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THIS IS A WEEKLY LIST OF QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PORTIONS OF THE BIBLE READ BY JEWISH COMMUNITIES EVERY SABBATH, WITH COVER ART BY OUR FRIENDS. DO YOU LIKE OUR PROJECT? DO YOU HAVE MORE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS OR ANOTHER PARSHA? SEND US YOUR QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS AT: persnicketyfinicker@gmail.com

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Q1: Why is Moses' last prophecy rendered as poetry? Does the change in form correspond to a change in content? How do we relate to poetry differently than prose?

Q2: Why is the water metaphor for this speech (dew, rain, droplets) so diffuse? Why not a surging stream or spring?

Q3: Make a list! Count metaphors for God in this poem. Count metaphors for Israel. Count metaphors for other people, for food, for states of being, for actions. Count verbal motifs that might be metaphors, but might not be.

Q4: God-as-rock is an especially prevalent metaphor. It is even used to express attributes of God that rocks don't usually share, like birth (v. 18) and sustenance (v. 13). Why, in a poem with such a welter of images, is the rock so useful?

Q5: Does 32:5 imply that parents have no responsibility for the actions of their children? Why is it children that are faithless, not students or servants?

Q6: What is meant by "he found him in the desert" (v. 10)? How would you have to alter your understanding of "found" or "desert" in order to reconcile this with the story we know?

Q7: What are the honey and oil from the rock (v.13)? Is that a poetic reference to manna?

Q8: What is evoked by the wine-blood-poison metaphor cluster? Grapes are crushed like bodies, and blood is drunk like wine. In this metaphoric system that ties together violence, victory, and drunkenness, what does it mean to call the wine of your enemies poisonous?

Q9: Does the rich food metaphor (v. 13-15) imply a direct causal link between God's blessing and the people's sin?

Q10: How is it supposed to be obvious to the enemies of the Jews that God is better than any human power (v. 28-31)?

Q11: Does it seem like G-d is deriving pleasure or satisfaction from the destruction described in verse 32:42?