

# Deuteronomy 4:25-31 Commentary

**Background-** Deut 4:26-31 sets the [context](#) for an incredible prophecy of Divine judgment and mercy concerning the nation of Israel. Let's [observe](#) the context verse by verse. Although, Habakkuk's prayer was many years after Moses' words below, it is a prayer that is "answered" in Deuteronomy 4:26-31 for this Jewish prophet prayed "**In wrath remember mercy.**" (Hab 3:2-[note](#)). As you study this section, you will see that while there is indeed divinely ordained wrath, when God has the final word (which of course He ALWAYS DOES!), it will be "I will show mercy to my people!"

**Deuteronomy 4:25** "When you become the father of children and children's children and have remained long in the land, and act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD your God so as to provoke Him to anger,

## Cross-references:

**Become the father:** De 31:16-18 Judges 2:8-15

**Act corruptly:** De 4:16, 31:29 Ex 32:7 Ho 9:9

**Do that which is evil:** 2Ki 17:17-19 21:2,14-16 2Ch 36:12-16 1Co 10:22

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## THE CORRUPTION AND CONSEQUENCES OF IDOLATRY

In this section Moses is speaking as God's prophet. Recall that a [prophet](#) had the role of *forth*-telling and *fore*-telling and in this section Moses carries out both these functions.

Daniel Block observes that "While the first part of this section is dominated by a tone of doom (Deut 4:25–28), the second opens windows of hope (Deut 4:29–31). Here Moses the pastor describes the consequences of abandoning Yahweh and the covenant relationship: the tripartite covenant relationship involving Yahweh, Israel, and the land will disintegrate. Although the mood is pessimistic, Moses ends on a positive note." (NIV Application Commentary)

**When you become the father of children and children's children** - Father of children and of grandchildren.

**The land** - Referring to the promised land of Canaan.

**When...you act corruptly** - The [Omniscient God](#) (speaking through His "*mouthpiece*" Moses cp Deut 31:29) sees the future failure of His [Chosen People](#) Israel. He had just warned them when they entered the land to "**watch yourselves carefully.**" (Dt 4:15) The Hebrew word for "**watch carefully**" is [shamar](#) (08104) which means to be on one's guard and is rendered in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) with the Greek verb [phulasso](#) a vivid word calling for one to set up a watchman to guard and protect from enemy incursions. It is fascinating that both [shamar](#) and [phulasso](#) are used in Genesis 2:15 where Adam was commanded by God guard ("keep") the garden against intruders! Adam failed to guard not only the Garden but also his wife and the rest is history!

Deut 4:16 goes on to explain that Israel was to be on guard so that they would "**not act corruptly**" ([shachath](#)) so that they would not be spoiled, ruined, perverted, destroyed or wiped out. This same verb describes the [corrupt](#), ruined (morally rotten) state of the world in Ge 6:11,12! In context the "corrupting agent" was idolatry and as Deut 4:25 teaches while idols may be "dead," they still exert a controlling effect on the human heart, resulting in evil in the sight of God thus provoking the "Refiner's Ire" and the "Refiner's fire!" (cp Dt 32:16)

**Remained long in the land** - This speaks of time and as it passes we have a natural tendency to become forgetful. As Thompson says "There was a danger that prolonged enjoyment of the blessings of the land might result in forgetfulness of the demands of the covenant, so that after many years Israel might turn to idolatry and vex Yahweh. If that happened the curses of the covenant, here defined by national death (Dt 4:26), separation from the land (Dt 4:26) and scattering among the nations (Dt 4:27), would come into operation." (Tyndale OT Commentary - Deuteronomy)

Israel failed to heed the warning Moses had just given and made graven images just as they were commanded not to do (Exodus 20:3-5)...

"Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, **lest you forget** the things which your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and

your grandsons. (Deut 4:9)

"So watch yourselves, **lest you forget** the covenant of the LORD your God (referring to the Mosaic Covenant, the Covenant of Law), which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything against which the LORD your God has commanded you. (Deut 4:23)

**Warren Wiersbe** - God made a covenant with His people and He expected them to keep it **Ed**: See [Covenant: Abrahamic versus Mosaic](#). The word "covenant" is used at least twenty-seven times in Deuteronomy (**Ed**: Deut. 4:13, 23, 31; 5:2f; 7:2, 9, 12; 8:18; 9:9, 11, 15; 10:8; 17:2; 29:1, 9, 12, 14, 21, 25; 31:9, 16, 20, 25f; 33:9) and comes from the Hebrew word [beriyth](#) which some scholars say means "to eat bread." In the East, when people broke bread together, they formed a covenant or treaty that they would help and protect each other (see Ge 26:26–35) (**Ed**: See [Table Summary of Biblical Covenants](#)). When God established His covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai, Moses and the Jewish elders ate before God on the mountain (Ex. 24:11). The terms of the covenant were simple: if Israel obeyed God's laws, He would bless them; if they disobeyed, He would chasten them. He would show His love to them in both the blessing and the chastening, "for whom the Lord loves, He chastens" (Heb. 12:6-[note](#), NKJV). (Be Equipped)

**Idol** ([06459](#)) see below for discussion of [pesel](#).

**John Butler** rightly reminds us that "Idolatry corrupts. It leads to low morals and cruel deeds. Corrupt creed leads to corrupt conduct. This explains the corruption that prevails in our country. Bad doctrine precedes bad deportment." (Analytical Bible Exposition) Have you done an "idol check" in your life lately? You might consider praying Psalm 139:23, 24 periodically.

