

Singing of Jeshurun  
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The “Song of Moses” in **Deuteronomy 32** is not a delightful, upbeat song. Rather, it was composed as a reminder and warning to God’s people of where they had come from, of mistakes they had made already, and of other failures that would inevitably occur in the future. God’s mercy and generosity are extolled, but there are also blunt descriptions of the failures of the nations to acknowledge God, from Babel onward, and their tendency to prefer gods reflecting their own character, rather than acknowledge the Creator and the image of his character. However, while the moral failures and idolatry of the nations and their gods are described, the focus of the song is on Israel and her own recurring determination to follow the nations and her own will, rather than follow God who chose them and rescued them to be his own people.

“The Song of Moses” describes God’s character and behavior as “upright” (Hebrew: “jeshur”), along with associated attributes that show us what “*upright*” means.

**Deuteronomy 32:4 (ESV)**, *“The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.”*

Upright refers to being consistent, doing what is right and good, choosing justice over preferences. A few verses later in the song (**Deuteronomy 32**), the same word “*upright*,” used as a proper noun, identifies the people of God, calling them “the upright one” (Hebrew: “Jeshurun”).

**Deuteronomy 32:15 (ESV)**, *“But Jeshurun grew fat, and kicked; you grew fat, stout, and sleek; then he forsook God who made him and scoffed at the Rock of his salvation.”*

In Moses’s song, Israel as Jeshurun, the Upright, is described as coming from desperate circumstances — poverty, oppression, and hardship — into a blessed peace and prosperity provided by God, only to “kick” against divine restraint when he became “*fat, stout, and sleek.*” Those with experience handling calves and cows will readily visualize the scene of the well-cared but ungrateful animal rebelling against necessary restraints, kicking at its stall or handler; the unrestrained cow kicking the milker or kicking over the milk bucket. “The Song of Moses” then describes the many moral and religious failures of Israel, and their disastrous consequences as God let them go the way of the nations, letting them have their own way. (See also **Deuteronomy 33:3-5**, where again Israel is called Jeshurun, the Upright, the recipient of God’s bountiful blessings and loving guidance. A people whose king is God.)

“The Song of Moses,” which was to be rehearsed and memorized by Israel, tells of the rebellion of the nations against God, and of his selection of Abraham to build a new nation, a people belonging to himself. That new nation was to be upright – Jeshurun – having the very character of God himself. Instead, when Israel prospered by the grace of God she rebelled in her prosperity, becoming the image of the fallen nations rather than the image of God. *“Jeshurun grew fat and kicked.”* How often does prosperity lead to (or at least contribute to) pride, stubbornness, selfishness, moral failure, and worship of gods that are not God? Unfortunately, prosperity and rebelliousness often go hand in hand. Israel is by no means a unique example of a people who were upright in their dependancy upon God in trials, but then “*grew fat and kicked*” while enjoying the blessings of prosperity. Selfishness and godlessness, envy and conflict, tend to grow and flourish when people are blessed with prosperity. Prosperity offers no assurance of peace and harmony and goodwill among humans and certainly no assurance of obedience to God.

Upright, of course, is not a descriptive term unique to Israel in the Old Testament, and what is recorded about them is intended to teach us how we should live (**1 Corinthians 10:6-13**). The Lord’s saved people now who have received the Spirit of God are called to be Jeshurun, the upright one (see **Isaiah 44:1-5**) and so to live exemplary and productive lives while waiting for the fulfillment of hope when Jesus comes again. Paul in **Titus 2:11-14** described the Christian life in those terms, specifically as “*self-controlled, upright, and godly.*”

*For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us*

*from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works*  
**(Titus 2:11-14, ESV).**

Christians, as described by Paul, are “*a people*” for God’s “*own possession*” which is what the upright (Jeshurun) in the Old Testament were called to be. Learning (we hope) the lesson of Israel in "The Song of Moses," the Lord’s people must not “*grow fat and kick*” even if we might be living in a culture seemingly slipping into the vortex of rebellion in the mist of prosperity, with all the disasters that “*kicking*” sets in motion.

Nations today are no less accountable to God than they were at Babel or in Deuteronomy when they “*get fat and kick*.” Prosperity might contribute to the inclination to get fat, get stubborn, and make trouble, but whatever happens in the nation(s), Christians must be Jeshurun (upright) and must not “*get fat and kick*” against divine restraint.