusive devotion inherent to YHWH’s jealousy, which proves to be the “obverse”¹⁵⁸ or “underside”¹⁵⁹ of his special love for his people.¹⁶⁰ Yet, it ultimately moves him to punish Israel’s oppressors (Joel 2:18; Zech 1:14), to return them from exile (Zech 8:2), and to restore their blessing (Ezek 39:25; Joel 2:18). There is perhaps a play on the homonyms קנה (v. 6) and קנא here.¹⁶¹ If so, the incongruence between YHWH’s actions (creating) and Israel response (making him jealous) is heightened. The parallel verb—כעס—expresses a similar idea, though the emphasis falls squarely on YHWH’s righteous indignation over Israel’s covenantal infidelity rather than the relational breach underlying קנא.¹⁶² The term כעס is likewise closely tied to YHWH’s response to the idolatrous practices of his people elsewhere in the book of Deuteronomy (4:25; 9:18; 31:29) in the Hebrew Bible (especially 1–2 Kings and Jeremiah).¹⁶³

Verse 17 unfolds in four cola, all of which expand upon v. 16 by focusing intently on the nature of Israel’s substitute gods.¹⁶⁴ The poet’s unflattering description of these gods runs:

¹⁵⁷ Note that both קנא and כעס occur again in v. 21 to form a poetic word-pair that depicts YHWH’s ‘measure-for-measure punishment’ of Israel’s *idolatry* (Carrillo Alday, *Cántico* 78–80). Within Deuteronomy, the verb קנא occurs only here in the Song; however, the related adjective קנא is found in Deut 4:24, 5:9, and 6:15. These passages are instructive in that all three uses of קנא occur in close connection with the warnings against pursuing other gods. A similar emphasis is observable in the use of the verb in 1 Kgs 14:22, Ps 78:58, and Ezek 8:3; see also the use of the adjective in Exod 20:5 and 34:14.

¹⁵⁸ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 456.

¹⁵⁹ Cairns, *Word and Presence*, 284.

¹⁶⁰ Lee, “Narrative Function,” 86; Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 418; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 306.

¹⁶¹ Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, 476, 489 n. 2.

¹⁶² On the significance of the כעס root in the Song as a whole, see Gosse (“Deutéronome 32,1–43,” 110).

¹⁶³ See also Samantha Joo, *Provocation and Punishment: The Anger of God in the Book of Jeremiah and Deuteronomistic Theology* (Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 28–36.

¹⁶⁴ Nelson, 373; cf. Lee, 87; Boston, “The Song,” 71, 75.

יִזְבְּחוּ לַשִּׁדִּים לֹא אֱלֹהִים	17a	<i>They sacrificed to demons, not God</i>
אֱלֹהִים לֹא יָדְעוּם	17b	<i>Gods that they did not know</i> ¹⁶⁵
חֲדָשִׁים מִקֶּרֶב בָּאוּ	17c	<i>New ones that came in recent times</i>
לֹא שִׁעְרוּם אֲבֹתֵיכֶם	17d	<i>That your fathers did not revere</i> ¹⁶⁶

The first colon sets out to disparage these gods. Many interpreters take לֹא אֱלֹהִים in a qualitative sense to mean not-divine.¹⁶⁷ While this suggestion is possible, Heiser has convincingly argued for understanding the expression as a reference to YHWH on syntactical and contextual grounds.¹⁶⁸ Syntactically, this reading best accounts for the shift in number (from plural שִׁדִּים to singular אֱלֹהִים) and fits with the use of אֱלֹהִים just a few lines earlier (v. 15bA). It also avoids the incoherence of denying the objects of Israel’s worship divinity on one line (17aA) and referring to them as gods in the next (17aB). Finally, this is consistent with the perspective of Deuteronomy more generally, which acknowledges the existence of other gods but proclaims YHWH’s unrivalled superiority. In this way, he reads the line ‘they sacrificed to demons, not God’.¹⁶⁹

The expression יִזְבְּחוּ לַשִּׁדִּים ‘they sacrificed to demons’ is possibly intended to invoke the detestable practice of child sacrifice, a suggestion based on Ps 106:37–38, which reads:¹⁷⁰

*They sacrificed (זָבַח) their sons
And their daughters to the demons (לַשִּׁדִּים)
They poured out innocent blood
The blood of their sons and daughters
Whom they sacrificed (זָבַח) to the idols of Canaan
And the land was polluted with blood*

However, it seems more probable that the characterisation of the objects of Israel’s

¹⁶⁵ In both יָדְעוּם and שִׁעְרוּם, the 3mp suffix refers to the other gods, but has been left out of translation.

¹⁶⁶ The meaning of the verb שָׁעַר is unclear. Some take it to mean ‘to know’ as the Arabic cognate *ša‘ara* suggests (Boston, “The Song of Moses,” 74–75; Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 806; Nigosian, “The Song of Moses,” 51; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 306; von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 193). This is the rendering of the LXX (οἶδα), though it is possible that this arose under the influence of the parallel expression לֹא יָדְעוּם (Sanders, *Provenance*, 185; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 387). Still others, pointing to passages like Jer 2:12, 14:21, Lam 2:6, Ezek 27:35, and 32:10 have proposed that שָׁעַר here conveys the idea of great fear (Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 373), or—by extension—a profound reverence (Carrillo Alday, *Cántico*, 84–85; Lee, “Narrative Function,” 87; Nigosian, “The Song of Moses,” 51 n. 27; Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 300). A decision is difficult since all of them fit the context. However, as the only solution with support drawn from the Hebrew Bible itself, the last suggestion stands perhaps on slightly firmer ground than the others and on this basis should be tentatively preferred.

¹⁶⁷ Block, *Deuteronomy*, 757; Carrillo Alday, *Cántico*, 83; Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 363; Fokkelman, *Major Poems*, 93; Knight, *A Theological Quarry*, 62; Lee, “Narrative Function,” 87; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 403 n. 93; Wright, “The Lawsuit of God,” 29.

¹⁶⁸ Michael S. Heiser, “Does Deuteronomy 32:17 Assume or Deny the Reality of Other Gods?,” *The Bible Translator* 59, no. 3 (2008): 137–45.

¹⁶⁹ Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 382; Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 416; Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 300.

¹⁷⁰ Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 362; Knight, *A Theological Quarry*, 64; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 387.

worship as mere שְׂדִיִּים ‘demons’ functions as a pejorative term, used to underscore their inferiority. The expression ‘not God’ makes Israel’s error explicit, underscoring to whom they should have sacrificed but did not (לֹא אֱלֹהִים). The divine title אֱלֹהִים is rare outside of Job (only 12 of 58 occurrences).¹⁷¹ Within Deuteronomy, it only occurs here in the poem (vv. 15, 17), which makes this repetition significant. Rhetorically, it serves to heighten the incongruity of Israel’s behaviour: one would expect Israel to worship the God who brought them into existence (אֱלֹהֵי עֲשָׂהוּ), but shockingly they sacrificed to demons instead of their God (לֹא אֱלֹהִים). Syntactically, the cola is modified by the final three cola (v. 17aB, bA, bB), which serve to characterise these demons further.

In tone, these cola are equally disparaging. The relative clause לֹא יִדְעוּם highlights the inferiority of the gods (אֱלֹהִים) Israel chose to worship. Unlike YHWH, whom Israel had known, these new gods had no past history with them (v. 12, cf. vv. 7–14).¹⁷² Comparable expressions appear elsewhere in Deut 11:28, 13:3, 7, 14, 28:64, 29:25 with similar undertones.¹⁷³ This lack of past history is reflected in the equally cutting depictions of the gods as new (חֲדָשִׁים) and recent (מִקְרֵב בָּאוּ).¹⁷⁴ YHWH has been their God from the beginning (vv. 8–9) and has demonstrated his love for them in history (vv. 10–14), credentials the other gods cannot claim.¹⁷⁵ After all, as Tigay remarks, it was the antiquity of a god that carried the “the hallmark of authenticity” in the ANE world.¹⁷⁶ Finally, uncertainty concerning the verb שָׁעַר makes the precise meaning of the expression לֹא שָׁעַרוּם elusive. What can be said with more certainty—based on the context—is that the verb refers to some sign of devotion that Israel’s fathers did not deem necessary to give the other gods. In this way, the expression reiterates the inferiority of the other deities.

¹⁷¹ For more on the divine title אֱלֹהִים, see the following studies: Bernard Gosse, “Le Nom Divin de אֱלֹהִים et La Question de Deiu,” *Bibelsche Zeitschrift* 52, no. 1 (2008): 100–109; Dennis Pardee, “Eloah אֱלֹהִים,” in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. K. van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter Willem van der Horst, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 285–88; Norman Walker, “Elohim and Eloah,” *Vetus Testamentum* 6, no. 2 (1956): 214–15.

¹⁷² Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 387.

¹⁷³ Lee, “Narrative Function,” 86; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 306.

¹⁷⁴ Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 387; von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 198.

¹⁷⁵ Carrillo Alday, *Cántico*, 84; Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 363; Lee, “Narrative Function,” 87; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 387; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 456; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 306.

¹⁷⁶ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 306; cf. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 806; Lee, “Narrative Function,” 87.

5.1.3 YHWH and the Other Gods

Rightful God vs. Illicit Gods

When read together, these verses set up a stark contrast between YHWH and other gods. One such example is the way that they cast YHWH as Israel's rightful God and the other gods as illicit substitutes. This contrast is intimated in the depiction of them as תועבת 'abominations' but is most explicitly developed by the use of אֱלֹהִים in vv. 15b and 17. The use of אֱלֹהִים in connection with YHWH's role as Creator (עשה) draws attention to the fact that the gods who are not God (לֹא אֱלֹהִים) had nothing to do with Israel's national conception. Vv. 8–9 delineates the proper relationship between deity and people. YHWH allotted other gods ('sons of God') to the nations of the earth (v. 8 Q, LXX), while he keeps Israel as his own special possession (v. 9). Thus, Israel's entanglement with other gods not only violates their covenantal obligations, as seen above, but it also violates the established order and rejects their privileged status. The fact that, in v. 17, Israel's sacrifices were not offered to him (לֹא אֱלֹהִים) underscores the illegitimacy of their actions; sacrifices belong to YHWH, Israel's rightful God (אֱלֹהִים), not their illicit ones.

Ancient God vs. New Gods

In these verses, there is also a temporal contrast, one between new-fangled gods and an ancient one.¹⁷⁷ The other gods are portrayed as a very recent development (הַדְּרָשִׁים 'new ones'; מְקָרְבֵי כָּאֵזוּ 'they came recently', v. 17). The fact that Israel's forefathers did not revere (לֹא שָׁעֲרוּם) these gods not only underscores the unworthiness of these gods but also seems to reinforce their newness. Unlike YHWH, these gods were not even around in the ancient days (יָמֹת עוֹלָם, v. 7). Israel's forefathers had no occasion to revere them. At the same time, the portrayal of YHWH as Israel's Creator—the one who gave birth to them (vv. 15b, 18)—speaks to the antiquity of their history together in that it shows that he was there from their very conception. In addition, the ancient relationship is demonstrated in the preceding verses (vv. 7–12), which recall the days of old, their election in the *primaeval* past (vv. 8–9) and their early days in the wilderness (vv. 10–12).

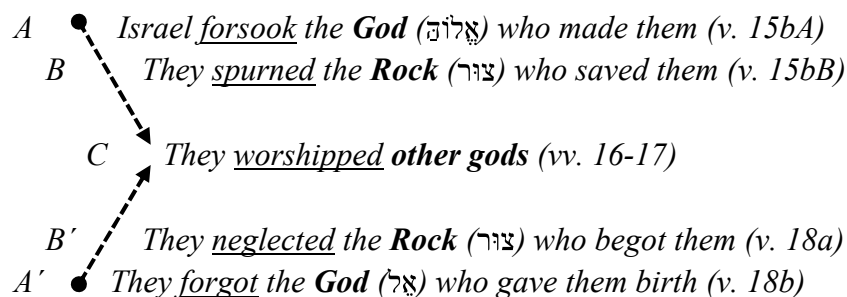
¹⁷⁷ Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, 476; Block, *Deuteronomy*, 757; Lee, "Narrative Function," 87; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 886; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 373.

YHWH is moreover portrayed as a familiar God. Earlier in the poem, he is cast as a father (v. 6), mother (vv. 13–14), and parent eagle (v. 11), three images that inherently connote a degree of intimacy between parent and offspring. However, the divine birthing language as here in vv. 15b, 18 deepens the sense of intimacy significantly.¹⁷⁸ By contrast, the other gods are depicted as strange or foreign (נְרִים, v. 16). Similar language occurs in v. 12 (cf. אֵל נֶקֶר). This thematic link draws attention to the fact that foreign gods had absolutely no part in Israel’s formative years as YHWH had (v. 12, cf. 10–14). Israel’s abandonment of a familiar God for foreign gods (נְרִים) is all the more shocking. Moreover, unlike YHWH, to whom Israel’s fathers were well acquainted (v. 7), these cheap substitutes were unknown (לֹא יָדְעוּם, v. 17).¹⁷⁹

5.1.4 YHWH in Contrast to Israel

Within vv. 15b–18, an equally painful contrast between YHWH and his people emerges.¹⁸⁰ The chiasmic structure of the strophe serves to focus attention on the centre of the passage and to Israel’s idolatry in vv. 16–17 (Figure 5.2). With this movement, the tension builds as the depiction of their apostasy moves from the general description of their rejecting of YHWH (vv. 15b, 18) to a more specific and absurd one (vv. 16–

Figure 5.2: The Focusing and Contrasting Function of Vv. 15b and 18



17). Common sense dictates that Israel would have responded to their God with respect,

¹⁷⁸ Cf. McFague, *Models of God*, 103–5; “God as Mother,” 143–45.

¹⁷⁹ It is also possible to find the antecedent of ‘them’ (v. 17aB) in ‘your fathers’ (v. 17bB).

¹⁸⁰ Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, 476; Boston, “The Song of Moses,” 76–77; Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 372; Lee, “Narrative Function,” 84.

love and loyalty; however, to their shame, they shockingly responded with disrespect, ingratitude, and unfaithfulness (vv. 15b, 18) in turning to offensive and pitifully inferior foreign gods (vv. 16–17).¹⁸¹

Israel's abandonment of their faithful and loving God for other gods not only defies reason but again reflects a blatant violation of the first commandment and a breach of their primary covenantal obligation (Exod 20:5; Deut 5:9–10; 6:4). Wright is perhaps right in thinking that the combination of the paternal and maternal imagery to underscore YHWH's role as Israel's Creator serves to heighten their guilt and is intended to evoke the grievous crime of dishonouring one's parents. He writes: "To dishonour or disobey one's *human* father and mother was a covenant offence that carried the death penalty. What then did Israel deserve for this treatment of their father-mother *God*?"¹⁸²

5.1.5 Rhetoric

The observations above demonstrate that the rhetorical effect of these verses is threefold. First, the bold divine images (rock, parent) and the stark juxtaposition between YHWH and other gods *affirm* his greatness. In this way, vv. 15b–18 reinforce the witness of the preceding verses (vv. 4–14), which also take up these images to affirm his goodness to his people. In doing so, the poem portrays him as a God worthy of Israel's whole-hearted devotion. Second, this contrast between YHWH and the other gods functions as an effective polemic. As seen above, YHWH is shown at every turn to be exceedingly superior to the other gods that Israel chose to follow in order to disparage these inferior deities: he is Israel's rightful, ancient, and familiar God, while they are illicit, new, and foreign.¹⁸³ Third, the affirmation of YHWH and critique of the gods serve as a scathing rebuke against Israel for their appalling decision to reject their superior God for far inferior ones.

5.2 METAPHORICAL ANALYSIS

Turning to the rock metaphor: there is little doubt that YHWH is the referent of צור in

¹⁸¹ Nigosian, "The Song of Moses," 178; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 301.

¹⁸² Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 301.

¹⁸³ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 306; cf. Lee, "Narrative Function," 86–87.

vv. 15bA and 18b, but what does this designation communicate about him?¹⁸⁴ Within this passage, the frames, entailments, and conceptualisations reveal five ways that the צור characterises YHWH.

5.2.1 YHWH as Creator, Protector, Provider

It casts him as Israel's Creator, Protector, and Provider. Since vv. 15b–18 reflect the closing strophe of the broader stanza vv. 4–18, many of the findings of Chapter 4 apply to the uses of צור here in vv. 15b–18 as well. The same parent, protection, and provision frames point to the same vast array of cultural (place of quarrying, source of refuge) and religious entailments (generative rock myth, cosmic mountain motif, divine designations, water from the rock). Together they likewise conceptualise YHWH as Israel's Creator, Protector, and Provider.

5.2.2 YHWH as Ancient, Incomparable

More unique to the verses at hand is the likely conceptualisation of YHWH as ancient and incomparable. The language and themes of vv. 15b–18, as well as the wider context, set the stage for such a reading. Note how a frame of reference paints a picture of two rival parties, namely YHWH and other gods: YHWH, Israel's 'God' (אֱלֹהֵי, vv. 15b, 17; אֱל, v. 18), is mentioned alongside other 'gods' (אֱלֹהֵיִם, v. 17). These other gods are unflatteringly referred to as 'strange (gods)', 'abominations, and 'demons'. From these designations, the purpose of the comparison quickly becomes obvious: to underscore YHWH's superiority over these other gods. This contrast is found both explicitly and implicitly in vv. 4–18 as well. In v. 12, the poet declares that it was YHWH who led his people, *not other gods* (v. 12). More subtle is YHWH's title 'Most High' in v. 8, which in context implies his elevated status over other divine beings, the 'sons of God'. This is also seen in the course of vv. 8–9, where YHWH demonstrates his sovereignty over these other gods as he parcels out nations to them (vv. 8–9).

The characterisation of YHWH and the other gods in vv. 15b–18 makes it

¹⁸⁴ One rabbinic tradition suggests that צור in 18a refers to Abraham based on Isa 51:1 (Piska 318). However, by analogy, this would suggest that v. 18b refers to Sarah—a highly unlikely reading. It breaks the parallelism between צור and אֱלֹהֵי and, as Basser notes (*Midrashic Interpretations*, 189), it requires taking v. 18b as a rather cumbersome question: 'Would you have God forget the one who bore you [Sarah]? Moreover, the fact that the Parent Rock in vv. 4–6 refers to YHWH suggests that the Parent Rock here in vv. 15b–18 is also YHWH. The position and language of v. 19 confirms this. Note that the repetition of the כעס root suggests that YHWH, the God who is provoked (כעס) by his sons and daughters (v. 19) is also the Rock who is provoked (כעס) by Israel (v. 16).

possible that the antiquity of rock is in view. As seen in Chapter 3, the biblical evidence suggests that, because of their great size and hardness, rocks were considered immovable and unchanging apart from divine intervention (Job 14:18, 18:4; Nah 1:6). This solidity and constancy convey a sense of timelessness, extending not only into the future (durability, permanence) but also reaching back into the *past* (antiquity). Verse 17 goes to great lengths to underscore the newness of the other gods (תְּדָשִׁים ‘new (ones)’, מְקָרֵב בָּאֵי ‘who came recently’). By stark contrast, YHWH—as Israel’s Creator—boasts of an intimate and *ancient* relationship with his people since he was there from their beginning and—as their Protector and Provider—has walked alongside them in the wilderness (vv. 10–14). According to v. 7, these realities were well known to the former generation. It is precisely this contrast between old and new deities that suggests that the antiquity of rock is highlighted in this use of צוֹר in vv. 15b and 18. If correct, this entailment conceptualises YHWH as ancient, reinforcing his sense of antiquity that is expressed by the parental imagery. In addition to the cohesion of such a reading within this passage, external support may be found in Isa 44:8, where the use of צוֹר clearly underscores his antiquity (see Chapter 3).

The final conceptualisation goes to the heart of the message of vv. 15b–18: the *incomparability* of YHWH over other gods. This connotation is also rooted in the ‘rival gods’ frame and is animated by one of two potential entailments. The first is the close connection between צוֹר and expressions of incomparability. A number of places in the Hebrew Bible employ the rock metaphor in close connection with expressions of divine incomparability (1 Sam 2:2; 2 Sam 22:32 [=Ps 18:32]; Isa 44:8). The similarities among these passages suggest that צוֹר had become almost stock imagery in expressions of incomparability. It is possible that the rock imagery reflects precisely this tradition. This would again certainly cohere well with the rhetorical aim of vv. 15b–18 to demonstrate YHWH’s superiority over the other gods. If one reads the occurrences of צוֹר in vv. 15b and 18 as this type of stock language, then, the conceptualisation of YHWH as Israel’s Rock is one that inherently portrays him as incomparable.

A second possibility is the common ANE divine designation ‘great mountain’. If so, the implication of this is that the nature, activities, and status of ANE gods—such as the creation and provision of Enlil and Bel or the protection of Aššur—are transferred to YHWH. It could be that this is simply a means of expressing the continuities among these deities. However, in light of the poem’s efforts to underscore the supremacy of YHWH over other gods through explicit declaration (v. 12) and striking contrast (vv.

15b–18), it seems far more likely that the application of a similar designation to YHWH serves a subversive and polemical function. It casts YHWH as a *matchless* God—the Creator, Protector, and Provider *par excellence*.

5.2.3 Discussion

Connotations

Concerning the findings of this metaphorical analysis, a few additional comments are necessary. The sense of the word-picture can only be described as robust and sophisticated. This is exemplified in its polyvalence (creation, protection, provision, antiquity, incomparability). Though this analysis finds little support for reading the ‘unchanging’ sense of Knight and Claassens, it nevertheless corroborates several of the other connotations proposed in the literature (creation, protection). As with v. 4, this affirmation of multiple senses suggests that scholarship actually presents ‘complementary’ senses rather than ‘competing’ readings. That is to say, interpreters have very often focused on one aspect of a larger whole. In the course of the metaphorical analysis above, it has become clear that the metaphor exhibits senses that have not been fully explored. These additional connotations include antiquity, provision, and incomparability.

These observations have particular bearing on the rather heated debate among interpreters concerning whether צור carries a protective sense or not. It is difficult to deny this connotation in these verses, especially when this conclusion is based on the close syntactical connection between the צור ‘rock’ and ‘salvation’ in v. 15b (Kowalski, Nelson). Moreover, while it is true that there is no explicit threat as is typical of refuge language in the Hebrew Bible found in vv. 15b–18, as Knowles and Fernandes have pointed out, their wholesale rejection of a protective sense of the metaphor is unfounded. One only needs to look to the preceding verses to find mortal danger, namely the chaotic and howling wilderness in v. 10. In any case, the syntactic link between צור ‘rock’ and ‘salvation’ alone would seem to justify seeing a conceptualisation of YHWH as Israel’s Protector in v. 15b. At the same time, the fact that *multiple* connotations are expressed means that those who see only protective function (Eichhorn) do not see the whole picture.

The relationship between the connotations is also noteworthy. There is a strong coherence among the distinct connotations. On the level of conceptualisation, this is

seen in the way the depictions of YHWH as Creator, Protector, and Provider relate. They reinforce YHWH's status as divine parent—as both father ('who made them') and mother ('begot you', 'who gave birth to you'). At the same time, the depiction of YHWH as Israel's Creator—the one who was with them from the very beginning and set his affections upon them even before that (vv. 8–9)—reinforces the characterisation of him as an ancient God. Moreover, the portrayal of him as their Protector and Provider is the natural outworking of his covenant promises.

On the level of entailment, a second example of coherence is the strong mythological undertones that nearly all the connotations share. Each of the frames identified above points to mythological associations in one way or another, particularly the use of mountains imagery as divine designations and allusions to the cosmic mountain. This, along with the explicit mention of other ANE gods in vv. 16–17 and the strong mythological undertones elsewhere in the poem (vv. 8–9, 12, 24, 31, 37–38, 43), give good reason to suspect such undertones in the uses of the rock metaphor in vv. 15b and 18. This would seem to affirm the argument of scholars who locate the origins the rock metaphor for YHWH in the broader ANE world (Knowles, Sanders).¹⁸⁵

Despite the coherence, there is also an important distinction to be considered. The mirror-like structure—resulting from the remarkable symmetry between vv. 15b and 18—would seem to indicate that the two occurrences of the rock metaphor in these verses more or less conceptualise YHWH in unison. Yet, there is perhaps subtle variation in connotation signalled by the modifying clauses accompanying each use of צור. In other words, the construct chain 'of their salvation' in v. 15b suggests YHWH as Protector rather than Creator is the prominent sense. The converse is likely true in light of the relative clause 'who gave birth to you' in v. 18. This is not to say that these themes overshadow the others. Eliminating any of them is difficult, hinting that all five senses find expression in the use of צור for YHWH in these verses.

Contribution

In addition to robust expression, the rock metaphor demonstrates a profound contribution to the message of vv. 15b–18. It helps develop one of the passage's distinctive and central features: its juxtaposition of YHWH and the other gods on the one hand and the juxtaposition of YHWH and Israel on the other.

¹⁸⁵ See also Boston, "The Song of Moses," 74–75; Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge*, 62; Levy, *The Song of Moses*, 49; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 383.

YHWH in Contrast to the Other Gods. The former is observable on the horizons of structure, theme, and rhetoric. Structurally, the metaphor (along with the divine designations אֱלֹהִים and אֵל) forms the chiasmic pattern that leads one from the outer lines to the inner ones and invites YHWH (vv. 15b, 18) and the other gods (vv. 16–17) to be considered together side by side.¹⁸⁶ In addition to this, the word-picture helps to develop several key themes. In light of the common use of צִוּר in expressions of divine incomparability, the simple choice of this term intimates his superiority. However, the other connotations bear this out as well. The use of צִוּר for YHWH to cast him as ancient develops his antiquity in contrast to the newness of the other gods. Moreover, using the rock metaphor to conceptualise YHWH as Israel’s Creator reinforces the birthing language. This not only depicts him as the one who brought Israel into existence but also reinforces the sense of YHWH’s antiquity. This creative sense of the rock metaphor works together with the protection and provision connotations to portray YHWH as a familiar God. He is a God who, unlike the foreign gods, Israel has known from their conception and early years.

Finally, this contrast can be seen elsewhere in the threefold rhetoric of elevation, polemic, and rebuke. Together, the nuances of the word-picture draw attention to some of YHWH’s most noteworthy attributes. This affirmation of his greatness not only elevates his status but also serves as a polemic as it brings the deficiencies of the other gods into sharp focus.¹⁸⁷ In light of the possible allusions to ANE mythology in the uses of צִוּר here, it could be that this application of common ANE divine motifs to YHWH serves as a polemic, a way of demonstrating that YHWH has assumed the titles and roles that ANE gods held.¹⁸⁸ Certainly, the stark contrast vv. 15b–18 set up between YHWH and the other gods supports this proposal, as does the variety of mythological themes that carry polemical undertones elsewhere in the Song.¹⁸⁹ The fact that Israel turned from such a superior God (to such inferior deities) functions as a further rebuke against Israel.

YHWH in Contrast to Israel. The role of צִוּר for God in setting up the contrast between YHWH and his people is equally pronounced. By conceptualising YHWH as Israel’s Creator, Protector, and Provider, the rock metaphor portrays him as a caring God. Moreover, the way the metaphor draws attention to the antiquity of his

¹⁸⁶ Block, *Deuteronomy*, 757; Boston, “The Song of Moses,” 68; Kowalski, “Rock of Ages,” 207.

¹⁸⁷ Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 310.

¹⁸⁸ Smith, *Early History*, 137.

¹⁸⁹ See Chapter 1.

relationship with his people reinforces his rightful place as their God. These conceptualisations, along with the portrayal of YHWH as Israel’s incomparable Rock among the gods, underscores the fact that he is indisputably worthy of their whole-hearted devotion. Yet this glowing depiction of YHWH stands in sharp contrast to Israel’s response—rejection and apostasy. In short, then, the word-pictures in vv. 15b and 18 help to express YHWH’s faithfulness and Israel’s faithlessness,¹⁹⁰ a juxtaposition that heightens the inappropriate nature of Israel’s betrayal.¹⁹¹

The rock metaphor also contributes to the juxtaposition of YHWH’s care and his people’s apostasy. The choice of צור, especially in connection with אֵל, heightens the contrast between YHWH and his people by bringing the preceding verses to bear on vv. 15b–18. That is to say, the use of צור and אֵל in v. 18 echoes the use of the pair in v. 4, forming a tidy inclusio around vv. 4–18. In this way, this collocation of terms not only evokes YHWH’s moral and relational perfection (v. 4) but also demonstrates his love and care in the intervening verses (vv. 15b–18). The salvation and birthing language harken back to his tenacious protection (vv. 10–11) and motherly provision (v. 13). Note the remarkable way this choice of words opens additional means of expression. This account of Israel’s appalling response to their praise-worthy God serves as an indirect rebuke. The accusation that the hearing generation has abandoned their Rock (just as the former generation had) makes this rebuke explicit.

Dialogue between the Rock and Parent Metaphors. The interaction between the rock and parent (father, mother) word-pictures opens up further avenues of meaning. Exploring their relationship is a natural move. The divine parent and rock images, which were first brought together in vv. 4–6, are brought together for a second time here in vv. 15b–18. The strong parallelism between vv. 15b and 18 draws them together with particular force. Furthermore, in the case of v. 18b, these themes are “dramatically combined into a single metaphor,” the rock that begot Israel.¹⁹²

Many have rightly pointed to the particularly close relationship between these images, though the nature of this connection has received little explanation. Notable exceptions include Sanders and Kowalski. My analysis affirms Sanders in seeing a possible reference to the ANE generative rock myth in the use of these metaphors while drawing attention to additional and perhaps more probable entailments (quarrying, ANE divine designations). With regard to Kowalski’s proposal that there is the water from

¹⁹⁰ Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 230; Preuss, *Deuteronomium*, 168.

¹⁹¹ Nielsen, “Biblical Theology,” 267.

¹⁹² Von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 301.

the rock tradition, my analysis agrees that this paradigmatic event very likely stands behind the use of צור. However, this conclusion rests on the use of the provision theme in the broader context rather than the simple analogy between the water-producing rock being a source of life and YHWH—Israel’s צור—being a source of life. Sanders and Kowalski move the discussion in a helpful direction, though it can be pressed further.

I would like to suggest that additional layers of expression emerge when the continuity and discontinuity are considered. On the one hand, parent and rock images reinforce one another. This is because of the significant overlap of entailments between them; a phenomenon called metaphorical ‘coherence’ by CMT theorists Lakoff and Johnson.¹⁹³ For example, these metaphors cohere since protection and provision are marks of both. Mothers and fathers (in an ideal world) protect their children; rocks serve as sources of protection for those who seek refuge in them. Parents provide for their children; in the Hebrew mind, rocks were seen as sources of provision. Perhaps less expected, as the analysis above reveals, is the fact that both parents and rocks are associated with creation. In short, then, these seemingly inconsistent word-pictures work together to underscore YHWH’s constant and loving care for Israel.

On the other hand, the discontinuity between these conceptualisations is equally insightful in that it opens up three additional avenues of expression. First, their differences allow them to complement one another, the parent imagery allowing YHWH to be conceptualised in a way that the rock imagery simply cannot and vice versa. Take for instance the way that, despite the relative sense of temporal stability that can be expressed by a parent word-picture, the rock imagery can convey a sense of antiquity and durability that simply supersedes any temporal connotations of parent imagery. At the same time, as ‘personal’ metaphors, the portrayal of YHWH as Father and Mother is able to express a relational intimacy that is not as readily available with the ‘impersonal’ rock metaphor.

Second, the discontinuity creates a synergy, whereby these word-pictures come together to communicate the ancient and continual (rock) history shared between YHWH and his people (parent). Claassens has suggested that the juxtaposition of these conceptualisations serves to demonstrate that YHWH’s unswerving faithfulness (rock) goes back to Israel’s birth (parent). It seems likely that this can be extended to include his parental care more generally; that is to say, his role as Creator as well as his role as *Protector and Provider*. Though both metaphors connote divine creation, protection,

¹⁹³ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 94; cf. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors*, 1, 14–15.

and provision, the distinctive qualities of rock—namely its unchangeability, and by extension/implication, its antiquity and stability— draw attention to the temporal and relational constancy of the relationship.

The two word-pictures also help to identify some of YHWH's expectations for his people, namely their loyalty (rock) because they are his children. Though indeed each human is unique, there is a certain degree of transference inherent in childbearing, meaning that offspring reflect the parents—not only in terms of the very basic ways (humanity) but also in more specific ways (family identity, personality, physical characteristics). By extension, one might expect Israel's immovable Rock to produce immovable children, immovable in the sense of being securely established as a nation and of being unswervingly committed to their God. Verse 4 underscores the constancy of YHWH's relationship with Israel. The use of כּוּן in v. 6 seems to illustrate the way Israel's Rock-Father *securely* established them as a nation. Nielsen has explored this dynamic and its implications. She writes:

When the Israelites are accused of having deserted 'the Rock who fathered' them, the contrast between Yahweh and his people is obvious: Yahweh is unchangeable like a rock, but human beings are changeable. Yahweh does not forget what he fathered, but although they are Yahweh's children and should themselves have some of the qualities of *rock*, they change their mind and forget.¹⁹⁴

In this, she notes the expected similarities between parent and child (immovability). She also points out the shock and shame that accompany this breach.

Finally, the extraordinary nature of the juxtaposition can even communicate analogously. That is to say, the remarkable idea of a rock begetting a nation perhaps points to the equally remarkable conception of Israel as a people. YHWH could have chosen any of the nations which he apportioned to the sons of God (v. 8) but chose Israel, a rather unlikely candidate according to Deut 7. There Moses underscores that their election had nothing to do with their own merit—since they were the least among the nations (Deut 7:7)—but rather because of his unmerited favour and his desire to uphold his oath to their forefathers.