**Do that which is evil** is more literally "the evil thing." Block notes that "this idiom commonly occurs with the article ("the evil") suggests a particular kind of evil; violating the Supreme Command ("You shall have no other gods before me," Dt 5:7) by manufacturing competing images of worship, which "provoke" Yahweh's ire." (Ibid)

**Deuteronomy 4:26 I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you shall surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it. You shall not live long on it, but shall be utterly destroyed.**

#### Cross-references:

De 30:18,19 31:28 32:1 Isa 1:2 Jer 2:12 6:19 22:29 Eze 36:4 Mic 1:2 6:2

**You shall**: De 29:28 Lev 18:28 26:31-35 Jos 23:16 Isa 6:11 24:1-3 Jer 44:22 Eze 33:28 Lu 21:24

## **GOD CALLS THE UNIVERSE AS WITNESS! SEPARATION FROM THE LAND**

Moses acting as God's spokesman (prophet) begins this section with the solemn words "I call heaven and earth to witness".

**KJV Bible Commentary** on "I call heaven and earth" - (This) is in the accusative case, which means to give a witness against a person under oath. **Heaven and earth** are personified, not as the instruments of judgment if they disobey, but as witnesses that God had warned His people against idols.

**Bratcher** on calling **heaven and earth** - the punishment that Moses is about to describe is so severe that he calls the whole universe to listen to what he is about to say. Among other peoples at that time it was common to call upon the gods to witness to what someone was about to say or do; here the whole world, as God's creation, is to be witness. (Handbook on Deuteronomy)

**Eugene Merrill** - Though the full form is lacking here, the very phrase "I call heaven and earth against you this day" (v. 26) is sufficient to show that Moses was invoking, vestigially at least, the so-called "Rib-pattern" as a vehicle by which to communicate the formal process of dealing with covenant violation on the part of an indicted vassal. ([The New American Commentary: Deuteronomy](#)).

**Bob Utley** on "I call heaven and earth to witness" - This was part of the Suzerain Hittite Treaties (need for powerful spiritual witnesses, cf. Intro. to Book, VII). These are the two most permanent things in physical creation. They are often called on by God to act as witnesses. It also reflects the Israeli legal system's need for two witnesses in a court case (cf. Ex 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15). The phrase is used often in connection with the ratification of the covenant with YHWH (cf. Dt 4:26; 30:19; 31:28).

**Treasury of Scripture Knowledge Notes** says this oath is "A most solemn method of [adjuration](#), in use among all the nations in the world; God and man being called upon to bear testimony to the truth of what was spoken, that if there was any flaw or insincerity it might be detected, and if any crime, it might not go unpunished. Such appeals to God shew at once the origin and use of oaths."

**Deuteronomy 4:27** "And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you shall be left few in number among the nations, where the LORD shall drive you.

**Cross-references:**

De 28:62-64 Ne 1:3,8,9 Eze 12:15 32:26

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## GOD'S PROMISE TO SCATTER IS SURE

**The LORD will scatter you** (see more detailed description of this punishment in Deut 28:64-68) - Compare similar promises in Deut 28:64-67. This is one of those promises we don't usually see in a collection like ["God's Promises for Your Every Need."](#)

**Ryrie** - Here is Moses' first prophecy of Israel's removal from the land if she proved disobedient.

**The LORD will scatter...shall drive you** - Jehovah Himself would in His sovereign control of the Gentile nations inflict this promised punishment.

**You shall be left few in number among the nations**(Gentiles) (see the contrast in Dt 28:62) - Jews are located throughout the world today but their numbers are relatively ([13.9 million in 2014](#)). The number of Jewish believers, while increasing in recent years, is still a small percentage of the population. However God had promised that there would always be a [remnant](#) of Jews who were genuine believers in the Messiah.

Israel's disobedience provoked the LORD's anger which brought His righteous punishment and the scattering of the nation among **the peoples** (the Gentile nations). The Hebrew verb **scatter** is translated in the Septuagint with the verb diaspeiro which means to scatter abroad which calls to mind the [Jewish diaspora](#). (see Greek word [diaspora](#) used in NT) This prophecy was first fulfilled when the 10 northern tribes were carried into exile in Assyria in 722BC (2 Kings 17:6) and the 2 Southern tribes, Judah and Benjamin, were taken into exile in Babylon in 586BC (2Chr 36:15-21 - note the tragic phrase "*until there was no remedy*" - no "healing" in 2 Chr 36:16!, cp fall of Jerusalem - 2Ki 24:14ff, 2Ki 25:10ff). In addition, the nation of Israel was scattered from her land after her rejection of Christ, [this dispersion](#) occurring at the hands of the Romans.

**Constable** - The nation's present scattered condition as a result of her dispersion by the Romans is only one of several scatterings that Israel has experienced.

**John MacArthur** sums up Deut 4:25-31 - In fact, this briefly outlined the future judgment of Israel, which culminated in the northern 10 tribes being exiled to Assyria (ca. 722 B.C.; 2Ki 17) and the southern two tribes being deported to Babylon (ca. 605–586 B.C.; 2Ki 24, 25). Although the Jews returned in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah (ca. 538–445 B.C.), they never regained their autonomy or dominance. Thus, the days of promised restoration and return look forward to Messiah's return to set up the [millennial kingdom](#). (Study Bible)

**Warren Wiersbe** - During the closing years of Solomon's reign, to please his many wives he introduced idolatry into the land (1 Kings 11:1-12) and this led to God's judgment and the division and deterioration of the nation (1 Kings 12:1-33). In 722 B.C., Assyria captured the ten tribes that formed the Northern Kingdom of Samaria, and Babylon took the Southern Kingdom of Judah in 586 B.C. From A.D. 70 until May 14, 1948, when the modern nation of Israel was recognized (**Ed:** [See summary of events leading to nationhood](#)), the Jewish people were **dispersed throughout the world** and had no national homeland. (Be Equipped)

**J Vernon McGee** - That nation is still a witness to the world today, a witness in their disobedience. They are scattered over the world today. Why? Because they did the thing God forbade them to do. I know someone will point out that they are back in the land and they are a nation now. Yes, but they are in trouble, aren't they? When God brings them back into that land as He predicted, they won't be having the trouble they are having today. The nation of Israel is still under the judgment of God today because it has turned its back upon God. Judgment will come upon any nation which rejects Him. This is a tremendous lesson for us today.

