

Deuteronomy 29:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt:

Analysis

Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt (עַל אֲשֶׁר עָזְבוּ אֶת־בְּרִית יְהוָה)—The answer to v. 24's question begins with al asher azvu ("because they forsook"). The verb azav means to abandon, leave, forsake—covenant desertion, not minor infraction. They broke the berit YHWH Elohei avotam ("covenant of the LORD God of their fathers").

The relative clause asher karat lahem ("which he cut with them") uses covenant-making terminology—karat berit (literally "cut covenant") references animal-cutting ceremonies symbolizing covenant obligations (Genesis 15:17-18, Jeremiah 34:18-19). The temporal marker be-hotzi'o otam me-eretz Mitzrayim ("when bringing them out from the land of Egypt") grounds covenant identity in exodus redemption.

This analysis emphasizes covenant's foundational importance. Israel isn't judged for being generically sinful nations but for covenant violation—breaking sworn commitments to their redeemer. The exodus reference recalls covenant grace: Yahweh initiated relationship by redemptive deliverance, not because Israel merited favor. Covenant breaking thus represents supreme ingratitude—spurning the God who saved them.

Historical Context

The Mosaic covenant was established at Sinai (Exodus 19-24) shortly after exodus liberation. Deuteronomy 29 occurs forty years later, renewing that covenant with the second generation. The answer given in v. 25 reflects what prophets like Jeremiah repeatedly explained during and after exile: judgment traced to covenant abandonment, particularly idolatry and social injustice. The nations' theological verdict (vv. 24-28) mirrors Israel's prophets—covenant theology wasn't obscure but publicly evident through judgment's explanatory power.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does covenant theology explain suffering better than moralistic cause-effect thinking?
2. What parallels exist between Israel forsaking the old covenant and Christians forsaking the new covenant (Hebrews 10:29)?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמְרוּ	אֲשֶׁר עָלָה	עָזְבוּ	אֶת	בְּרִית	
Then men shall say	H5921	H834	Because they have forsaken	H853 the covenant	
H559			H5800	H1285	
יְהוָה	אֱלֹהֵי	אֲבֹתָם	אֲשֶׁר	כָּרַת	עִמָּם
of the LORD	God	of their fathers	H834	which he made	H5973
H3068	H430	H1		H3772	
בְּהוֹצִיאָם	אֹתָם	מִן	הָאֲרָץ	מִמִּצְרַיִם	
with them when he brought them forth	H853	out of the land	H776	of Egypt	
H3318				H4714	

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 8:9 (Covenant): Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

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