5.3 SUMMARY

The aim of this chapter was to analyse the use of צוּר in vv. 15b and 18 in order to re-evaluate the connotation and contribution of the metaphor and to better evaluate the

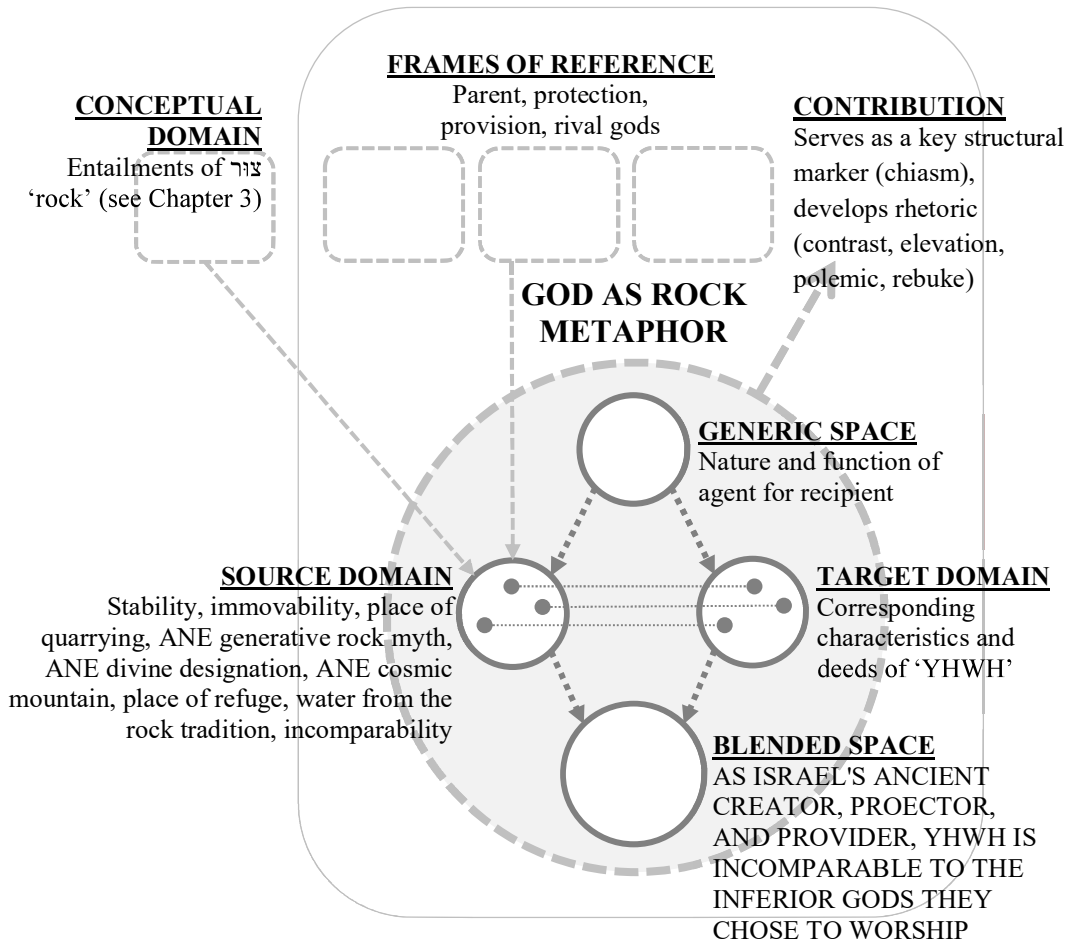
¹⁹⁴ Nielsen, "Biblical Theology," 267.

diverging views concerning these features. To summarise: it has shown that a number of ‘frames’ emerge from this stanza (vv. 4–18)—‘protection’, ‘parent’, ‘rival gods’, and ‘provision’. These ‘frames’ suggests a wide array of possible entailments of rock including physical features (immovable, unchanging), cultural conceptions (places of refuge, provision, quarrying), ANE mythical associations (cosmic mountain, divine designations, creation myth), and Israelite religious traditions (incomparability language, water from the rock tradition). These entailments provide a variety of potential conceptualisations of YHWH. A variety of cultural, mythical, and traditional entailments cast him as their lavish Provider. Perhaps even more pronounced is the way an even more diverse array of entailments conceptualise YHWH as their Creator and Protector, ancient and incomparable.

With regard to connotation, the creative power of metaphorical language is unmistakably displayed as the rock metaphor provides a complex portrait of YHWH. The findings of this chapter then reveal a polyvalent word-picture in vv. 15b and 18 (see Figure 5.3).

While this chapter has called some of the connotations into question (unchangeability), it has affirmed a number of those suggested by interpreters (creation, protection) and even set forth additional ones (antiquity, provision, incomparability). In addition, this chapter has demonstrated the marked ways that the rock metaphor helps to communicate the message of vv. 15b–18. It helps form the chiasm that moves the reader from the outer frame (vv. 15b, 18) to the inner one (vv. 16–17). Moreover, the contrast between this characterisation of Israel’s Rock and his people, as well as between YHWH and their inferior substitutes (vv. 16–17), lies at the heart of the rhetoric of vv. 15b–18 (contrast, elevation, polemic, rebuke).

Figure 5.3: Conceptual Blend of the Rock Metaphor in Vv. 15b–18



CHAPTER 6

AN ANALYSIS OF צוּר IN DEUTERONOMY 32:28–31

The most concentrated use of צוּר for God in the poem is found in vv. 30–31, where the metaphor occurs three times. There is a great deal of agreement within the scholarly discussion around the rock metaphor in these verses, both in terms of its connotation and its rhetorical force. Most interpreters take the word-picture in v. 30 as an expression of either divine strength¹ or refuge.² A similar reading emerges for v. 31.³ Concerning the rhetoric of צוּר for God, the majority of scholars draw attention to its biting irony in these verses,⁴ as well as the forceful assertion of YHWH's incomparability in v. 31.⁵

While there is a general consensus concerning the sense and rhetorical use of these uses of צוּר, what remains unresolved is how the rock metaphor contributes to its broader context, in particular, how the uses of צוּר in v. 30 and 31 relate. Interpreters agree that the metaphor in v. 30 refers to YHWH, based on the use of יהוה ('YHWH', 'the LORD') in the parallel colon:

*How could one have routed a thousand,
and two put a myriad to flight
unless their Rock had sold them,
the LORD had given them up?*

¹ Basser, *Midrashic Interpretations*, 221; Kowalski, "Rock of Ages," 211; C. J. Labuschagne, *The Incomparability of Yahweh in the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 70–72; Lee, "Narrative Function," 102; Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 232; Sanders, *Provenance*, 215.

² Eichhorn, *Gott als Fels, Burg, Zuflucht*, 53–54; Knowles, "The Rock, His Work Is Perfect," 314; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 370; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 300.

³ Eichhorn, *Gott als Fels, Burg, Zuflucht*, 53–54; Knowles, "The Rock, His Work Is Perfect," 314; Kowalski, "Rock of Ages," 211; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 370; Sanders, *Provenance*, 214 n. 641; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 300.

⁴ Claassens, "I Kill and I Give Life," 39–40; Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 377; Knowles, "The Rock, His Work Is Perfect," 314; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 873; Olofsson, *God Is My Rock*, 39; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 300, 310, 312.

⁵ Lee, "Narrative Function," 102; Knowles, "The Rock, His Work Is Perfect," 314; Kowalski, "Rock of Ages," 211; though alone in doing so, Sanders thinks the use of צוּר in both vv. 30 and 31 speaks to YHWH's incomparability (*Provenance*, 283, 430).

The challenge arises as one moves to v. 31, which reads:

*Indeed their rock is not like our Rock;
our enemies are fools.*

‘Our Rock’ most naturally refers to YHWH, meaning that ‘their rock’ refers to the enemy’s god. Yet, if so, how is the awkward shift in referent from YHWH (their rock, v. 30) to the enemy’s god (‘their rock, v. 31) to be explained? Three basic answers to this question have been proposed as seen in the representative readings of Fullerton, Carrillo Alday, and Sanders.

Fullerton thought vv. 30–31 (as well as 30–33) to be irreconcilably conflicted, finding the prevailing views of his day utterly “unsatisfactory.”⁶ The first argued that v. 31 was spoken from the perspective of Israel, affirming the superiority of YHWH in v. 31a and describing their enemy’s concession in v. 31b. The other contemporary view (notably put forth by Budde) understood v. 31 as the enemy’s words as quoted by YHWH (conceding the superiority of YHWH and the reason their gods are inferior). In either case, the enemy concedes that *they* would have been defeated by Israel had YHWH not abandoned them (v. 30) because (יָ) Israel’s God is superior to their god.⁷

Fullerton rejected the first proposal for two reasons. First, the connection (יָ) between vv. 30 and 31 is difficult to explain and the interpreter, he asserts, is forced between two undesirable options. Either one must (1) embrace the incoherent notion that Israel was abandoned by YHWH *because* he is superior to the enemy’s god or (2) read additional information into these verses in order to make proper sense of the sequence of thoughts.⁸ Second, he objected to the way this reading requires an equally “intolerable” shift in the referent of the expression ‘their rock’ from YHWH in v. 30 to the enemy’s god in v. 31.⁹ Though he acknowledged that Budde’s reading avoids this shift, Fullerton nevertheless dismissed this reading as well since the enemy’s ready concession that their gods are inferior is unforeseen. It is especially unexpected in light of the absence of any stated motivation for reversing their self-aggrandisement in v. 27.¹⁰ Fullerton concluded that the way forward was to attribute the difficulties of these

⁶ Fullerton, “On Deuteronomy 32 26–34,” 148–52.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 149–50.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 149.

verses to a complex and problematic transmission history¹¹ and to excise the dubious secondary material (vv. 30–33).¹²

Carrillo Alday saw no tension between the uses of צור in these verses. This coherence is due to his reading of vv. 27b–33, which he places completely in the mouth of the enemy.¹³ In this way, he insists that ‘our rock’ refers to the enemy’s god (possibly the Babylonian god Marduk).¹⁴ Support for this reading is the fact that it allows both occurrences of ‘their rock’ in vv. 30 and 31 to refer to YHWH.¹⁵ Together these verses express the enemy’s (misguided) belief that YHWH sold his people (v. 30) because of his inferiority to their god (‘our rock’).¹⁶

Sanders’ reading of vv. 30–31 acknowledges the tension set up by the expression ‘their rock’ but maintains that these verses are not irreconcilable.¹⁷ He argues that vv. 30 and 31 are bound by their common audience (the enemy) and aim (assessment). In v. 30, the poet addresses his rhetorical question to “a fictitious audience consisting of the enemies,” calling them to assess the scenario before them.¹⁸ How is their remarkable victory over Israel possible except that YHWH, ‘their Rock,’ had abandoned his people? This call to assessment lies behind v. 31 as well. Sanders suggests that is precisely the point of the statement ‘our enemies are judges’ in v. 31, rendering ‘our enemies may be assessors.’¹⁹ In this way, the poet calls the enemy to consider the fact that, while both ‘their god’ and Israel’s God (‘our Rock’) can be called ‘rocks,’ YHWH is undeniably superior.²⁰ What is one to make of the conflicting referents of ‘their rock,’ YHWH in v. 30 and the enemy’s god in v. 31? Sanders thinks the key is the nature of the comments in vv. 30 and 31. He explains: “In v. 30 the poet speaks in a general, detached and somewhat proverbial manner, trying to convince a

¹¹ Fullerton has posited the following scenario (ibid., 151): v. 30 was an explanatory gloss of ארץ in v. 29, under the mistaken assumption that the foolish nation in vv. 28–29 was Israel. This error likely arose based on the depiction of Israel as foolish in v. 6 and the reference to ‘their end’ in v. 20. Moreover, he thought that originally vv. 32–33 were directly connected to v. 30 and were added at the same time as the gloss in v. 30 or subsequently in the poem’s transmission history. Finally v. 31—perhaps originally a textual note accompanying v. 27—was introduced into the text in order to stand in juxtaposition to v. 30.

¹² Fullerton concludes (ibid., 155): “It is in these verses [vv. 30–33] that the disease is located which has infected the structure of the poem. The disease is deep seated. The medicaments of exegesis fail to cure it. Only the surgery of criticism will suffice.”

¹³ Carrillo Alday, *Cántico*, 99–105.

¹⁴ Ibid., 104, 106.

¹⁵ Ibid., 103.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Sanders, *Provenance*, 210–21.

¹⁸ Ibid., 212–15.

¹⁹ Ibid., 221.

²⁰ Ibid., 215.

fictitious audience of his people's enemies. In v. 31, however, he expresses his personal conviction and more overtly sides with his Yahwistic compatriots."²¹

This brief survey demonstrates the diverging perspectives concerning the relationship between the uses of צור in vv. 30 and 31 and need for a re-evaluation of the problem. In light of these three readings of vv. 30–31, the aim of this chapter is to analyse the use of צור in these verses with a special eye to the relationship between the three occurrences of the word-picture. In the end, I will show that this analysis not only lends support for Sanders' reading but also suggests that the contrast serves an important literary function. This analysis will proceed in two broad movements. First, the textual analysis will explore the general contours of vv. 28–31 and raise critical interpretive questions. Next, the metaphorical analysis will examine the rock metaphor more closely in order to identify key connotations and trace its contribution to the message of the broader context (vv. 28–31).

6.1 TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

At the outset of the textual analysis of these verses, it is helpful to address their structure. Verses 28–30 hang together by a combination of lexical and thematic connections. Regardless if one follows Fullerton, Carrillo-Alday, or Sanders, the use of צור in vv. 30 and 31—and especially the shared form 'their rock'—invites these verses to be considered together. Thematically, vv. 28 and 29 are closely connected by the wisdom motif they share (בין, שכל, חכם, אין בָּהֶם תְּבוּנָה, אֲבָד עֲצוֹת).²² Many of these details will be addressed in greater detail below.

A proper understanding of this poetic unit requires briefly addressing the structure and function of the broader and highly-structured context (vv. 26–35).

Fokkelman envisions it as the chiasm below:²³

- A Judgment of Israel limited (vv. 26–27)
- B Foolishness of the enemy (vv. 28–29)
- C The incomparability of God (vv. 30–31)
- B' Wickedness of the enemy (vv. 32–33)
- A' Judgment of the enemy announced (vv. 34–35)

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 273.

²³ Fokkelman, *Major Poems*, 109–10, 118–19.

As tempting as this suggestion is, it does not fully account for the pattern of structural markers in vv. 28–35. Note that vv. 30 and 34–35a both open with an interrogative particle (אִי־כֵּה, הֲ) and vv. 28–29, 31, 32–33, and 35b are all introduced with the emphatic particle כִּי.²⁴ Significant symmetry emerges when these structural markers and the number of poetic lines are taken into consideration:

כִּי	vv. 28–29	2 lines	כִּי	vv. 32–33	3 lines
אִי־כֵּה	v. 30	2 lines	הֲ	vv. 34–35a	2 lines
כִּי	v. 31	1 line	כִּי	v. 35b	1 line

Though space does not allow for a detailed analysis here, the content of these verses falls into one of three categories: (1) reflection on severe judgment (vv. 26–27), (2) reason for severe judgment (vv. 28–29, 32–33), and (3) reiteration of severe judgment (vv. 30–31, 34–35).

By drawing together the observations above, it is possible to envision the structure of vv. 26–35 as follows:

- A Reflection on Severe Judgment (vv. 26–27)
- B Reason for Severe Judgment (vv. 28–29)
 - C Reiteration of Severe Judgment by Rhetorical Question (v. 30) and Affirmation of Fact (v. 31)
- B' Reason for Severe Judgment (vv. 32–33)
 - C' Reiteration of Severe Judgment by Rhetorical Question (v. 34–35a) and Affirmation of Fact (v. 35b)

Within this broader structural framework, then, vv. 28–31 forms the first of two units expounding upon vv. 26–27. The strophe under investigation (vv. 28–31) is the first of two explanations of the severe punishment mentioned in vv. 26–27 and rehearsed earlier in vv. 19–25, namely the nation's lack of wisdom and foresight. Verses 32–35 present the second: their toxic moral corruption. In order to lay the groundwork for a metaphorical analysis of צוּר for God in these verses, let us explore vv. 28–31 in more detail.

²⁴ Block identifies these occurrences of כִּי as key structural markers (*How I Love Your Torah*, 172; *Deuteronomy*, 762).

6.1.1 Verses 28–29

This strophe opens with an unflattering accusation of foolishness:

כִּי־גוֹי אֲבָד ²⁵ עֲצוֹת הַמָּה ²⁶	28a	<i>Indeed they are nation that lacks any counsel²⁷</i>
וְאֵין בָּהֶם תְּבוּנָה	28b	<i>There is no understanding in them²⁸</i>
לִּי ²⁹ תִּכְמוּ וְשִׁפְלוּ זֹאת	29a	<i>If only they had been wise, they would understand this</i>
יְבִינּוּ לְאַחֲרֵיהֶם	29b	<i>They would discern their end</i>

The expression אֲבָד עֲצוֹת is found elsewhere to express the lack of reliable council from dependable sources such as elders (Ezek 7:26) or wise men (Jer 18:18; 49:7). On a basic level, the term תְּבוּנָה denotes ‘understanding.’ It is often found in close connection with wisdom (חָכְמָה) and represents the foil of senselessness (Prov 11:12; 15:21) and folly (Prov 14:29; 15:21). Verse 29 continues the foolishness motif but draws particular attention to the nation’s failure to foresee the consequences of their actions. Here the verbs שָׁכַל and בִּין work together to convey the act of understanding, perhaps with the stress on the insight gained from this comprehension. Of course here, to their peril, the senseless nation lacks such discernment. The particle לִי makes this clear by casting the verse as a hypothetical and unreal scenario.³⁰ In other words, *if* the nation had wisdom they certainly *would have* understood; unfortunately, they do not. It is unclear precisely what it is they failed to discern (זֹאת ‘this’, אַחֲרֵיהֶם ‘their end’), but the first two related interpretive challenges must be addressed, namely the identity of

²⁵ For an explanation of the unexpected vocalization of אֲבָד, see Gesenius, Kautzsch, and Cowley, *Gesenius’s Hebrew Grammar*, §93qq.

²⁶ The SP divides the consonantal text differently than the MT (and the other ancient Versions), reading one word (עצותהם) instead two (עצות המה). While it is certainly possible that the SP has preserved the original text, the weight of the external evidence supports the MT. Therefore, the MT is preferred here.

²⁷ Gesenius, Kautzsch, and Cowley cite עֲצוֹת as an example of plural of intensification—thus, ‘any counsel’ (*Gesenius’s Hebrew Grammar*, §124e).

²⁸ A וְ may function epexegetically; that is to say, it serves “to clarify or specify the sense of the preceding clause” (Bruce K. Waltke and Michael P. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990], §39.2.4a; Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003], §40.8.2.vii). More specifically, in poetic texts where the connected clauses “have nearly identical sense,” the epexegetical וְ “probably functions to intensify the poetry.” In this case, the conjunction is “often best left untranslated in English” (Waltke and O’Connor, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, §39.2.4a). This is probably true here in v. 28, where the וְ likely serves to intensify the parallelism.

²⁹ The MT reads לִי, while the SP reads לָא (cf. LXX, οὐκ). The former has likely preserved the original text for two reasons. First, the related לִיגִל occurs only a few verses earlier (v. 27), demonstrating—at the very least—that a similar concessive construction is not out of the question (see also the concessive אִם v. 30). Second, and perhaps more convincingly, the SP and LXX still convey the *sense* of the MT, suggesting that the variant readings are interpretive.

³⁰ Waltke and O’Connor, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, §38.2e; cf. Block, *Deuteronomy*, 762; Gesenius, Kautzsch, and Cowley, *Gesenius’s Hebrew Grammar*, §159x; Joüon and Muraoka, *Grammar*, §167k; Sanders, *Provenance*, 207.

the nation in vv. 28–29 and the meaning of v. 30.

Concerning the identity of the foolish nation, three views have been defended. Some see Israel here.³¹ Others insist that Israel's *enemy* (v. 27) is depicted.³² Still others, pointing to the seemingly intentional ambiguity of the broader context, see in vv. 26–35 a critique of *both* Israel and the enemy.³³ This ambiguity is created in large part by the unclear antecedents. For example, the 3mp suffixes and verbal forms used to speak of the foolish nation in vv. 28–29 could find as their antecedent either Israel or the enemy (vv. 26–27). The same is true in vv. 32–33, where the antecedent of the 3mp suffixes could reasonably be either Israel or the enemy (v. 31). Adding to the ambiguity is the use of imagery that is equally fitting of Israel and the enemy. Both are cast as foolishness elsewhere in the poem, Israel a *חָכָם וְלֹא נָבָל עַם* 'a foolish and unwise people' (v. 6) and the enemy a *גֹּי נָבָל* 'foolish nation' (v. 21). Within the Hebrew Bible, the vineyard imagery, the comparison with Sodom and Gomorrah, the noxious wine motif, and expressions of divine vengeance are used in connection with both Israel and their enemies.³⁴

Of the three readings, the third one seems the strongest. It is consistent with the striking ambiguity of the passage. Rather than literary incompetence, some rightly see this ambiguity as a skilful means by which the poet opens this entire stanza (vv. 26–35) to be understood with Israel *or* the enemy in mind. This reading also accounts for the

³¹ Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 386; Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 371; Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 421; Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 301; Support for this is found in v. 6, where they are depicted as a foolish people (*חָכָם וְלֹא נָבָל עַם*). Knight explains the use of *גֹּי*—a term typically used of non-Israel people—as a rhetorical device designed to cast Israel as a people who have “opted out of the covenant relationship” (*A Theological Quarry*, 93). Furthermore, Israel's ‘end’ (*אַחֲרִית*) is already mentioned back in v. 20.

³² Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, 478; Eissfeldt, *Das Lied Moses*, 11 n. 1; Labuschagne, “Framework and Structure,” 96; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 893; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 390; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 375; Nigosian, “The Song of Moses,” 56; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 310; Von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 198; Wright, “The Lawsuit of God,” 35. The 3mp verbs in v. 27 unmistakably have the enemy in view. Since the most natural subject of the 3mp verbs (*יִשְׁכַּלּוּ*, *יִקְרְאוּ*, and *יִבְרִיחוּ*) in v. 29 is the same subject of the 3mp verbs (*יִבְרִיחוּ* and *יִאָּמְרוּ*) in v. 27, it is argued, the enemy is the preferable subject of v. 29 (Block, *Deuteronomy*, 762; Sanders, *Provenance*, 208). Further support is found in the designation *גֹּי נָבָל* for the enemy in v. 21, which echoes the language here in vv. 28–29 (Nigosian, “The Song of Moses,” 56). Indeed this designation has closer correspondence to the description in v. 28 than that in v. 6 (see above); this is not only because of the common use of *גֹּי*, but also the common context of Israel's judgment. In v. 21, the nation is the instrument of judgment and vv. 28–29 are imbedded in a discussion of Israel's military defeat (vv. 26–27, 30) as part of their divine punishment (vv. 19–25).

³³ Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 808; Lee, “Narrative Function,” 101; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 458; “Retribution in Deuteronomy: Theology and Ethics,” *Interpretation* 69, no. 3 (2015): 292.

³⁴ While the vineyard language is typically reserved for Israel (Isa 5:1–7; Jer 2:21; Hos 10:1), it is used of all the nations of the world in Isa 24:7–13. Both Israel (Isa 1:9–10; Jer 23:14; Lam 4:6; Amos 4:11) and their enemies (Isa 13:19–22; Jer 49:18, 50:40; Zeph 2:9) are described in connection with Sodom and Gomorrah. Both are also made to drink the wine of YHWH's wrath (Israel in Isa 28:7–8; the nations in Isa 51:17, 22; Jer 25:15–16; Ezek 33:31–34). Note finally the divine vengeance falls on Israel (Lev 26:15; Jer 5:9, 29) as well as their enemy (Isa 47:4; Jer 50–51; Nah 1:2).

evidence put forth in favour of reading *both* Israel and the enemy—perhaps most notably, the depiction of both as foolish (vv. 6, 21). Moreover, several of the arguments for the ‘Israel’ or ‘enemy’ only views are unconvincing under closer examination. This is true of pointing to the use of the expression ‘their end’ for Israel as evidence for reading Israel here in v. 28–29 since a poet is free to employ repetition for contrasting purposes. One could argue, as Fokkelman has, that the foolish enemy’s ‘provocation’ (v. 27) and ‘end’ (v. 29) is intended to mirror foolish Israel’s provocation (v. 19) and ‘end’ (v. 20).³⁵ At the same time, it is questionable whether one is justified preferring the enemy based on the 3mp verbs and suffixes since Israel is an equally viable antecedent. It is often overlooked that v. 27 is syntactically dependent on v. 26, where Israel is referred to in the 3mp (אֶפְאַיְהֶם ‘I would have destroyed *them*’, זְכָרָם ‘*their* memory’). In sum, then, these reasons suggest that it is best to read both Israel and enemy in these verses.

6.1.2 Verse 30

Let us turn to the meaning of v. 30. This verse consists of a rhetorical question cast in a conditional construction:

אֵיכָה יִרְדֹּף אֶחָד אֶלֶף	30aA	<i>How could one pursue one thousand</i>
וּשְׁנַיִם יְנִיסוּ רֶבְבָה	30aB	<i>Or two put to flight ten thousand</i>
אִם־לֹא כִי־צוּרָם מְכָרָם	30bA	<i>If it was not for their Rock selling them</i>
בִּיהִנֵּה הַסִּגְיָרָם	30bB	<i>And YHWH handing them over?</i>

The imagery here envisions an inferior opponent remarkably defeating a significantly superior one. Language very similar to v. 30a is found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (Lev 26:8; Josh 23:10; Isa 30:17; cf. 1 Sam 18:7), which perhaps suggests that the expression is employed to make “a general theological point” and is drawn from proverbial stock.³⁶ It is possible that v. 30 envisages the carnage in v. 25 or, if not, at

³⁵ *Major Poems*, 109–10; one might add a fourth affinity to this list—both conclude with a description of divine judgment.

Israel’s provocation (כַּעַס, v. 19)	Enemy’s provocation (כַּעַס, vv. 26–27)
Foolish nation (v. 21)	Foolish nation (vv. 28–29)
Their end (אֶחְרִיתָם, v. 20)	Their end (אֶחְרִיתָם, v. 29)
Divine judgment (vv. 22–25)	Divine judgment (vv. 34–35)

³⁶ Knight, *A Theological Quarry*, 95; cf. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 817; Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 386.

the very least another aspect of YHWH's judgment in vv. 19–25. In light of this, there is little doubt that Israel is the larger army.³⁷ The characterisation of YHWH's instrument of judgment as a 'no-people' in v. 21 possibly corresponds to the enemy's small numbers. While it could be that the remarkable downfall reflects a historical one, the ambiguity of the poetic style and proverbial feel of the language have effectively obscured the details of this event. It may have even been an intentional decision on the part of the poet in order that any Israelite defeat might fit.

The language and rhetoric of this verse emphasise that Israel's defeat could only be attributed to their God. This idea behind the verbs *מכר* and *סגר* here almost certainly depicts YHWH abandoning Israel to their enemies resulting in their defeat and oppression. This is consistent with the typical use of the terms with God as the subject. With the exception of Judg 4:9, where Deborah anticipates YHWH giving Israel victory (*מכר*) over Sisera, *מכר* envisages YHWH's handing over his people for their sin (Judg 2:14; 3:8; 4:2; 10:7; 1 Sam 12:9; Ps 44:13; Isa 50:1; 52:3).³⁸ When used of God, most occurrences of the verb *סגר* (in the *pi'el* and *hiph'il*) depict him as delivering individuals or nations over for defeat or destruction, thus, reinforcing the sense of *מכר*.³⁹ A similar use is found in Amos 6:8 and Ps 78:48, 50, 62. The rhetorical question underscores that this fact is self-evident. Israel and the enemy should have recognised this.⁴⁰

At this point, let us return to the meaning of 'this' and 'their end' in v. 29. When read from the point of view of Israel, the former most likely refers back to the severe judgment in v. 26. There, YHWH reflects upon how he brought his people to the brink of annihilation and would have completely destroyed them had he not feared that their enemy would misinterpret this. Of course, this also presumes both the rebellion that precipitated this punishment as well as the depiction of it in the preceding verses, vv. 19–25. For Israel, then, this also undergirds the expression 'their end', though unlike 'this' which points backwards, the meaning of 'their end' is explained by the following verses. This is especially true of v. 30, which underscores *YHWH's unmistakable role* in their judgment (v. 30). After all, such a remarkable defeat (v. 30a) could only have been

³⁷ Fullerton, "On Deuteronomy 32 26–34," 142; Sanders, *Provenance*, 212.

³⁸ Of these passages, some of them similarly depict YHWH's abandonment as a response to Israel forgetting him (*שכח*) and forsaking him for idols. See also Izak Cornelius, "מכר," in *NIDOTTE*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, vol. 2 (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996), 937; E. Lipiński, "מכר," in *TDOT*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 291–96.

³⁹ 1 Sam 17:46, 24:19, 26:8; 2 Sam 18:28; Job 16:11; Pss 31:9 [Eng. 8], 78:50, 62; Lam 2:7; Amos 6:8; see also Helmer Ringgren, "סגר," in *TDOT*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 150–51.

⁴⁰ Merrill rightly suggests that Israel's past experiences (Num 14:39–45) should have led them to this conclusion (*Deuteronomy*, 421).

a result of him working against them (v. 30b). In another sense, however, ‘their end’ also includes their swift judgment as retold in vv. 34–35.

When read with the enemy in mind, the referents shift. Instead of Israel’s judgment, ‘this’ refers back to the enemy’s arrogant and misguided claim in v. 27b:

*. . . our hand is triumphant;
it was not the LORD who did all this.*

In this, they failed to recognise that the complete opposite was true: their military might has had nothing to do with Israel’s downfall and that it was YHWH who orchestrated this event. This is indeed the point of v. 30. Yet, their foolishness also includes their lack of foresight to see the consequence of their self-aggrandisement. In this way, ‘their end’ foreshadows their ultimate destruction in vv. 34–35 (cf. 40–42).

6.1.3 Verse 31

The strophe concludes with a notoriously difficult verse:

כי לא קצורנו צורם 31a *Indeed*⁴¹ *their rock is not like our Rock*
 ואֵיבֵינוּ פְּלִילִים⁴² 31b *And our enemies are mere judges*⁴³

Three key interpretive questions arise from this verse.

First, to whom do the expressions ‘our rock’ and ‘their rock’ refer? This question was introduced earlier. Recall that Carrillo Alday thought the enemy’s god to be in view; Fullerton and Sanders argued it is YHWH. Deciding between these competing readings involves identifying the antecedents of not only ‘our’, but also ‘their’. Again, the trouble is that both v. 30 and v. 31 use the expression ‘their rock’. The language and tone of v. 31 are reminiscent of the poet’s exhortation to praise in v. 3 (הָבוּ גְדֹלָה לְאֵלֵהֵינוּ ‘give greatness to our God!’). These are only occurrences of the first-person possessive pronoun in connection with a deity. An exclamatory tone characterises both v. 3 and v. 31. These similarities support reading ‘our Rock’ as

⁴¹ Though the כִּי here—and in v. 31—could denote a causal sense (Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 801; Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 385; Eissfeldt, *Das Lied Moses*, 11–12), they seem to function emphatically (Block, *Deuteronomy*, 762–63; Knight, *A Theological Quarry*, 98; Sanders, *Provenance*, 206; Wright, “The Lawsuit of God,” 31).

⁴² The various readings at this point are likely due to uncertainty over the meaning of פְּלִילִים rather than reflecting a different *Vorlage*. For example, the LXX’s ἀνόητοι ‘fools’ is likely an attempt to render the difficult term in light of the preceding verses (John William Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Deuteronomy* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995], 527).

⁴³ The translation of this colon will be defended in the course of the discussion below.

Israel's God.

A second interpretive question involves the nature of the comparison. The general consensus is that this comparison is intended to demonstrate YHWH's *superiority* over the enemy's god. However, in what way or ways YHWH is unlike the god of the enemy is a matter of debate. It has been suggested that it is YHWH's willingness to punish his people for unfaithfulness.⁴⁴ The problem with this suggestion is that such a relational dynamic between deity and people is not unique to Israel, but is widely attested in the ANE world.⁴⁵ Others see the divine characteristics outlined elsewhere in the poem. For example, Block argues that "the statement assumes the catalogue of Yahweh's distinctive characteristics referred to in the Song, as well as the nature of the gods of the nations."⁴⁶ Still others propose that the comparison is one of divine power or protection. While it is possible to say that the first reading is unlikely, a decision concerning the second and third is more difficult and must await the metaphorical analysis below.

The meaning of פְּלִילִים reflects a third interpretive challenge.⁴⁷ In order to make sense of this expression, most interpreters appeal to other uses of the term in the HB or to ANE cognates, though a few have turned to emendation⁴⁸ or deletion.⁴⁹ This is not to say, however, that a comparative path has led to consensus.

For instance, some think that פְּלִילִים denotes 'guardians' based on the Akkadian cognate *palilu* "guardian' or 'leader',⁵⁰ which is a divine epithet.⁵¹ The expression אִי־בְנוֹ

⁴⁴ Eissfeldt writes that "Israel's God is of an exceedingly different kind than the gods of the enemy by punishing his people when they are unfaithful to him" (*Das Lied Moses*, 12 n. 1): "Israels Gott ist eben ganz anderer Art als die Götter der Feinde, indem er sein Volk, wenn es ihm untreu geworden ist, straft."

⁴⁵ Bertil Albrektson, *History and the Gods: An Essay on the Idea of Historical Events as Divine Manifestations in the Ancient Near East and in Israel* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 38, 42–52; Lee, "Narrative Function," 102; J. Gordon McConville, *Grace in the End: A Study in Deuteronomistic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 129; Sanders, *Provenance*, 63–65, 214 nn. 643, 406. Take for example the Moabite Mesha' stele, which reads 'Omri was king of Israel and he oppressed Moab many days, for Chemosh was angry with his land' (lines 4–6). Other texts where divine wrath is aroused by human transgression include: (1) the Hittite Pestilence Prayers of Mursilis II (Pritchard, *ANET*, 394–96); (2) the Canaanite El Amarna Letter of King Rib-Haddi (*ibid.*, 483); (3) the Ugaritic Legend of Aqhatu (*KTU* 1.17.vi, 1.18); and (4) the Akkadian The Erra Epic (Daniel I. Block, *The Gods of the Nations: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern National Theology* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1988], 137–39).

⁴⁶ *Deuteronomy*, 763; cf. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 306.

⁴⁷ For a thorough discussion of the origin and meaning of פְּלִילִים, see Sanders, *Provenance*, 215–21.

⁴⁸ Ehrlich conjectured that פְּלִילִים should be read as אֱלִילִים 'idols' (*Randglossen zur hebräischen Bible: Textkritisches, Sprachliches und Sachliches* [Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1968], 2, 344). This is apparently followed by the NRSV, as seen at the beginning of this chapter. This suggestion has not gained much of a following among recent scholarship, however.

⁴⁹ Fullerton, "On Deuteronomy 32 26–34," 152–53.

⁵⁰ Block, *Deuteronomy*, 763; Ephraim A. Speiser, "The Stem PLL in Hebrew," *JBL* 82, no. 3 (1963): 301–6; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 310–11.

⁵¹ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 310.

פְּלִילִים then would refer to those who serve as guardians of Israel’s enemies; that is, the enemy’s rock (צוֹרֵם) in the preceding line. This indeed has the support of the parallelism. However, it requires the genitive relationship to be reversed; that is to say, the natural reading of the expression would be ‘our enemies of guardians’ rather than ‘guardians of our enemies’.⁵²

Others connect פְּלִילִים with the activity of judging, largely based on the use of the plural form elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (Exod 21:22; Job 31:11).⁵³ In the former, the term is used in connection with the assessment of how much restitution payment is due a victim; the offender is to pay what has been determined בְּפִלְלִים, that is, by judges or arbiters. In Job 31:11, the expression עוֹן פְּלִילִים seems to denote the iniquity that *needs to be judged or will be judged by judges*. This is also the apparent meaning of the near identical phrase a few verses later in 31:28, though there admittedly the different but related noun פְּלִילִי is employed. This ‘judges’ reading avoids the grammatical difficulties of the ‘guardians’ view and should be preferred, though precisely what it means for the enemy to serve as judges must also wait for further analysis of the metaphor. It must suffice here to outline the competing views.

By attributing פְּלִילִים with a passive sense, some understand it to mean that Israel’s enemies are about to *be judged*.⁵⁴ This proposal has the advantage of fitting the context nicely. It explains *why* Israel’s Rock is not like their rock: they are inferior to YHWH and therefore are powerless to stop him from punishing ‘their’ nations (cf. v. 8). This contrast is outlined in more detail just a few verses later (vv. 37–39). Moreover, it also fits the context in that it prepares the way for the impending judgment of YHWH’s (and Israel’s) adversaries in vv. 40–43. This seems to be supported by the use of פְּלִילִים in Job 31:11 (cf. v. 28) where it depicts *that which will be judged*.

Other interpreters envisage a more active judgment. In this way, many insist that they are judges in the sense that the enemies have weighed the evidence and come to the conclusion that Israel’s God is not like their god(s) (v. 31a).⁵⁵ By carrying the negation in the first line of v. 31 into the second, it is possible to read ‘the enemies are

⁵² Tigay cites several examples of this type of reversal (Lev 14:4; Josh 2:6; Ezek 24:17), though he concedes that these examples are not exact analogies since they are not *possessive* genitives in אֲיִבֵינוּ פְּלִילִים (ibid., 404 n. 135; cf. Block, *Deuteronomy*, 763).