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**Deuteronomy 4:28** "And there you will serve gods, the work of man's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell.

**Cross-references:**

**You will serve:** De 28:36,64 1Sa 26:19 Jer 16:13 Eze 20:32,39 Ac 7:42

## GOTTA SERVE SOMEBODY! GOD OR IDOLS

The title of this section comes from Bob Dylan's classic "[Gotta Serve Somebody!](#)"

It may be the devil or it may be the Lord, but you gotta serve somebody!

**You will serve gods** - O the [irony](#) of "[poetic justice!](#)" What a pitiful description for God's Chosen People! By the way, this another of the passages you won't find in God's book of promises! The truth of this passage applies to all men of all ethnicity. If man does not serve God, he will by default serve gods! Jesus made this quite clear when He declared

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You (absolutely) cannot serve God and mammon." (Matthew 6:24-[note](#))

**Henry Morris on serve other gods** - This is a prophecy remarkably fulfilled in later ages. Not only were the Israelites scattered among the nations of the world, but great multitudes of these apostates abandoned the faith of their fathers in favor of many forms--ancient and modern--of evolutionary pantheism. Modern Reform Judaism, for example, is little more than evolutionary humanism.

**Serve** - The Jews were set free from the bondage of slavery in Egypt so that they might **serve Jehovah** (Ex 7:16, 8:1, 20, 9:1, 13, 10:3, 7) but they rejected Him as their Master instead choosing to **serve dumb idols!** In this passage God says in essence "If you want idols, not Me, then I will give you what you want!" That is personally my greatest fear when I commit a [presumptuous](#) ("[high handed](#)") sin against God (Ps 19:12-13-[note](#)) - that He may say "*Okay, you want it. Go for it!*" That would be horrible! The other point that this passage raises is you had better be careful what you "wish for" or you may end up like Israel who lusted for idols and were given over entirely to the object of their evil desire! Look out!

In **Jeremiah 16:13** there is a vivid picture of God's wrath casting Judah out of the land as someone would throw someone out their house:

So **I will hurl** (cp Isa 22:17, Jer 22:26, 28) **you out of this land** into the land which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers; and there **you will serve other gods day and night**, for I shall grant you no favor (Lxx translates with eleos = pity, mercy).

Gods, the work of man's hands...neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. The psalmist gives a similar description

Their idols are silver and gold, The work of man's hands. They have mouths, but they cannot speak; They have eyes, but they cannot see; They have ears, but they cannot hear; They have noses, but they cannot smell; They have hands, but they cannot feel; They have feet, but they cannot walk; They cannot make a sound with their throat. (Psalm 115:4-7)

In Isaiah 44:9 we read

Those who fashion a graven image (carved as from wood or chiseled from rock, but still dead!) are all of them futile, and their precious things are of no profit; even their own witnesses fail to see or know, so that they will be put to shame.

**Comment:** Notice these inanimate objects are futile (Hebrew *tohu*, 08414) which is used first in Ge 1:2 translated "formless," in Deut 32:10 translated "waste" and in Isa 24:10 translated "chaos!" All of these renderings would compose an apt description of idols!

**Block comments** - Exposing the folly of idolatry, Moses observes sarcastically how roles have reversed. (1) Instead of the creature worshipping the Creator, the creator worships creature: idols are the work of human hands. (2) Idolatry directly contradicts Yahweh's self-revelation (Dt 4:12, 15): lifeless and physical material replaces what is formless but living and spiritual. (3) These images have organs of perception and communication, but they are blind, deaf, and dumb. In effect, Yahweh says through Moses, "If idolatry is what you want, fine—but not in my land!" For their sin, the Israelites face a total disintegration of the deity—nation—land relationship that Yahweh had established for the sake of his mission to the world, and in Israel's interest. (Ibid)

God mocks the idols in Isaiah 45:20 declaring an idol cannot save! As a Westerner you may not realize that there are literally millions of souls who have been deceived by the lie that their idols can bestow benefits (as well as curses) and can save them. Are you regularly praying for the hidden people groups who are in bondage to the dominion of Satan (Acts 26:18). I like two sites to guide my intercession for these souls ensnared by idolatry - [Global Prayer Digest](#) and [Joshua Project Unreached People Group of the Day](#).

Gather yourselves and come; Draw near together, you fugitives of the nations; They have no knowledge,  
Who carry about their wooden idol, And pray to a god who cannot save.

**Deuteronomy 4:29 "But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul.**

**Cross-references:**

**But:** De 30:10 Lev 26:39-42 2Ch 15:4,15 Ne 1:9 Isa 55:6,7 Jer 3:12-14 Jer 29:12-14

**With all:** De 30:1-3 1Ki 8:47,48 2Ki 10:31 23:3 2Ch 15:12 31:21 Ps 119:2,10 Ps 119:58,145 Jer 3:10 Joe 2:12

### A BLESSED "BUT"!

**But** - Note this blessed [term of contrast](#)!!! This blessed contrast reminds us the wonderful "but God" in Ephesians 2:4-[note](#) where in the face of our spiritually dead condition, God, because of His rich mercy and great love, "made us alive together with Christ." (Ephesians 2:5-[note](#)). As Thompson says "Even in the predicament of exile God may be sought and found." (Ibid) To that we all say "Thank You Jesus!" as we all have those moments of "temporary exile" so to speak, wherein we forget God's goodness and go astray into sin, bowing down to and serving our "**idol du joir**" or "idol of choice" so to speak. And yet because of God's endless love and great mercy and kindness, we can still cry out to Him from the darkness of sin (cp 1John 1:9, Pr 28:13) and He picks us up and out of the miry clay and puts us on a rock...

