

Deuteronomy 8:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish.

Analysis

This verse presents covenant curse for forgetting God and pursuing idolatry. The conditional 'if thou do at all forget' uses emphatic Hebrew construction (shakhoach tishkach) meaning 'surely forget' or 'completely forget.' Walking after, serving, and worshiping other gods represents comprehensive apostasy—progressive departure from mild neglect to active idolatry. The phrase 'I testify against you this day' (ha'idoti) is legal language—Moses serves as witness in a covenant lawsuit. The consequence is unequivocal: 'ye shall surely perish' (avod toveidun, emphatic construction meaning certain destruction). This isn't arbitrary punishment but covenant justice—violation brings curse as surely as obedience brings blessing (Deuteronomy 28).

Historical Context

This warning proved prophetic. The northern kingdom's persistent Baal worship led to Assyrian conquest and exile (722 BC, 2 Kings 17:7-23). Judah's apostasy resulted in Babylonian captivity (586 BC, 2 Chronicles 36:15-21). Both destructions fulfilled this warning exactly—they forgot the LORD, walked after other gods, and perished as nations. The prophets (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea) repeatedly invoked covenant curses, warning that idolatry would bring the threatened destruction. Israel's history demonstrates that God's warnings are not empty threats but certain prophecies.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What subtle forms of 'forgetting God' (practical atheism, functional idolatry) appear in your life?
2. How seriously do you take God's warnings about consequences for persistent sin and unbelief?
3. What 'other gods' (money, success, comfort, reputation) compete for the worship that belongs to God alone?

Interlinear Text

אֵת	תִּשְׁכַּח	תִּשְׁכַּח	אִם	וְהָיָה
H853	H7911	H7911	H518	H1961
And it shall be if thou do at all	And it shall be if thou do at all	And it shall be if thou do at all		
וְעַבַּדְתָּם	אֱלֹהֵי יָם	אֱלֹהֵי יָם	אֱלֹהֵי יָם	יְהוָה
H5647	H312	H430	H430	H3068
and serve	other	gods	gods	the LORD
כִּי	הַיּוֹם	בְּכֶם	הָעֵד תִּי	לָהֶם
H3588	H3117	H0	H5749	H0
against you this day	against you this day		them I testify	them and worship
תֵּאבְדוּן	תֵּאבְדוּן			
H6	H6			
perish	perish			

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 4:26 (Witness): I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed.

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