⁵³ Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 372; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 389; Rose, *5. Mose*, 571; Sanders, *Provenance*, 221.

⁵⁴ Eissfeldt, *Das Lied Moses*, 12; Labuschagne, “Framework and Structure,” 96.

⁵⁵ Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 817; Knight, *A Theological Quarry*, 97–98; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 390; Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 302.

not judges'.⁵⁶ Or perhaps they are not capable judges, a notion that bodes well with vv. 27–29. One can also read the enemy as judges in the sense that they are instruments of YHWH's judgment.⁵⁷ This is supported by vv. 21 and 30, where he wields the enemy against Israel.

6.2 METAPHORICAL ANALYSIS

Having laid an exegetical groundwork in the close reading of vv. 26–31 above, the passage's multiple divine uses of צור will be analysed in more detail. When the frames and entailments are considered, a number of potential conceptualisations or connotations of the rock metaphor emerge.

6.2.1 Divine Opposition

The rock imagery expresses divine opposition. This is intimated by a frame of reference that emerges in vv. 26–35: a picture of divine judgment. YHWH considers completely destroying his people and erasing them from the human memory (v. 26a). The depiction of a few defeating many in v. 30, as seen above, reflects stock judgment language in the Hebrew Bible (Lev 26:8; Josh 23:10; Isa 30:17). Note also that the depiction of divine abandonment in this verse is reminiscent of the judgment in vv. 19–21 and very likely harkens back to the devastating chastisement in v. 25. Verse 35 announces YHWH's vengeance and recompense, which will bring swift demise to the wicked. If the vineyard imagery in vv. 32–33 is to be understood as the corruption culminating in divine judgment, these verses as well contribute to the picture frame.⁵⁸

In light of this judgment frame, it is possible that the rock imagery in v. 30 conceptualises YHWH and the other gods as unflinching forces of opposition. Terrien has insightfully noted that rock—large, hard, and immovable—symbolises not only strength but also obstinacy.⁵⁹ This latter entailment is altogether fitting in light of the immediate context (v. 30b), which recounts how Israel's Rock turned *against* his people and abandoned them into the hands of their enemy. In this verse, then, צור quite naturally conceptualises YHWH as hard and immovable rock in order to express his

⁵⁶ Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 376.

⁵⁷ Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 386.

⁵⁸ Sanders, *Provenance*, 227–28.

⁵⁹ Terrien, "Rock in Biblical Theology," 158.

resolved stance against his people, his unyielding determination to punish them. A similar conceptualisation very likely undergirds the use of the rock metaphor in Isa 8:14, where the use of the metaphor casts YHWH as an inescapable obstacle to his people, a צור מְשׁוּל ‘rock of stumbling’.

The clustering of rock language and the verbatim repetition of צִיָּרָם ‘their rock’ in vv. 30 and 31 provides reason to suspect that a similar connotation is highlighted in 31. It could be that YHWH’s hardened opposition to his people fills in, at least in part, *how* he is unique among the gods (Eissfeldt). Yet, this seems improbable since—as noted above—divine opposition against one’s people is a well-attested notion in the ANE. It is more likely that, while acknowledging the adversarial side of the enemy’s god, this comparison affirms that YHWH’s opposition is of an entirely different class. The obstinacy of YHWH’s opposition is unrivalled, meaning that, once set against his people, it cannot be denied by the enemy or thwarted by their god(s).

This sense of the rock imagery possibly underscores YHWH’s ability to oppose *both* his people and other peoples, something the other gods cannot claim. One only needs to look back to v. 8, which demonstrates that the other gods exercise authority. After all, YHWH himself has given it to them (v. 8). On the other hand, the Song describes both his judgment of Israel (vv. 19–35) as well as his judgment on enemy nations (vv. 40–43). This is even seen in the ambiguity of the immediate context (vv. 26–35), which can be read as a reflection of Israel’s past judgment (vv. 19–25) or a foreshadowing of the enemy’s final punishment (vv. 40–43).

6.2.2 Divine Strength

In addition to expressing divine disposition, the rock imagery speaks to the *power* wielded by YHWH and the enemy’s god. A second frame of reference is built up within the stanza (vv. 26–35) that focuses on military might. The picture of few defeating many in v. 30a clearly envisions a disproportionate military victory, as it does elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. As many have noted, the imagery of the enemy’s raised hand (יָדֵינוּ רָמָה) in v. 27 is likely a sign of martial strength or victory.⁶⁰ To this list, one may add the rhetorical import of vv. 27–31, namely that it was YHWH who was directly responsible for Israel’s defeat. It was his abandonment—his military might (v. 30)—not the power or prowess of the enemy (v. 27) or their gods (v. 31).

⁶⁰ Block, *Deuteronomy*, 762; Carrillo Alday, *Cántico*, 101; Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 808; Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 385 n. 48.

This frame suggests that the symbolic strength of rock is likely highlighted here though it is possibly an allusion to the strength of Bel, the ‘great mountain’ or the mountain-like dominion of Baal (see Chapter 3). In either case, צור conceptualises YHWH and other gods as deities who act with great power. Such a notion fits the context of vv. 27b and 28–31 since at the heart of these verses is the question of whose strength brought Israel down. In v. 30, such a sense would express the great display of power with which YHWH commits himself to abandoning his people and expresses this opposition (selling and giving them up). By implication, it underscores that no degree of resistance on Israel’s part could thwart this plan. If this conceptualisation is present in v. 31, it reflects—at least in part—the basis of comparison between YHWH and the god of the enemy; that is, YHWH is exceedingly stronger than the enemy’s god. If indeed an allusion to Bel or Baal is present, this polemic becomes more concrete and pointed. It should also be noted that the use of צור to express YHWH’s incomparability perhaps serves as a subtle reminder that the enemy and their gods are equally powerless to force YHWH to abandon his people or take them from him. This will be expressed explicitly just a few verses later in v. 39.

6.2.3 Divine Creation, Protection, and Provision

The word-picture, furthermore, very likely includes divine roles of creation, protection, and provision. As the discussion above has already intimated, the language and themes of vv. 26–35 work together to form a frame of reference that depicts two rival divine parties: YHWH and the other gods. This is seen most clearly in v. 31, where ‘their rock’ is said to be ‘not like our Rock’. Though this line emerges rather unexpectedly, it echoes two other expressions of incomparability (vv. 12, 39) and therefore carries significant rhetorical weight. If one follows Kowalski in seeing vv. 32–33 as an unflattering depiction of the enemy’s *gods*, this may extend this frame further.⁶¹

The frame helps identify as a potential entailment the use of mountain imagery as an ANE divine designation (Enlil, Bel, Aššur), a backdrop that conceptualises YHWH and the enemy’s god as creators, protectors, and providers (see Chapters 3–5).

Within v. 31, such connotations would convey YHWH’s superiority in these areas, either in the sense that he alone among the gods exercises these roles or that he is Creator, Protector, and Provider *par excellence*. The poem elsewhere points toward a

⁶¹ Kowalski, “Rock of Ages,” 211–12.

combination of the two. In vv. 38–39, other gods are ascribed a protective function, albeit far inferior to YHWH’s (v. 39). On the other hand, these same verses seem to deny their ability to provide by casting them as deities who, rather than providing for Israel (as YHWH had done, vv. 13–14), simply gobble up Israel’s resources. In a similar vein, vv. 8–18 seem to deny the gods any creative ability.⁶² In short, then, applying rock language with an allusion to ANE divine designation more precisely works to assert YHWH’s unique role as Creator and Provider, and at the same time casts him as Protector *par excellence*.

Because of the close proximity of v. 30 to v. 31 and the form they share (צִוּרֵם ‘their rock’), it is possible that these connotations are at work in the use of the word-picture in v. 30 as well, albeit ironically. If so, צִוּר for God contributes significantly to the irony of this verse, an irony that can be detected on two levels: On the one hand, the use of the rock metaphor alone at this point is arresting since, until now in the narrative of the poem, it has been employed in the service of building up YHWH’s caring relationship with his people (vv. 4, 15b, 18). Its occurrence here is then ironic in the sense of an intensely positive term being transformed into a painfully negative one. On the other hand, it is ironic at the level of connotation. One sees this in the way the metaphor evokes YHWH’s role as Israel’s Rock of creation, protection, and provision. However, here it is not for the purpose of affirming his divine care (as before) but for the purpose of underscoring the way these benefits have been reversed. This tension is heightened by the way צִוּר here in v. 30 serves as a catch-word. That is to say, it harkens back to the previous occurrences of the term and the broader context the rock imagery helps to frame (vv. 4–18). The effect of this is to bring the key connotations of the metaphor (constancy, creation, protection, provision) as well as the elaboration of these themes as within in vv. 4–18 to bear on his unflinching judgment.

It should be noted that a protective sense of צִוּר for God is suggested by the ‘military might’ frame as well. In addition to the symbolic strength of rock, this frame also opens up the possibility that the rock imagery in vv. 30 and 31 may draw upon ancient conceptions of rock as a source of military protection. In a physical sense, the use of rocks as military strongholds is well-attested by the biblical texts, as well as

⁶² This is the sense one gets from the account of *YHWH* dividing and apportioning the nations to them in the primeval past. In vv. 15b–18, the contrast between YHWH—Israel’s ancient Creator—and the new gods Israel pursued effectively denies other deities any role in Israel’s formation. If indeed the birth of Israel as a nation is closely tied to their time in the wilderness (vv. 10–11), as was argued in Chapter 5, then v. 12 underscores YHWH’s singular role in this creative act when it declares: ‘*YHWH alone led them / And there was no foreign god with him*’.

archaeology and ANE iconography.⁶³ At the same time, it was commonly believed in the ANE that deities dwelt upon an impregnable cosmic mountain.⁶⁴ A decision between the physical and mythological is difficult and perhaps unnecessary since, in the final analysis, they both evoke the same general idea: rock mass as a source of military protection.

In vv. 30 and 31, then, this conception of rock reinforces the conceptualisation of YHWH and the enemy's god as protectors. Of course, in v. 30, this imagery is employed ironically. YHWH does the precise opposite, placing his people in harm's way instead of keeping them safe. Korpel understands the similar use of the rock imagery in Isa 8:14 as a deviation of the traditional protection sense.⁶⁵ This is precisely the 'deviation' that Knowles and Lee also envisage here.⁶⁶ With regard to v. 31, a more positive sense seems to be required. That is to say, YHWH is unlike the other gods in that he alone has and *is able to protect Israel*. Support is perhaps found in the fact that, as Korpel remarks, it is the more 'traditional' sense within the Hebrew Bible.⁶⁷ Moreover, this precise point is made forcefully elsewhere in the poem, namely vv. 10–12 and vv. 36–39.

6.2.4 Divine Incomparability

Last but certainly not least, the word-picture carries the sense of divine incomparability. Precedent for such a reading can be found in the apparently stock use of צור in Hebrew expressions of YHWH's incomparability (1 Sam 2:2; 2 Sam 22:32 [=Ps 18:32]; Isa 44:8). The 'rival gods' frame makes it all the more fitting here. If so, this cultural association with rock helps conceptualise him as an incomparable God.

This is undoubtedly the case in v. 31. On one level, YHWH's incomparability is the plain sense of the comparison 'their rock is not like our Rock'. However, the rock metaphor also casts him as incomparable in more subtle ways. First, it seems that the very choice of צור underscores this. Regardless of what the divine designation used, the

⁶³ See Chapter 4.

⁶⁴ Take for example the Ugaritic *CTA* 3.3.43–4.47, where despite attempts of the enemy nations to storm the Baal's divine abode (Mount Saphon), his strength and military prowess assures that they do not succeed.

⁶⁵ *A Rift in the Clouds*, 585; "Rock צור סלע," 710.

⁶⁶ "The Rock, His Work Is Perfect," 314; "Narrative Function," 65; cf. Olson, *Death of Moses*, 140.

⁶⁷ Cf. Fabry, "צור Sûr," 12:318; Fernandes, *God as Rock*, 3102; Hill, "צור," 3:793; Knowles, "The Rock, His Work Is Perfect," 307–10; Walker-Jones, "Honey from the Rock," 93–94.

comparison between these gods would have been explicitly set up. However, In light of its nearly stock use in expressions of divine incomparability within the Hebrew Bible, its use here signals at a very basic level that it is YHWH's incomparability that is in view.

Second, the use of the word-picture significantly—and quite cleverly—heightens the degree of YHWH's superiority. The poet's application of rock imagery to *both* YHWH and the enemy's god is one of the great curiosities of in v. 31. It might be tempting to consider this a mark of poor and confusing composition. In reality, however, it is more likely an example of the poet's skilful use of words. By using צור for YHWH ('our Rock') *and* the enemy's god ('their rock'), YHWH's greatness is elevated to untouchable heights by asserting his incomparability over a god, who itself was believed to be incomparable.

Though perhaps not as prominent as in v. 31, it is also quite possible to detect hints of this connotation in v. 30. This coincides with Sanders' lone voice that this sense should be extended to v. 30 as well.⁶⁸ The close proximity between the uses of צור points in this direction generally, but how might YHWH's incomparability explain his direct involvement in Israel's defeat? The answer is perhaps found in Lee's observation that, already in v. 30, there is an implicit comparison between Israel's God and the enemy's. That is to say, emphasis on the fact that YHWH gave them up on his own volition in v. 30b serves, at least in part, to rule out the possibility that he was forced to give them up by the enemy *or their god*. The use of the rock metaphor to underscore YHWH's incomparability only strengthens this argument by drawing attention to the absurdity of the alternative: an inferior people and god overcoming a superior one.

6.2.5 Discussion

In light of the results of the metaphorical analysis, several conclusions can be made concerning the sense of the metaphor and, perhaps more significantly, its impact on the immediate context.

⁶⁸ *Provenance*, 283, 430.

Connotations

With regard to its connotations, the evidence points to a surprisingly complex mode of expression, both in terms of the number of likely senses and in terms of the relationship among them. This is perhaps best seen in the polyvalent nature of the word-picture in vv. 30 and 31. Of the divine conceptualisations identified (opposition, strength, creation, protection, provision, incomparability), it is difficult to dismiss any one of them, which leaves open the possibility that these uses of the rock metaphor are multivalent. It is worth noting that all six of these connotations appear to be expressed in vv. 30 and 31.

The implications of these findings are threefold: On the one hand, it calls into question Knight's conclusion that the rock metaphor casts YHWH as a covenant-bound God. One is hard-pressed to find evidence for this reading within the confines of this stanza (vv. 26–35), especially if one is to root this connotation in the unchanging nature of rock as he argues. On the other hand, these findings are in agreement with both of the generally held views concerning the connotation of צִוּר for God (strength, protection). In this way, rather than two 'competing' senses, they are best understood as 'complementary' ones; that is, shades of the multivalent whole. Furthermore, this analysis suggests that several additional 'shades' are likely at work in the metaphor (divine opposition, creation, provision, incomparability).

With regard to the incomparability connotation, the analysis in this chapter affirms the consensus view that the rock metaphor in v. 31 asserts YHWH's uniqueness and superiority but, at the same time, differs from it with regard to *how* צִוּר expresses this notion. Scholarship has tended to focus on the rhetorical level: that is, the way the application of the metaphor to both YHWH and the enemy's god sets up a direct comparison. However, the analysis here suggests that the idea of incomparability is found not only on this rhetorical level but also on a more fundamental level, that of the entailment and connotation. In other words, YHWH's superiority is expressed in the explicit comparison to another god *and also* in the very choice of צִוּר since it is a term often used in the expression of divine incomparability.

One finds a degree of coherence among the divine conceptualisations. Divine opposition and strength are related in that they reflect the stance and force behind YHWH's judgment against the wicked. This is seen most clearly in his abandonment depicted in v. 30. All the connotations identified in these verses are related in that they

illustrate his divine incomparability. That is to say, YHWH's unflinching opposition, his unrivalled power, and his unmatched status as Israel's Creator, Protector, and Provider all forcefully demonstrate his superiority and uniqueness among the gods.

Contribution

My analysis has shown that the rock word-picture contributes significantly to its literary context, helping to bring the message of the vv. 28–31 into sharper focus in several ways.

First, it sheds light on two challenging interpretive questions in v. 31. The rock metaphor gives some definition to the ambiguous nature of comparison between YHWH ('our Rock') and the enemy's god ('their rock'). The connotations of divine creation, provision, and incomparability confirm the suggestion by many that YHWH's *superiority* lies at the heart of the comparison in v. 31. Those who think that divine characteristics from elsewhere in the poem lie at the heart of the comparison tend to be vague in their explanation of what this means (Block, Wright).⁶⁹ Yet, if by this they include YHWH's role as Creator and Provider *par excellence* (vv. 4, 15b, 18), then the presence of the connotations here might indeed support this reading. A more certain mark of YHWH's superiority is the use of צַרַּר, which as noted above, occurs elsewhere in contexts where YHWH's incomparability is asserted.

Moreover, connotations of divine opposition and strength that factor strongly in v. 30 can very likely be detected in the comparison as well. That is to say, though both deities can forcefully oppose their people, the force and resolve of YHWH's opposition is unrivalled. It cannot be broken or overcome. In addition, by conceptualising them *both* as strong and powerful deities, v. 31a underscores how—regardless of the relative power of the enemy's god—YHWH is the more powerful God.

Finally, the use of the rock imagery to conceptualise YHWH and god of the enemy as sources of protection affirms the suggestion that the comparison involves the ability to protect one's people. While both deities can provide refuge, as will be developed more fully in vv. 37–39, the protection of other gods cannot even compare to YHWH's. This superiority can be seen on two levels. It is incomparable because it is unshakable; none—not even powerful deities—can touch those whom he chooses to protect (cf. v. 39). Furthermore, the superiority of his protection can also be understood

⁶⁹ Take for example, again, Block's "catalog of Yahweh's distinctive characteristics" and of "the nature of the gods of the nations" (*Deuteronomy*, 763).

in the sense of military empowerment of his people, as the proverbial covenant promise states: Few Israelites will rout many of their enemies. In an ironic twist on this, v. 30 illustrates that it was YHWH—not their god—who empowered the enemy. Moreover, the comparison understood in terms of military empowerment underscores that, while YHWH could have established his people, he did not, a decision that only further reinforces the truth that their defeat was due to *him* and not the enemy’s god.

The metaphorical analysis also has implications for understanding the challenging פְּלִילִים. Though a decision between the active readings of פְּלִילִים is particularly difficult, the connotations of the word-picture point in this direction of Craigie’s ‘instrument of judgment’ view. The way the metaphor helps set up YHWH’s superiority in terms of his power and incomparability is altogether inconsistent with the enemy’s arrogant and adamant denial of YHWH’s role in their victory. Moreover, the text gives no indication that such a change of heart has occurred. More befitting the context of vv. 28–30—verses that focus intently on YHWH’s role in Israel’s defeat—is the idea that Israel’s enemies are *mere* instruments of his judgment. The verse reiterates to both Israel and the adversaries that YHWH ultimately stands behind his people’s downfall and wields heathen nations to accomplish his will.

The rock metaphor *also* provides possible support for Eissfeldt and Labuschagne’s passive reading of פְּלִילִים (‘being judged’). If indeed his freedom to punish all peoples, as advanced above, is one mark of YHWH’s incomparability among the gods in v. 31a, then an allusion to the enemy’s judgment is a fitting one. After all, this becomes a reality in vv. 40–43. The unflinching opposition and unrivalled power evoked in the rock imagery is now turned on the enemy. The ability for פְּלִילִים to be read in this passive sense, as well as the active sense above, is perhaps another example of the poet’s intentional use of ambiguity to facilitate a dual reading.

צוֹר for God further helps to de--velop an understanding of the relationship between vv. 30 and 31. Perhaps most significantly for the purpose of this chapter, the metaphorical analysis helps provide a way forward with regard to a chief interpretive quandary, the perplexing relationship between the use of the expression צוֹרָם ‘their rock’ in these verses.

Of the views outlined above, Fullerton’s represents the most unlikely solution. His scepticism concerning the final form of vv. 26–35 has not gained great acceptance among recent interpreters. Indeed, as Carrillo Alday and Sanders have demonstrated, reasonable readings of the text *as it stands* have been put forth. More significantly,

however, it seems dubious to excise such a large swathe of the poem (vv. 30–33) based on a reconstruction of the textual transmission as conjectural as Fullerton's. His reconstruction is also questionable in that it requires one to envision a rather incompetent editorial work in what is an otherwise impressively composed and seamlessly edited poem.⁷⁰

The textual analysis offered in this chapter calls Carrillo Alday's reading into question. His view that vv. 28–33 reflects the enemy's ridicule of Israel and vv. 34–35 YHWH's pronouncement of judgment on the enemy is inconsistent with the symmetric structure of vv. 26–35 and poses two problems: First, it has been argued above that vv. 32–33 belong more closely with vv. 34–35 than vv. 28–31. The second problem is that the symmetry demonstrated in these verses strongly suggests that both vv. 28–31 and vv. 32–35 are addressed to the same party—whether that be Israel, the enemy, or both—not Israel in one and the enemy in the other as Carrillo Alday envisions.

Though Sanders' (enemy only) reading of vv. 28–31 is not convincing in every regard, he does present the most compelling treatment of the relationship between the uses of צור in these verses. Without ignoring the tension, he rightly concludes that the shift in referent is not an irreconcilable one and that the accompanying shift in tone is enough to explain it. It should be noted that one could also appeal to the structure of vv. 28–31. As seen in the textual analysis there is a discernible structural division between vv. 30 and 31 that just might be enough of a caesura to accommodate such a shift. Unlike Carrillo Alday's reading, Sanders' is also consistent with the broader structural symmetry of vv. 26–35. At the same time, like Carrillo Alday, Sanders too fails to account for the ambiguity of the passage to open up an 'Israel only' reading. Nevertheless, Sanders' insightful explanation of 'their rock' is not noticeably altered when vv. 28–31 are read from the perspective of Israel.

Furthermore, despite the helpfulness of Sanders' explanation, it overlooks two important literary roles that the repetition of 'their rock' plays, namely (1) the way it adds to the ambiguity of the passage and (2) the way it sets up an additional avenue of comparison between YHWH and the enemy's god.

As explained already, with clever construction and careful word choice, the poet allows vv. 28–31 (as well as vv. 32–35) to explain YHWH's severe punishment of his people and to announce his imminent judgment on their enemies simultaneously. Both, therefore, serve to justify his actions and to show that he is unswervingly committed to

⁷⁰ Sanders, *Provenance*, 429–31; cf. Otto, "Singing Moses," 173.

justice, just as v. 4 maintains. Though the meaning of the rock metaphor does not change depending on whether it is read from the perspective of Israel or of the enemy, as with other words and phrases in vv. 28–35, the abrupt shift in referent of ‘their rock’ nevertheless contributes to the sense of ambiguity. At the very least, the use of the expression to refer to both Israel’s God (v. 30) and the enemy’s god (v. 31) creates the palpable tension that signals to the hearer that the poet very likely intends something other than a straightforward reading of vv. 28–35.

With regard to the second of these literary functions, Sanders is not alone in overlooking the comparative function that the double use of ‘their rock’ creates. It has been overlooked by many interpreters. Lundbom is a notable exception. Understanding ‘their Rock’ in v. 30 as YHWH and the enemy’s god in v. 31, he argues that the latter “plays” on the former in order to demonstrate that “there is no comparison between the two.”⁷¹ This coheres with Lee’s suggestion that v. 30 sets up an implicit contrast between YHWH and the enemy’s god. These observations can be developed further in light of the robust complex of connotations all three uses of צור share. The commonality among them strengthens the comparison, not only horizontally within the poetic cola (v. 31) but also vertically between poetic lines (vv. 30–31). Moreover, the polyvalence of the word-picture provides an array of divine characteristics to be considered (strength, protection, opposition, creation, provision, incomparability).

In addition to the relationship between these ‘rocks’, the use of צור—particularly its expression of divine opposition, power, and protection—helps to illuminate the argument that vv. 30 and 31 develop. The fact that YHWH’s power and protection are unrivalled reinforces the idea that Israel’s defeat could only have been the result of YHWH’s doing. Neither the enemy nor their god could have possibly out-manoeuvred or overpowered YHWH’s incomparable resolve once set against his people.⁷² As an unshakable source of protection *par excellence*, if he had desired to protect his people from their enemy, he certainly could have. The fact, therefore, that they did not experience his refuge could only mean that he *chose* not to extend it to them. Of course, this is precisely the point of v. 30. In this way, v. 31 reinforces v. 30.

A final contribution follows on the heels of these last two: a proper understanding of rock metaphor in vv. 30 and 31 allows for a more decisive reading of the passage as a whole. When read from the perspective of Israel, these verses

⁷¹ Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 895.

⁷² Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 372; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 458; Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 302; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 310.

underscore their foolishness (vv. 28–29) in failing to recognise that their apostasy (cf. vv. 15b–18, 21) would lead to their severe judgment (v. 26, cf. 19–25)—a judgment that, more specifically, would culminate in their own Rock turning against them (vv. 30) and exacting swift, terrible punishment (vv. 34–35). Lest Israel dismiss the notion that their committed and caring Rock (vv. 4, 15b, 18) could deliver such a blow, v. 30 forcefully points out that such a remarkable defeat (v. 30a) could only have been a result of YHWH *himself* working against them (v. 30b). Verse 31 boldly declares the superiority of Israel’s Rock over the enemy’s rock, ruling out the possibility that Israel might have been defeated because of the military prowess of the enemy or their god. The implication of this, then, is the same as v. 30: Israel’s defeat could have only been the result of YHWH himself abandoning them.

With the enemy in view, vv. 28–29 critiques the way they arrogantly dismissed YHWH’s role in their victory (v. 27b), as well as the way they overlooked the fact that this grievous misstep would ultimately result in their destruction (vv. 34–35, 40–42). Verses 30 and 31 work together to correct the enemy’s arrogant claim. Verse 30 dispels any notion that such a remarkable victory could have been anything other than YHWH working against his people, while v. 31 dispels any notion that they were victorious because of their, or their god’s, military prowess.

The word-picture is indispensable to the rhetoric of vv. 28–31. In addition to underscoring the irony in v. 30 and YHWH’s incomparability in vv. 30–31, as discussed above, it contributes rhetorically in other significant ways. In v. 30, the use of the rock metaphor heightens the rebuke of Israel. This rebuke is made explicit by the form and tone of the verse, namely the rhetorical question that chides them for not realising that their Rock was directly involved in their downfall. At the same time, the choice of the metaphor increases the sting. That is to say, the fact that Israel’s constant, creating, protecting, and providing Rock is moved to abandon his children and replace his loving care with his rock-hard opposition(!) serves to poignantly underscore the great depth of Israel’s sin.

The use of the word-picture in v. 31 is equally rhetorically-charged. In one swift move, the comparison between the rocks in v. 31 explicitly holds up the superiority of YHWH (elevation) and exposes the inferiority of the enemy’s god (polemic). This supports Knowles’ view that the use of the rock metaphor—at least in v. 31—serves as a strong polemic against other gods. Implicitly, this disparity between the deities serves as a further rebuke of Israel for having sought such cheap substitutes. Reading v. 31b as

expressing the enemy's acknowledgment of YHWH's superiority, Knight comments that the irony of this verse is that "the gentile people had an insight into the ways of Israel's God that Israel not only lacked—even though they had received a special revelation at Sinai—but against which they actually kicked."⁷³

6.3 SUMMARY

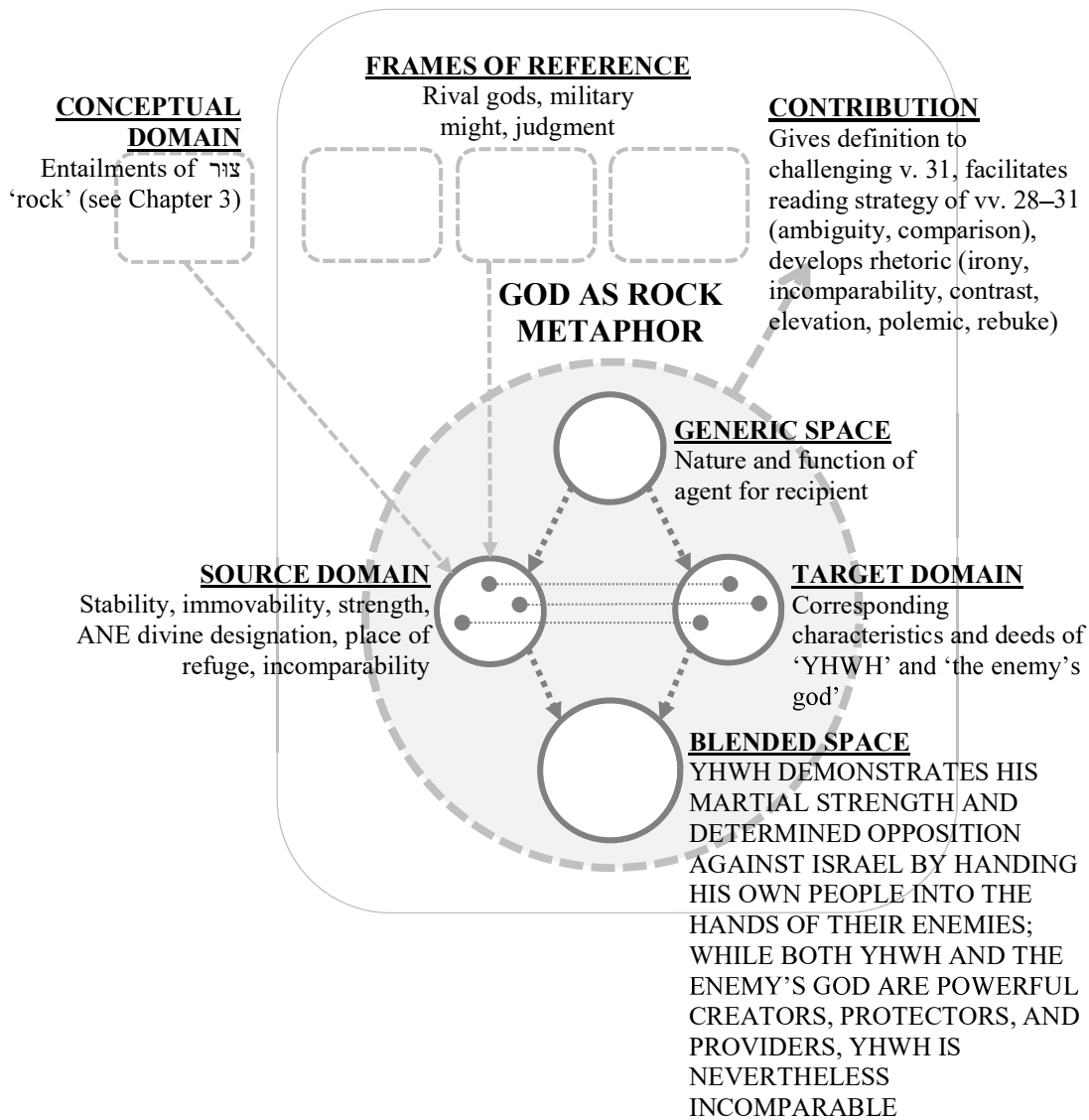
The purpose of this chapter was to analyse the uses of צור in vv. 30 and 31. Building on the textual analysis of vv. 28–31, the foregoing metaphorical analysis has drawn attention to three relevant 'frames' that are built up within vv. 26–35 (judgment, martial, and rival gods). Together these frames point to a number of possible rock entailments, ranging from physical characteristics (high, large, hard, strong, immovable), cultural conceptions (place of refuge), and religious traditions of both the Israel (stock incomparability language) and the broader ANE world (divine designations).

The metaphorical analysis here justifies a pregnant and multivalent reading of the rock metaphor in vv. 30 and 31 (see Figure 6). Together the entailments above serve as the basis of the conceptualisation for YHWH and the enemy's god in a number of ways. The rock imagery casts them as sources of formidable opposition and strength. It portrays them as creators, protectors, and providers. It evokes the notion of divine incomparability. While these findings affirm the majority view with regard to the connotation of the metaphor (strength, protection), it also brings to the fore several other likely connotations (creation, provision, incomparability).

This chapter has also drawn attention to the ways that the word-picture contributes to the message of the strophe (vv. 28–31). With regard to the rhetoric of the passage, my metaphorical analysis both affirms and challenges those who read irony (v. 30, *not* v. 31) and incomparability (*both* vv. 30, 31) in the rock metaphor. It also demonstrates that the metaphor's contribution to a broader rhetorical pattern (elevation, polemic, rebuke). Lastly, in addition to illuminating the message of these verses generally and v. 31 more specifically, the analysis of metaphor here suggests that the juxtaposition between YHWH ('their rock') and the enemy's god ('their rock'), while arresting, is not as incoherent as it is sometimes claimed (Sanders, *contra* Fullerton). In fact, the contrast created serves an important literary function (ambiguity, comparison).

⁷³ Knight, *A Theological Quarry*, 98.

Figure 6: Conceptual Blend of the Rock Metaphor in Vv. 30–31



CHAPTER 7

AN ANALYSIS OF צוּר IN DEUTERONOMY 32:36–39

The use of צוּר in v. 37 is surprising for two reasons. First, it is unique in the Hebrew Bible as the only place where this term is used of a god other than YHWH without mention of Israel's God. Second, having employed the term in a long string of verses to develop the greatness of YHWH (vv. 4, 15b, 18, 30, 31), the poet suddenly uses it (albeit ironically) for another god entirely. While interpreters are generally united with regard to the sense of the rock metaphor here (divine protection¹ employed in a "highly ironic way"²), any agreement concerning its contribution to the broader context is significantly hampered by the disagreement over what constitutes this context. That is to say, it is unclear how vv. 37–38 relate to the preceding and following verses. Several proposals have been put forth and defended. Space simply does not allow for an exhaustive survey, so I have chosen to highlight three recent suggestions, which when compared draw attention to some of the key divergences among interpreters. These include the readings of Lundbom, Sanders, and Fokkelman.

Lundbom detects a major division between vv. 38 and 39, reading vv. 34–38 and vv. 39–42 as distinct rhetorical units. This decision is based on several structural markers that he observes elsewhere in the Song and also identifies here. He points to the volitional mood at the end of v. 38 and the fivefold use of the pronoun in v. 39, both of which he argues are examples of 'climactic lines' that tend to fall at the strategic junctures of rhetorical units.³ Reinforcing this division are additional concluding markers in v. 38, namely the use of rhetorical questions and the shift to direct address

¹ Claassens, "I Kill and I Give Life," 39–40; Eichhorn, *Gott als Fels, Burg, Zuflucht*, 74; Knowles, "The Rock, His Work Is Perfect," 314; Kowalski, "Rock of Ages," 213; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 370; Sanders, *Provenance*, 414; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 300, 312.

² Claassens, "I Kill and I Give Life," 39; Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 377; Eichhorn, *Gott als Fels, Burg, Zuflucht*, 74; Fernandes, *God as Rock*, 31; Knowles, "The Rock, His Work Is Perfect," 314; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 873, 899; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 374–75; Nielsen, "Biblical Theology," 268; Sanders, *Provenance*, 414; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 300, 312.

³ Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 860–61.

(vv. 37–38a to 38b; cf. v. 6 to 7).⁴ For these reasons, then, Lundbom reads vv. 36–38 with the preceding verses and v. 39 with the following ones.