He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay; and He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm. (Psalm 40:2)

**From there** - From where? From their worldwide dispersion.

**Seek the LORD** - Do you see God's great covenant mercy, His abundant lovingkindness? No man, Jew or Gentile, seeks for God (Ro 3:11, Ps 14:2), so in order for the dispersed Jews **in the latter days** to seek for Him, God Himself (His Spirit) must put that desire in their heart. Of course, they still have the responsibility to follow through and "seek for Him" -- this is a great mystery - God's sovereign provision, man's responsibility.

**Seek** ([01245](#)) ([baqash](#)) is a verb meaning to seek, to require; to try to obtain. "It is used to describe subjects seeking or requiring various things for various reasons: a stolen object (Ge 31:39); persons (Ge 37:15, 16); someone's life (Ex. 4:19; 24); evil against someone (1 Sa 25:26) or good (Neh. 2:10; Ps. 122:9). It denotes seeking someone's presence, especially the Lord's (1 Ki 10:24; Hos. 5:15) or His word (Amos 8:12). Prayer was a means of seeking the Lord's will (Dan. 9:3). In the passive use of the verb, something is sought for (Jer 50:20; Ezek 26:21) or is examined (Esther 2:23). (Baker)

**Block** adds that in this passage "to seek" (bqš) Yahweh does not mean to look for Him as if He were lost, but to seek Him out, to approach Him humbly with renewed devotion, and plead for return of His favor." (Ibid)

**With all your heart and all your soul** - This speaks of total commitment. This degree of commitment is repeatedly urged throughout Deuteronomy. If God asked that of them then, why would He ask less of us today, especially in light of the truth that we have the empowering Holy Spirit indwelling us? But just try accomplishing this in reliance on your natural strength, the [Old Man](#)! It seems to me that this description is of a heart and soul which has been touched by God's grace and mercy (see Zech 12:10 and circumcision of the heart in Dt 30:6).

**Concordia Self Study Bible on all your heart and all your soul** - The phrase is applied not only to how the Lord's people should seek him, but also to how they should fear (revere) him, live in obedience to him, love and serve him (Dt 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 13:3; 30:6), and, after forsaking him, renew their allegiance and commitment (Dt 26:16; 30:2, 10).

### WITH ALL ONE'S HEART AND SOUL: SEEK, LOVE, FEAR, SERVE, RETURN & OBEY/TURN

Deut 6:5 "And you shall **love** the LORD your God with **all your heart and with all your soul** and with all your might.

Deut 10:12 "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to **fear** the LORD your God, to **walk** in all His ways and **love** Him, and to **serve** the LORD your God **with all your heart and with all your**

soul,

Deut 11:18 "You shall therefore impress (Lxx says "cast into your heart") these words of mine on your heart and on your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontals on your forehead.

**Comment:** How better to place the Word of God on your heart than to memorize it! [Do you need some motivation to begin to discipline yourself to memorize God's Word?](#) See [Memorizing His Word](#) and [Memory Verses by Topic](#).

Deut 11:13 "And it shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to **love** the LORD your God and to **serve** Him with **all your heart and all your soul**,

Deut 13:3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you **love** the LORD your God with **all your heart and with all your soul**.

Deut 26:16; "This day the LORD your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances. You shall therefore **be careful to do** them with **all your heart and with all your soul**.

Deut 30:2 and you **return** to the LORD your God and **obey** Him with **all your heart and soul** according to all that I command you today, you and your sons,

Deut 30:10 if you obey the LORD your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you **turn** to the LORD your God **with all your heart and soul**.

Deut 30:6 "Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to **love** the LORD your God with **all your heart and with all your soul**, in order that you may live.

**Comment:** This is an OT allusion to the New Covenant (see Ro 2:28, 29 and Col 2:11 and topic - [Circumcision of the Heart](#)). Indeed the only way one can truly love the Lord with all one's heart and soul is by having a new power. The old nature cannot do this. Exactly how this was effecting in OT believers is not clear to me as they did not have the indwelling Spirit as we do. However it is still most reasonable to postulate that although they did not have Him indwelling them, He was still available as their source of supernatural power.

**Wiersbe** - He also warned them that disobedience would bring chastening. God forgives His people when they repent (Dt 4:29–31), but read Hebrews 12:25–29 before making plans to disobey God. He is a merciful God (Dt 4:31), but He is also a jealous God (Dt 4:24); He will not permit His children to sin successfully. (With the Word Bible Commentary)

**Deuteronomy 4:30** "When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days, you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice.

#### **Cross-references:**

**All these:** 1Ki 8:46-53 2Ch 6:36-39 Da 9:11-19

**Have come upon you:** Hebrew = "have found you" De 31:17 Ex 18:8

**In the latter days:** De 31:29 Ge 49:1 Nu 24:20 Jer 23:20 Da 10:14 Ho 3:5 Heb 1:2

**You will:** De 30:10 La 3:40 Ho 14:2,3 Joe 2:12,13 Ac 3:19 26:20

**Listen:** Isa 1:19 Jer 7:23 Zec 6:15 Heb 5:9

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## **IN THE LATTER DAYS OF ISRAEL: "HERE COMES TROUBLE!"**

**NOTE:** For a more detailed exposition of this passage, especially as it relates to **future prophecy for the nation of Israel** see [Deuteronomy 4:30 Commentary](#) (there is some repetition).

