

Deuteronomy 4:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

(For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them.

Analysis

(For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them.

Moses grounds Israel's hope not in their future faithfulness but in God's unchanging character. The parenthetical declaration *El rachum Yahweh Elohekha* (אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה רַחוּם, 'the LORD thy God is a merciful God') reveals the foundation: divine compassion (*rachum*, from *rechem*, 'womb') suggests maternal tenderness and covenant commitment.

Three negations reinforce this mercy: God will not *yarph* (יָרַף, 'forsake/abandon'), will not *yashchit* (יִשְׁחִית, 'destroy'), and will not *yishkach* (יִשְׁכַּח, 'forget') the covenant. The first addresses fear of abandonment in exile; the second, fear of annihilation; the third, fear that God's promises might lapse through divine forgetfulness. Each fear is met with emphatic denial.

The ultimate anchor is *berit avotekha* (בְּרִית אֲבוֹתֶיךָ, 'covenant of thy fathers')—the unconditional promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, confirmed by divine oath (*nishba lahem*). Israel's restoration depends not on earning forgiveness but on God's covenant fidelity. This anticipates the New Covenant, where God's promises in Christ secure believers eternally—not because of our faithfulness but because of His (2 Timothy 2:13).

Historical Context

Moses grounds hope in God's covenant faithfulness and mercy. Despite Israel's anticipated failures, God's promise to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (made some 400-600 years before Moses' time) would remain secure. This assurance was vital as Israel prepared to enter Canaan without Moses' leadership.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does grounding assurance in God's character rather than your own faithfulness change your experience of security in Christ?
2. Which of the three fears addressed here—abandonment, destruction, or being forgotten—most resonates with your own spiritual struggles?

Interlinear Text

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|-----------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|-------|
| יְרַכֵּךְ | לֹא | אֱלֹהֶיךָ | יְהוָה | בְּחֹם | אֵל לֹכֵי | |
| | H3808 | thy God | H430 | For the LORD | H3068 | H3588 |
| | | | | is a merciful | H7349 | H410 |
| | | | | God | | |
| | | | | he will not forsake | | |
| | | | | | | |
| בְּרִית | אֶת | יִשְׁכַּח | וְלֹא | יִשְׁחִיתֶךָ | וְלֹא | |
| | H853 | thee nor forget | H7911 | H3808 | H3808 | |
| | | | | thee neither destroy | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| לָהֶם: | נִשְׁבַּע | אֲשֶׁר | אֲבֹתֶיךָ | | | |
| | H0 | which he swore | H834 | of thy fathers | | |
| | | | H7650 | H1 | | |

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 31:8 (References Lord): And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.

Psalms 116:5 (Grace): Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.

Nehemiah 9:31 (Grace): Nevertheless for thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God.

Jonah 4:2 (Grace): And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

Leviticus 26:42 (Covenant): Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.

Deuteronomy 31:6 (References God): Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

2 Chronicles 30:9 (Grace): For if ye turn again unto the LORD, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him.

Psalms 111:5 (Covenant): He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant.

Psalms 111:9 (Covenant): He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name.

Jeremiah 14:21 (Grace): Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us.