Sanders envisages two different units at this point: vv. 36–38 and vv. 39–40. Like Lundbom, Sanders sees a major break between vv. 38 and 39 and takes v. 39 with what follows. He differs from Lundbom, however, in that he also detects a division between vv. 36 and 34–35. He finds support for these breaks in the use of נִי in vv. 36 and 39,⁵ a particle that many consider an important structural marker in the Song.⁶ Marking v. 36 from the preceding verses is the change in speaker (YHWH to poet) and subject (enemy to Israel).⁷

With regard to v. 39, Sanders thinks that the use of the imperative signals a separation from the preceding verses. As further evidence for his proposed structure, Sanders points out several literary features. For example, he notes the alliteration found in פָּצוּר (v. 36) and צוּר (v. 37).⁸ He also envisions continuity of theme running through vv. 36–38, namely YHWH's ability to rescue (v. 36) and the other gods' inability to do so (vv. 37–38).⁹ On the other hand, he suggests that v. 39 is securely tied to v. 40 by means of the repetition of the phrase יָדִי 'my hand' and the theme of life reflected in the use of פִּי 'el חַיָּה 'to restore' in v. 39 and חַי 'alive' in v. 40.¹⁰

Fokkelman presents a third proposal, namely taking vv. 36–39 as an inclusive unit. With Sanders, he understands the change in speaker and subject as a signal of a new thought.¹¹ At the same time, he diverges from both Lundbom and Sanders in seeing no break between vv. 38 and 39. Though acknowledging the repetition of יָדִי 'my hand' in vv. 39, 40, and 41, Fokkelman ultimately reads them as separation markers for two reasons.¹² First, the expression is used negatively in v. 39 and positively in vv. 40–41. Second, he argues that the way that יָדִי 'my hand' falls at the end lines of vv. 40 and 41b

⁴ Ibid., 866–68; he also sees a threefold repetition of נִי at the centre (vv. 35–36) of vv. 34–38 as affirmation of this division (ibid., 863).

⁵ Sanders, *Provenance*, 274, 280.

⁶ Block, *How I Love Your Torah*, 172; *Deuteronomy*, 762.

⁷ Sanders, *Provenance*, 274.

⁸ Ibid., 280.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Fokkelman, *Major Poems*, 121; he finds additional support in (1) the anaphora created by the repetition of $\text{נִי} + \text{yqtl}$ in v. 36; (2) moreover, he thinks that reading the נִי in a temporal sense unduly subordinates the "far too important" contents of v. 36 to v. 35 (ibid., 122).

¹² Fokkelman, *Major Poems*, 127. Labuschagne finds form-critical support for this division. He writes ("Framework and Structure," 97): "from a form-critical point of view verse 39 belongs to what precedes, for in verse 40 we have something quite different." The contrast he appears to envision is one between theological reflection (vv. 36–39) and proclamation of war (vv. 40–42).

reflects an inclusio that marks vv. 40–41b off as a unit. Fokkelman finds further support for his proposal in the thematic thread that runs through these verses: the powerlessness of Israel (v. 36) and the gods they sought for protection (vv. 37–38) in sharp contrast to YHWH’s unrivalled power over all things (v. 39).¹³

This brief survey clearly shows that scholarship is divided with regard to the structure of this segment of the Song. The aim of this chapter is to analyse that use of צור in v. 37–38a with special attention to how the rock metaphor contributes to the structure and message of the surrounding verses. I intend to show that the metaphor, both explicitly and implicitly stated, not only strongly supports Fokkelman’s demarcation (vv. 36–39) but also provides a theme that guides the reader through these verses. Here, as in Chapters 4–6, this will follow the same progression movement from textual to metaphorical analysis.

7.1 TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

7.1.1 Verse 36

It is to the first of these that we now turn. Verse 36 opens with an announcement of divine kindness, a note strikingly different than that of the preceding verses (vv. 28–35):

כִּי־יִדִין יְהוָה עַמּוֹ	36aA	<i>Indeed¹⁴ the YHWH will judge his people</i>
וְעַל־עַבְדָּיו יִתְנַחֵם	36aB	<i>And he will have compassion on his servants</i>
כִּי יִרְאֶה כִּי־אָזְלַת ¹⁵ יָד	36bA	<i>When¹⁶ he sees that their strength¹⁷ was gone</i>
וְאֶפֶס עֲצוּר וְעָזוּב	36bB	<i>And there is none bound or free</i>

The shift from judgment against Israel to judgment *in their favour* is primarily

¹³ Fokkelman, *Major Poems*, 125–26.

¹⁴ The כִּי here can be interpreted as causal (Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 811; Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 387; Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 376; Peels, *The Vengeance of God*, 139), though Fokkelman is probably right to take it as emphatic (*Major Poems*, 122).

¹⁵ Joüon and Muraoka suggest that the early form of the perfect 3fs verb ending was תִּ (Grammar, §42f; cf. Gesenius, Kautzsch, and Cowley, *Gesenius’s Hebrew Grammar*, §44f), as we find in v. 36 (הָיָה יָדוֹ תִּ ‘his hand went’—or more idiomatically ‘his strength is gone’).

¹⁶ Interpreters are likewise divided over the sense of this second כִּי in v. 36. Some suggest that it functions causally (Eissfeldt, *Das Lied Moses*, 12; Sanders, *Provenance*, 231). Other argue it carries a temporal sense (Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 811; Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 387; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 365; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 312; Wright, “The Lawsuit of God,” 32). In the end, both communicate the same general sense: YHWH’s compassion came at a point when Israel was powerless.

¹⁷ As in v. 27, the יָד ‘hand’ should probably be understood as ‘strength’ (Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 375–76; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 446).

carried by the verbs דין and נהם: The basic meaning of the former is ‘to judge’ or ‘to give justice’, but can carry a positive nuance (deliverance) or a negative one (punishment).¹⁸ It seems that the positive sense is intended here based on the strong parallelism with the almost certainly positive נהם (cf. 135:14). The idea, then, appears to be that YHWH will vindicate his people.¹⁹ With regard to נהם, it is generally agreed that the verb conveys a positive intervention, though the precise expression of this is debated. It could express the idea of YHWH ‘relenting’ from his judgment upon his servants; it could also depict him ‘showing compassion.’ A third possibility is that the verb denotes the act of ‘avenging’ on behalf of his servants. It is difficult to make a decisive decision; however, the notion of showing compassion seems the most fitting in light of the preposition על, which is best understood as signalling an action (נהם) performed upon the direct object (עֲבָדָיו).²⁰ It is difficult to envision how relenting—the cessation of action—fits this. Avenging is likewise ill-fitting in that, while such an action would be undertaken on behalf of Israel, it would be exacted upon the enemy, not God’s people.

A question remains: who are עֲבָדָיו ‘his servants’? Against the proposal of some that they are YHWH’s instrument of judgment, the enemy of the preceding verses (vv. 21, 27, 31), it seems more likely Israel is in view.²¹ This is supported by the fact that this reference is embedded securely amidst clear references to God’s people. The preceding colon speaks of עַמּוֹ—an expression only used of Israel elsewhere in the poem (vv. 9, 43). The following lines depict *Israel* as crushed and left powerless in the next line (v. 36b). Moreover, within the wider context, YHWH showing compassion to the enemy seems out of place, especially in light of their arrogance, foolishness, and corruption (vv. 27–29, 32–33). This evidence also casts doubt on the possibility that עֲבָדָיו ‘his servants’ is intentionally ambiguous and, in this way, a depiction of *all* who side with YHWH.²²

¹⁸ Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 391; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 459; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 312. This is attested by a wide array of ANE cognates as well as its parallelism with the more common שפט ‘to judge’ in Ps 9:9 [Eng. 8] and Prov 31:9 (G. Johannes Botterweck and V. Hamp, “דין dîn,” in *TDOT*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, vol. 3 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978], 187–94; Richard L. Schultz, “דין,” in *NIDOTTE*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, vol. 1 [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997], 938–42).

¹⁹ Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 818; Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 234; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 376; Robson, *Honey from the Rock*, 61; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 312; for further discussion of the God as Judge metaphor in the Hebrew Bible, see Meira Z. Kensky, *Trying Man, Trying God: The Divine Courtroom in Early Jewish and Christian Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 15–22.

²⁰ Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 818; Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 386; Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 423; Peels, *The Vengeance of God*.

²¹ Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 392; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 376.

²² Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, 480; Lee, “Narrative Function,” 106; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 459.

As just intimated, v. 36b reveals that YHWH will act when he sees that they are powerless to save themselves, a state presumably resulting from their severe punishment (vv. 19–27, 30, 34–35) and a prerequisite for divine deliverance.²³ This humble state is expressed in terms of their strength being gone. Here יָד ‘hand’ probably serves as a symbol of strength as it does elsewhere in the Song (vv. 27, 40, 41).²⁴ Thus, the expression יָד אֶזְלַת יָד is an idiomatic way of saying that Israel is powerless to save themselves.²⁵

More difficult is the second colon. The traditional and most straightforward reading of the expression אָפֶס עֲצוּר וְעֹזֵב has been understood to mean that no one will be left in Israel. In other words, the verbs עֲצַר (‘to restrain’) and עֹזֵב (‘to let loose’) yield ‘those bound and those free,’ an expression suggesting that neither those who are slaves nor those who are free will remain. In this way, then, it functions as a merism to express that none will remain.²⁶ The problem with this is that it is not consistent with the other uses of the expression אָפֶס עֲצוּר וְעֹזֵב (1 Kgs 14:10; 21:21; 2 Kgs 9:8; 14:26), where, rather than denoting all of Israel, it clearly refers to the *royal house* only.²⁷

Alternatively, Talmon and Fields have argued that אָפֶס עֲצוּר וְעֹזֵב more likely reflects an idiomatic reference to those in a position to help or deliver Israel.²⁸ Of particular importance in elucidating this obscure expression is 2 Kgs 14:26, a passage that exhibits striking similarities with v. 36, including the near identical אָפֶס עֲצוּר וְעֹזֵב (see Table 7).²⁹

Table 7: Deut 32:36 and 2 Kgs 14:26–27

	2 Kgs 14:26–27	Deut 32:36
<i>God sees</i>	כִּי־רָאָה יְהוָה	כִּי־רָאָה
<i>Israel’s plight</i>	אֶת־עַנֵּי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִרְחַק מְאֹד	כִּי־אֶזְלַת יָד
<i>Their lack of</i>	אָפֶס עֲצוּר וְעֹזֵב	אָפֶס עֲצוּר וְעֹזֵב
	אֲזִין עֹזֵר לְיִשְׂרָאֵל	—
<i>God acts</i>	וַיּוֹשִׁיעֵם	וְעַל־עַבְדָּיו יִתְנַחֵם

²³ Lee, “Narrative Function,” 108.

²⁴ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 446.

²⁵ Sanders, *Provenance*, 231.

²⁶ Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 376; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 391; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 376.

²⁷ Shemaryahu Talmon and Weston W. Fields, “The Collocation עֲצוּר וְעֹזֵב and Its Meaning,” *ZAW* 101, no. 1 (1989): 88–89; cf. Alter, *Five Books of Moses*, 1045; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 312.

²⁸ See also Alter, who renders the expression as ‘no ruler or helper’ (*Five Books of Moses*, 1045).

²⁹ Talmon and Fields, “The Collocation,” 91.

In 2 Kgs 14, this expression stands parallel to *אין עזר לישראל* ‘there is none to help Israel’, seeming to imply that the former expression envisions some sort of *helpers* or *deliverers*.³⁰ The following verse reveals that when Israel had no *עזוב* or *עצור*, YHWH appointed Jeroboam to save them (גיושיעם, 2 Kgs 14:27). This not only strengthens the argument that the expression refers specifically to the ruling class, but it also further reinforces the view that it connotes military help or deliverance.³¹ All of this suggests that the expression here in the poem likewise refers specifically to helpers and rulers responsible for the nation’s deliverance,³² the point being, then, that there was no one in Israel who could lead them out of their wretched state.³³

7.1.2 Verses 37–38

Though YHWH’s judgment (דין) will not end in destruction for Israel (vv. 26–27), as it will for his adversaries (vv. 40–42), he does not spare them severe admonishment; in vv. 37–38, he rebukes his people for seeking refuge in other gods with a devastating combination of rhetorical devices.³⁴ Apart from the introductory formula (ואמר), vv. 37–38a form a lengthy rhetorical question that highlights the inferiority of the gods to whom Israel turned.³⁵ It runs:

<p>ואמר אי אלהימו 37a צור הסיון בו 37b</p>	<p><i>And he will say: Where are their gods</i>³⁶ <i>The rock in whom they took refuge</i></p>
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³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 818; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 312.

³³ Some have read *עצור ועזוב* as a compound phrase, ‘rulers and leaders,’ perhaps functioning as a merism (Sanders, *Provenance*, 232–33). Others take it as hendiadys, rendering it along the lines of “ruling deliverer” (Talmon and Fields, “The Collocation,” 87–88). I favour the latter, which brings out the military connotations most clearly.

³⁴ See Sanders (*Provenance*, 234), though Peels and Kowalski represent notable dissenting voices (*The Vengeance of God*, 139–40; “Rock of Ages,” 212).

³⁵ Lee, “Narrative Function,” 108.

³⁶ While the form *אלהימו* can denote either a god or gods, Sanders rightly concludes that “in view of the plural forms of the verbs in v. 38 it would seem best to interpret *אלהימו* as a plural noun.” (*Provenance*, 234). Labuschagne suggests that “the word *צור* does not denote one god, but any of the gods in which they put their trust” (“Framework and Structure,” 70 n. 3). One rabbinic tradition (Piska 327) understood *אלהים* in v. 37 to mean “princes” (*Midrashic Interpretations*, 236). This would cohere well with the mention of Israel’s military leaders in the preceding line (v. 36b). However, this is unlikely since the parallelism ties *אלהים* close with *צור*, which very likely serves as a divine epithet here just as it does throughout the Song.

³⁷ Gesenius, Kautzsch, and Cowley note that the original final *yod* is retained even when the affirmative begins with a vowel (*Gesenius’s Hebrew Grammar*, §75u). This helps explain the strange form—*הסיון*—in v. 37. Rendsburg suggests that this form is an indication of the poem’s northern provenance (“Morphological Evidence for Regional Dialects in Ancient Hebrew,” in *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, ed. Walter Ray Bodine [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992], 82, 87–88).

38aA *Who ate the best of their sacrifices*
 38aB *Who drank wine of their drink offerings?*

The opening colon (37aA) introduces the heart of the matter with a taunt familiar to the Hebrew Bible (Pss 42:3, 10 [Eng. 1, 9]; 79:10; 115:2; Isa 42:17; Jer 2:28): *אי אלהימו* ‘where are their gods?’ The tone is undeniably sarcastic and clearly anticipates a negative response: they are nowhere to found! The full irony of this is underscored by the next three cola as attention is drawn to Israel’s devotion to absentee gods. These cola expose the foolishness of Israel in relying on these deities (v. 37aB) and in worshipping them (v. 38a). The verb *חסה* suggests that Israel sought protection from these gods *under threat*.⁴⁰ It is possible that Israel turned to these other gods for protection against the heavy hand of YHWH’s judgment (vv. 19–26, 30, 34–35). However, the use of sacrifice language (see below) harkens back to v. 16 and suggests that vv. 37–38 reflect further depiction of the idolatry that led to their judgment in the first place (vv. 15b–18, 21).

It is clear from the context that the eating and drinking here is part of Israel’s illicit worship of these other gods; what is less clear is *who* precisely is eating and drinking. Is it Israel or the gods they sought? If Israel is in view, these lines likely depict their feasting in connection with worship. This finds an analogy in the account of Israel’s entanglement with Baal Peor recorded in Num 25, where offering sacrificing (*זבח*) to the Moabite god was accompanied with feasting (*אכל*, v. 2). On the other hand, if the gods are the subject here, the idea is that Israel offered fat and wine for them to eat and drink as part of their worship. Though—for the modern mind—there is perhaps the conceptual challenge of envisioning these gods actually consuming the sacrifices, the syntax seems to favour this option slightly.⁴¹ Connecting *אָשַׁר* with an explicit antecedent (*צוֹר הָסִיּוּ בּוֹ/אֱלֹהֵימוֹ*) rather than an implicit one (embedded subject of the *הָסִיּוּ*) provides a more natural reading. Lending further support for this reading is

³⁸ 4QDeut^a reads a plural for the MT singular. The LXX also reads a singular; however, it has been questioned whether this is necessarily support for the MT over 4QDeut^a since the translators of the LXX “often used s[ingular] forms with a collective meaning to render Hebrew pl[ural] forms” (McCarthy, BHQ, 151*; cf. Lust, “For I Lift Up My Hand,” 37–38).

³⁹ The LXX reads *second-person* verbs (*ἠσθίετε* and *ἐπίνετε*) for the MT’s third-person ones (*יאכלו* and *ישתו*). Yet, the MT is the harder reading and should be preferred. It is possible—if not likely—that the LXX translators attempted to avoid the idea that these gods could eat and drink (Lee, “Narrative Function,” 109 n. 304; Sanders, *Provenance*, 235; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 313; Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Deuteronomy*, 530).

⁴⁰ Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge*, 30, cf. 24–30.

⁴¹ Fokkelman, *Major Poems*, 124.

Fokkelman’s observation that taking Israel as the consumers seems to detract from the gods, which are the main focus of these verses as the flanking lines affirm (37a, b and 38).⁴²

In addition to this rhetorical question (vv. 37–38a), the antagonistic imperatives in v. 38b underscore the fact that the ability of these gods to help falls embarrassingly short:

יָקוּמוּ וְעֲזְרוּכֶם	38bA	<i>Let them arise and help you!</i>
יְהִי עֲלֵיכֶם סִתְרָה ⁴³	38bB	<i>Let him be a shelter⁴⁴ over you!</i>

The verbs קום and עזר can carry military connotations (Ps 44:27 [Eng. 26]). Here YHWH mockingly implores the gods to rise up (קום) and come to Israel’s aid (עזר), something that they cannot possibly do, as the following verses make apparently clear (cf. Judg 10:14; Isa 44:9–20; Jer 2:27–28). The sarcastic challenge to let these gods serve as a shelter (יְהִי עֲלֵיכֶם סִתְרָה) reinforces this idea and, at the same time, links v. 38b back to vv. 37–38a via the refuge motif.⁴⁵

7.1.3 Verse 39

The scathing rebuke in vv. 37–38 is quickly followed up with a pointed corrective in v. 39. It begins with YHWH’s bold pronouncement of his uniqueness in language reminiscent of other statements of incomparability (vv. 12, 31). In v. 12b, the poet makes clear that אין עמו אל נקר ‘there was no foreign god with him’. In v. 31, he announces that לא כצורנו צורם ‘our Rock is not like their rock’. Now here, the poet records YHWH’s self-declaration:

רְאוּ עַתָּה כִּי אֲנִי אֱנִי הוּא	39aA	<i>See now that I alone am he!</i>
וְאֵין אֱלֹהִים עִמָּדִי	39aB	<i>And there are no gods besides me</i>

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ The MT reads a singular but the vast majority of witnesses have a plural. While it is possible that the MT is the result of haplography (McCarthy, BHQ, 152*), it seems more likely that the Versions reflect an attempt to harmonise יְהִי with the previous plural verbs. The MT represents the harder reading and should be preferred (Sanders, *Provenance*, 237; contra Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 812; Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 387 n. 51). Sanders adds that perhaps צור or סִתְרָה is the subject (*Provenance*, 237).

⁴⁴ סִתְרָה occurs only here. However, there is little doubt that its sense is similar to the related verb סתר and noun סִתְרָה, which commonly denote the act of hiding and a place of hiding or refuge (respectively). This is further supported by the refuge (חסה, v. 37) and deliverance language (עזר, קום, v. 38) in the immediate context.

⁴⁵ Creach identifies both חסה and סִתְרָה as part of the refuge word-field, which helps draw the lines together and to underscore more forcefully the fact that the refuge Israel sought could not be provided (*Yahweh as Refuge*, 24–26).

Stated positively, he asserts that he alone is the one who can help his people. While the testimony of the LXX and Vg could be interpreted as evidence that the MT reading אָנִי אֲנִי הוּאָ arose by dittography, it seems more likely that these textual witnesses omitted one of the pronouns by mistake or intentionally intending to capture the sense only in light of the attested doubled pronoun elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (Isa 43:11; 43:25; 48:15; 51:12; Hos 5:14). The double use of the pronoun is most likely for emphasis and, as Williams has suggested, is best rendered along the lines of ‘I alone,’ ‘I, even I,’ or ‘I indeed’.⁴⁶ In sum, this “succinct self-expression” vividly communicates YHWH’s uniqueness.⁴⁷

The parallel colon states YHWH’s uniqueness negatively. It is likely that עִמָּדִי here expresses a *restrictive* sense—that is, one that “presents an exception to a circumstance or action.”⁴⁸ In other words, there are no other gods *besides* YHWH who can deliver and protect Israel. This expression highlights YHWH’s pre-eminence and transcendence. There are no other gods on par with them. He acts independently of them and with unmatched power. Moreover, there are no other gods on par with YHWH because of his sweeping command of matters of life and death. YHWH declares:

אָנִי אָמִית וְאֶחְיֶה	39bA	<i>I kill and I restore</i>
מְחַצְתִּי וְאֶחְפֶּא	39bB	<i>I smite and I heal</i>
וְאֵין מִיָּדַי מְצִיל	39bC	<i>And there is none who can deliver from my hand</i>

The breadth of his dominion is expressed clearly by the pair of couplets (v. 39bA, B). In the first of these, YHWH asserts his ability to take life (מִוֹת) and give it back (חַיָּה). The term חַיָּה likely carries the sense of restoring one to life. In the second pairing, YHWH harms (מַחֲזֵק) and he heals (רִפָּא). In most cases, מַחֲזֵק connotes a wounding that is violent and fatal. For example, it is used to depict piercing one through with arrows (Num 24:8) and crushing enemy skulls (Num 24:17; Judg 5:26; Ps 68:22 [Eng. 21]; Hab 3:13). In Deut 33:11 and 2 Sam 22:39 (= Ps 18:39 [Eng. 38]), מַחֲזֵק emphasises the fact that the recipient will fall (נָפַל) and not rise again (קָוָם). This would seem to suggest that the ‘healing’ envisioned here is restoring one who is mortally wounded. In this way, YHWH’s healing closely echoes his restoration in the previous colon (חַיָּה) and reinforces that this is something that only he can do.

⁴⁶ Catrin H. Williams, *I Am He: The Interpretation of 'Ani Hu' in Jewish and Early Christian Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 47; cf. Nathan MacDonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of "Monotheism"* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 86–89.

⁴⁷ Williams, *I Am He*, 48.

⁴⁸ Arnold and Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, §4.1.17(c).

The significance of these couplets is observed on literary and theological levels. On a literary plane, both pairs likely reflect aspects of his dealings with Israel. Note the perfect tense of מות and מחץ, which leads one to see here a reference to Israel's experience earlier in the poem."⁴⁹ Indeed מות and מחץ are fitting depictions of their judgment (vv. 19–27, 30, 34–35); at the same time, it should not be overlooked that היה and רפא serve as equally fitting depictions of their deliverance from the wicked (vv. 40–42) and restoration of the land (v. 43).

On a theological level, these couplets function to underscore the greatness of YHWH's dominion and power. Many have rightly seen in the pair of couplets an example of merism. In this way, the poet employs opposites to express totality, to express the great breadth of his control. Moreover, there is perhaps some significance in the finality (מות) and severity (מחץ) of his negative actions since they underscore the power necessary to reverse them (היה and רפא), the power that YHWH alone wields. The fact that these couplets occur elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (היה || מות in 2 Kgs 5:7; מחץ || רפא in Job 5:18; Isa 30:26; cf. Hos 5:14–6:2) gives the impression that YHWH's unmatched sovereignty was a theological truth that was (or should have been) well known. This is reinforced by the proverbial ring they carry.⁵⁰

The final colon (v. 39bC) draws out the implications of YHWH's omnipotence and freedom (v. 39bA, B). The idea of deliverance (נצל) out of one's hand (מינד) is a common one in the Hebrew Bible, occurring about 70 times. In a great many of these, it is YHWH who delivers his people out of the hand of their enemies. Yet, closer to the idea expressed in this line, other passages speak of deliverance *from YHWH's hand* (Josh 22:31; Job 10:7; Isa 43:13; Hos 2:12; cf. Dan 8:4, 7).

Of these passages, the expression in Isa 43:11–13 is particularly helpful for elucidating the sense here. The similarities to v. 39 are striking:

¹¹ "I, I am the LORD (אֲנֹכִי אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה),
and besides me there is no saviour (אֵין מִבְּלַעֲדִי מוֹשִׁיעַ)

¹² *I declared and saved and proclaimed,
when there was no strange god among you;
and you are my witnesses,* says the LORD.

¹³ "I am God, and also henceforth I am He (אֲנִי הוּא);
there is none who can deliver from my hand (אֵין מִיַּדִּי מִצִּיל);
I work (אֶפְעֵל) and who can hinder it (מִי יִשְׁיַבְּרֶנָּה)?"

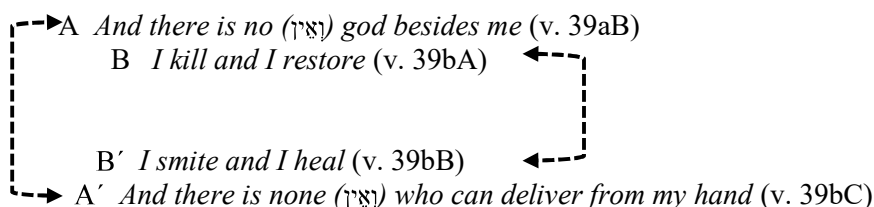
⁴⁹ "Divine Warrior," 256 n. 23.

⁵⁰ With respect to Job 5:18, Crenshaw comments that "the statement that the deity both wounds and binds up, strikes and heals, has a proverbial ring" ("Divine Discipline," 183).

The parallelism of Isa 43:13 helps to give definition to the expression *אין מִיָּדִי מְצִיל* ‘there is none who can deliver from my hand’. ‘My hand’ seems to correspond to ‘I work’ and ‘can deliver’ corresponds to ‘can hinder it.’ In this way, both expressions appear to convey the idea that when YHWH acts no one can thwart him.

This is very likely the point of the *אין מִיָּדִי מְצִיל* ‘there is no one who can deliver from my hand’ here in v. 39 as well. On the one hand, this is *universally* true; nothing—elements of nature, other gods, enemy nations, Israel themselves—can frustrate his plans. However, on the other hand, it seems that the poetic structure of the verse directs these words to the rival gods particularly (Figure 7.1). Note how the cola beginning with *אין* (v. 39aB, bC) flank the two meristic cola (v. 39bA, B):⁵¹

Figure 7.1: Inclusio Binding V. 39



The correspondence between these *אין*-cola would seem to indicate that YHWH’s unrivalled deliverance is more to point another example of his superiority over *other gods*. This is perhaps further supported by the use of the expression in Isa 43, where it is firmly embedded in a section that unequivocally outlines *YHWH’s incomparability* among the gods (Isa 43:10b–13). There, as here, YHWH is touted as Israel’s *sole* deliverer; he saved his people with absolutely no help from other gods (Isa 43:11–12).

The implications of this assertion of YHWH’s matchless power for Israel are twofold. Negatively, this means that no one—neither their ruling deliverers (v. 36) nor the gods they sought for refuge (v. 37)—could have saved Israel from YHWH’s judgment. Positively, YHWH’s omnipotence means that no one—neither the enemy nor their gods—will be able to interfere with his plan to vindicate his people (v. 36) and exact vengeance upon his enemies (vv. 34–35, 40–43).⁵²

It is perhaps not surprising that many consider v. 39 to be the climax of the entire poem in light of its striking form and theological profundity. For example,

⁵¹ These lines are also perhaps linked by the assonance between *עֲמִדִי* and *מִיָּדִי*.

⁵² Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 313.

Williams draws attention to its particularly “rhythmic” and “carefully constructed” qualities.⁵³ With regard to the verse’s theological weight, Luyten concludes that it is “probably the most impressive monotheistic formula of the O[ld] T[estament].”⁵⁴

7.1.4 Synthesis

Taken together, vv. 36–39 develop a clear message and rhetoric.⁵⁵ Israel is cast as *powerless* to save themselves (v. 36) and the gods in whom they sought refuge are proven to be equally as *powerless* to save them (vv. 37–38). It is against this backdrop that v. 39 delivers its point with force; YHWH alone has the *power* to save Israel. Within this progression, a picture of the poem’s now familiar threefold rhetoric of elevation, polemic, and rebuke also emerges. That is to say, YHWH’s sovereignty and superiority, especially as it relates to this omnipotence, is affirmed (elevation) and juxtaposed against the other gods in order to draw attention to their inferiority and impotence (polemic) and to underscore Israel’s stupidity in rejecting a superior God for cheap substitutes (rebuke).

7.2 METAPHORICAL ANALYSIS

Let us now turn to the rock metaphor itself. Examining the frames, entailments, and subsequent conceptualisations brings several connotations to the fore.

7.2.1 Divine Strength

First, צור for God carries the sense of divine strength. One finds support for this in a frame that develops the idea of military might. This theme is expressed negatively in vv. 36–38. It is first encountered in v. 36, where Israel’s lack of military might and leadership (אָפֶס עֲצוּר וְעִזּוּב, אֲזַלֶּת יָד) serves as the impetus for YHWH’s compassion. The rebuke in vv. 37–38 continues this military imagery with the verbs קוּם ‘to arise’ and עֲזַר ‘to help’, which, as noted above, are often employed in connection with military intervention. As noted above, these verses also depict divine protection with two prominent members of the refuge-word-field: the verb חָסָה ‘to take refuge’ and noun

⁵³ *I Am He*, 47.

⁵⁴ “Primeval and Eschatological Overtones,” 346.

⁵⁵ Williams, *I Am He*, 47.

סְתָרָה ‘shelter’.⁵⁶ Within this context, it is likely that this refuge imagery is best taken as a depiction of *military* protection. The thick sarcasm in vv. 37–38 underscores that the gods lacked the power to provide any such assistance.

In contrast to the military impotence of Israel and the other gods, vv. 39–42 draw attention to YHWH’s military might. The language of v. 39 betrays military undertones. YHWH’s יָד ‘hand’ likely depicts his military strength based on the use of the term to describe the enemies (mistaken) appraisal of their military prowess in v. 27 (יָד) and to express Israel’s lack of military leadership in v. 36 (יָד). Moreover, the verb מָחַז ‘to wound’ and the collocation אֵין מִיָּדִי מִצִּיל ‘deliver from one’s hand’ as a whole are often used in military contexts. His military might is further illustrated as the frame is widened to include the divine weaponry and the graphic battle imagery of vv. 41–42. In light of these strong military undertones in v. 39 as well as the entire stanza, it is possible—if not likely—that YHWH’s gift of life and healing should be understood as the result of his offensive against his enemies and the protection of his servants.

The focus on martial *power* in this frame opens up the possibility that the strength commonly attributed to rock is in view here. As in vv. 30 and 31 (Chapter 6), this conception could either be rooted in the physicality of rock (size, height, hardness) or the mythological allusions it evokes (Bel, Baal). With regard to the former, the hardness of rock betrays a smashing and crushing power. At the same time, its great height and size pave the way for rocks to be seen as virtually immovable and as pillars of great resistant strength (Job 14:18; 18:4; Nah 1:6). The conceptualisation of gods as hard and immovable rocks communicates both an active and passive sense; they are depicted as deities who are both offensively and defensively strong. While it is unclear if this type of duality is implied in the strength of Bel, the ‘great mountain’, it is not difficult to imagine an offensive and defensive component to Baal’s mountain-like dominion (see Chapter 3).

Of course, as the immediate (vv. 37–38) and wider context (vv. 36–39) confirms, this application of the metaphor to these gods is clearly ironic. For one, it is couched in the sarcastic rebuke of Israel, making it difficult to read the use of צִוּר as anything other than ironic. Moreover, this is reinforced by the forceful corrective in the following verse, which—in striking contrast to the inability of these gods to save Israel—asserts YHWH’s unrivalled ability to deliver his people (v. 39). This is not to say, however, that the word-picture is altogether inappropriate. Indeed, the use of צִוּר

⁵⁶ Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge*, 24–26.

for YHWH and another god within the same line in v. 31 suggests that the point is not that the other gods cannot function as rocks. Rather, the point is that their power does not even compare to YHWH's.

7.2.2 Divine Protection

In addition to gods of (inferior) strength, צור casts them as gods of (inferior) military protection. The 'military might' frame points to two possible entailments: (1) rock as a source of refuge and (2) the cosmic mountain motif. With regard to the first, one finds that not only were rocks commonly looked to for protection from natural elements (Job 24:8) or divine wrath (Isa 2:10, 19, 21) but they also often served as military strongholds in the ancient world.⁵⁷ Examples of this latter function can be found in the biblical texts (1 Sam 24:3; 1 Chr 11:15) and as well as the archaeological record (Tell el-Hibr).⁵⁸ At the same time, it is possible that the rock imagery evokes the cosmic mountain motif, especially the belief that such a divine abode was impregnable. In Ugaritic myth (CTA 3.3.43–4.47), despite attempts by enemy nations to storm Baal's Mount Saphon (*Völkerkampf*), his strength and military prowess assures that his cosmic mountain will remain safe.

In either case, the conceptualisation is the same; the rock metaphor casts the gods as sure sources of protection, albeit for ironic purposes. This finds strong internal and external support. Within the immediate context, the close syntactical relationship between צור and הָסִיּוּבוֹ strongly supports this suggestion.⁵⁹ Moreover, as has Block noted, the sarcastic commands to protect (יָקוּמוּ 'let them arise!', יִעֲזְרוּכֶם 'let them help you!', יְהִי עֲלֵיכֶם סִתְרָה, 'let them be a shelter to you') "play on the reference to the gods as 'rock' in verse 37."⁶⁰ Such a connotation here is right at home within the broader biblical witness, where the use of the rock imagery as a depiction of YHWH's protection in ancient Israel has been well documented.⁶¹ In context, then, the use of צור to conceptualise these ineffective gods as powerful protectors is particularly ill-fitting and serves to heighten the YHWH's scorn to a nearly unbearable level.

⁵⁷ Keel, *Symbolism*, 180.

⁵⁸ See Betts "Tell El-Hibr."

⁵⁹ Sanders, *Provenance*, 414.

⁶⁰ Block, *Deuteronomy*, 765.

⁶¹ Sanders, *Provenance*, 414.

7.2.3 Divine Incomparability

A third connotation—divine incomparability—derives from a second relevant frame in vv. 36–39, namely the rivalry between YHWH and the gods in whom Israel foolishly sought refuge. This contest is at the heart of vv. 37–39, which sets up the painful contrast between the inability of these gods to save Israel (vv. 37–38) and YHWH’s unrivalled ability to do so (v. 39). In light of this, the common use of צור in Hebrew expressions of incomparability (1 Sam 2:2; 2 Sam 22:32 (= Ps 18:32 [Eng. 31]); Isa 44:8) emerges as a quite natural background to this use of the metaphor. This fits the general point of the passage, namely the assertion of YHWH’s incomparability, which culminates in his bold self-declarations of uniqueness among the gods: אֲנִי אֶלֹהִים הוּא ‘I alone am the one’ and אֵין אֱלֹהִים עִמָּדִי ‘there are no gods besides me’ (v. 39aA, B). If indeed in view here, this use of צור for the illegitimate gods ironically conceptualises them as incomparable gods. The thick sarcasm of vv. 37–38, as well as the explicit correctives in v. 39, quickly shuts down any such notion of true superiority of course. Rhetorically, then, applying language normally attached to divine incomparability in this context only serves to heighten the critique.

