

Deuteronomy 32:40

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever.

Analysis

פֶּאֲשָׂא אֶל-שָׁמָּן יְהִי—God swears by Himself, lifting His hand in oath-taking gesture. Humans swear by something greater (Hebrews 6:16), but God has none greater, so He swears by His own eternal life: chai anokhi le-'olam (I live forever). This oath form appears when God makes unconditional covenants (Genesis 22:16; Hebrews 6:13-18).

The gesture of raising the hand (nasa yad) was standard oath-taking posture in ancient Near Eastern treaties, calling heaven as witness. But here God Himself is both oath-taker and witness—there is no higher authority. His eternal existence (le-'olam, forever/eternally) guarantees His promises cannot fail and His threats cannot be evaded. The self-existent, eternal God pledges His very being as surety for His word. What He declares will certainly come to pass because He lives forever to accomplish it.

Historical Context

Ancient treaty documents included oath formulas invoking gods as guarantors. Israel's covenant is unique: the Divine Suzerain guarantees His own treaty by His eternal existence. This became foundational for understanding God's immutability and faithfulness—He cannot lie (Titus 1:2) or break covenant because His nature is unchangeable. The New Testament sees God's oath to Abraham as model for Christian hope's certainty (Hebrews 6:13-20).

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 – Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does God's self-swearing oath strengthen your confidence in His promises?
2. What difference does God's eternity make when your circumstances seem unstable and temporary?

Interlinear Text

פָּ	אֲשֶׁר	אָל	שְׁמָה	יְהִי	וְאֶמְתָּנָה	אָנֹכִ	לְעוֹלָם
H3588	For I lift up	H413	to heaven	my hand	and say	I live	H595
	H5375		H8064	H3027	H559	H2416	H5769

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 14:22 (Parallel theme): And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,

Jeremiah 4:2 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt swear, The LORD liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.

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