

# Torah Portion Haazinu

*Shabbat beginning October 7, 2022*

Today's portion contains the "Song of Moses." We approach the end of the Torah and of Moses' story. These last words poetically recount the old person's struggle between despair and integrity. Moses epitomizes these through punishment and reward, struggling with himself and for his people's future. The promised land rewarded Israel but God will punish their disobedience; its vista rewarded Moses but God punished his transgressions through exclusion. Since his song focuses on idolatry, we may have difficulty gleaning modern meanings. Theology helps by providing categories of belief.

Rabbi Elliot Dorff describes four religious concerns: unify families and communities; make our lives works of art; connect to our past, present, and future; and guide our interactions with each other while ameliorating moral problems. Moses supports unity by warning of God's punishment of the disloyal. He models artful living with poetic metaphors of God as father, rock, parent, and eagle. He connects us to the past through memories of God's help. He teaches respect for God as faithful, true, and upright in contrast to a litany of Israel's vices. Thus, combining Moses' great song with Dorff's concerns of religion can help us form our personal beliefs about God and Judaism.