7.2.4 Divine Creation, Provision, and Protection

When the word-picture is considered within the context of the ‘rival gods’ frame, a final set of connotations emerges from a possible allusion to the designation ‘great mountain’ (Enlil, Bel, Aššur) to evoke divine creation, provision, protection. A very similar allusion was seen in vv. 30–31 (Chapter 6). These divine designations here, however, open up the possibility that the use of צור for God here in v. 37 conceptualises the gods as creators, providers, and protectors in purely ironic terms. If so, evoking a creative connotation in connection with these gods rather than YHWH serves to highlight the illegitimacy of their relationship with Israel, since only YHWH is Israel’s true Parent (vv. 6, 13, 15b, 18). The protective sense of this entailment reinforces the picture of these gods as (inferior) protectors (see above).

In a particularly entertaining twist, casting these gods as rocks of provision creates a laughable irony. It has been argued that the depiction of Israel’s sacrificing to them here harkens back intentionally to YHWH’s lavish provision for his people earlier in the poem (vv. 13–15a). Indeed the affinities are strong. While the mention of sacrifices (זָבַח) draws the reader to earlier verses, it is the repetition of eating (אָכַל, vv.

15 LXX, 38) and drinking (השתה, vv. 14, 38) of best food (הקֶלֶב, vv. 14, 38) and wine (יַיִן, vv. 14, 38) that links these passages. These parallels set up a sharp contrast between YHWH and the other gods, between the Rock who provides abundantly for his people and the rocks who eat and drink Israel's offerings. In other words, the flow of provisions is reversed; while YHWH provides for his people, these gods only take.⁶² In addition to underscoring their inability to provide for Israel, it demonstrates the audacity of Israel's apostasy as they take YHWH's gifts and give them to other gods.

7.2.5 Discussion

The findings of this metaphorical analysis are noteworthy for understanding the rock metaphor's connotation and its contribution to its literary context.

Connotation

For one, the word-picture is richer than scholarship has often observed. That is to say, while the metaphorical analysis above affirms the consensus view (divine protection), it also demonstrates that the metaphor is multivalent and, thus, identifies several additional connotations (divine strength, incomparability, creation, provision). With regard to these findings, three further comments are necessary.

First, interpreters are justified in focusing on the protective sense of צִוּר for God. Though it is difficult to rule out any of these conceptualisations, the portrayal of these gods as rocks of protection is almost certainly the most pronounced connotation. This is primarily signalled by the presence of חֹסֶה in the accompanying relative clause (צִוּר הַחֹסֶה (בּוֹ), arguably one of the most important members of the refuge word-field.⁶³ The fact that the protection sense draws on multiple entailments (rock as source refuge, ANE divine designation) arising from both frames (military might, rival gods) seems to point in this direction as well. It is curious that little attention has been paid to the natural strength of rocks and the resultant conceptualisation of divine strength, especially in light of the prominence of the themes of power and might in vv. 36–39.

Second, by detecting hints of divine incomparability, this analysis agrees with Sanders' reading and—at the same time—diverges from it. He has rightly drawn attention to the way the rock metaphor contributes to YHWH's incomparability in that

⁶² Kowalski, "Rock of Ages," 213.

⁶³ Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge*, 24–30.

its ironic application to other gods, rhetorically speaking, serves to underscore *YHWH*'s unrivalled ability to protect.⁶⁴ Yet, this observation speaks to the rhetorical level alone. The foregoing analysis shows that the notion of divine incomparability is expressed on even more fundamental levels, on the levels of the entailments (stock divine incomparability language) and conceptualisation (gods as ironically incomparable).

A third and final comment involves the interrelatedness of several of the conceptualisations. One finds that the ironic depictions of the gods as (1) strong and as (2) sources of protection are intimately related: on the entailment plane, they both draw upon the immovability rock; on the conceptualisation plane, divine strength can be understood as an important aspect of what makes them effective sources of protection. There is also a degree of coherence between these conceptualisations and the ironic depiction of these deities as incomparable, namely that strength is a necessary attribute of an effective protector, both, in turn, serving as sure marks of an incomparable god.

Contribution

צור as a Guiding Theme. With regard to the contribution of *צור* to vv. 36–39, the rock imagery plays a significant role, serving as a guiding theme and as an invaluable clue to the message and structure of these verses. One interpretive question that has yet to be addressed is the antecedent of *הוא* in v. 39. MacDonald argues that it most likely refers back to *צור* 'rock' in v. 37. In this way, the expression boldly asserts that *YHWH* alone is Israel's Rock; he alone is the one who can do what the worthless gods cannot, namely protect and deliver Israel.⁶⁵ Fokkelman concurs.⁶⁶ In her thorough treatment of the phrase 'I am he' in the Hebrew Bible, Williams acknowledges this possibility but ultimately concludes that it is best not to seek an antecedent since the expression is far too pregnant to be tied to a single self-identification of Yahweh such as 'Rock'.⁶⁷

In the final analysis, there is good reason to side with Fokkelman and MacDonald and find the antecedent of *הוא* in *צור*. Firstly, in response to Williams, the metaphorical analysis above significantly undercuts her objection. Rather than the

⁶⁴ Sanders argues that vv. 37–38 (as well as vv. 30–31) “stress the incomparability of *YHWH*,” explaining that “other gods may be called *צורים* but the only real *צור* is *YHWH*” (*Provenance*, 283, 430). He argues that incomparability and uniqueness are not contradictory but complementary (*ibid.*, 408; cf. Labuschagne, *Incomparability*, 114–23, 145–46).

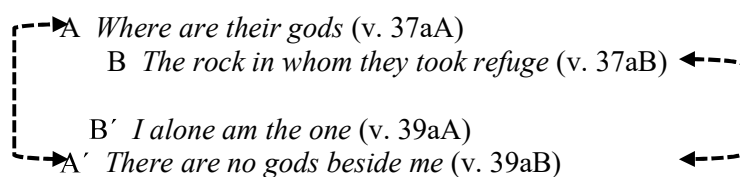
⁶⁵ MacDonald, *Meaning of “Monotheism,”* 88–89.

⁶⁶ Fokkelman, *Major Poems*, 125.

⁶⁷ *I Am He*, 47–48.

narrow self-designation that she seems to presume, the findings of this chapter have shown the word-picture to be an expressive and robust metaphor. Secondly, the contrast set up by an explicit (v. 37) and implicit use of צור (v. 39) is entirely consistent with how צור is employed elsewhere in the Song, namely to draw particular attention to the superiority of YHWH over other gods (vv. 15b, 18, 30, 31). Finally and perhaps most convincingly, poetic structure supports MacDonald’s reading. Note the way the divine exclamation וַאֲיִן אֱלֹהִים עִמָּדִי ‘there are no gods beside me’ (v. 39aB) echoes the rhetorical question אֵי אֱלֹהֵימוּ ‘where are their gods?’ (v. 37aA) in sight and sound (Figure 7.2).

Figure 7.2: Inclusio Binding Vv. 37–39



This serves to link v. 39a securely with the vv. 37–38.⁶⁸ More importantly, however, it links the expression ‘I alone am the one’ directly with the ‘rock’ statement. Even if, for the sake of argument, one was to dismiss any direct connection between them, the inclusio formed by vv. 37aA and v. 39aB hems the expression ‘I alone am the one’ into the discussion of Israel’s inferior rock(s) that Israel sought for refuge to the same effect.

This explicit use of צור in vv. 37–38 and the very likely implicit use of the term in v. 39 invite one to consider the possible wordplay in vv. 36 and 37. The idiomatic אָפֶס עֲצוּר וְעִזּוּב in v. 36 includes the expression עֲצוּר, which, with regard to sight and sound, shows a great degree of affinity with צור in v. 37. Such wordplay is certainly not out of character within the Song. A similar example occurs in vv. 6 and 7 between אָבִיָּה and אָבִיָּה . . . וְקִנְיָה.⁶⁹ Moreover, just a few verses earlier (vv. 30, 31), the poet employs inter-cola wordplay involving צור (‘their rock’). The link between עֲצוּר and צור is also reinforced by their thematic similarity. The former helps underscore the powerlessness of Israel, while the latter the powerlessness of the gods they sought.

Structure and Message of Vv. 36–39. These observations have implications for understanding both the message of vv. 36–39 and the structure of this passage. The rock

⁶⁸ This is not to say that v. 39b, c is disconnected from v. 39a since—as discussed above—the repetition of the 1cs pronoun אָנִי and the particle of non-existence וַאֲיִן hold v. 39 together as a unit (see Figure 7.1).

⁶⁹ Lee, “Narrative Function,” 56; MacDonald, *Meaning of “Monotheism,”* 148.

imagery (stated and implied) helps to move the argument along. Note how it appears in each of the three movements of the strophe and contributes to the powerlessness of Israel in v. 36 (wordplay) and the impotence of the gods in vv. 37–38 (explicit use), and the omnipotence of YHWH in v. 39 (implied antecedent). It is true that this differential in power is implied by other literary means within these verses, but צַוַּר—with its connotations of strength and protection—express this theme with particular style and force. Moreover, its presence gives the passage unity, which not only demonstrates that these verses belong together but also leads the reader along from one thought to the next. Its role as a unifying and guiding theme coheres with the thematic thread that Fokkelman observes and casts support rather decisively for his proposal (vv. 36–39) over Lundbom’s (vv. 34–38, 39–42) or Sanders’ (vv. 36–38, 39–40).⁷⁰

To this, one might add (1) the use of volitional verbs in vv. 38b and 39a and (2) the *inclusio* formed by the language and theme. Concerning the first of these Sanders cites the use of jussives in v. 38b and imperatives in v. 39a as reason to separate these verses. However, this is far from a convincing distinction within the context of the poem. Note the poet’s use of imperative (הִצְוִינוּ) and jussive forms within the same line in v. 1:

*Give ear (הִצְוִינוּ), O heavens, and I will speak
And let the earth hear (וְתִשְׁמַע) the words of my mouth*

It seems better to take the use of these volitional forms here as good reason to read vv. 37–38 *with* v. 39. Lexically and thematically, vv. 36 and 39 form an *inclusio* that binds these verses and underscores a key reversal: in v. 36, YHWH acts when he sees (רָאָה) that Israel’s strength is gone (אָזְלַת יָד ‘their strength is gone’). In v. 39, by contrast, YHWH demands that Israel open their eyes (רָאָה) to the fact that, among other things, he acts with an invincible strength (אֵין מְדַי מְצִיל ‘there is none who can deliver from my hand’).

At the same time, by employing wordplay on the same term (צַוַּר), the poet also invites comparison between these sections—for example, Israel’s lack of protection in comparison to YHWH’s unrivalled protection or the impotence of the gods in comparison with YHWH’s omnipotence. The wordplay even invites Israel’s sorry state to be considered in light of the sorry state of the enemy, namely their inability to protect. In doing so, Israel’s foolishness becomes inescapably apparent. They sought

⁷⁰ Fokkelman, *Major Poems*, 125–26.

protection in gods who could not provide it.

In addition to moving the argument along and facilitating a dialogue within these verses, the poet's use of the implied and stated rock metaphor reinforces the rhetoric of the passage (elevation, polemic, and rebuke). Knowles and Lee have drawn attention to its functions of צור for God as a polemic.⁷¹ Without question, the aim of the ironic use of the metaphor is to portray the other gods as protectors. My analysis, however, suggests that the possible allusion to ANE divine designation as a means of (ironically) conceptualising these gods as creators and providers has a similar polemical effect since, when read in light of v. 39, these ironic conceptualisations of these gods reinforce the claim that these divine attributes are embodied *par excellence* in YHWH alone (elevation). In light of these observations, Lee rightly draws attention to how the ironic use of rock metaphor bites on another level, namely the way it serves to rebuke Israel for having abandoned YHWH, their rightful and superior God, in pursuit of legitimate and far inferior gods.⁷²

7.3 SUMMARY

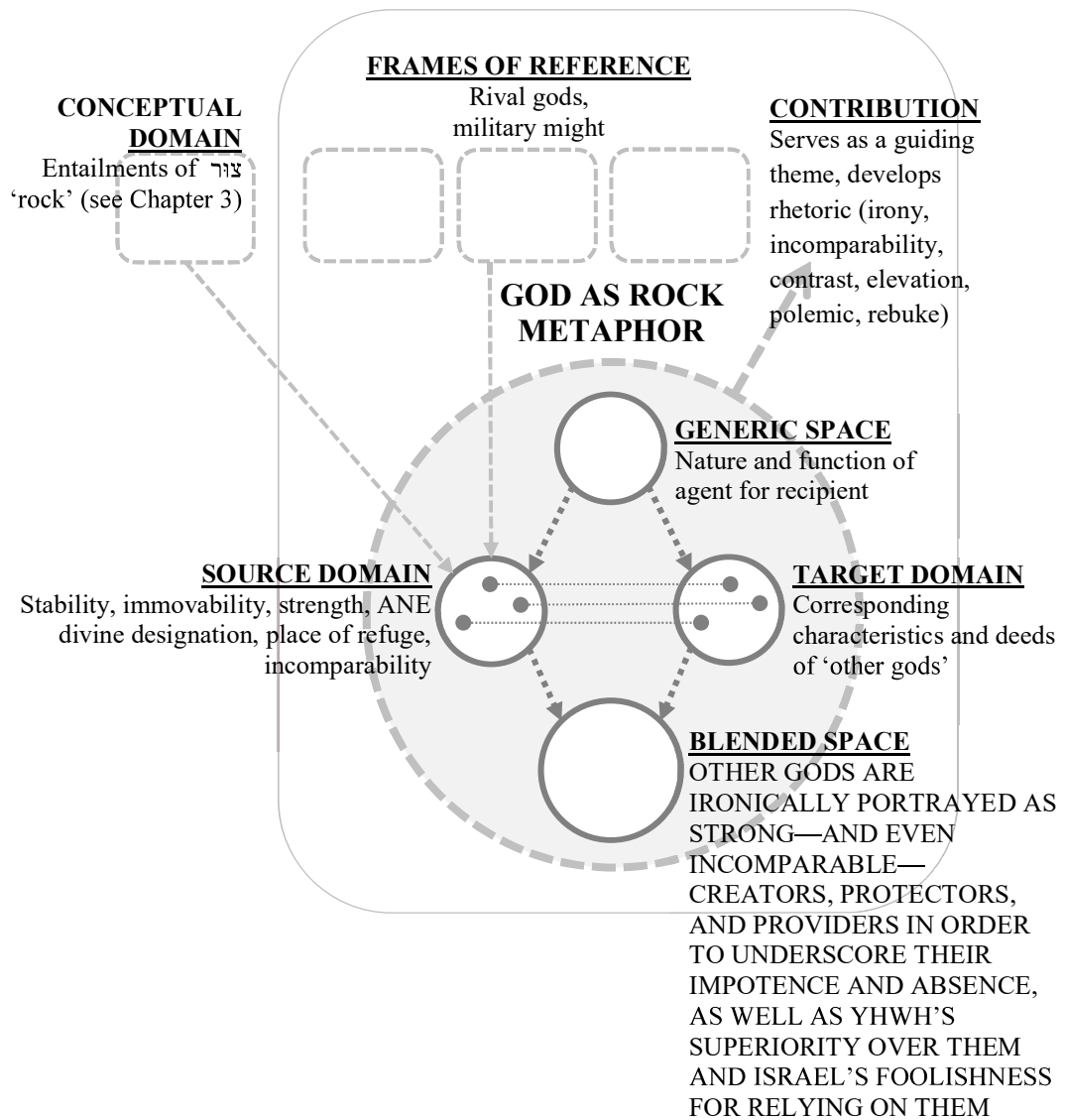
The goal of this chapter has been to examine the use of צור in v. 37 with the hopes that this might clarify the structure of vv. 36–39. Indeed, the textual analysis of these verses and the metaphorical analysis of the word-picture have helped in this in that they strongly support reading these verses as a unit (Fokkelman, *contra* Lundbom, Sanders). Along the way, these analyses have shed light on other aspects of the metaphor as well.

With regard to its connotation, the metaphorical analysis demonstrated its polyvalence. This is rooted in the multiple 'frames' and rock entailments that arise from the context (vv. 36–42). More specifically it is the 'military might' and 'rival gods' frames that open up a wide variety of entailments. These include physical characteristics of rocks (hard, immovable), cultural conceptions of them (place of refuge), mythical associations with them (ANE divine designations), and religious traditions connected to them (stock incomparability language).

⁷¹ Knowles, "The Rock, His Work Is Perfect," 314, 316; Lee, "Narrative Function," 108; cf. Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 377.

⁷² Lee, "Narrative Function," 108.

Figure 7.3: Conceptual Blend of the Rock Metaphor in V. 37

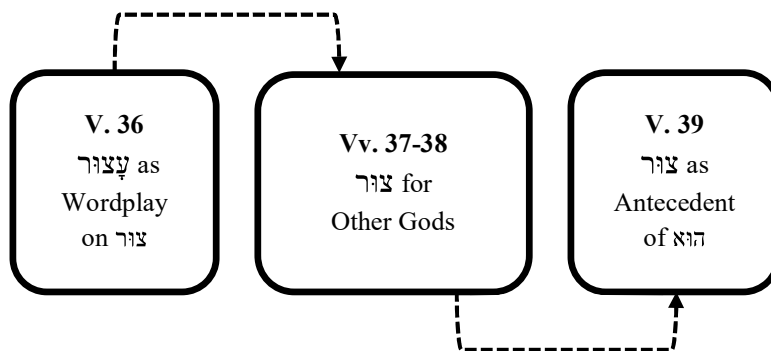


Together these entailments conceptualise the gods in whom Israel sought refuge in a number of different ways (see Figure 7.3). The hard and immovable nature of rock is intended to give these gods the air of strength, a notion the context decisively demolishes. Closely related to this is the way the conception of rock as a place of refuge, as well as its allusion to ANE cosmic mountain myth and divine designations (Aššur), all work ironically to portray them as protectors. It is even possible that the latter of these casts them as creators and providers (Enlil) for ironic effect. It is probably best to understand the use of stock incomparability language as a means of depicting the gods as incomparable, in doing so, setting up a pathetic scenario: those Israel thought were incomparable are proven to be utterly inferior. In this way, not only does this analysis affirm the consensus view of the metaphor (protection), but also goes further

by drawing attention to additional senses (strength, creation, provision, incomparability). This polyvalence of צור affirms once again what has been observed in the previous chapters, namely the openness of the metaphor and its great power to convey much with little.

Finally, this chapter has illustrated the great contribution of צור for God to our understanding of the message of vv. 36–39. This is seen in the way it develops the rhetoric of these verses (elevation, polemic, rebuke). Perhaps more importantly, though, is the way that the explicit and implicit uses of the metaphor serve as a guiding theme that binds these verses and moves the argument along from the powerlessness of Israel (v. 36) to the impotence of the other gods (vv. 37–38) and, climactically, to the unrivalled power of YHWH (v. 39); see Figure 7.4.

Figure 7.4: צור as Guiding Theme in Vv. 36–39



PART THREE:
TRACING THE IMPLICATIONS

Chapters 4–7 have explored each occurrence of צור for God within its immediate context and now this study ventures to explore the rock metaphor more holistically. Chapters 8 and 9, therefore, aim to consider the ‘rock’ passages together and trace the implications of the preceding metaphorical analysis for broader interpretive issues. Chapter 8 will take up the relationship between the metaphor and the Song’s message; Chapter 9 will deal with the metaphor’s contribution to some of the poem’s most pressing perennial questions. To conclude the present study, Chapter 10 will briefly retrace the contours of the preceding chapters and succinctly highlight key findings.

CHAPTER 8

THE ROCK METAPHOR AND THE MESSAGE OF THE SONG OF MOSES

Up to this point in the study, the focus has been on the individual ‘rock’ passages; let us now turn to the poem as a whole and locate them in their larger context. This will include examining (1) the relationship among the seven occurrences of צור for God, as well as (2) the metaphor’s relationship to the Song’s message. In doing so, this chapter will attempt to show that the rock metaphor expresses its meaning on a variety of levels and contributes profoundly to key aspects of the Song.

8.1 THE ROCK METAPHOR

When all seven occurrences of the word-picture are taken together, several observations concerning the metaphor emerge. A few general remarks are necessary; more will be said in connection with other aspects of the poem.

8.1.1 Polyvalence

First, it becomes evident that the rock metaphor is polyvalent. This is true on the level of the individual use. Table 8.1 visualises the findings of the metaphorical analysis of Chapters 4–7 (those conceptualisations that are particularly prominent are in bold). Indeed, these chapters have already demonstrated that each occurrence of צור expresses not a single sense but multiple. Yet, when the wide array of connotations that are expressed by the metaphor across the poem are brought together, the full weight of this point is underscored forcefully and the diversity is made unmistakable.

Yet another level of polyvalence arises. Note that amidst the multiplicity of sense within each occurrence, one can also observe a focus. As the Song unfolds, these emphases shift: constancy (v. 4) to protection (v. 15b) to creation (v. 18) to opposition and strength (v. 30) to incomparability and again strength (v. 31) back to protection (v. 37). Each occurrence reflects a unique configuration of entailments. This is even true of vv. 15b and 18, which share the same combination of entailments yet differ slightly in where emphasis is laid: protection in the former and creation in the latter. These observations point to a word-picture that is polyvalent not only in the sense that each

use of צִוּר expresses a range of connotations but also in the sense that each metaphor differs from the others and brings its unique set of expressions. This certainly challenges the unfortunate tendency of interpreters to reduce all uses of the rock metaphor to one connotation but also challenges the commonplace tendency to allow an occurrence only one sense.

Table 8.1: Conceptualisations of the Rock Metaphor

V. 4	V. 15b	V. 18	V. 30	V. 31	V. 37
Constancy	—	—	—	—	—
Creation	Creation	Creation	Creation	Creation	Creation
Protection	Protection	Protection	Protection	Protection	Protection
Provision	Provision	Provision	Provision	Provision	Provision
—	Antiquity	Antiquity	—	—	—
—	—	—	Opposition	Opposition	—
—	—	—	Strength, Power	Strength, Power	Strength, Power
—	Incompar- ability	Incompar- ability	Incompar- ability	Incompar- ability	Incompar- ability

8.1.2 Dialogue

Reinforcement

One can detect a surprisingly lively interaction or dialogue among the uses of צִוּר. At times, they *reinforce* one another. Take for example the way that, in each occurrence of the word-picture, the connotations of creation, protection, provision, and incomparability are expressed to one degree or another. In this way, special attention is drawn to these divine qualities and roles. In other places, reinforcement takes the form of clear expression strengthening the more subtle ones. For instance, the way that the unequivocal use of צִוּר to express divine protection in vv. 15b and 37, as well as the very likely expression of this connotation in vv. 4, 18, 30, provides good reasons to read this sense in the more ambiguous use of the metaphor in v. 31.

In v. 4, a similar interaction is in view. The articular form ‘*the* Rock’ seems to presume YHWH’s pre-eminence among other rocks. As noted in Chapter 4, the use of the verb ‘to act corruptly’ (v. 5) is routinely used to describe Israel’s entanglement with other gods elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. This is also supported by the structure of vv. 4–8, where YHWH’s divine care (vv. 8–14) illustrated his moral perfections (v. 4) and Israel’s rebellion in v. 15b–18 their corrupt and inappropriate behaviour (vv. 5–6). The fact that all five of the other uses of צור arise out of a ‘rival gods’ frame and mythological entailments (see Table 8.2) seems to affirm the suspicion that indeed it conceptualises YHWH as part of a divine world and invites the hearer to consider YHWH’s relation to other gods.

Table 8.2: Frames of Reference Relevant to the Rock Metaphor

V. 4	V. 15b	V. 18	V. 30	V. 31	V. 37
Moral Perfection	—	—	—	—	—
Parent	Parent	Parent	—	—	—
Protection	Protection	Protection	—	—	—
Provision	Provision	Provision	—	—	—
—	Rival Gods	Rival Gods	Rival Gods	Rival Gods	Rival Gods
—	—	—	Military Might	Military Might	Military Might
—	—	—	Judgment	Judgment	—

Transference

The dialogue among the occurrences of the rock metaphor includes a type of transfer or import. Perhaps the best example is the likely echoes of YHWH’s constancy (v. 4) in the subsequent use of the metaphor (vv. 15b, 18, 30, 31). Rock and parent imagery form an *inclusio* that binds vv. 4–18. This naturally invites one to read the constancy of v. 4 into vv. 15b and 18 with the effect of underscoring YHWH’s commitment to his people in spite of their rejection. At the same time, the placement of צור at the head of the poem proper more broadly (vv. 4–42) invites one to consider the possibility of v. 4 informing the use of צור in vv. 30 and 31. Though the metaphor clearly casts YHWH as a strong *opposition* in vv. 30 and 31, Knight insightfully observes that YHWH’s direct role in orchestrating Israel’s fall nevertheless demonstrates that “at no point in their

history did God ever abandon his people.”¹ The possible hints of divine constancy in these verses underscore that, even in judgment, he remained their Rock (‘their Rock’, ‘our Rock’), serving as a subtle reminder of the constancy of his covenant with his people. YHWH’s ultimate compassion, vindication, and restoration in the concluding verses of the poem bear this out (vv. 36–42).

Elaboration

In the case of the use of צור in vv. 31 and 37, the dialogue is one of elaboration. That is the compact comparison between YHWH and another god in v. 31 (לא כְּצוּרֵנוּ צוּרִים) ‘their rock is not like our Rock’) is significantly expanded upon in vv. 37–39, as vv. 37–38 ruthlessly highlight the impotence of other (illegitimate) rocks and v. 39 demonstrates the unrivalled power of Israel’s only true Rock. One implication of this: it seems to support the suggestion that the ability to act as both a rock of blessing and a rock of destruction is indeed a divine quality at the heart of the comparison between ‘rocks’. This is because v. 39 gives YHWH superiority over other gods: he *alone* is Israel’s Rock who wields power to bless them (‘give life’, ‘heal’) or curse them (‘smite’, ‘kill’).

Reconsideration

In addition to themes of one use of the metaphor being carried into a subsequent one (transference), one also observes the reverse: one use inviting the previous uses to be reconsidered. This form of interaction is likely found among vv. 4, 15b, and 18, where the emphasis of YHWH’s antiquity in the latter two invites one to consider a similar temporal connotation in the former. Indeed it does appear that vv. 15b and 18 bring this aspect to the forefront in v. 4. This proposal is strengthened by the parent and creator language in v. 6 that underscores YHWH’s role in Israel’s *beginning*, as well as the way that rock and parent imagery bind vv. 4–18. If so, we are to detect this sense in v. 4; it highlights the antiquity of YHWH’s perfections, which in turn only heightens Israel’s guilt. They acted corruptly and inappropriately toward not only a God who is good to them but more specifically (and shamefully) a God who has been good to them since their very inception as a nation (vv. 8–9, 10, 11). Indeed there is a temporal sense inherent in YHWH’s constancy since this steadfastness implies that his righteous character and deeds remain unchanged, as well as that they have been constant

¹ Knight, *A Theological Quarry*, 96.

throughout Israel’s past.

A similar reconsideration is likely at work in the pronounced emphasis on YHWH’s strength and opposition in the latter half of the poem (especially vv. 30 and 31), which seems to invite the first half to be reread in light of these connotations. In ancient Israel as well as the broader ANE context, it was expected that children recognise the authority of their father and that the father would correct his wayward children with discipline.² It seems quite possible then that hints of YHWH’s strong opposition and chastisement against his disobedient people in vv. 30 and 31 might also be expressed in vv. 4, 15b, and 18.³ In this way, צור foreshadows what is to come because of their rebellion (vv. 19–35), an altogether fitting response to their corrupt behaviour (vv. 5–6)—their rejection of YHWH for illicit gods (vv. 15b–18).

In light of these examples of interaction, the discernible connotations are significantly increased. Table 8.3 presents the fuller picture (additions in italics):

Table 8.3: Conceptualisations of Rock Metaphor Introduced by Dialogue

V. 4	V. 15b	V. 18	V. 30	V. 31	V. 37
Constancy	<i>Constancy</i>	<i>Constancy</i>	<i>Constancy</i>	<i>Constancy</i>	—
Creation	Creation	Creation	Creation	Creation	Creation
Protection	Protection	Protection	Protection	Protection	Protection
Provision	Provision	Provision	Provision	Provision	Provision
<i>Antiquity</i>	Antiquity	Antiquity	—	—	—
<i>Opposition</i>	<i>Opposition</i>	<i>Opposition</i>	Opposition	Opposition	—
<i>Strength, Power</i>	<i>Strength, Power</i>	<i>Strength, Power</i>	Strength, Power	Strength, Power	Strength, Power
—	Incomparability	Incomparability	Incomparability	Incomparability	Incomparability

² Ringgren writes that the authority held by fathers is clearly seen in the expectations of their children to love, revere, and obey them in the ancient world (“אבִּי ’ābh,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 1 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974], 2). This is echoed in the use of ‘father’ as a common divine epithet to highlight the deity’s power and authority (ibid., 1:5). Within the Hebrew Bible, the same paternal authority is demonstrated in the command to honour one’s father (and mother—Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16; 21:18) and the figurative use of ‘father’ for authority figures such as priests (Judg 18:19), prophets (2 Kgs 2:12), and masters (2 Kgs 5:13) (ibid., 1:8–9). As an extension of this paternal authority, fathers were expected to discipline their children as in Deut 8:5 and Prov 13:24 (ibid., 1:10).

³ Lee, “Narrative Function,” 64.

8.1.3 Grounding

With regard to the entailments undergirding the metaphor, it is notable how diverse they are (see Table 8.4):

Table 8.4: Entailments Undergirding the Rock Metaphor

V. 4	V. 15b	V. 18	V. 30	V. 31	V. 37
Stability, Immovability	Stability, Immovability	Stability, Immovability	Stability, Immovability	Stability, Immovability	Stability, Immovability
—	—	—	Strength	Strength	Strength
Place of Quarrying	Place of Quarrying	Place of Quarrying	—	—	—
ANE Generative Rock Myth	ANE Generative Rock Myth	ANE Generative Rock Myth	—	—	—
ANE Divine Designation	ANE Divine Designation	ANE Divine Designation	ANE Divine Designation	ANE Divine Designation	ANE Divine Designation
ANE Cosmic Mountain	ANE Cosmic Mountain	ANE Cosmic Mountain	—	—	—
Place of Refuge	Place of Refuge	Place of Refuge	Place of Refuge	Place of Refuge	Place of Refuge
Water from the Rock	Water from the Rock	Water from the Rock	—	—	—
—	Incompar- ability	Incompar- ability	Incompar- ability	Incompar- ability	Incompar- ability

They are drawn broadly from various key spheres of life including the natural world (stability, immovability, strength), cultural conceptions (place of quarrying, refuge), and the religious traditions of Israel (water from the rock, incomparability) and of the broader ANE (creative rock myth, divine designation, cosmic mountain).

As mentioned in Chapter 2, recent metaphor theorists argue that metaphor is experientially conditioned and shaped by both physical and cultural factors.⁴ The implication of this fact for this present study is twofold. First, such physical and cultural grounding suggests that metaphor serves as a window into the conceptual world of the

⁴ Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 67–76, 117, 243–44; Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 19–21, 56–68; Lakoff and Turner, *More Than Cool Reason*, 60, 65–67; cf. Basson, *Divine Metaphors*, 56; DesCamp and Sweetser, “Metaphors for God,” 213–17.

ancient poet and audience. Second, it would seem to imply that deeply-grounded metaphors carry a greater communicative power than those with few physical and cultural underpinnings. That is to say, metaphors with richer entailments are likely to be more readily evoked, more acutely felt, and more relevant to a broader range of people.

The rich array of rock entailments undergirding the word-picture in the Song, therefore, appears to betray its cultural relevance—its affective and expressive power. By drawing on physical characteristics of rock, the metaphor is made accessible and tangible. Alluding to entailments taken from the religion of Israel and the ANE demands comparison among deeply held beliefs and national identity. This is especially true in light of the Song’s allusion to one of the events at the very core of Israel’s religious and national identity: the miraculous provision of water from the rock in connection with the exodus and wilderness wanderings.⁵

8.2 THE ROCK METAPHOR AND THE SONG’S MESSAGE

8.2.1 Narrative

This polyvalent and deeply-entrenched metaphor contributes to the message of the poem in several important ways, but first a word on the ‘narrative’ of the Song—its flow and argument—to place the ‘rock’ passages into their broader literary context.⁶

The poem opens with a grand invocation which serves to draw in and orient the audience. The poet calls the heavens and earth to attention (v. 1) and wishes that his hearers might hear the life-giving words of his poem (vv. 1–2). At the same time, he invites all to praise God for his greatness (v. 3). Having gained an audience, the poet moves into the poem proper (vv. 4–42), which divides into four major units: vv. 4–18, 19–25, 26–35, and 36–42.

The first of these introduces and illustrates a theme that will run through the remainder of the Song, namely the constancy of YHWH despite the inconstancy of his people (vv. 4–18). Though their Rock remains unchanging in his divine perfections and—by extension—his faithfulness to Israel (v. 4), wayward Israel shockingly did not reciprocate this relational fidelity (vv. 5–7). The poet expounds upon this dichotomy with a painful historical retrospective that illustrates YHWH’s abundant goodness (vv. 8–14) and Israel’s utter wickedness (vv. 15b–18). YHWH chose them to be his people

⁵ Fernandes, *God as Rock*, 358; Kowalski, “Rock of Ages,” 310; cf. Smith, *Early History*, 137.

⁶ McConville helpfully speaks of “the underlying ‘narrative’ of the Song” (“Retribution,” 291).

(vv. 8–9), vigorously protected them (vv. 10–12), and lavishly provided for them (vv. 13–14b). One would expect such benevolent actions to evoke a grateful response, but ungrateful and shameful Israel, having gorged themselves on the rich provision, grew rebellious (vv. 14c–15b) and ultimately rejected their Rock for other gods (vv. 15b–18).

In the second major unit, vv. 19–25, Israel’s flagrant disregard for their God despite his faithfulness to them is met with swift and fitting judgment. Seeing that his treacherous children have abandoned him, YHWH responds (v. 19) by abandoning them (vv. 20–21). In response to their provocation, his anger burns hot (v. 22) and he unleashes ghastly horrors upon them: pestilence (vv. 23–24) and war (v. 25).

Verse 26 marks an important shift in the poem as a description of Israel’s sin and judgment (vv. 19–25) gives way to theological reflection upon it (vv. 26–35). This third rhetorical unit opens with the reality that YHWH nearly annihilated his people (vv. 26–27). They should have considered the consequences of their rebellion (28–29), namely that their omnipotent Rock would powerfully turn against them (vv. 30–31). After all, just as a bad vine yields bad grapes and bad wine, so Israel’s rebellious nature yielded idolatrous results (cf. vv. 15b–18) and kindled YHWH’s wrath (vv. 32–33, cf. 19–22) and judgment (vv. 32–35, cf. 19–25). As Chapter 7 demonstrated, the ambiguity of these verses also allows them to be read with Israel’s enemy in view.

Verse 36 marks yet another significant shift and the poem moves into its fourth and final major rhetorical unit. This change is detected in the rather unexpected display of divine favour. Moreover, while vv. 26–35 reflect on Israel’s past judgment, vv. 36–42 reflect on future judgment. YHWH will judge in favour of his people (v. 36a) and have compassion on his servants when they are powerless to save themselves (v. 36b). Their sentence will not be destruction as with his adversaries (vv. 40–42), but instead is a scathing reprimand, a reminder that the rocks Israel sought were powerless to save (vv. 37–38) and that only YHWH, their only true Rock, has the power to save Israel since it is he alone who directs their destiny, for good or for ill (v. 39).