**When** - Note Moses does not say "if" but "**when**" -- Israel will be "**in distress**" and then he gives the time frame **in the latter days**. This is a key time phrase! Notice it is made more specific by the phrase "**in the latter days**" - so this is a prophecy that speaks of the "end times" prior to Messiah's return. So the "**when**" makes two things clear - Israel will suffer in the future but Israel will repent in the future!

**When you are in distress** (KJV, ESV = **in tribulation**) - This is the first mention of the future Great Tribulation.

**Henry Morris** writes "This prophecy, given by Moses as Israel prepared to enter the promised land, apparently looks into the distant future, 3500 years or more, to "**the latter days**" when Israel will be in the "**great tribulation**" (Revelation 7:14). At that "**time of trouble...thy people shall be delivered,**" (Daniel 12:1), and "**immediately after the tribulation of those days...He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other**" (Matthew 24:29,31)." (Defender's Study Bible)

**Distress** - The Hebrew word for **distress** is **tsar** (06862) (See study of related noun [tsarah](#)) In the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) the phrase "**in your affliction**" is found in the last section of the previous passage Dt 4:29. In the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) the word for **affliction** is the noun **thlipsis** which literally describes a pressing together, and figuratively refers to trouble that inflicts distress.

Thlipsis is the same Greek word used by Jesus to describe the **Great Tribulation** in Mt 24:21-[note](#) (*thlipsis megale*) where Jesus warned His Jewish audience "*For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.*" (See Daniel's seventieth week where the last half or 3.5 years represents the **Great Tribulation**). The question is "When is then?" When does the alarm go off marking the beginning of this never seen before and never to be seen after **Great Tribulation**? As usual, it pays to check the context, and in the preceding passages (Mt 24:16-20) Jesus clearly describes a situation demanding a sense of urgency.

So what is the sign that marks the beginning of this horrible time? In Mt 24:15 Jesus declared "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)" (Mt 24:15-[see in depth analysis and commentary](#)). Then Jesus calls for an urgent response upon seeing this sign because it was the beginning of the distress, the Great Tribulation, the "**time of Jacob's trouble**" (Jer 30:7-note), "**a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time**" (Da 12:1-note).

**Listen** - (shama)(08085) implies not just hearing, but hearing with attention and thus obeying so KJV translates it "obey."

**Listen to His voice** - **NET Note** renders it "obey Him" and explains that "this expression (listen to His voice) is an [idiom](#) meaning "**obey**," occurring in Dt 8:20; 9:23; 13:18; 21:18, 20; 26:14, 17; 27:10; 28:1-2, 15, 45, 62; 30:2, 8, 10, 20.

**You will return** - The NET Bible renders it "**NET** - if you return to the LORD your God and obey him."

**Return** (turn back) (07725)(**shub/sub**) is a common verb (over 1000x) meaning to turn, to return, to go back, to do again, to change, to withdraw, to bring back, to reestablish, to be returned, to bring back, to take, to restore, to recompense, to answer, to hinder.

The idea of **return** in this passage is to go back to a previous state of focusing on the true God, to be restored to fellowship with Him. This is the essence of repentance -- turning around from walking toward idols and walk toward God so to speak. This reminds one of Jesus charge against the church at Ephesus (**red** = commands)...

But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. **Remember** therefore from where you have fallen, and **repent** and **do** the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. (Rev 2:4-5-[note](#))

**Merrill** comments that "Repentance is obviously a matter of free will, but the biblical witness is unanimous that the impetus to repent is something God himself will plant within his people in order to encourage and enable them to return to him and to the land (cf. Lev 26:40-45; Deut 30:1-10; Jer 31:27-34; Ezek 36:22-31)." (Ibid)

**Constable** - Moses predicted a turning back to the Lord (v. 30). This has yet to take place during Israel's present dispersion, but it will happen (Zech. 12:10).

## **SUMMARY OF INTERPRETATION OF DEUTERONOMY 4:30**

In the **last days** prior to (and including) the return of Israel's Messiah, Israel will undergo a time of **distress** that Jesus referred to as the Great Tribulation in Matthew 24:21. He explained in Matthew 24:15 ([see excursus below](#)) a clear sign that would signal to the Jews the beginning of this time of distress, a time which would last for only 3.5 years (1260 days, 42 months or "time, times, and half a time"). Jeremiah 30:7 referred to this time period as the "**time of Jacob's trouble.**" Daniel 12:1 said "there will be a **time of distress** such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your (Daniel's) people (in context clearly referring to Israel), everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued." Paul spoke of this "rescue operation" in Romans 11:26-27 explaining that "all Israel will be saved (or "rescued" as in Daniel 12:1); just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER (Messiah) WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB. "AND THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN

I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS." At that time Zechariah 12:10 says "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me (Messiah) Whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born." So the reason these Jews in the latter days will mourn is because they have been given the Spirit of grace. No man seeks for God and they would not be broken if they had not received God's great grace! Nor would you or I dear fellow believer! Zechariah 13 goes on to explain that in **the latter days** "it will come about in all the land (Israel)," Declares the LORD, "That two parts in it will be cut off and perish; But the third will be left in it. 9 "And I will bring the third part through the fire, Refine them (referring to the Jewish remnant who will be saved) as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested (cp Deut 4:30 "a time of distress"). They will call on My name (Why? Because they have received a Spirit of grace and supplication), And I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' And they will say, 'The LORD is my God (This is clearly covenant language, and describes the remnant of 1/3 of the Jews in the latter days who will enter into the New Covenant by grace through faith) .'"

