

# Deuteronomy 31:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed: for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I sware.

## Analysis

**And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness**—when covenant curses arrived, the song would explain causation: suffering resulted from covenant violation. **For it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed**—the song's memorability ensured it would persist through generations. **For I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I sware**—God knew Israel's rebellious intentions before they acted on them, even before entering the land where temptation would peak.

The song's witness function was both condemning and merciful. It would explain suffering (you broke covenant) while pointing toward restoration (God remains faithful). The phrase 'I know their imagination' reveals God's omniscience regarding not just actions but intentions and thoughts (Psalm 94:11, 139:2). This foreknowledge didn't cause rebellion but demonstrated that judgment would be just—God knew their hearts fully. Yet His knowing their future failure didn't prevent His leading them forward, showing divine patience and redemptive purpose despite human unfaithfulness.

## Historical Context

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Spoken circa 1406 BC, implemented immediately (31:22), and fulfilled throughout Israel's history. When the Babylonian exile came, Israelites in captivity could sing this song and understand their situation—not random tragedy but covenant consequences. The song provided interpretive framework for suffering, preventing either denial (blaming circumstances) or despair (losing hope). This pattern continues: Scripture memorized before crisis provides divine perspective during crisis, interpreting events through God's eyes rather than human confusion.

## Related Passages

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**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

## Study Questions

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1. How does God's foreknowledge of rebellion demonstrate omniscience while preserving human moral responsibility?
2. Why is it crucial to learn Scripture before crisis, when memory and perspective function best?
3. How does the song's dual function (witness against sin, hope for restoration) balance justice and mercy?

## Interlinear Text

בְּבוֹת	בְּרוּ וְתִּאְתֵּן תִּמְצֵא אֵלֶיךָ			
H1961	H3588	are befallen	H853	evils
H4672			H7451	And it shall come to pass when many
				H7227
וְאַרְבָּה	וְאַרְבָּה	וְאַרְבָּה	וְאַרְבָּה	וְאַרְבָּה
and troubles	shall testify	them that this song	הַשִּׁיבֵה הַשִּׁיבֵה	לִפְנֵי הַזָּאת
H6869	H6030	H7892	H2063	against
				H6440
לְעֵד	לְאַכְּל	תִּשְׁכַּח	מִפְּ	
them as a witness	for it shall not be forgotten	for it shall not be forgotten	out of the mouths	
H5707	H3588	H3808	H7911	H6310
וְיַעֲרָעַ	וְיַדְעַת	וְאַתְּ	וְאַתְּ	וְאַתְּ
of their seed	for I know	H853	their imagination	H834
H2233	H3588	H3045	H3336	H1931
עֲשָׂה	הַיְמָן	בְּטַרְמָה	אֲבִיאָהָה	אֶל
which they go about	even now	H2962	before I have brought	H413
H6213	H3117		H935	
בָּאָרֶץ	אֲשֶׁר	בְּשַׁבְּעָתִים		
them into the land	H834	which I swear		
H776		H7650		

## Additional Cross-References

**Hosea 5:3** (Parallel theme): I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me: for now, O Ephraim, thou committest whoredom, and Israel is defiled.

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