The poem concludes with a coda of praise (v. 43) that looks backwards and forwards. Regardless of one’s reading of the verse (MT, Q, LXX), it captures the essence of vv. 36–42 by reiterating the vindication of YHWH’s people and vengeance against his enemies. At the same time, v. 43 directs the hearer to the future by introducing a new thought in its final line: YHWH’s restoration of his people and their land. The verse also serves as a fitting conclusion in that it harkens back to the poem’s introduction (vv. 1–3). Note how that call for the ‘heavens’ to praise evokes both the

invocation to the ‘heavens’ and earth in v. 1 as well as the invitation to praise in v. 3. The fact that the poem ends with a similar call to worship in v. 43 perhaps suggests that the ultimate goal of the Song is to cultivate praise.

צור for God plays a significant role within this narrative. This is seen on the level of individual poetic units. The metaphorical analysis in Chapters 4–7 has shown the metaphor’s contribution to the reading strategy of the poem’s ‘rock’ passages (governing theme, chiasm, ambiguity, binding motif). One might add to this the positioning of the word-picture at the beginning (v. 4) and end (v. 18) to frame the account of YHWH’s faithful care and Israel’s faithless rejection of their living God (vv. 4–18).

At the level of the Song as a whole, the rock metaphor and ‘rock’ passages help move the narrative along. This is seen in its linking capacity. The dialogue among occurrences of צור mentioned above invites comparison among them but also effectively facilitates movement between the rhetorical units more broadly as the hearer moves from one use of the metaphor to the next (reinforcement, informing, elaboration) and back again (reconsideration). Note also how the word-picture in vv. 15b and 18 falls at a structurally-significant juncture, helping to mark the bounds of a passage that functions as a literary hinge. Israel’s rejection of their Rock in vv. 15b–18 serves not only as the shocking conclusion to his goodness in vv. 4–14 but also as the reason for the judgment in vv. 19–25; in doing so, effectively connecting the first two major segments.

The rock metaphor also facilitates movement by means of development. For example, צור is applied to other gods in vv. 31 and 37 only after it has already helped to develop some of YHWH’s key qualities (constant, ancient, strong, incomparable) and roles (creator, protector, provider) in vv. 4, 15b, 18, and 30. In this way, the poem first shows how YHWH is worthy of the title ‘Rock’ before showing how the other gods are unworthy of it in order that the full extent of his superiority might be readily recognised. This is perhaps most clearly seen in the move from v. 30 to v. 31 and finally to v. 37, where YHWH’s unmatched power is demonstrated (v. 30) before it is contrasted with the inferior power of other gods (v. 31) and their impotence is reiterated (v. 37).

The intensification from one ‘rock’ passage to another also illustrates this development, as in the way Israel’s rejection of their Rock in vv. 15b–18 echoes their corrupt response to him in vv. 5–6, but at the same time intensifies the language. The

vague corrupt actions and implicit idolatry and inappropriate behaviour are replaced by concrete offences and explicit references. A similar intensification involves the implied contrast between Rock and other gods in vv. 15b–18, which is explicitly stated in v. 31: לא קצורנו צורם ‘their rock is not like our Rock’. Note also the further elaboration of this verse in vv. 37–39 mentioned above.

The word-picture also punctuates the key movements within the poem’s narrative. From the discussion above, a basic plotline emerges: (1) Israel rejects YHWH, their good God (vv. 4–18), (2) YHWH punishes them for their rejection (vv. 19–25, 26–35), and (3) YHWH unexpectedly shows them compassion (vv. 36–42). As noted already, the metaphor helps form an *inclusio* around this first movement (vv. 4–18), demonstrating its importance to the stanza. More specifically, צור for YHWH illustrates his faithfulness (constancy), parental care (creation, protection, provision) and superiority (incomparability), while at the same it underscores the foolishness of Israel’s rejection. In reflecting on YHWH’s direct role in Israel’s punishment, the picture of their Rock handing them over into the hands of their enemy neatly summarises vv. 19–25. Finally, the poem announces Israel’s vindication (vv. 36–39) but not before the superiority of their Rock over other rocks is reasserted (vv. 37–39).

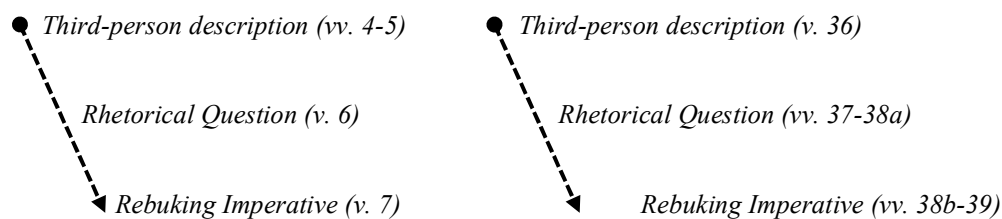
8.2.2 Structure

Closely related to this discussion of the poem’s narrative is a second: the rock metaphor contributes to three prominent aspects of the poem’s structure. Consider the division of its rhetorical units. Interpreters have rightly drawn attention to the structural significance of צור in the first half of the poem, namely its governing position in vv. 4–6, its framing function in the chiasmic vv. 15b–18, and its enveloping role in vv. 4–18 as a whole. The textual and metaphor analysis in Chapter 4 and 5 affirms these observations. However, I would like to suggest that this extends to the latter half of the poem as well. In accordance with the analysis in Chapter 6, the wordplay on the expression ‘their rock’ in vv. 30 and 31 demonstrates that these verses are best read together against those who divide the two verses (Skehan). In Chapter 7, it was argued that implicit and explicit uses of צור in vv. 36–39 serve as a guiding theme that binds these verses and facilitates the reading of them. This is in agreement with Fokkelman against Sanders and Lundbom.

The metaphor also falls at what can be called the Song’s thesis (vv. 4–6) and climax (v. 39). These verses have been ascribed particular weight by interpreters. The

former represents the poem’s thematic introduction, setting out the fundamental theme that the rest of poem elucidates.⁷ Because of its emphatic language, striking poetic structure, and strategic positioning at the centre of its stanza (vv. 36–42), v. 39 is widely held as the poem’s climax. In light of the structural findings just mentioned, it seems reasonable to speak of vv. 36–39 as the Song’s climactic strophe. This is all the more fitting since v. 36 introduces the unexpected theme of divine compassion and marks a clear turning point. Interestingly, both fall at the beginning of the first and last stanzas (vv. 4–18, 36–42) and follow a similar pattern (see Figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1: Parallel Structure of Thesis (Vv. 4–6) and Climax Strophes (Vv. 36–39)



In both vv. 4–6 and vv. 36–39, the word-picture plays a governing role, in the former by means of its emphatic *casus pendens* construction and the latter by means of the binding and guiding role of the rock imagery. It seems no stretch to say that צור serves as an important structural marker, helping to punctuate these strategic segments of the poem. The use of the metaphor in v. 4 marks off the beginning of the important ‘thesis’ unit (vv. 4–6), but also—as mentioned above—the opening stanza (vv. 4–18) and the poem proper (vv. 4–42).

A final structural feature of note is the poem’s distinctive expressions of incomparability in vv. 12, 31, and 39. Several aspects of these statements indicate that they perhaps serve as important structural markers. They share linguistic and thematic affinities:

⁷ Tigay for example suggests that vv. 4–6 set out “the thesis that God is entirely just and faithful while Israel is faithless, foolish, and ungrateful,” two themes that “the poem proceeds to elaborate” (*Deuteronomy*, 300; cf. Labuschagne, “Framework and Structure,” 94). Miller reflects (*Deuteronomy*, 227): “The song, whose basic character is poetic narrative, laying out the ways of God with his people and their way with God, essentially begins with these verses [vv. 4–6] but in the form of a presentation of the primary theme of the song. A contrast is offered between the Lord’s work and ways and those of Israel. That contrast then is developed in the rest of the poem.”

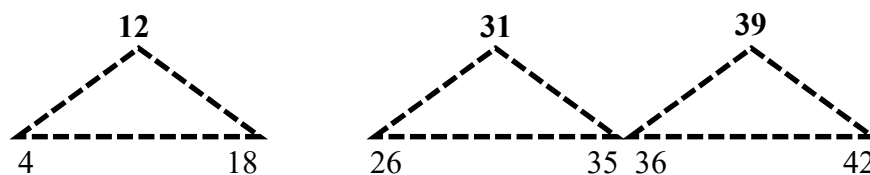
And there was (אין) no foreign god besides him (עמו אל נכר, v. 12b)

Indeed their rock is not like our Rock (v. 31a)

And there are (אין) no gods besides me (אלהים עמדי, v. 39c)

In addition, while each exhibits a general coherence within its immediate context, each has a slightly disjunctive sense as well. Verse 12 interrupts the natural progression from divine protection in vv. 10–11 to provision in vv. 13–14 with an abrupt introduction to the theme of other gods, giving it the feeling of a parenthetical comment.

Figure 8.2: Placement of Expressions of Incomparability



As seen in Chapter 7, v. 31 shifts unexpectedly to the first-person plural ('our Rock'). Verse

39 serves as a fitting contrast to vv. 37–38; however, when read within the broader context of vv. 36–42, it disrupts the expected movement from rebuke (vv. 37–38) to judgment avowed (vv. 40–41) to punishment executed (v. 42). Moreover, these statements fall very close to the middle of major sections (see Figure 8.2). What is more, all three share a degree of ambiguity that allows them to be read with the verses that precede them and those that follow, a feature that draws all the more attention to their central positioning.

The final two of these expressions are closely tied with the rock metaphor. This is seen most directly in v. 31, where of course it forms the basis of the comparison between Israel's Rock ('our Rock') and the enemy's ('their rock'). It is also seen in the fact that, as was argued in Chapter 7, צור is implicitly stated in v. 39 as the most likely antecedent of הוּא. Verse 12 is not directly tied to the word-picture, but interestingly it does neighbour the figurative—though not divine—use of צור in v. 13 and, perhaps more significantly, does sit at the heart of a major unit where the metaphor looms large (vv. 4, 18).

8.2.3 Key Themes

In addition to the Song's narrative and structure, צור for God contributes to the poem's key themes. A number of them trace the relationships among YHWH, Israel, and other

gods; yet, one finds that most fall nicely under the rubric of either YHWH's constancy or his incomparability. Lee speaks of these themes as the Song's "twin emphases."⁸ Theologically, they cohere well with the poem's "radically theocentric" quality and pragmatically provide a helpful way of organising its other themes.⁹

With regard to YHWH's constancy, the theme is introduced in the very first verse of the poem proper (v. 4). In Chapter 4, I argued with Biddle that this "dense array of theologically pregnant terms" serves to underscore YHWH's moral perfection, especially as it relates to his faithfulness (אל אֱמֻנָה 'God of faithfulness') and justice (יִשָּׁר, צְדִיק, מִשְׁפָּט).¹⁰ The placement of the rock metaphor at the head of this verse casts him as an immovable God, one whose commitment to faithfulness and justice are unswerving.¹¹

These two aspects of YHWH's constancy are developed throughout the poem. Take vv. 8–18 for example, which rehearses YHWH's past faithfulness to Israel, his tenacious protection in their formative years (vv. 10–12) and generous provision in the land (vv. 13–14) for those he had lovingly chosen from among all the nations to be his people (vv. 8–9). To this picture, vv. 15b and 18 add YHWH's role in bringing Israel into existence (חֵיל, יֵלֵד, עֲשָׂה), a portrayal that carries with it undertones of parental care and commitment. Note however that the care in vv. 10–14 (cf. 15b, 18) is an outworking of not only his faithfulness but also his justice. Protection (vv. 10–12) and provision (vv. 13–14) are to be expected of a God who has chosen a people to be his own (vv. 8–9). Elsewhere, this type of divine care is closely connected with YHWH's covenantal responsibilities (Exod 19:4; Deut 1:31; 8:4–9; 14:1–2; 29:5–6).

The contribution of the word–picture to these verses is unmistakable. Structurally, the placement of צִיָּר at the beginning (v. 4) and end (v. 18) seems to signal that the entire unit is to be read in light of the metaphor. This appears to be confirmed on a thematic level: From these verses arise three key motifs that illustrate YHWH's faithfulness and justice: creation, protection, and provision. It is hardly a coincidence that these are also the connotations detected in the use of the rock metaphor in vv. 4, 15b, and 18.

The justice of YHWH introduced in v. 4 is illustrated in his "devastating but fitting" punishment of idolatrous Israel (vv. 19–25), as well as his judgment of the

⁸ Lee, "Narrative Function," 119.

⁹ Robson, *Honey from the Rock*, 63; cf. Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 278; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 375.

¹⁰ Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, 473.

¹¹ cf. Knight, *A Theological Quarry*, 96.

wicked enemy (vv. 41–42, cf. 39, 43).¹² His unshakable commitment to justice is clearly seen in the fact that he will not overlook rebellion, even when this means punishing his beloved inheritance.¹³ While vv. 19–25 serve to outline Israel’s judgment, vv. 26–35 reflect upon it and, in one sense, serve to justify YHWH’s chastisement of his foolish and corrupt people. Perhaps not surprisingly, the word-picture contributes greatly to this theme.

The use of צור for God in v. 30 to express YHWH’s opposition underscores his justice profoundly. The startling discontinuity between the use of צור in vv. 4–18 and v. 30 intimates the gravity of the sin that brings a loving God to chastise his people so severely. At the same time, the continuity created by the use of the metaphor draws particular attention to the fact that Israel’s faithful Creator, Protector, and Provider will not shy away from exacting a terrible but just response upon them. Harkening back to the picture of YHWH’s unchanging justice in v. 4, the use of צור helps explain (and justify) these severe actions. Moreover, as noted, above, it is possible that the dialogue among vv. 4, 15b, 18, and 30 may legitimise reading hints of divine opposition in vv. 4, 15b, 18 as well. If so, the use of the rock metaphor would fittingly and ominously foreshadow the judgment Israel’s rebellion against their Rock will incur.

Punishment of Israel is of course not the final word; though his faithfulness is temporarily eclipsed by his judgment, it finds vivid expression in his ultimate compassion (v. 36), vindication (vv. 40–43), and restoration (v. 43). Even the rebuke in vv. 37–39 contributes to this picture in that he chooses to rebuke them rather than destroy them as he nearly did before (v. 26) or as he will do to his enemies (vv. 41–43). By punishing those who have oppressed his people, YHWH’s faithfulness and justice are brought together in the sense that YHWH will uphold his faithfulness by exacting his justice upon his enemies.

The position of these themes at the end of the poem gives them particular emphasis; they constitute the poet’s parting word on the matter of YHWH’s relationship to his people. The unexpectedness gives this act of divine favour additional weight. Israel’s behaviour is heinous and yet—with no indication of repentance—YHWH demonstrates his faithfulness to them by demonstrating his justice against their enemy. In this way, the poem begins and ends with YHWH’s faithfulness and justice *on behalf of* his people. For Knight, this is not altogether surprising since, as he insightfully

¹² Robson, *Honey from the Rock*, 59. For a insightful study on the themes of justice and retribution in the Song, as well as in the book of the Deuteronomy more generally, see McConville, “Retribution.”

¹³ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 300.

observes, it was YHWH's *direct role* in orchestrating Israel's fall that shows that "at no point in their history did God ever abandon his people."¹⁴ In other words, even in fierce opposition, he remained 'their Rock' and loyal to his covenant with his people.¹⁵

The incomparability of YHWH also pervades the poem. In addition to the explicit expressions in vv. 12, 31, and 39, the theme is also developed in more subtle ways. His dominion over other gods demonstrates this. Verses 8–9 recount how he apportioned the nations to their patron gods ('the sons of God'). While some have argued that YHWH is portrayed in these verses as simply one of the gods receiving nations from 'Most High',¹⁶ it seems clear that they are one and the same.¹⁷ Thus, the title 'Most High' and the authority implied in the act of apportioning demonstrate the superiority of YHWH. A similar demonstration is found in vv. 23–24. In connection with the discussion of the Song's possible mythological background in Chapter 1, it was noted that many read the scourges—'arrows' YHWH unleashes upon his disobedient people—in these verses as allusions to ANE gods. If so, his superiority is seen in the way he wields other gods as mere instruments of his judgment.

YHWH's incomparability is likewise implied in the contrast set up between YHWH and other gods. The textual and metaphorical analysis in Chapter 5 revealed vv. 15b–18 cast YHWH as Israel's rightful God and other gods as illicit substitutes. He is ancient and familiar; other gods are new-fangled and foreign. In Chapter 6, it was argued that the poet sets up an additional contrast between YHWH and the god of the enemy, by introducing a somewhat awkward but effective wordplay between Israel's God in v. 30 ('their Rock') and the enemy's in v. 31 ('their rock'). Chapter 7 traced an equally distinct contrast in vv. 37–39 between omnipotent YHWH and the powerless gods in whom Israel sought refuge.

Knowles and others have rightly pointed out how the rock metaphor forges a clear distinction between the superior God of Israel and the far-inferior foreign gods.¹⁸ In addition to its place among the Song's expression of YHWH's incomparability in vv. 31 and 39, as already noted, his pre-eminence over other gods is implied in the articular form *הַצֵּיִר* 'the Rock' in v. 4. The use of the word-picture in vv. 15b and 18 to

¹⁴ Knight, *A Theological Quarry*, 96.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Eissfeldt, *Das Lied Moses*, 9 n. 1.

¹⁷ Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, 189; Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 279; Fernandes, *God as Rock*, 100; Lee, "Narrative Function," 73 n. 105; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 385; McConville, *Grace in the End*, 125 n. 1; Nigosian, "The Song of Moses," 46; Wright, "The Lawsuit of God," 28 n. 7.

¹⁸ Knowles, "The Rock, His Work Is Perfect," 322; cf. Fernandes, *God as Rock*, 6, 22; Fokkelman, *Major Poems*, 141–42; Smith, *Early History*, 137.

conceptualise YHWH as Israel's ancient, Creator, Protector, and Provider serves, in large part, as the basis of comparison between YHWH and the other gods, demonstrating all the ways he surpasses them. The connotations of the metaphor—explicitly stated in v. 37 and implied in v. 39 (strength, protection)—similarly reinforce YHWH's superior status by drawing attention to his unmatched strength and security and the gods' laughable military prowess. Labuschagne nicely brings a number of these elements together in his summary of the theme in the Song:

Through Yahweh's intervention and after He has executed judgment, it will be seen that He is not like the gods of the enemy (vs. 31), for these false 'rocks' will disappear from the scene (vs. 37), as they were in fact 'no-gods' (vs. 21). Thus the saving events caused by Yahweh's judging activity serve to vindicate Him not only as the incomparable God, but also as the sole God. When Yahweh intervenes, the rival gods will be eliminated, being no match for Him, and He will emerge triumphantly as the only true God. Because the saving events afford clear proof of His incomparable position, His honour is restored and He is re-established in the position He held of old among His people, when '*it was Yahweh alone who led him, and there was no illicit god with him*' (vs. 12).¹⁹

One final word on this point: while scholarship has tended to focus on the way the application of the rock imagery to both YHWH and the enemy's god sets up a direct comparison, the analysis of the present study suggests that the idea of incomparability is found not only on this rhetorical level but also on a more fundamental level—that of entailment and connotation. This is to say, YHWH's superiority is not only expressed in the fact that he is explicitly compared to another god, but also in the very choice of צור, a term often used in expressions of divine incomparability. Note the pervasive 'rival gods' frame gave good reason to suspect that the rock metaphor was channelling the use of the term as stock incomparability language in nearly every occurrence (see Figures 8.1 and 8.3 above).

8.2.4 Rhetoric

A fourth contribution of the word-picture to the Song's message is its place within the poem's rhetoric. In addition to the rhetorically-charged use of contrast to underscore YHWH's incomparability, the poem employs irony liberally. This includes a poignant use of reversal. For example, the sword (חֶרֶב) and arrows (קִּיצִים) that are used to punish Israel in vv. 23–25 are turned upon their enemies in vv. 40–42. In a similar way, the

¹⁹ Labuschagne, *Incomparability*, 115.

vengeance (נָקָם, נִקְמָה) and recompense (שְׁלֵם, *pi'el* שְׁלַם) exacted upon Israel (vv. 34–35) are poured out on their enemies (vv. 41–43). In an especially ironic twist: instead of enjoying (אָכַל, אָכְלָה, v. 15a) the lavish provisions YHWH had provided for them (especially חֶלֶב ‘fat’, דַּם-עֵנָב ‘blood of grapes’, חֲמֹר ‘foaming wine’, v. 14), Israel offers their wine (יַיִן, v. 38) and fat (חֶלֶב, v. 38) to other gods to enjoy (אָכַל, אָכְלָה, v. 38).

One of the marks of the Song is its poetic justice, arguably a specific class of reversal above.²⁰ The most explicit expression of this is in v. 21, where YHWH makes Israel jealous (קִנְיָה) and provokes them to anger (כָּעַס) for making him jealous (קִנְיָה) and provoking him to anger (כָּעַס).²¹ This type of poetic justice is seen elsewhere as Israel’s blessings give way to curses. The fact that Israel abandoned YHWH (vv. 15b, 18) leads to YHWH abandoning his people (vv. 20, 30–31). Upon those he once protected (vv. 10–12), he brought great harm (vv. 23–26, 34–35). Those who experienced his abundant provision (vv. 13–15a) experienced famine (v. 24).²²

Another rhetorical feature of the poem is its consistent threefold emphasis on elevation, polemic, and rebuke. The Song functions to elevate YHWH. This is signalled by the calls to praise him in vv. 3 and 43:

*... I will proclaim the name of the LORD;
ascribe greatness to our God! (v. 3)*

*Praise, O heavens, his people,
worship him, all you gods! (v. 43)*

Many have remarked the hymnic qualities of v. 4, which undoubtedly elevate YHWH. This function is also at the heart of the explicit and implicit expression of incomparability treated above. The descriptions of YHWH’s goodness in Israel’s formative years (vv. 8–15, 18) and his sovereignty over subsequent affairs (vv. 27–31, 39) also serve to elevate him. In response to the enemy’s denial of YHWH’s *direct* role in Israel’s defeat (‘it was not YHWH who did this’, v. 27) and Israel’s inability to foresee this fact (‘their end’, vv. 28–29), vv. 30–31 asserts that he indeed was the one who wielded power necessary to bring this about. This sovereignty is reiterated in the iconic form at the poem’s climax:

²⁰ Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 281.

²¹ Cairns, *Word and Presence*, 285; Fokkelman, *Major Poems*, 99; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 457; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 373; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 308.

²² There is perhaps even a wordplay between יָנַק and יִנְקָה to communicate that—despite his maternal care in nursing (יָנַק) young Israel on these provisions (v. 13)—he will spare no one from his wrath, not even the young (יִנְקָה, v. 25).

*I kill and I restore, I smite and I heal
And there is none who can deliver from my hand (v. 39)*

At the same time the poem elevates YHWH, it disparages the other gods that Israel chose to pursue. The gods are pejoratively cast as strange or foreign gods (זָרִים, v. 16), recent (הַדְּשִׁים מִקֶּרֶב בְּאֵן) and unknown to the past generation of Israel (לֹא שָׁעָרוּם אֲבֹתֵיכֶם, v. 17). They are ‘abominations’ (תּוֹעֵבֹת, v. 16), mere demons (שָׁדִים, v. 17) and second-class deities (לֹא־אֱלֹהִים, v. 21). Once again, the explicit and implicit expressions of incomparability only continue this theme and demonstrate that the poem’s statements serve as praise and polemic simultaneously. This is especially true of statements such as those in vv. 12, 31, and 39 (see above), which simultaneously underscore YHWH’s superiority and the other gods’ inferiority. Furthermore, Nelson rightly pointed to the way v. 43 commands all the gods to worship YHWH.²³

Furthermore, the poem is no stranger to rebuke and critiques rebellious Israel in four key ways: First, they are characterised as corrupt (vv. 5, 15a, 20, 32–33) and foolish (vv. 6, 28–29). Second, biting rhetorical questions are employed to underscore the inappropriate nature of Israel’s response to YHWH’s goodness (v. 6) and their failure to consider the consequence of their sinful actions (vv. 30, 34–35a). Third, corrective statements that occur either in the form of an imperative (vv. 7, 38a–39a) or exclamation (vv. 31, 35b) serve as effective rebukes.

Fourth and finally, at several points the poet abruptly shifts from third-person description to second-person accusation, employing one of the modes of critique above. Take for example v. 15b:

*And Jeshurun grew fat and he kicked
You grew fat, you were thick, you became stubborn!*

Compare also vv. 15b and 18:

*And they forsook the God who made him
And they treated the Rock of their salvation with disdain (v. 15b)*

*You neglected the Rock who begot you
And forgot the God who gave birth to you (v. 18)*

²³ Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 369.

Similar shifts occur in the movement from vv. 28–29 to vv. 30–31, from vv. 32–33 to vv. 34–35a, and from v. 36 to vv. 37–39. Von Rad thinks this movement arises “apparently by chance,”²⁴ while Knight sees this as *ad hominem* arguments.²⁵ However, both seem to miss the strategic nature of these shifts—both in terms of their frequency and their placement at key points of rebuke. The poet’s elevation of YHWH and polemic against other gods has the effect of furthering the critique: the more worthy YHWH is shown to be and the more pitiful the other gods are proven to be, the weightier the shame of the people who rejected such a worthy God and pursued such pitiful replacements is.

The metaphorical analysis in the preceding chapters has drawn attention to the contribution of צור to the rhetoric of the poem (see Table 8.5). Three observations are necessary concerning this contribution.

Table 8.5: Rhetorical Contribution of the Rock Metaphor

V. 4	V. 15b	V. 18	V. 30	V. 31	V. 37
Contrast	Contrast	Contrast	Irony	Incomparability	Irony
Elevation	Elevation	Elevation	Contrast	Contrast	Incomparability
Rebuke	Polemic	Polemic	Elevation	Elevation	Contrast
	Rebuke	Rebuke	Polemic	Polemic	Elevation
			Rebuke	Rebuke	Polemic

First, the ironic use of צור in v. 30 reflects one of the poem’s most poignant instances of poetic justice as the caring Rock (vv. 4, 15b, 18) is replaced with an opposing Rock (v. 30). As mentioned above, the shock of this reversal gives the use of the metaphor in v. 30 a significant rhetorical weight by highlighting the gravity of a sin that would cause an otherwise constant Creator, Protector, and Provider to turn on his people.

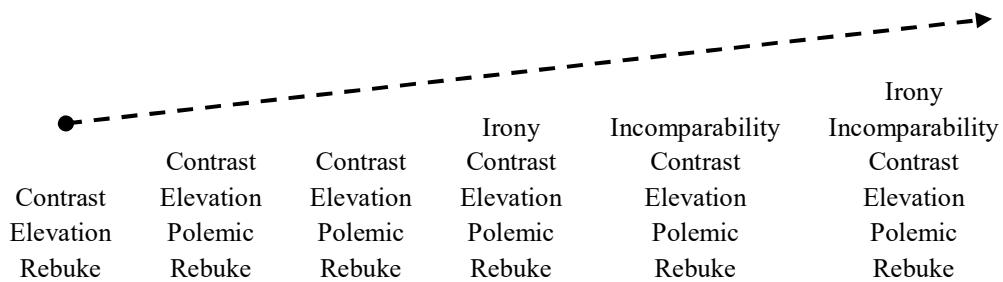
Second, note the consistency with which the rock word-picture helps articulate a threefold rhetoric of elevation, polemic, and rebuke. The various shades of the metaphor serve to underscore YHWH’s greatness: his antiquity, constancy and strength, his role as Creator, Protector, and Provider, and, by extension, his undeniable incomparability. Knowles and Fernandes have rightly argued that צור for God helps to set up two of the Song’s central contrasts namely the sharp distinction between the

²⁴ Von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 198.

²⁵ Knight, *A Theological Quarry*, 57.

faithful covenant God and unfaithful covenant people on the one hand and between the superior God of Israel and the laughably inferior foreign gods Israel chose on the other.²⁶ It is these characteristics of YHWH that serve as the basis of the contrasts. Israel’s rebellion against his commitment (antiquity, constancy) and care (creation, protection, provision) serves as a pointed indictment, as does the fact that he was forced to chastise them severely (strength, opposition). The way the rock metaphor carries the sense of divine strength and protection highlights the gods’ impotence in comparison to YHWH’s great power. The picture of YHWH as an ancient and constant God underscores the new and transitory nature of these other gods. The fact that Israel rejected such a superior Rock in favour of inferior ones only heightens the rebuke against them. Third, there appears to be a rhetorical heightening or layering as the poem unfolds (Figure 8.6):

Figure 8.6: Rhetorical Heightening and the Rock Metaphor



8.3 SUMMARY

The purpose of this chapter has been to explore the use of צור for God within the context of the Song in its entirety. It has clearly demonstrated the power of the rock metaphor, not only in the diversity with which it communicates but also in the way it intersects key aspects of the poem.

When the results of Chapters 4–7 were considered together, a picture of an expressive metaphor emerges. It is polyvalent, both in the individual sense that each occurrence of צור for God carries multiple connotations and in a collective sense that the most prominent connotation differs from one use to another. The dialogue among the occurrences of the metaphor draws the hearer into the poem and leads him or her to

²⁶ Fernandes, *God as Rock*, 6, 22; Knowles, “The Rock, His Work Is Perfect,” 322.

consider the word-picture in view of its use elsewhere in the poem (reinforcement, transference, elaboration, reconsideration). The accessibility and affective impact are by-products of the rock imagery's secure grounding, as its wide range of physical and cultural entailments attests.

Examining the relation between צור for God and the Song's message showed the metaphor to be intimately engrained in several of the poem's literary features (narrative, structure, key themes, rhetoric, divine imagery). It helps facilitate movement within 'rock' passages as well as within the rhetorical units of the poem as a whole (linking, development). It contributes to the structure of the Song, forming key patterns (inclusio, chiasm) and falling at significant junctures (thesis, climax, expressions of incomparability). It helps to express the poem's central themes of constancy and incomparability, as well as other ones such as faithfulness, justice, punishment, vengeance, apostasy, and illicit gods. It punctuates the Song's basic plotline, underscoring Israel's rejection of their Rock (vv. 4–18), their judgment exacted by their Rock (vv. 19–25, 26–35), and their restoration at the hands of their true Rock (vv. 36–42). Rhetorically, the rock metaphor serves as a parade example of the poem's effective use of irony, as well as an important means by which it promotes YHWH (elevation), disparages other gods (polemic), and chastises rebellious Israel (rebuke).

These observations lend credence to Nelson's understanding of the metaphor as a "theological axiom that governs the poem."²⁷ It would also seem to affirm Fischer's characterisation of צור for God as "an *inner centre* for the wealth of theological statements in the Song of Moses",²⁸ and perhaps even Knight's argument that "Moses' choice of the name 'Rock' for God is basic to all else that we learn about the LORD and his redemptive purpose, plan, and presence."²⁹

²⁷ Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 370.

²⁸ "Der Fels,"²⁹ "dem Reichtum der theologischen Aussagen des Moseliedes eine *innere Mitte*" (emphasis original).

²⁹ *A Theological Quarry*, 141.

CHAPTER 9
**THE ROCK METAPHOR AND
THE SONG'S PERENNIAL INTERPRETIVE ISSUES**

In Chapter 1, it was shown that scholarship has largely congregated around several of the Song's key interpretive issues (its provenance, text, structure, conceptual background, genre, function within Deuteronomy, and place in the Hebrew Bible). It was also noted that a number of interpreters have taken up the poem's striking figurative language (Claassens, Crenshaw, de Hulster and Strawn, Mercer, Moran, Nielsen, Peels, Vogel, Wünc).¹ In this chapter, I would like to return to these topics and examine them further through the lens of the צִוְרָה for God in order to explore what insight the metaphor might provide for better understanding the Song.

9.1 THE ROCK METAPHOR AND THE POEM'S ICONIC STRUCTURE

Let us address the latter first. In his influential study *Seeing the Psalms*, Brown calls the "various ways particular images and metaphors interact in the text" a poem's 'iconic structure'.² LeMon and Gray have illustrated the fruitfulness of exploring metaphor within this broader 'constellation of images',³ which allows for a more complete and accurate reading of biblical psalms.⁴ Table 9 locates the rock metaphor within the Song's 'iconic structure' broken down by strophe (column 1) and referent (nature, humans, God; columns 2–4):

¹ Chalmers, "Critical Analysis"; Chalmers, "There Is No Deliverer"; Claassens, "I Kill and I Give Life"; Crenshaw, challenging Wedorek"; de Hulster and Strawn, "Figuring YHWH in Unusual Ways: Deuteronomy 32 and Other Mixed Metaphors for God in the Old Testament"; Mercer, "The Little Man"; Moran, "Some Remarks"; Nielsen, "Biblical Theology"; Peels, "On the Wings"; Vogel, "Moses as Poet"; Wünc, "Like an Eagle"; one might add Olson to this list in light of the significant amount of space he devotes to the imagery of the Song in his treatment of the poem (*Death of Moses*, 139–43).

² Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 14.

³ *Ibid.*, 10–11.

⁴ LeMon, *Yahweh's Winged Form*, 16–17.

Table 9: Iconic Structure of the Song of Moses

vv. 1–3	Heaven and Earth as Human (v. 1) Words as Rain (v. 2)		
Vv. 4–18	Distress as Desert (v. 10a) Conquest as Climbing (v. 13a) Provisions as Honey and Oil from Rock (v. 13b)	Israel as Children (v. 5) Israel as Apple of YHWH’s Eye (v. 10b) Israel as Eaglets (v. 11a) Israel as Rebellious Animals (v. 15a)	YHWH as Rock, YHWH as Judge (v. 4) YHWH as Father (v. 6) YHWH as Eagle (v. 11) YHWH as Mother (vv. 13b–14) YHWH as Father, YHWH as Rock (v. 15b) YHWH as Rock, YHWH as Mother (v. 18)
Vv. 19–25	Disasters (Famine, Plague, Pestilence, Wild Beasts) as Arrows (v. 23) Warfare as Sword (v. 25)	Israel as Children (vv. 19–20)	Divine Favour as Face (v. 20) Divine Wrath as Fire (v. 22) YHWH as Warrior (vv. 23–24) YHWH as Warrior (v. 25)
Vv. 26–35	Wickedness as Vines, Wickedness as Grapes (vv. 32–33)		YHWH as Rock, YHWH as Warrior (v. 30) God of the Enemy as Rock, YHWH as Rock (v. 31) Divine Wrath as Wine (v. 33) YHWH as Warrior (vv. 34–35)
Vv. 36–42	Arrows and Sword as Human or Beast (v. 42)		YHWH as Judge (v. 36) Other Gods as Rock, Other Gods as Refuge (v. 37) YHWH as Warrior (v. 39) Sword as Instrument of Divine Judgment, YHWH as Judge, YHWH as Warrior (v. 41) YHWH as Warrior (v. 42)
V. 43	Heavens as Human	Israel as Children	YHWH as Warrior

9.1.1 Divine Metaphors

Of these metaphors, the majority of them conceptualise the realm of the divine. This is perhaps not surprising in light of the Song's radically theocentric perspective. Of particular relevance for the purpose of this study are the personal (father, mother, warrior, judge) and impersonal divine metaphors (rock, eagle). In her essay "‘I Kill and I Give Life’: Contrasting Depictions for God in Deuteronomy 32," Claassens explores the interaction of this rich array of divine images. There, she argues that together the seemingly contrasting metaphors serve an important rhetorical function, namely to highlight the uniqueness and freedom of God, which is fittingly summarised in the climactic declaration: *I kill and give life* (v. 39bA). More specifically, she demonstrates how the Rock (v. 4, 15b, 18), parent (vv. 6, 15b, 18), eagle (v. 11), and provider (vv. 13–14) are interconnected and depict YHWH as the life-giver. Claassens points out how the imagery in the second half of the Song shifts from positive to negative and, at many points, reflects the reversal of God's protection and provision. In this way, while in vv. 8–18 YHWH's gives life, in vv. 19–35 he kills and wounds (cf. v. 39b). She briefly notes that the Song ends with the restoration of Israel (vv. 41–43), demonstrating YHWH indeed is a God who heals and gives life (cf. 39b). Rhetorically, she suggests that this complex of contrasting metaphors functions as a teaching device, reminding Israel of the choice that lies before them—to choose life or death—and to exhort them to choose life. Theologically, the juxtaposition of the Song's imagery underscores not only the uniqueness and sovereignty of YHWH but also the ambiguity and complexity of life. Her treatment is insightful, but more can be said.