**Deuteronomy 4:31 "For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.**

**Cross-references:**

**LORD your God:** Ex 34:6,7 Nu 14:18 2Ch 30:9 Ne 1:5 9:31 Ps 86:5,15 116:5 Ps 145:8,9 Jon 4:2 Mic 7:18

**Not forget:** Lev 26:42,45 Ps 105:8 111:5,9 Jer 14:21 Lu 1:72

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## IN THE MIDST OF WRATH GOD REMEMBERS MERCY

**For - [term of explanation](#)**

**A compassionate God** (cp the "moral definition" of God in Exodus 34:6) - **Compassionate** is the adjective [rachum](#) (see in depth study of the noun [racham](#)). The picture of this great Hebrew word is that of the tender compassion of a mother toward her helpless infant. Indeed, in her own strength, Israel was helpless, and during the purging and refining time of the Great Tribulation, she will come to humbly acknowledge her helplessness and cry out to Jehovah (Zech 12:10)

The psalmist records this mercy filled description of the compassionate God...

But He, being **compassionate**, forgave their iniquity and did not destroy them;  
And often He restrained His anger  
And did not arouse all His wrath. (Psalm 73:38)

**He will not fail you** - The Hebrew verb here is rapah (07503) which means to become slack, to relax, to come weak, etc. The NET Note says that the Hebrew can be paraphrased "He will not drop you!" We occasionally may feel like we have lost our grip on God, but we can be sure that He never loses His grip on us! This reminds one of the precious picture in Deut 33:27 which says ""The eternal God is a dwelling place, And underneath are the everlasting arms." Spurgeon must have loved this passage as he preached 3 sermons on Deut 33:27. ([The Everlasting Arms](#), [Present Privilege and Future Favour](#), and [Underneath](#)). Quoting from this last sermon [Underneath](#)...

GOD surrounds His children on all sides—they dwell in Him. The passage before us shows that the Lord is above, for we read, "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rides upon the heaven to help you, and in His excellence on the sky." Assuredly He is around them, for "The eternal God is your refuge." And He is before them, for "He shall thrust out the enemy from before you; and shall say, Destroy them." Here according to the text, the Lord is also under His saints, for "Underneath are the everlasting arms." "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations," and by You we are surrounded everywhere, as the earth is by the atmosphere—

"Within Your circling power I stand.  
On every side I find Your hand.  
Awake, asleep, at home, abroad,  
I am surrounded still with God."

## THE UNCONDITIONAL ABRAHAMIC COVENANT



**Nor forget the covenant** (see study on [forget - shakach/shakah below](#)) - Israel may forget covenant but Yahweh will not. He is a covenant remembering and a covenant keeping God. In the midst of a discussion of judgment, Jehovah gives this sure hope...

Yet in spite of this (Lev 26:41-43), when they are in the land of their enemies (cp Northern 10 tribes in Assyria, Southern 2 tribes in Babylon), **I will not reject them**, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them (He is referring to the Abrahamic Covenant - see Lev 26:42); for (explains why He won't break it - Why? Because He is Jehovah which is His covenant Name signifying that He is a covenant keeping God!) I am the LORD their God. (Lev 26:44)

**That Jehovah will not forget Israel** is even more incredible in light of the description of Israel in Judges 3:7 (God had warned them this would happen - see Dt 8:14):

And the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God, and served the Baals and the Asheroth.

**Comment:** I believe we would call this **GRACE** - God giving them what they clearly don't deserve just as He did with every person who enters the New Covenant by grace through faith.

**The covenant with your fathers which He swore to them** - This is not the **conditional** Mosaic Covenant, the covenant of law which Israel promised to keep, but instead repeatedly broke. Instead this covenant refers to the unconditional **covenant** ([berith/beriyth](#)) which Yahweh **cut** ([karath](#)) with Abraham and then reaffirmed both to Isaac and then to Jacob ("with your fathers."). The New Covenant is in a very real sense an extension of the Abrahamic Covenant (**See [New Covenant in the Old Testament](#)**), which Abraham entered by faith in Genesis 15:6 and thus was reckoned as righteous, just as we were when we believed the Gospel and entered into the New Covenant (**See [Why the New is Better](#)**).

**With your fathers** - The covenant first cut by Jehovah with Abraham was reaffirmed with Isaac and Jacob - Read Ge. 15:18–21; 17:7–8; 26:3–5; 28:13–15; 35:12. God's faithfulness to keep His covenant should encourage those believers who struggle with the security of their salvation. If one is genuinely saved by faith, he or she cannot lose their salvation, not because they can "hold on" to it but because the faithful, covenant keeping God is holding on to them!

**Eugene Merrill** rightly reminds us that "Israel as the seed of Abraham constituted an indispensable element of the promise and for that reason could never fail to exist before God. For him to forget Israel would constitute a violation of the oath he swore to the fathers (Gen 15:12–21; 17:1–8). This, of course, is theologically inconceivable. But the conditional side of the Sinai covenant also must be stressed, for Israel's success in fulfilling its mandate as a kingdom of priests and holy nation is dependent on its covenant fidelity. The biblical resolution of the tension created by the unconditionality versus conditionality of the respective covenants lies always (as here) in the grace of God, who guarantees the wherewithal by which his people can meet the terms requisite to achieving his high and holy calling for them. ([Ibid](#))

**Jack Deere** writes that Jehovah "will not abandon His morally helpless children because He has the tender compassion of a mother and because He made an inviolable covenant with Abraham (**Ed: See [Covenant: Abrahamic vs Old vs New](#)**). (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

**MacArthur** - God mercifully, not because they deserve it, will fulfill the covenant He made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob with repentant Israel in the future. God will not forget the Word that He has given to Abraham and his seed (cf. Ro 11:25–27).