9.1.2 The Rock and Parent (Father, Mother) Metaphors

As was first introduced in Chapter 5, the rock, father, and mother imagery creates a lively dialogue. They cohere in that all three carry ideas of creation and constancy. Again, however, the *discontinuity* is just as expressive as the continuity since even the differences between the word-pictures allow them to complement one another. The rock and parent metaphors augment each other, rock imagery conveying a sense of durability that simply supersedes any temporal connotations possible of parent imagery and father or mother imagery expressing a relational intimacy that is not as readily available with the 'impersonal' rock metaphor. Second, the discontinuity between the images can also create a synergy, whereby characteristics of both work together to develop a single

point. Claassens draws this out with her suggestion that rock and parent metaphors work together to demonstrate that YHWH's unswerving faithfulness (rock) goes back to Israel's birth (parent).⁵ Nielsen argued that they underscore the faithfulness (rock) expected of children of YHWH (parent).⁶ Finally, the extraordinary nature of the juxtaposition of rock and parent imagery perhaps communicates analogously to point to the equally remarkable conception of Israel as a people (Deut 7).

9.1.3 The Rock and Eagle Metaphors

A similar interaction is found between the God as Rock and God as Eagle metaphors. As has been briefly explored in Chapters 4 and 5, the latter is developed over the four cola of v. 11. The verse opens by explicitly likening YHWH to a bird of prey (נֶשֶׁר), a symbol of great strength, speed, and stealth.⁷ The image is developed further with a variety of bird-related/avian language. The mention of the eagle's nest (קֶן) and young (גִּזְרֵי) gives the imagery strong parental connotations. The act of hovering over them (רָחַף) and lifting them up (נִשָּׂא) upon its wings (כַּנְּפֵי) and pinions (אֲבָרְהָהּ) underscores the protective role of this parent.

The rock and eagle metaphor share two important divine conceptualisations: protection and constancy. Perhaps the more obvious of the two is the protection. With regard to eagle imagery, the protection is seen explicitly in the verbs 'to protect' and 'to hover'; it is seen implicitly in the picture of young lifted up on the wings of its parent;⁸ wings are often closely connected with divine protection.⁹ The metaphorical analysis has justified reading this connotation in every divine use of צִוֵּר. As a result of this coherence, YHWH's commitment to Israel and his care for them are once again underscored.

Less straightforward is the shared sense of constancy. As with the parental imagery, it seems natural to envisage an inherent bond between (parent) eagle and offspring. This appears to undergird the poet's depiction of YHWH as a tenaciously protective eagle in the acts of hovering and carrying, conveying both a sense of motion

⁵ Claassens, "I Kill and I Give Life," 37.

⁶ Nielsen, "Biblical Theology," 267.

⁷ T. Kronholm, "נֶשֶׁר nešer," in *TDOT*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 82–84; Nobuyoshi Kuichi, "נֶשֶׁר," in *NIDOTTE*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, vol. 3 (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996), 200–201; Wüch, "Like an Eagle."

⁸ Peels, "On the Wings."

⁹ LeMon, *Yahweh's Winged Form*.

and of steadiness. The bird hovers, providing a *continual* attention and protection. Similarly, the picture of it carrying its young on its wings and pinions seems to envision a parent *ever ready* to swoop down and rescue them in the event that they fall out of the nest.

At the same time, though both word-pictures are examples of ‘impersonal’ metaphors, the strong parental undertones ascribe to the eagle imagery a relational quality that the rock imagery does not naturally possess. For one, when read together, the active and passive aspects of these images are brought into sharper focus. The rock metaphor connotes a great solidity and stability. As mentioned above, the protective stance of the eagle imagery also points to the constancy of YHWH. However, the mobility of the eagle should not be overlooked. The bird’s hovering and carrying open up possibilities for conceptualising YHWH in ways that an immovable rock cannot. As with the juxtaposition of rock and parent metaphors, reading the rock and eagle images together also draws attention to the temporal and relational differences between rocks and eagles. Related to the great solidity and stability is the way צוּר expresses a sense of longevity and durability. Again, it is this fact that confers to the rock imagery a permanence, to which even the longest living eagle cannot compare. Conversely, the eagle imagery allows for a relational bond the rock metaphor is incapable of expressing.

The juxtaposition of these metaphors underscores the antiquity and reliability (rock) of YHWH’s care for Israel (parent); a very similar idea was seen in connection with the dialogue between the rock and parent metaphors, though the stress differs slightly: here, the imagery primarily highlights the antiquity and constancy of YHWH’s *protection* of Israel, which can be traced back to their formative years in the wilderness (vv. 10–12), rather than their national conception.

There is a sense in which these metaphors underscore the fundamental and instinctual nature of YHWH’s care, especially his protection (but also, at some level, his creation and provision). Both rock and eagle imagery are drawn from the natural world. As such, there is a certain natural, primal, instinctual, foundational quality to them. When read in light of the expressed connotations of the metaphors, this inherent quality gives them a natural and instinctual sense. It helps draw attention to the fact that YHWH’s divine care, especially his protection, is a natural and foundational outworking of the relationship between patron God and his people. This also means, then, that Israel’s rejection of YHWH violates the natural order of things at the most fundamental level.

9.1.4 The Rock and Warrior Metaphors

The use of צור for God dialogues with the warrior metaphor in its various expressions. Though the Song does not directly refer to YHWH as a warrior in the same way that, say, Exod 15:3 does (יְהוָה אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה ‘YHWH is a man of war’), the poem nevertheless sketches a rather robust picture of his role as warrior through more indirect means, namely ascribing a wide array of military themes to him.¹⁰ YHWH as Warrior is signalled by the references to the weaponry he wields in judgment. Nelson is probably right in seeing YHWH’s use of fire as a weapon in v. 22.¹¹ More certain is his command of lethal arrows. In v. 23, YHWH unleashes disasters—his arrows—into his disobedient people. As many have noted, the list of scourges in the following verse (v. 24) are likely to be interpreted as specific ‘arrows’.¹² In v. 42, YHWH turns his arrows on his enemies, and he announces the carnage in striking language: he will make them drunk with their blood. His arrows are accompanied by his deadly sword. In v. 25, it cuts down men and women, young and old, indiscriminately. In vv. 41–42, YHWH sharpens his sword to a dangerous and glinting edge (שְׁנוֹתַי בְּרֶקַע חֲרָבִי, v. 41) and chillingly depicts it devouring the flesh of his adversaries (חֲרָבִי תֹאכַל בְּשָׂרָה, v. 42).¹³

To this one might add the use of יָד ‘hand’ and the notion of delivering Israel into the hands of their enemies. With regard to the uses of ‘hand’ in vv. 39 and 41, they most likely carry the sense of military prowess and might. It is even possible that YHWH’s raised hand in v. 40 doubles as both an oath gesture and a signal of martial action as it is in ANE iconography.¹⁴ This perhaps suggests that the act here should be read in the same light. Of course, here it is turned against Israel, just as YHWH promised he would in the event of covenantal violation (Lev 26:8).

In light of the prominence of the warrior motif, especially in vv. 22–25 and vv. 40–42, it seems likely that the disaster language in vv. 26 and 35 should be read in connection with YHWH’s role as Warrior. The same is probably true for the deliverance language in v. 39bC (אֵינִי מִיָּדֵי מִצְרַיִל) and repeated vengeance imagery in vv.

¹⁰ Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 819; Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 379; Luyten, “Primeval and Eschatological Overtones,” 345–46; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 392; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 459; Nelson, “Divine Warrior,” 374, 377–78; Peels, *The Vengeance of God*, 141; Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 303; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 313.

¹¹ Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 374.

¹² Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 890; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 374.

¹³ With the imagery of sharpening his sword, “God is pictured as a warrior preparing for battle” (Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 313; cf. Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 377; Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 303).

¹⁴ Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 377.

34, 41, 43 (נָקָם, נִקְמָה). One even wonders if the protection motif in vv. 10–11 and the salvation language in v. 15b (צוּר יִשְׁעָתוֹ ‘Rock of his salvation’) reflect positive aspects of YHWH’s role as Warrior.

The rock and warrior metaphors exhibit a great degree of coherence. They both conceptualise divine strength, protection, and opposition. The physical power of human warriors and the hardness of rocks provide the basis for conceptualising YHWH as a God who wields unrivalled strength. From a defensive point of view, an effective warrior provides safety for those for whom he fights. A similar security is provided to those who seek refuge in rocks. Inherent in war is opposing forces. Fearsome and victorious warriors are those whose opposition is committed and forceful. This is precisely the same sense of the (ironic) use of צוּר in v. 30 as YHWH’s hardened opposition and crushing power arise from the physical hardness of rock. In this way, these word-pictures together reiterate YHWH’s strength and status as an effective protector or a formidable opposition. Of course, as the poem illustrates through the history of Israel, whether one experiences protection or opposition rests entirely on the nature of his or her response to YHWH.

This discontinuity also communicates through augmentation and analogy. Just as was the case with the rock and eagle metaphors, the rock and warrior imagery reflect varying degrees of mobility (augmentation). The passive rock imagery expresses a solidity and stability, while the active nature of warrior imagery seems to envisage quick and agile movements such as those required in unleashing a quiver of arrows (vv. 23–24, 42) and skilfully wielding a sword (vv. 25, 41–42). In this, a certain unresolved tension arises. Yet, even this inconsistency seems to further the poet’s message in that, by means of analogy, it parallels the startling and disconcerting shift in roles from parental Rock (vv. 4, 15b, 18) to warrior Rock (v. 30).

9.1.5 The Rock and Judge Metaphor

Finally, the dialogue between the rock and judge word-pictures is as lively as others. Concerning YHWH’s conceptualisation as Judge, the most explicit statement is in v. 36, where the poet announces that he will judge (דִּין) in favour of his people. In light of the parallelism, it is likely that the divine display of compassion should likewise be read against a legal backdrop to mean something along the lines of handing down a gracious and merciful decision (see Chapter 7). The picture of YHWH as Judge is extended in two key ways. First is the use of מִשְׁפָּט ‘justice’ in vv. 4 and 40. Note that his

commitment to justice is stressed in both. As seen above, צור in v. 4 helps to underscore the fact that his ways are always just (מִשְׁפָּט, cf. צְדִיק וְיֵשֶׁר ‘righteous and upright’). In v. 40, YHWH swears on his life that he will exact justice (מִשְׁפָּט) upon the wicked (vv. 41–42). Second, YHWH’s role as Judge is seen in his *execution* of justice, against both his people (vv. 23–26, 30) and his enemies (vv. 40–42). To these verses, one should add vv. 34–35. Nigosian insists that vv. 28–35 underscore YHWH’s unfailing justice, which means that the wicked enemy *will* be punished.¹⁵ With slight modification, this statement is likely correct, namely the fact that, as argued elsewhere, these verses can be read with the wicked enemy *or rebellious Israel* in view.

The rock metaphor and this one overlap. Both exhibit constancy. As judge, YHWH’s commitment to justice is unswerving; as Rock, he is unchanging. The metaphors also overlap in that they both convey a sense of detachment: rocks by virtue of being inanimate objects and judges by (ideally) being impartial. This coherence only serves to strengthen the portrayal of YHWH as God of reliability and objectivity with regard to his interaction with his created world generally and with his people, Israel, more specifically. In addition to casting YHWH as constant in his justice, the word-pictures also come together to cast his opposition against the wicked (judge) as obstinate (rock) and his judgment upon them (judge) as forceful (rock). This perhaps gives credence to Kowalski’s suggestion that the union of these metaphors underscores the *efficacy* (rock) of his judgment (judge).

Just as the juxtaposition of rock and birthing imagery serves to underscore Israel’s remarkable national conception, also note the surprising dialogue between the rock and judge metaphors that analogously echoes the remarkable nature of YHWH’s display of compassion in vv. 36–42. This forces the reader to reconsider the relationship between YHWH’s commitment to faithfulness and justice anew. The shift from faithfulness (vv. 4, 15b, 18) to judgment in (v. 30) forcefully draws attention to the tension. YHWH’s unexpected compassion helps resolve it. If pursued to its logical conclusion, the seemingly incoherent themes fall into place: his faithfulness does not mean that he will spare them the due judgment, but rather that, after justice is met, he will surely draw them back to himself.

¹⁵ Nigosian, “The Song of Moses,” 181.

9.2 THE ROCK METAPHOR AND THE POEM'S PERENNIAL ISSUES

9.2.1 Structure

Let us now turn to some of the Song's perennial issues. In addition to the structural significance mentioned in Chapter 8 (divisions, thesis, climax, expressions of incomparability), the rock metaphor has contributed to the discussion of the poem's unity. Though Baumann and Braulik have understood the Song as a composite text (an early hymn and later scourging-song,¹⁶ a pre-exilic and post-exilic poem respectively),¹⁷ Sanders' structural analysis has cast considerable doubt upon such suggestions. His careful analysis points to a strong "literary unity," finding no clear evidence of redactional layers and reasoning that, if there are, "there has been an extremely careful redaction."¹⁸ One line of support for a unified poem that has been overlooked is the Song's use of צור for God.

Two observations are particularly relevant: First, the occurrences of the word-picture are evenly distributed throughout the Song. Second and perhaps more importantly, these occurrences form a complex and interrelated linguistic web, as Chapter 8 has demonstrated. They work together to reinforce the poem's key themes. They are united in their rhetorical force. There is a certain movement or progression as one use of צור gives way to the next (foreshadowing, rhetorical heightening). These observations seem to indicate a unified poem rather than a composite text. Against Baumann, is the fact that the rock metaphor occurs in both of the original texts that he conjectures—the hymn (v. 4) and the scourging-song (vv. 15b, 18, 30, 31, 37). It is, of course, conceivable that both envisioned poems had employed צור for God; however, the complex interaction between the uses of the metaphor makes this unlikely. The same arguments also challenge Braulik's proposed pre-exilic (vv. 1–25) and post-exilic poems (vv. 26–43).

9.2.2 Conceptual Background

The word-picture has implications for understanding the Song's conceptual background. As was seen in Chapter 1, a wide array of allusions to ANE mythology has

¹⁶ Baumann, "Das Lied Moses."

¹⁷ Braulik, *Deuteronomium 16, 18–34, 12*, 227.

¹⁸ Sanders, *Provenance*, 431, cf. 429-31; see also Otto, "Singing Moses," 173.

been found in the Song, most notably in the studies of Wyatt, Heiser, de Moor, and Greenfield. Hidal and Knowles have even detected hints of myth in the use of צור for God.¹⁹ The analysis of this study would seem to affirm this proposal. On one level, note the strong presence of a ‘rival gods’ frame in ‘rock’ passages and its routine influence in the process of identifying possible entailments. Two such entailments include the ANE divine designations (especially Enlil, Bel, and Aššur) and the cosmic mountain motif, both of which highlight the strong mythological undertones to the rock metaphor. Particularly allusions to ANE divine designation, which, as mentioned above, are likely at work in nearly all of the uses of the צור for God (vv. 15b, 18, 30, 31aA, 31aB, 37).

Furthermore, it was even shown that the debated generative rock myth serves as a possible entailment undergirding the conceptualisation of YHWH as a rock from which Israel was brought into existence, most explicitly in vv. 18 but also likely in vv. 4 and 15b. This, of course, challenges those like van der Woude who have dismissed this aspect of the word-picture.²⁰ At the same time, it justifies the suspicions of Sanders and Korpel that such a creation myth could stand behind צור in v. 18²¹ and suggests that Hidal perhaps goes beyond the evidence in suggesting that this *Steingeburtmythus* likely undergirds *all* occurrences of צור for God in the Song.²²

The Song’s use of the metaphor speaks to another proposed conceptual background, though its contribution has yet to be explored: the conception of Israel’s salvation history in the poem. Not only does the Song recount Israel’s formative years from the exodus to the possession of the land of Canaan in vv. 10–14 (albeit vaguely), but, as Luyten has demonstrated, it presses the temporal boundaries to include Israel’s election in the *primaeval* past (vv. 8–9) and their eschatological restoration (vv. 43).²³ The rock metaphor is an altogether fitting image for these fundamental and sweeping depictions of Israel’s history. It contributes to the context of Israel’s formative years in that צור in vv. 4–18 very likely alludes to one of the central events of this period, the paradigmatic provision of water from rock in the wilderness. Moreover, the constancy of rock—particularly its antiquity and permanence aptly characterise YHWH, the God who was faithful to his people from the very beginning and will remain committed to them to the very end.

¹⁹ Hidal, “Some Reflections”; Knowles, “The Rock, His Work Is Perfect,” 316–17, 320–22.

²⁰ van der Woude, “צור שֵׁר Rock,” 2:1340; Ringgren, *Israelite Religion*, 85.

²¹ Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds*, 584–85; “Rock צור, סלע,” 709–10; Sanders, *Provenance*, 397.

²² Hidal, “Some Reflections,” 18.

²³ “Primeval and Eschatological Overtones.”

9.2.3 Genre

A number of literary genres have been detected in the Song, most notably lawsuit, wisdom, and hymn. At the same time, going back all the way back to Gunkel, scholarship has recognised that the poem likely contains a mixture of these forms.²⁴ This is consistent with the internal testimony of the Song itself. I would like to submit that its colourful proem (vv. 1–3) sets out the overarching aims of the poem, aims that cohere remarkably with proposed modern form designations of lawsuit, wisdom, and hymn, namely rebuke, instruction, and praise. As Thiessen has convincingly shown, the language of v. 1 is that of prophetic rebuke.²⁵ The teaching motif in v. 2 is reminiscent of wisdom literature and has a didactic quality. With its praise language, v. 3 resembles hymnic literature and could be taken straight out of the Psalter (29:1–2, 96:7–8; cf. 1 Chr 16:28–29).

Though the rock imagery is largely overlooked in this scholarly discussion, it should be noted that the metaphor coheres nicely with each of these forms. The metaphorical analysis demonstrates that each use of the word-picture carries an implicit or explicit rebuke. Verses 5–6 rebuke Israel for mistreating their Rock and Father (vv. 4–6). The shift in person from vv. 15b to 18 confirms the rebuking intent of the depiction of Israel’s apostasy; the description of the past generation’s rejection of their Rock (צֹרֵר יִנְבֵּל צֹרֵר יִשְׁעָתוֹ, ‘they treated the Rock of their salvation with disdain’, v. 15b) becomes a direct indictment of the imagined hearing generation (צֹרֵר יִלְדָּה תִּשִׁי, ‘you neglected the Rock who bore you’, v. 18). A similar shift appears in vv. 28–31 as the description of Israel’s foolishness gives way to a cutting rhetorical question posed directly to the hearers in v. 30. Once again this pattern unfolds in vv. 36–39 as YHWH’s compassion is followed by a scathing rebuke for seeking inferior rocks (vv. 37–38) when YHWH alone is Israel’s rightful Rock (v. 39). On a broader level, the rock metaphor plays an important role in the lawsuit; צֹרֵר marks the heart of the lawsuit (vv.

²⁴ Gunkel and Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms*, 23, 255, 274.

²⁵ Thiessen re-examines the textual evidence and argues that a more thorough analysis of the relevant texts supports G. E. Wright’s conclusion—rebuke—against Boston’s—invocation of teacher (“Form and Function”). Because the texts usually cited (such as Isa 1:2-3, Jer 2:4-14, Mic 6:1-8, and Ps 50) include not only summons of heaven and earth but also other natural phenomena, he broadens his examination to passages that invoke heaven (שָׁמַיִם), earth (אֲרֶץ), and mountains (הָרִים). He demonstrates that the majority of such passages fall into one of two distinct categories: “(1) texts in which heaven, earth, or mountains are invoked in a context of judgment [and] (2) texts in which the natural phenomena occur in the context of a redemptive message” (ibid., 405). Moreover, with one exception (Jer 2:12), the elements of creation are commanded to hear (שָׁמַע, אָזַן, קָשַׁב) in the judgment texts (Isa 1:2; Jer 2:12, 6:19; Ezek 6:1, 3; Mic 1:2, 6:2). On the other hand, imperatives to praise (רָנַן, רָוַע, פָּצַח, שָׂמַח, גִּיל, הִלֵּל) tend to occur in salvific texts (Isa 44:23; 49:13; Ezek 36:1, 4; Pss 69:35 [Eng. 34]; 96:11; 148:4).

4–18); Israel’s Rock selling Israel into the hands of their enemy in v. 30 essentially summarises the sentence of the lawsuit (vv. 19–25). On a more conceptual level, Knowles remarks that the key emphases of the rock imagery in the Song (namely, YHWH’s righteousness, uniqueness, creation, care) “seem altogether fitting if, as Wright has argued . . . , the poem constitutes a ‘covenant lawsuit’ associated in some way (as the present context of the chapter would indicate) with a ceremony or tradition of covenant renewal, since these are precisely the divine attributes which call for reciprocal faithfulness on the part of the covenant people.”²⁶

צור for God is closely linked to the poem’s wisdom motif. Eichhorn cites “the formulaic use of ‘Rock’ as a name of God” as support for the Song’s didactic aim.²⁷ Unfortunately, he does not develop this connection further. Perhaps he had in mind the fact that Israel’s mistreatment of the Rock (v. 4) is seen as a lack of wisdom (עם נָבַל וְלֹא עָם הָקָם, v. 6). In vv. 15b–18, Israel’s rejection of the ‘Rock of their salvation’ is cast as foolishness by the repetition of the נבל root. Verses 30–31 reflect what the unwise nation (vv. 28–29) failed to discern, namely that it was YHWH—Israel’s Rock—not other rocks who gave them into the hands of their enemy. The imagery is a didactic tool and the prominence of צור seems to indicate that the poet intends the rock metaphor as the chief among the poem’s images: the secure grounding reinforces this; it is tangible and routine, making it a readily available image. Though no wisdom language is used in vv. 37–38, the biting questions (vv. 37–38a) as well as the mocking challenges (v. 37b) on a rhetorical level underscore Israel’s foolishness in seeking refuge in such gods.

The metaphorical analysis also has shown that each use of the rock word-picture elevates YHWH either directly or indirectly. Scholarship has drawn attention to the hymnic quality of in v. 4; in form, it resembles a creedal hymn and, in content (especially the moral perfection ‘the Rock’), it is very likely intended to be read as a response to the poet’s praise in v. 3. The comparison between Israel’s Rock and the enemy’s rock in v. 31 explicitly holds up YHWH as superior. There is also a sense in which the rebuke of Israel’s illicit worship of unworthy gods underscores YHWH’s worthy and rightful place as the object of their devotion; this is seen clearly in vv. 37–39, where Israel is rebuked for worshiping other rocks when YHWH alone is the only Rock who rightfully deserves their offerings (אֲנִי אֶנְי הָיָה, v. 39). The rebuke of Israel for their sacrifices to new deities in vv. 16–17 presumes the worthiness of the ancient Rock

²⁶ Knowles, “The Rock, His Work Is Perfect,” 321.

²⁷ Eichhorn, *Gott als Fels, Burg, Zuflucht*, 53.

they rejected (vv. 15b, 18).

9.2.4 Function within Deuteronomy

The rock metaphor intersects the question of the Song's place in the book of Deuteronomy at various points. On a diachronic level, it sheds light on an aspect of the book's redaction history. It is generally agreed that the Song existed independently before it was introduced into Deuteronomy. This seems to be affirmed by the striking difference between the Song and the rest of the book. As intimated in Chapter 1, Lee has explored these "ostensible differences" in great detail.²⁸ One such difference that he does not address is the way צור for God occurs only in the poem, a divergence that is heightened by the particularly concentrated use in the poem. It seems to affirm that the narrative frame was written *after* the Song—not at the same time as Otto has suggested.²⁹ In light of the high degree of lexical and thematic affinity between the poem and its frame, it seems strange that the prominent word-picture would be limited to the poem if indeed they are to be attributed to the same hand. The continuity and discontinuity are better accounted for if one envisions a reactor(s) constructing the frame to highlight specific aspects of a pre-existing Song (apostasy, judgment) as a means of embedding the Song into a larger Deuteronomic document at some point in the development of the book.

The discontinuity between the poem and the rest of the book is significant on a synchronic level as well. In a way, the whole of Deuteronomy marks an important transition, one from the exodus out of Egypt to the possession of the land of Canaan. This transition is felt with particular poignancy in the concluding chapters of the book (31–34) as Joshua is commissioned (31:1–8, 10–15, 23); as the law (תּוֹרַת הַיְהוָה) is put into writing and plans for its propagation are put in place (31:9, 31:24–29); as Moses pronounces his final blessing (33:1–29) and dies (34:1–12). Of these, the death of Moses arguably presents the greatest change and challenge in the mind of the Deuteronomic narrator. Olson, in his helpful study *Deuteronomy and the Death of Moses*, has shown how this theme "casts its shadow over the whole of Deuteronomy in an unresolved but meaningful tension between human limits and human possibilities."³⁰ It is within this context that the Song is written down and recited (31:16–22, 30; 32:1–

²⁸ Lee, "Narrative Function," 164–81.

²⁹ Otto, "Moses Abschiedslied," 651–57, 676; "Singing Moses," 171–74.

³⁰ Olson, *Death of Moses*, 175, cf. 17–22, 38–9, 47–8, 60–1, 86–7, 123–25, 157–58, 165–67, 170–71.

47) and serves to aid Israel's transition into life in the land as the nation prepares for a new home and new leadership.

Here, צור for God also takes on particular significance. As Chapters 4–7 have shown and Chapter 8 has reiterated, the rock metaphor vividly expresses YHWH's unchanging nature and relational faithfulness. One can hardly envision a more fitting placement of such a metaphor. It serves to reassure Israel of YHWH's unswerving commitment to them as they venture into the unknown—an unswerving commitment akin to a bond between parent and child. The word-picture also holds out the promise of sure protection and abundant provision. It serves as a reminder of YHWH's incomparability as they enter a land replete with competing—and apparently quite alluring—gods.

It is worth noting that differences between the poem and the rest of Deuteronomy have an important rhetorical implication as well. They mark the Song's momentary departure from many of the prominent themes of the book and focus one's attention squarely on YHWH himself. The poem's divine metaphors are particularly effective in this regard, especially צור for God as its leitmotif. This coheres well not only with the striking 'theocentric' perspective of the Song but also with the overall movement of the concluding chapters of Deuteronomy (31–34) from Moses to God. With regard to the latter, Olson once again insightfully observes:

As the persona of Moses begins to wane in the closing chapters, God's activity begins to move to the foreground. The Moab covenant in Deuteronomy 29–32 emphasizes God as final judge and deliverer. God is the one who transfers leadership from Moses to Joshua (Deut. 31:7–8, 14–15, 23). The movement of the poetic Song of Moses clearly ends with God at centre stage (Deut. 32:39–43). Moses' prayer, which requests God's blessing upon Israel in Deuteronomy 33, entrusts Israel to God's care and oversight after Moses dies. Finally, it is God who is the subject of the verbs in the final chapter of Deuteronomy. On Mount Nebo, Yahweh shows, speaks, commands, and buries. The only action that Moses does is die. God puts Moses to death and buries his body in an unknown place (34:5–6).³¹

This theocentric focus presents a way of weathering Israel's time of transition, namely looking intently to YHWH.

At the same time, the continuity between the poem and the broader context of the book must not be overlooked. The rock metaphor reinforces key theological aspects of the book, affirming the suggestion of some that the Song functions as a summary of

³¹ Ibid., 180.

Deuteronomic thought (Lee, Watts, Schweitzer).³² צור for God is a fitting picture of the covenantal framework that undergirds the book. This is intimated by Knowles when he writes that “rock or mountain imagery borrowed from current religious usage is altogether appropriate for a covenant people which is rooted in a mountain theophany.”³³ Indeed, there are striking echoes of the accounts of Israel’s time at Sinai as recorded in Exodus.

This is especially true of the Song’s opening ‘rock’ passage, vv. 4–6, which appears to evoke Israel’s time spent at Mount Sinai as recounted in Exod 32–34. There are substantial links between the two passages. In addition to the lexical link הַצּוֹר ‘the rock’ (v. 4; Exod 33:21, 22), the expression ‘proclaim the name of the YHWH’ (שֵׁם יְהוָה) (קרא) occupies a prominent place in Exod 33:19, 34:5, 6. In light of the poet’s words in the preceding verse (‘I will proclaim the name of YHWH’, v. 3), some have suggested, perhaps rightly, that the description of YHWH here in v. 4 reflects a declaration of his name. Knowles draws attention to the similarities between the depiction of YHWH’s moral perfections in v. 4 and those attributes “revealed in the covenant and theophany of Sinai.”³⁴ While the language is not exact, both v. 4 and Exod 34 include lists of YHWH’s moral character and deeds in connection with proclaiming the name of YHWH (Exod 34:5–7), including a particular emphasis on his faithfulness (אֱמוּנָה, v. 4; אֱמֶת, Exod 34:6) and justice (צְדִיקָה, v. 4; צְדִיקָה, Exod 34:7). To this, we might add the depiction of Israel as a rebellious (דֹּר עָקֹשׁ וּפְתִילֵל) ‘twisted and tortuous generation’, v. 5; עַם־קָשָׁה־עֲרָף ‘stiff-necked people’ Exod 32:9, 33:3, 5, 34:9) and corrupt people (שָׂחָה, v. 5; Exod 32:7).

The wider context of vv. 4–18 reveals further links with the Sinai narrative, not only with Exod 32–34 but also with Exod 19–20. Take, for instance, the eagle imagery in v. 11, which is remarkably reminiscent of the depiction of YHWH’s loving care for Israel in the wilderness recorded in Exod 19:4:

*Like an eagle (נֹשֵׂר) that protects his nest
He hovers over his young
He spreads his wings (כַּנְפָּי), he catches him
He lifts him up (בִּישָׂא) upon his pinions (v. 10)*

*You yourselves saw what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore (בִּישָׂא) you on wings
(כַּנְפָּי) of eagles (נֹשֵׂר) and brought you to myself. (Exod 19:4)*

³² See also Olson (ibid., 138).

³³ “The Rock, His Work Is Perfect,” 321.

³⁴ Ibid.

Lee draws attention to the lexical links between these verses, which include נִשָּׂר ‘eagle,’ כַּנְךָ ‘wing,’ and נָשָׂא ‘to carry.’³⁵ Kowalski concludes that this imagery is a “clear allusion to the exodus, reflecting Exod 19:4, where God speaks of having carried Israel ‘on eagle’s wings.’”³⁶

The metaphor reflects the nature of Israel’s covenantal relationship. The notion of *seeking* refuge in rock captures two key aspects of Israel’s life with YHWH: the necessity of keeping YHWH the object of their devotion and the necessity of *actively pursuing* YHWH. In this way, the picture of seeking refuge is a fitting picture of the central demand to love YHWH with all one’s heart, soul, and strength (Deut 6:4). The Song also emphasises the importance of seeking refuge in the *right* rock: it underscores YHWH’s unequivocal superiority over other gods, casting him as the rightful object of Israel’s undivided devotion. Thus, the rock metaphor echoes another key text, the First Commandment and its insistence that Israel have no other gods before him (Deut 5:6–9a). Knowles insightfully notes that the metaphor also communicates the (expected) *motivation* behind human devotion in the way that it conceptualises YHWH’s uniqueness, creation, and provision serve as a “call for reciprocal faithfulness on the part of the covenant people.”³⁷

Yet, as the poem attests, Israel rejected their Rock and sought refuge in other rocks (vv. 15b–18, 37) in direct violation of this command, a reality that leads to yet another key notion, namely the consequences of Israel’s covenant faithfulness or faithlessness. Deut 5:9b–10 speaks of YHWH’s love for those who love him and retribution for those who hate him; this dichotomy is filled out in the rest of the book of Deuteronomy and arguably finds its fullest expression in the catalogue of covenant blessings and curses in Deut 28. In addition to the Song picking up this language (cf. vv. 41–43) and echoing the covenant blessings (vv. 10–15a) and curses (vv. 19–26, 30, 34–35) more generally, the connotations of צִוֶּה for God allow it to reflect these themes effectively. YHWH’s role as Israel’s protecting and providing Rock echoes his covenant blessings. At the same time, the hard and imposing nature of rock allows the word-picture to echo his fierce opposition against the disobedience; the connection is made direct in v. 30.

³⁵ Lee, “Narrative Function,” 77.

³⁶ Kowalski, “Rock of Ages,” 205.

³⁷ “The Rock, His Work Is Perfect,” 321.

Within this context, the themes of land, blessing, and cursing converge.³⁸ Deuteronomy contains vivid descriptions of the fruitful land that Israel stands poised to possess (6:3, 18; 7:13; 8:7–9; 11:8–15; 28:1–14). At the same time, the book warns that disobedience will result in devastating disasters upon the land (28:15–24) and ultimately Israel’s expulsion from the land (4:26–28; 29:24–28). As has already been noted, this study affirms the suggestion of many interpreters that the Palestinian landscape is one of the spheres from which the entailments of the rock metaphor draw. Strikingly, then, the very imagery taken from the land of Canaan is employed to depict YHWH as the one who blesses with rich abundance in the land as well as the one who orchestrates disaster and defeat to befall the land. He is a lavish provider (vv. 4, 15b, 18) as well as a formidable foe (v. 30). He blesses and he curses.

Moreover, the flexibility of the metaphor allows it to draw together and embodies an array of Deuteronomic conceptions of YHWH. The physicality of צור captures well the idea that YHWH is a God who is present among his people (2:7, 4:7, 37, 7:21, 31:8, 23), just as the hardness and strength of rock capture his unshakable faithfulness to them (4:31, 7:9, 31:8). The ancient conception of rocks as sources of refuge and protection naturally depicts the refuge and protection that Israel finds in YHWH, the one who fights for them (1:30, 3:22, 20:4) and delivers them (4:34, 11:4, 23:15, 33:7, 12, 29). The free-standing nature of looming rock formations effectively portrays the freedom of his choices as seen especially in the unmerited election of Israel (7:7–8). This is reinforced by the portrayal of YHWH as a Rock of protection (vv. 4, 15b, 18) as well as a Rock of opposition (v. 30). This duality also reinforces his climactic self-affirmation to be the one who commands life and death—complete sovereignty over human affairs (1:10–11; 2:24, 30–31; 7:13; 20:13). Finally, as has been seen already, the metaphor effectively depicts YHWH’s uniqueness and incomparability among the gods (3:24; 4:7, 32, 35, 38; 6:4; 7:21; 10:17; 33:26).

In addition to providing insight into the matters of redactional history and theological content, the use of the rock word-picture in the Song draws attention to a key rhetorical feature of the poem within the book. Scholarship has not been shy to point out the *differences* between the Song and the rest of Deuteronomy. While YHWH

³⁸ Walter Brueggemann, *The Land* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 45–70; James McKeown, “Land, Fertility, Famine,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 487–91; Patrick D. Miller, “Gift of God: Deuteronomic Theology of the Land,” *Interpretation* 23, no. 4 (1969): 456–57, cf. 451–65.

is cast as a Father (1:31, 8:5, cf. 14:1), King (33:5), Warrior (1:30, 3:22, 20:4),³⁹ Judge (1:17, 7:10, 10:17–18), and Fire (4:24, 9:3)⁴⁰ elsewhere in the book, צור for God is used only in the Song. This discontinuity has a profound rhetorical effect as a number of factors come together. First, the metaphor occurs in a rhetorically significant text. Second, because the poem falls at the end of Deuteronomy, it is cast as Moses' final words to Israel. Second, the imagery occurs at a memorable place in the book, just as the book shifts from prose to poetry and the relatively sparing use of divine metaphors give way to a remarkably concentrated and rich use of them. In short, then, the uniqueness of the word-picture—compounded by the high frequency and placement at such an emphatic position in the book—serves to draw particular attention to rock imagery specifically and to heighten the prominence of the poem with Deuteronomy more generally.

Lastly, צור for God has implications for some of the persistent scholarly conceptions of Deuteronomy. Lee expresses scepticism of a commonly-held demythologised reading of the book. He appeals to the poem's strong anthropomorphic language, which seems problematic if indeed Deuteronomy primarily aims to cast YHWH as a transcendent God. The rock metaphor appears equally inconsistent, reinforcing Lee's objection. The earthiness and tangibility of the imagery seem to work in the opposite direction: (1) connecting YHWH very closely with his creation and (2) portraying him as a very immanent God.⁴¹ This becomes all the more inconsistent if one accepts the suggestion of Walker-Jones that the metaphor arose in Israel out of the rural community (as opposed to the ruling city-dwellers), a people with significantly more appreciation and connection with the land.

Lee has also called into question another 'consensus' view: the book's program of cult centralization. He argues that cult centralization seems to be of secondary concern in light of the Song's silence concerning formalised worship.⁴² Might the rock metaphor be added to this critique? צור is connected with the Temple in Jerusalem in Pss 27 and 61 and is even seen as the most likely background behind the God as Rock

³⁹ Moreover, YHWH is 'with Israel' in a military sense (20:1; 31:8, 23), going before them in battle (9:3; 31:3–4, 6, 8). He helps, protects and delivers Israel (4:34; 23:15; 33:7, 12, 26–27, 29). He defeats their enemies in general (7:22–23; 11:4; 33:11) and the Canaanites more specifically (4:38; 6:19; 7:1, 18–19, 22; 8:20; 9:3–5; 11:23, 29–30; 19:1; 28:7; 31:3–4; 33:27).

⁴⁰ Howard Jacobson, "God as Consuming Fire," *Harvard Theological Review* 98, no. 2 (2005): 219–22.

⁴¹ Fischer, "Der Fels," 31; Walker-Jones, "Honey from the Rock," passim.

⁴² Lee, "Narrative Function," 183, cf. 229–230.

metaphor in the Psalter by some.⁴³ Such a use of the word-picture would be altogether fitting of cult centralization agenda. However, as the metaphorical analysis in Chapters 4–7 has demonstrated, צור for God is employed in the Song without any contextual hint of such an entailment.

9.2.5 Place within the Hebrew Bible

The studies of Bergey, Kim, and Keiser all point to the use of the rock metaphor as one of many lexical and thematic links that demonstrate the literary dependence between the poem and the book of Isaiah. Kim and Keiser solidify the already growing consensus that the Song has significantly influenced the relatively late Deutero-Isaiah.⁴⁴ Among some of these links is the use of the word-picture, as well as key accompanying titles (אֱלֹהִים ‘God’, Deut 32:15b, 17; Isa 44:8; יְשׁוּרֻן ‘Jeshurun’, Deut 32:15; Isa 44:8) and motifs (divine maker, Deut 32:5, 15b, 18; Isa 44:2).⁴⁵ In addition, Keiser rightly draws attention to the connection between the use of the rock word-picture and expressions of incomparability in both Deut. 32 and Isa 44, though this link can be pressed further, especially in light of how closely Isa 44:8 echoes the poem’s combination of the metaphor and the expressions of incomparability in Deut 32: 31, 39.⁴⁶

The work of these interpreters aside, the relationship between the Song and other passages that employ צור for God has been addressed in a cursory manner only (Fischer, Fernandes).⁴⁷ A detailed examination of this topic is far beyond the scope of the present thesis; however, the following two examples will demonstrate the potential fruitfulness of such an intertextual reading. The comments here are intended to be illustrative rather than comprehensive. As mentioned in Chapter 3, צור for God is largely concentrated in four places: Deut 32, 1–2 Samuel, Isaiah, and Psalms. Particularly high densities of the metaphor are found in 2 Sam 22–23 (22:3, 32, 47a, b; 23:3) and Pss 92–95 (92:16 [Eng. 15]; 94:22; 95:1). In addition, these passages share other links to the Song.

⁴³ Eichhorn, *Gott als Fels, Burg, Zuflucht*; Ollenburger, *Zion*; Schmidt, *Der heilige Fels*.

⁴⁴ Knight, *A Theological Quarry*, 45, 55, 85, 95, 99, 119–20.

⁴⁵ Keiser, “Basis for Isaiah’s Prophecy,” 488–90, 499; Kim, “Isaiah 40–55,” 159–62.

⁴⁶ Keiser, “Basis for Isaiah’s Prophecy,” 488–90.

⁴⁷ *God as Rock*, 22; “‘Der Fels,’” 23.

Deut 32 and 2 Sam 22 share a similar expression: צור ישעתי ‘Rock of his salvation’ (Deut 32:15b) and צור ישעי ‘Rock of my salvation’ (2 Sam 22:46).⁴⁸ Both poems use the rock metaphor in connection with YHWH’s moral reliability (Deut 32:4; 2 Sam 22:32, cf. 26–33) and as part of the expression of his incomparability (Deut 32:31, cf. 12, 39; 2 Sam 22:32). As in the Song (see Chapter 8), the use of the word-picture in 2 Sam 22 and 23 occur at structurally-significant places. It plays prominently in 2 Sam 22’s introduction (vv. 2–3) and conclusion (vv. 47–51). In 2 Sam 23, it likewise stands at the poem’s introduction (vv. 2–3a). The metaphor also falls at a key transition in 2 Sam 22: the expression of incomparability in v. 32, which serves as a natural bridge between vv. 26–31 and vv. 33–43.

In addition to similarities described above, Deut 32–33 and 2 Sam 22–23 share still other affinities. Both groups of poems occupied a climactic position of in their respective books. They are also placed in the mouths of a pillar of Israel’s religious and national life, Moses and David. Furthermore, these final chapters are punctuated by a conclusion of the hero’s career with a song (Deut 32, 2 Sam 22) and a blessing (Deut 33, 2 Sam 23) or—as Watts writes—a “retrospective hymn” and “poetic advice to his successors.”⁴⁹ The Song and 2 Sam 22 are even introduced with the same expression דברי השירה הזאת ‘the words of this song’ (Deut 31:30; 2 Sam 22:1). Deut 33 and 2 Sam 23 are cast as the final testament of Moses and David. The former is presented as the blessing given לִפְנֵי מוֹתוֹ ‘before [Moses’] death’ (33:1) and the latter as דְּבַרֵי יְהוָה הָאֲחֵרִים ‘the last words of David’. Watts goes on to suggest that the ending of Samuel (2 Sam 22–23) imitates the ending of Deuteronomy (Deut 32–33) and invites the books and their main characters to be compared directly.⁵⁰ If correct, the natural effect is an evaluation of the authority of 1–2 Samuel and of the status of David. This fits well with the book’s focus on “God’s support for King David.”⁵¹

⁴⁸ Sanders, *Provenance*, 393.

⁴⁹ James W. Watts, “Poetry,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books*, ed. Bill T. Arnold and H. G. M. Williamson (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2005), 799–800.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 800; cf. Patrick D. Miller, “Deuteronomy and Psalms: Evoking a Biblical Conversation,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 118 (1999): 3.

⁵¹ Watts, “Poetry,” 799.

A similar collection of lexical and thematic links is found between Deut 32 and Pss 92, 94, and 95. For instance, the Song and Ps 95 also share the familiar divine epithets צור 'Rock of his salvation' (v. 15b) and יְשַׁעְנוּ צור 'Rock of our salvation' (Ps 95:1). As first noted in Chapter 4, Ps 92:15 [MT 16] appears to draw directly on Deut 32:4, combining צור for God and moral language:

*The Rock (הַצּוּר)—his work is blameless
Indeed his ways are just
A God of faithfulness and no injustice (אין עָוֹל)
Righteous and upright (יָשָׁר) is he (v. 4)*

*. . . the LORD is upright (יָשָׁר); he is my rock (צוּרִי),
and there is no unrighteousness in him (לֹא-עֲוֹנוּתָהּ בּוֹ, Ps 92:15 [MT 16])*

The latter half of the Song and Ps 94 both cast YHWH as the Rock (Deut 32:30–31, 37–39; Ps 94:22), the Judge (Deut 32:36; Ps 94:2) who at the right time will exact vengeance (נִקְמָה) on Israel's enemies (Deut 32:26–43; Ps 94:1–3, 23). Howard also draws attention to the way that both the Song and Ps 95 use the rock metaphor (32:4, 15b, 18; Ps 95:1) in connection with the disobedience of the wilderness generation in order to instruct the current generation (Deut 32:10–18; Ps 95:8–11), including allusion to the miraculous provision of water from rock (Deut 32:13; Ps 95:8–9).⁵² This suggests the metaphor expresses a provision connotation as in the Song. Note a final affinity between the Song and Ps 95: the way the word-picture is employed in the context of YHWH's incomparability over all other gods (Deut 32:12, 31, 39; Ps 95:3).

Deut 32 and Pss 92–95 share a final affinity, namely their curious silence concerning key themes of the broader context of their respective books. As mentioned above, the Song lacks a number of key Deuteronomistic themes. The preoccupation with the Davidic kingship in Books I–III (Pss 1–89) is notably absent from Pss 92–95, as it is in the rest of Book IV (Pss 90–106). Rather there is a pronounced emphasis on divine intervention *before* the monarchy. This is also signalled by the placement of Ps 90, the תְּפִלָּה לְמֹשֶׁה אִישׁ-הָאֱלֹהִים 'a prayer of Moses, the man of God' (v. 1) at the head of this collection.⁵³ It is reinforced with the preoccupation with pre-monarchical figures such as Abraham, Moses, Aaron, and Samuel (Pss 99, 103), as well as with events like

⁵² Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 60–61.

⁵³ Miller, "Deuteronomy and Psalms," 17 n. 28.

creation, the exodus from Egypt, and the revelation at Sinai.⁵⁴ In fact, it appears to have been intentionally left out of the concluding historical retrospective (Ps 106) as the poem moves swiftly from the period of the judges (vv. 40–46) to the period of the exile (v. 47). Instead, the accent unmistakably falls on the kingship of YHWH (Pss 93:1–2; 95:3; 96:10; 97:1–2; 98:6; 99:1, 4; 103:19, 22); it is even possible that this theme alludes to the line of the Song of the Sea: יְהוָה יִמְלֹךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד ‘The LORD will reign forever and ever’ (Ex 15:18).⁵⁵ The omissions of the Song and Book IV have the effect of focusing unequivocally on YHWH himself, not—for example—the centralization of his worship (Deuteronomy) or the establishment of the Davidic dynasty (Pss 90–106).

Times of Great Transition

The significance of the links among Deut 32–33, 2 Sam 22–23, and Pss 92–95 emerges when one considers two final affinities. The first is the fact that these passages are connected with times of great transition. As seen already, Deut 32–33 represent the last words of Moses before leadership is transferred to Joshua and Israel stands on the cusp of their new life in the land. 2 Sam 22–23 also function as the ‘last words of David’ as the kingship is transferred to his son Solomon, who will carry on the dynastic promise and build a permanent Temple. If the growing consensus of Psalms scholarship is correct, then Book IV of the Psalter (90–106) represents a response to the devastating transition from Israel’s monarchy to their exile, which arguably finds its sharpest expression in Ps 89.⁵⁶

Secondly, in all three places, the use of צוּר for God in connection with moral language casts YHWH as *unchanging* in his faithfulness and commitment to justice. This is supported by the way each collection of poems explicitly underscores the eternal nature of God and his rule. Take for example the conclusion of Deut 33, which affirms that YHWH, אֱלֹהֵי קִדְּם ‘the eternal God’, is their dwelling place and that they are sheltered by his זְרֻעַת עוֹלָם ‘everlasting arms’ (v. 27). In 2 Sam 23, the everlasting nature

⁵⁴ Note—for instance—the quotation of YHWH’s self-declaration recorded (Ex. 34:6) in Ps 103:8.

⁵⁵ J. Clinton McCann Jr., “Psalms,” in *Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament: A Book-by-Book Survey*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Craig G. Bartholomew, and Daniel J. Treier (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 164.

⁵⁶ Nancy L. DeClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning: The Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997), 147–53; Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 166–83; J. Clinton Jr. McCann, “Books I–III and the Editorial Purpose of the Hebrew Psalter,” in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, ed. J. Clinton Jr. McCann (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 94–95; Gerald Henry Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (Scholars Press, 1985), 214–19.

of his covenant with David (כִּי בָרִית עוֹלָם שָׁם לִי) ‘for he has made with me an everlasting covenant’, v. 5) is an unmistakably high point of the king’s last words. The eternal nature of YHWH himself, as well as his commitment to his people, is an unmistakable theme running throughout Book IV (90:1–2; 92:8; 93:2, 5; 100:5; 102:11–12, 24, 27; 103:17; 104:31; 105:8–11; 106:1, 31, 48). By implication, this ontological, moral, and relational steadfastness of Israel’s Rock ultimately casts him as trustworthy, an especially crucial quality in times of great transition. This reliability is only reinforced further by the use of the rock metaphor to help underscore the incomparability of YHWH among the gods—his unrivalled status quelling any doubts concerning his power and authority (Deut 32:12, 31, 39; 2 Sam 22:32; Ps 95:3). The thematic omissions felt in the Song and Pss 92–95 (as well as Book IV more broadly) seem particularly fitting in connection with a jolting transition since together they throw attention upon the one who is cast as unchanging, incomparable, and completely reliable when the future is unknown.

The similarities between Deut 32 and these ‘rock’ passages raise the question of its relationship with them. It is possible that the Song simply occupies a place within a broader tradition of employing the rock word-picture in contexts of great transition. That is to say, the common features can be attributed to the fact that they all draw upon a common tradition. At the same time, it is possible that their relationship is more direct and that the Song serves as the basis for 2 Sam 22–23 and Ps 92–95. Such a proposal finds support in the fact that, as Watts has noted, 2 Sam 22–23 appears to echo the structure of Deut 32–33. Moreover, it would seem altogether fitting for a collection intent on harkening back to pre-monarchical times to likewise evoke momentous transition from the governance under Moses (in the wilderness) to governance apart from him (in the land).

If the latter is assumed, the use of צוּר for God to underscore the stability of YHWH in times of uncertainty was perhaps understood as paradigmatic by future biblical writers and editors. With regard to the connection between the metaphor and 2 Sam 22–23 specifically, Lee has convincingly argued that the Song serves as a ‘hermeneutical compass’, guiding one’s reading of the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua–Kings). The observation concerning the rock metaphor here seems to provide a significant example of this. If indeed Book IV is intended to harken back to the Mosaic age (a time before the disappointing monarchy when YHWH was King), it is not hard to imagine how the word-picture in Pss 92, 94, and 95 would contribute to this

rhetoical function of Pss 90–106 by alluding to the leitmotif (צִוֵּר for God) of one of the hallmarks of the Mosaic age (the Song).

9.3 SUMMARY

The goal this chapter has been to revisit the poem’s perennial issues with special attention to the contribution of the rock metaphor. This included questions about its structure, conceptual background, genre, function within Deuteronomy, and place in the Hebrew Bible. It was shown that the metaphor contributes to the discussion of these issues in a number of ways, some of which have been largely overlooked by scholarship.

Within the context of the poem’s rich divine imagery (father, mother, eagle, warrior, judge), צִוֵּר for God forms a complex web of interactions, created by means of both the continuity (coherence) and discontinuity among these word-pictures (augmentation, synergy, analogy).

Though צִוֵּר for God certainly contributes to questions of text and date, no real advances in knowledge are made; on the other hand, this chapter demonstrates that it *does* present ways of thinking about other perennial issues. The metaphor offers a fitting window into one of the poem’s conceptual backgrounds—Israel’s salvation history—by not only alluding to a paradigmatic event (water from the rock) but also conceptualising the sweeping scope of YHWH’s relationship with his people from the primeval past (antiquity) to his eschatological restoration (eternity). It reinforces the generic forms and functions of the poem (lawsuit, wisdom, hymn). It helps mark off structural units and points to the unity of the poem. It holds great promise for tracing the relationships between the Song and other ‘rock’ segments of the Hebrew Bible, especially 1–2 Samuel and Psalms 90–106.

Arguably the most significant contribution of the word-picture is to the discussion of the Song’s place in the book of Deuteronomy. It points to a different provenance between not only the Song and its narrative frame, but also between the poem and the book more broadly. The stability of the rock imagery is fitting of the transition inherent in Deuteronomy. Supporting the suggestion that the Song functions as a summary of key theological thought in the book, it reinforces themes of Deuteronomy (covenant, blessing, cursing, land). As an image drawn from the natural world, it serves as an additional challenge to the widely-accepted beliefs that the book promotes a transcendent view of YHWH. Similarly, the absence of any allusion to the

Temple adds to the reasons to question reading Deuteronomy as a cult-centralization program.

CONCLUSION

Chapters 8 and 9 have placed the findings of the metaphorical analysis in Chapters 4–7 into their wider context; here, these conclusions will be placed into their even wider context by locating them in the overarching narrative of this present study. This will include revisiting the key movements of this present study and highlighting some of the most salient findings along the way.

10.1 BRIEF RETROSPECT

10.1.1 Laying the Foundations

With regard to its broadest contours, this thesis unfolded in three movements and began by laying the foundations for the subsequent metaphorical analysis. This entailed a survey of past literature, which revealed the necessity for further research (Chapter 1). The next chapter established the methodology that undergirded the analysis (Chapter 2). It was argued that, though not specifically focused on the rock metaphor, Gray's model of metaphorical analysis holds more promise than those of Eichhorn, Kowalski, and Fernandes. Like Fernandes, she roots her methodology in CBT, but her model goes beyond his in that it alone successfully bridges the gap between metaphor theory and exegesis. Therefore, this study adopted Gray's model with slight modification, the most noticeable additions being (1) the use of 'frames of reference' as criteria for identifying highlighted entailments and (2) the reflection on the contribution of the word-picture to the broader context as an additional step in metaphorical analysis.

The aim of Chapter 3 was to establish a working conceptual domain of צֶרֶךְ 'rock'. The result of was a rich tapestry of entailments including physical characteristics, cultural conceptions, and metaphorical uses. Moreover, despite the objection of some, it was argued that the religious traditions of the broader ANE (generative rock myth, cosmic mountain motif, divine designations) should be counted among these entailments. With regard to the use of the rock metaphor in the Song, this

task set the stage not only by identifying a set of possible entailments but also a range of attested connotations of צור for God.

10.1.2 Analysing the Metaphor

With the necessary methodological foundation in place, this study moved to the metaphorical analysis of all four ‘rock’ passages (vv. 4–6, 15b–18, 28–31, 36–39), occupying Chapters 4–7. Among the most significant results of this analysis was the polyvalence of each occurrence of the metaphor (constancy, antiquity, strength, creation, protection, provision, incomparability). The textual and metaphorical analysis also allowed a number of pressing exegetical questions to be answered. For example, the connotation of the word-picture in v. 4 (constancy, creation, protection, provision) helped to clarify the relation between the rock metaphor and moral language (YHWH’s *unchanging* moral perfections as expressed in his *creation, protection, and provision* of Israel). The dialogue between rock and parent (mother, father) metaphors eased the tension created by the rather startling use of rock and birthing imagery in v. 18. The double use of the expression ‘their rock’—for YHWH in v. 30 and the enemy’s god in v. 31—provided one means of explaining the difficult transition from v. 30 to v. 31; at the same time, it was demonstrated that the ambiguity created by this ‘conflicting’ referent contributes to the intentional ambiguity of the stanza more generally (vv. 26–35). The implicit (vv. 36, 39) and explicit use of צור (vv. 37–38) offered good reason to read vv. 36–39 as a rhetorical unit, shedding light on the questions concerning the structure of these verses with the larger section (vv. 36–42).

10.1.3 Tracing the Implications

The third and final movement drew together the results of these analysis chapters and explored their contribution to our understanding of the rock metaphor and its place within the Song. Toward this end, Chapter 8 examined the relationship among the occurrences of צור for God. It was demonstrated that not only was the word-picture’s polyvalence seen on an individual level, as noted above, but also on a collective level as well; that is to say, not only does each occurrence express multiple connotations, but also the emphasis of each metaphor (its most pronounced sense) varies across the poem. Furthermore, it was found that the dialogue among the occurrences of the rock metaphor (reinforcement, transference, elaboration, reconsideration), as well as the

grounding in various spheres of life (natural, cultural, religious), create a deep cognitive and emotional connection with the hearer.

The relationship of צור to the poem's message was also traced in this chapter, where the metaphor proved to be a fundamental part of the Song's narrative, structure, key themes, and rhetoric. Chapters 4–7 demonstrated that צור plays an important role in the structure of the 'rock' passages and movement within them. The same is true at the broader level of the poem, where it contributes to important framing devices (inclusio, chiasm), occurs at key points (thesis, climax, expressions of incomparability), and facilitates movement from one rhetorical unit to another (linking, development). The word-picture even punctuates basic movements within the poem's narrative: Israel's rejection of their caring Rock (vv. 4–18), their punishment at the hand of their Rock (vv. 19–25, 26–35), and their restoration as the superiority of their Rock over other rocks is reasserted (vv. 36–42). Thematically, צור for God helps develop the Song's 'twin pillars' (constancy, incomparability) and closely related themes (faithfulness, justice, punishment, vengeance, apostasy, other gods). On the level of rhetoric, the metaphor contributes to the poem's biting irony, lofty praise (elevation), crushing critique (polemic), and weighty indictment (rebuke).

Chapter 9 focused on the implications of the word-picture for the Song's perennial issues. The complex interrelationship among the occurrences of the rock metaphor suggests that the poem, as it has come down to us, very likely reflects a unified rather than composite text. This chapter also drew attention to the place of the rock metaphor within the Song's iconic structure, especially among the poem's other vivid images for God (father, mother, eagle, warrior, judge). Tracing the continuity (coherence) and discontinuity among these metaphors (augmentation, synergy, analogy) yielded many additional avenues of expression.

On a conceptual level, the mythological undertones of the metaphor (generative rock myth, cosmic mountain motif, divine designations) affirmed reading the Song against the backdrop of broader ANE religious thought. At the same time, צור for God embodies the poem's sweeping account of Israel's salvation history, perhaps most directly in its allusion to YHWH's paradigmatic provision of water in the wilderness, but also in its portrayal of YHWH as an *ancient* God whose relationship with his people can be traced back to the primeval past (vv. 8–9) and as a *constant* God who will bring about eschatological restoration (vv. 36–43). However, the word-picture also conceptualises his role as their Creator, Protector, and Provider in their formative years

(vv. 10–14) as well as an obstacle (v. 30, cf. vv. 19–26, 34–35) to them when they slipped into apostasy (vv. 15b–18). The rock metaphor reinforces seeing elements of various genres in the Song (lawsuit, wisdom, hymn). Take for example the way it marks off what has generally been understood as the heart of the covenantal lawsuit (vv. 4–18) and contributes greatly to the poem’s rebuke of Israel (vv. 4–6, 15b–18, 30, 37–39). Attention was also drawn to the close connection between צור and the Song’s wisdom elements (vv. 4–6, 28–31, cf. 15b–18), as well as its close relation to one of the poem’s hymnic verses (v. 3) and its contribution to the elevation of YHWH (v. 4, 15b–18, 31, 37–39).

The rock metaphor contributes to the question of the poem’s place within its broader canonical context. The use of צור for God elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible opens avenues for further study such as the relationship between the Song and other ‘rock’ poems in 1–2 Samuel or between the Song and the ‘Mosaic-pointing’ Psalms 90–106. More definitively, it was shown that the metaphor coheres with and reinforces key theological notes sounded in the book of Deuteronomy, including covenantal framework (blessing, cursing, land) as well as key divine conceptualisations of YHWH (faithful, sovereign, incomparable, electing, protecting, opposing). It is important however not to overlook the discontinuity the word-picture creates within the context of the book. For example, the fact that it is restricted to the Song itself suggests that the poem reflects a different provenance than its narrative frame or the book as a whole. Moreover, צור for God—with its theocentric focus and connotations of stability—has the effect of facilitating the great transition from the wilderness to the land that undergirds Deuteronomy. This same discontinuity has implications for two widely-accepted beliefs about the book, namely that it promotes a demythologised view of YHWH and a cult-centralization program. Though Lee has shown that they are not well supported by the Song, it is worth noting that the rock metaphor points in the same direction. The fact that the rock image is drawn from the natural world would also seem to challenge the former, while the absence of any allusions to the Temple—as elsewhere (Pss 27, 61)—would likewise challenge the latter.

10.2 FURTHER REFLECTION

Gray suggests that one of the problems with literal paraphrases of metaphor in the Psalter is that they “obscure the full meaning” and “miss the poet’s skill” by diminishing “emotional impact,” “cognitive content,” and “subtle connections within

the psalm.”¹ In this, she draws attention to several observable features of biblical Hebrew metaphor, namely its powerful expression (“full meaning”) and skilful application (“poet’s skill”). Its power resides on affective (“emotional impact”), expressive (“cognitive content”), and literary levels (“subtle connections”). This is certainly true of צור for God in the psalm in Deut 32.

10.2.1 Literary Prominence

The rock metaphor exhibits a literary power in several ways. The great rhetorical critic James Muilenburg has noted that, within the Hebrew Bible, “repeated words or lines do not appear haphazardly or fortuitously, but rather in rhetorically significant collocations.”² This alone underscores the literary significance of the sevenfold use of the word-picture in the Song (vv. 4, 13, 15b, 18, 30, 31aA, 31aB, 37). However, there are five other signs of its power.

First, as pointed out earlier, the metaphor falls at strategic structural junctures, both within ‘rock’ passages and within the poem as a whole. Second, צור serves as a ‘guiding theme’ within rock passages and larger sections of the poem. Third, the word-picture develops a number of key themes. Fourth, it carries tremendous rhetorical weight, heightening the poem’s arguments at several points. It serves as a parade example of the Song’s use of irony and contrast; it also effectively advances the poem’s threefold rhetoric of elevation, polemic, and rebuke.

Fifth, the rock metaphor stands out within the poem’s other divine metaphors. Each of these could have conceivably been used in much the same way as God as rock (positively, negatively, ironically)—as a picture of YHWH’s care (vv. 4, 15b, 18), a reminder of Israel’s reproach (vv. 15b, 18), an ironic depiction of YHWH’s judgment (v. 30), YHWH’s superiority (v. 31), and the other gods’ inferiority (vv. 31, 37). The fact that the poet has chosen the rock imagery with such frequency at strategic junctures suggests that he has intentionally given this image a status of prominence.

10.2.2 Expressive Power

The literary power of the word-picture is in large part due to its expressive power—its

¹ Gray, *Psalm 18*, 19.

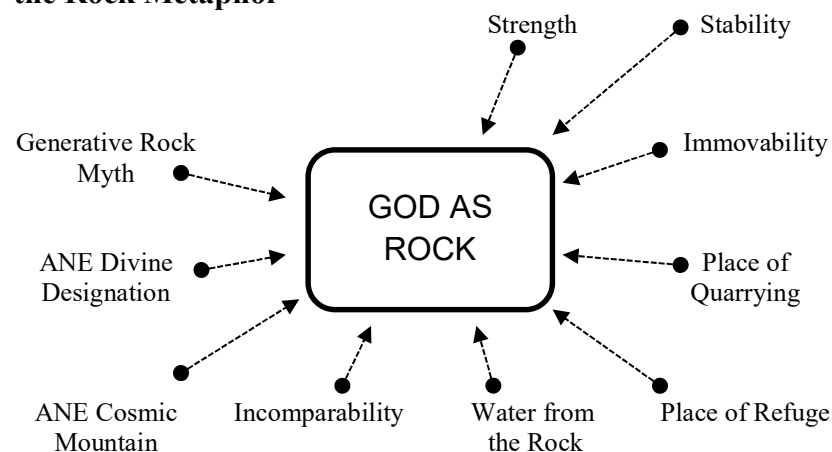
² James Muilenburg, “Form Criticism and Beyond,” *JBL* 88, no. 1 (1969): 16–17; cf. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 862.

ability to communicate in a variety of ways on a variety of levels. This is seen in the polyvalent nature of צוּר for God; it has the ability to communicate a broad range of meanings, both on the individual and collective levels. Undergirding this is a rich web of overlapping entailments and reinforcing connotations, which allows the metaphor to possess the ability to express much with little. With one explicitly stated term (צוּר) and an implicitly stated subject (YHWH or other gods) an entire conceptual world is opened up. Additional avenues of expression are made available as one explores (1) the interactions among the occurrences of the word-picture, (2) the dialogue between the rock metaphor and other divine metaphors, and (3) the coherence between צוּר and key themes in the book of Deuteronomy.

10.2.3 Affective Weight

The expressive power is also found in the metaphor's ability to wield profound affective weight. The way that the word-picture draws upon a variety of entailments from the צוּר concept domain reflecting various key spheres of life in ancient Israel (natural, cultural, religious) makes it an accessible and tangible image, a 'powerful' means of speaking theologically (see Figure 10).³

**Figure 10:
Entailments Undergirding
the Rock Metaphor**



Such a wide variety of physically and culturally-entrenched entailments makes it

³ Fernandes, *God as Rock*, 263. One possible reason for the choice of common (rock) imagery was to make the Song more readily accessible to the illiterate in Israel, which Knight believes was the majority of Israelites in the pre-monarchical period (*A Theological Quarry*, 4).

accessible to a wide range of hearers. It is difficult to imagine that all of the features of rock would be lost on the hearer and it seems more likely that at least *some* would have been detected and, in this way, allow the rock metaphor to communicate effectively. Having been taken from everyday life and from common ANE currency, these entailments allow the conceptualisations created by the metaphor to be readily envisioned. Moreover, by drawing on religious traditions of Israel as well as the broader ANE, צור for God draws on (presumably) deeply held and felt beliefs. Of particular note is the allusion to the miraculous provision of water from a rock in the wilderness, a truly paradigmatic event in Israel's formative years. A similar appeal to emotion is likely found in the metaphor's mythological undertones, which has the unavoidable effect of contrasting the God of Israel against the gods of their neighbours and pitting religious and nationalistic identities against one another.

On yet another level, the rock imagery effectively facilitates the conceptualisation of the divine by helping to ground abstract notions such as YHWH's character and his relationship with Israel in a commonplace and tangible image. This helps to arrest the hearer's attention. Fernandes remarks that the often 'vivid' and 'creative' nature of impersonal metaphors like God as Rock immediately draws them in and invites them to consider the ways that God is Rock.⁴ It also gives the Song 'staying power', which is particularly *apropos* considering the strong emphasis on the unchanging nature of rock and the fact that the poem (along with the *Torah!*) was to be memorised and passed on to the next generation as a perpetual witness (עד, Deut 31:19, 21). In the final analysis, perhaps Knight is right that the word-picture "exemplifies that Hebrew genius for employing metaphor, parable, poetry, and picture language to express what is otherwise inexpressible by mortals."⁵

The rock metaphor's expressive power is also felt in the way the poem pushes the boundaries of conventional ways of employing the metaphor. Some of the more straightforward examples include the ways that צור for God connotes far more than the typical divine protection and is used in connection with striking images: a righteous (v. 4), saving (v. 15b), and even a birthing Rock (v. 18). One might add the dualistic use of the metaphor. Berlin insightfully writes: "On occasion the same image may recur in close proximity with a new twist that gives a jarring effect, reinforcing the power of the

⁴ Fernandes, *God as Rock*, 354.

⁵ Knight, *A Theological Quarry*, 23.

image.”⁶ This is certainly true in the way צִוּר—as a picture of divine care (vv. 4, 15b, 18)—gives way to divine opposition (v. 30) and its referent shifts from YHWH (vv. 4, 15b, 18, 30, 31aA) to other gods (vv. 31aB, 37).

Remarkably, the rock metaphor is even helpful at the place where words break down. In particular, its inability to paint a complete or precise picture of YHWH is altogether fitting of the poem’s emphasis on his incomparability. Echoing Ricoeur,⁷ Fernandes insightfully draws attention to the fact that metaphorical language conveys something about him and, at the very same time, highlights *what he is not*.⁸ With regard to this point, McFague writes that “metaphors of God, far from reducing God to what we understand, underscore by their multiplicity and lack of fit the unknowability of God.”⁹ Indeed, certain qualities of rock are helpful in conceptualising aspects of YHWH’s nature and relationship with his people (what is), but ultimately the metaphorical language reminds us that the domains of God and rock are distinct (what is not). On the level of metaphor itself, this is because it is selective (‘highlighting’). A metaphor can never *fully* describe its target. However, this is amplified considerably in the case of *divine* metaphor. On a theological level, the word-picture is limited by the fact that it attempts to render the divine in human language. The effect of this is that the use of rock metaphor—as helpful as it may be—is fundamentally unable to describe him adequately in words. YHWH is not a rock and rocks are not divine; he is distinct from rocks, and by extension transcends the created world. In short, whether an intentional feature of the poem or not, the inability of the metaphor to fully conceptualise YHWH expresses his incomparability powerfully.

10.2.4 Hermeneutical Potential

In light of the findings in this study, there is another level in which the power of צִוּר for God can be observed: a hermeneutical one. That is to say, careful analysis of the metaphor provides the way forward with regard to several exegetical questions within the ‘rock’ passages. Chapter 9 also demonstrated that the rock metaphor contributes to some of the Song’s key interpretive questions. Furthermore, exploring the metaphor

⁶ Adele Berlin, “On Reading Biblical Poetry: The Role of Metaphor,” in *Congress Volume: Cambridge 1995*, ed. J. A. Emerton, vol. 66, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 34.

⁷ Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 7; “The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling,” 153, 155.

⁸ Fernandes, *God as Rock*, 27–28.

⁹ McFague, *Models of God*, 97; “God as Mother,” 139.

brings a number of important aspects of the poem's message into sharper focus. It contributes to the discussion of the poem's provenance, text, and structure. It provides clues into the conceptual background of the poem, both in terms of underlying background (myth, salvation history) and its form critical features (lawsuit, wisdom, hymn). It sheds light on the poem's place in Deuteronomy's redaction history, as well as its function within the book and bearing on deep-rooted scholarly conceptions of the book.

10.3 FINAL WORD

The purpose of this study has been to carefully analyse the use of צור for God in a way that allows each of the seven occurrences of the word-picture to speak fully. At the same time, it has aimed to bring together disparate insights of past scholarship while attempting to avoid some of the pitfalls of previous studies by striving for a clearly articulated methodology and introducing the rock metaphor into overlooked discussions concerning the Song's perennial issues. Having retraced the key findings of this analysis, it can be stated with confidence: the metaphor in the Song is more nuanced, expressive, and relevant than scholarship has yet to appreciate fully. Indeed, Knowles appears to be correct in insisting "a proper understanding of this metaphor and divine appellation [God as Rock] is integral to a proper understanding of the poem as a whole."¹⁰

¹⁰ Knowles, "The Rock, His Work Is Perfect," 307.

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