**Constable** - Yahweh is a holy judge who zealously yearns for the welfare of His chosen people (Dt 4:24), but if they turn from Him and He disciplines them He will have compassion on them (cf. Dt 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 26:16; 30:2, 6, 10). The promise that God would not fail or destroy His people or forget His covenant with them indicates the extent of His love for Israel (Ro. 11:1).

**Nelson Study Bible** - The future of God's people depends on God's love. The emphasis on God's mercy in this verse is a necessary balance to the emphasis that Moses placed on God's refining wrath (Dt 4:24). not forsake ... nor forget: The Lord was free to scatter His people. But after His discipline, He would regather them and show them His favor. God was and is faithful to His promises. The covenant of your fathers is God's solemn commitment to fulfill the promises He made to the patriarchs (Gen. 17:6–8; 22:16, 17; Ex. 3:15–17).

**ESV Study Bible** has an excellent note - In Deuteronomy, mercy is grounded in the Lord's faithfulness to the Abrahamic promises (Dt 9:27; 30:5, 20). God will maintain his covenant with Abraham, even if Israel forgets it (4:23; see Rom. 3:3–4). God also swore those promises under oath (Gen. 22:16; Heb. 6:13, 17–18). Cf. note on Deut. 1:8 [The promise of land was made first to Abraham (Gen. 12:7; 15:18–21), reiterated to Isaac (Gen. 26:4), and then to Jacob (Gen. 28:13; 35:12; cf. Deut. 6:10; 9:5; 29:13; 30:20; 34:4).

The promises to the three patriarchs included land for their offspring after them.]

## WORD STUDY SHAKACH/SHAKAH FORGET

**Shakach/shakah** (07911) means to **forget**, ignore, to cease to care, (*Niphal*) to be forgotten, (*Piel*) to cause to forget, (*Hiphil*) to make or cause to forget, (*Hithpael*) to be forgotten.

**Shakach/shakah** "indicates that something has been lost to memory, or a period of time has softened the memory of it....It is an especially important word with respect to God and His people: God never forgets them (Isa. 49:15); they are not to forget their God, His covenant, and His deeds (Deut. 4:9, 23, 31; 6:12; 8:11; 9:7; 25:19; 32:18). But God does not pass over, wink at, or forget the wickedness of His people (Lam. 5:20; Amos 8:7). Those who forget God wither away (Job 8:13), as well as all the nations who forget Him. The helpless must not be left alone (Ps. 10:12). God's Law must not be forgotten (Ps. 119:61, 83, 93). Wisdom's teachings are not to be forgotten (Prov. 3:1; 4:5)." ([Warren Baker - The Complete Word Study Dictionary: OT](#))

The first use is Jacob's mother telling him that he should stay away from Esau until "he forgets what" Jacob did to him (Ge 27:45). Here the nuance almost suggests also that Esau would "forgive and forget", but that is not the usual meaning of the verb. **Forget** means to not remember as shown when "The chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him." (Ge 40:23, cp similar teaching in Dt 9:7) The cupbearer may have forgotten Joseph but God did not! And that's a good lesson for all of us to remember when we are considering having a "pity party" because someone human forgot something they should have remembered. We need to remember that God never forgets us and that His eye is always on us whether we are good or bad (cp Pr 15:3). In Deut 4:9 (cp Dt 6:12) Moses gives Israel a principle to help them not forget God - "give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently." It is easy to forget the great movements of God in our life just as Israel forgot (and it cost them dearly). Could I suggest you get a journal and write down God's answers to prayers, His providential workings for good in your life and family, etc. Do it for your children as a "memorial" so that they begin to learn about the faithfulness of God and when they are older and gone from under your roof they will remember and not forget. As the commercial used to say, memorials to God's faithfulness in our lives can be "priceless!" In Dt 4:23 we see the instruction to Israel not to forget the covenant of Jehovah and make idols. Isn't this true in our life? If we don't frequently rehearse in our mind what it cost the Father to see His only Son to die in our place and the anguish Jesus bore because of His love for us even when we had not yet been born! Indeed, is this not part of the power of partaking frequently of the Lord's Supper. As Paul wrote...

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread;<sup>24</sup> and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this **in remembrance of Me.**" (What? In remembrance of Me!) In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, **in remembrance of Me.**" (What is repeated? For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death (Here we look back to the Cross) until He comes (Here we look forward to His return - and remembering both back and forward should serve as a motivation to love Him with all our heart and soul and not to forget what He has accomplished for us in time and eternity!). (1 Cor 11:23-26)

Deut 4:31 is a wonderful reminder that while we may forget God, He does not forget us!

In Deut 8:11 we see that forgetting God is integrally related to disobedience or "not keeping His commandments!" This is another reason we should always begin our day but not forgetting God, but instead by remembering God, reading about Him, meditating on His Word of Truth and speaking with Him. This daily exercise will have a radical impact on what transpires the rest of that day, "lest you forget the LORD your God!"

One of the great dangers in forgetting God is falling in love with the world or being more focused on our possessions than the One Who possesses us! (see Dt 25:19).

In Dt 32:18 we see **forgetfulness** of God is linked with **neglect** of God. Woe! Ponder these definitions of **neglect** - lack of attention and due care, the state of something that has been unused and neglected, willful lack of care and attention, the trait of neglecting responsibilities and lacking concern, failure to act with the prudence that a reasonable person would exercise under the same circumstances.

**RELATED RESOURCES:**

- [Quiet Time: 7 Minutes With God](#)
- [A Primer On Biblical Meditation](#)
- [Application: Meditate on the Bible](#)
- [Memorizing His Word](#)
- [Quiet Musing \(Meditate, Meditation\)](#)
- [Illumination of the Bible](#)
- [Inductive Bible Study: Observation](#)

The Lxx often translates shachach with the verb [epilanthanomai](#) from **epí** = in or upon - intensifies meaning of following verb + **lantháno** = lie hidden or concealed) conveys 2 basic nuances in the NT, to **forget** (not recall information concerning something) or to **neglect** (give little attention to, to omit by carelessness or design).

[Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary](#) The verb **Shakach/shakah** generally denotes not a physical inevitability among humans, but rather **a willful choice to ignore something that a person knows he is to do**. Exceptions to this are rarely found. An example would be Pr 31:5, as Lemuel encourages kings never to drink, lest they forget their decrees and pervert the rights of the afflicted. However, it is fine to give alcohol to a person who is perishing, in hopes that he might forget his misery (Pr 31:7). The dead are forgotten by the living (cf. Job 24:20). Bad experiences are forgotten when tempered by good ones (Pr 11:16). Likewise, the memory of good fortune disappears in the face of trauma (Gen. 41:30).

**Shakach/shakah** often designates incompetent officials who take advantage of the powerless, forgetting the rationale for their position of authority existing in the first place (cf. Ezek. 22:12). The chief priests forgetting to teach the Law to the people violated the rights of those oppressed by the more powerful (Hos. 4:6). The forgetfulness of the chief cupbearer in regard to Joseph was likely motivated by personal gain, a selective forgetfulness at best (Gen. 40:23).

**The most common usage of shākhach is in the sense of forgetting the Covenant with Yahweh** Such behavior was naturally a conscious choice, a morally evil one. Once this forgetting occurred, Yahweh then punished the people for violation of the Covenant (Jdg. 3:7). Indeed, this forgetting and punishing is the main focus of the Book of Judges and most of the prophetic Books, dominating the structure of these works. The absurdity of the circumstance is best expressed hyperbolically, akin to a woman forgetting her infant (Isa. 49:15) or a young woman who forgets her jewelry (Jer. 2:32).

Yet even more absurd is the notion that Yahweh forgets. The absurdity is expressed by the psalmist in the rhetorical question, "Has God forgotten to be gracious?" (Ps. 77:9). The irony of God's judgment against the chief priest of the northern kingdom of Israel at the time of Hosea is evident. Yahweh declared that just as the priest had forgotten the Law, so He in turn would forget the descendants of the priest (Hos. 4:6). This judgment was a microcosm of the destiny of the society, as this same judgment would be passed on all, in return for violation of the Covenant. Were the people to obey the Covenant, the antithesis would be the case, as "He will not forsake you, neither destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which he swore to them" (Deut. 4:31).

#### HOW ARE WE "FORGETFUL"?:

Dt 8:11: "Beware lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping (shamar - watchman) His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes (so by implication to "not forget" is to remember which practically is manifest as OBEDIENCE or to "keeping"),

Dt 8:10 seems to convey both the cause and the "antidote" for FORGETFULNESS: "When you have eaten and are satisfied, (THE SNARE) you shall bless the LORD (THE SOLUTION) your God for the good land which He has given you." (Thus David begins Ps 103:1,v2: with the command to "Bless the LORD" on one hand and on the other to "forget none of His benefits". Good advice!

Dt 8:14 then your heart becomes proud, and you forget the LORD (so abundance in Dt 8:13 can lead to pride which is the fertile soil of forgetfulness of the goodness of God);

#### BE CAREFUL WHEN YOU ARE "SATISFIED":

Dt 6:11-12 and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you shall eat and be satisfied, then watch yourself, lest you forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

#### CONSEQUENCES OF FORGETTING:

Dt 8:19 "if you ever forget the LORD your God, and (so remembering is manifest by our not doing the following things) go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you shall surely perish."

The horrible 300+/- yr period of Judges was a consequence of forgetting as stated in Judges 3:7

And the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God, and served the Baals and the Asheroth.

### 1 Sa 12:9

"But they forgot the LORD their God, so He sold them into the hand of Sisera...

One of the most searing indictments of Israel's forgetfulness and the consequences of forgetfulness is found in Hosea 4:6

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since **you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.**

Job 8:13 "So (papyrus w/o water, etc) are the paths of all who forget God, And the hope of the godless will perish,

Ge 40:23 the cupbearer forgot Joseph,

## **Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits Psalm 103:2**

**Shakach/shakah** ([Theological Wordbook of OT](#)) -The verb appears 102 times in the OT, mostly in the Qal (eighty-six times) but also in the Niphal (thirteen times) and once each in the Piel (Lam 2:6), Hiphil (Jer 23:27) and Hithpael (Eccl 8:10). It occurs most often in Psa (thirty-three times) followed by Jer (thirteen times) and Deut (eleven times). Interestingly though shakah means "to forget," the same root in Biblical Aramaic (in the Haphel stem) means almost the opposite, "to find," e.g. "I have found (shkh) a man of the captives of Judah" (Dan 2:25). One explanation for this phenomenon is that the root may originally have meant "he could not find," a meaning reflected perhaps in Jer 50:6, "they have gone from mountain to hill, they have 'forgotten'/they 'cannot find' their resting place" (Rabin).

The general meaning of shakah "to forget," without a specific theological nuance, is the exception for this verb. A few passages will, however, illustrate this basic meaning: Gen 27:45, "And (Esau) forgets what you (Jacob) have done unto him"; Gen 40:23, "The butler forgot Joseph"; Job 19:14, "My friends have forgotten me"; Job 39:15, 'Ostrich... leaves her eggs on the ground... forgetting that a foot may tread on them."

It is in God and man's reciprocal relationship, that the verb shakah finds its most steady use. About ten times it is used as an antonym for zakar "to remember" as in Deut 9:7, "Remember, never forget how you provoked Yahweh your God in the wilderness." Or, shakah may be used as an antonym for yada' "to know" especially in Hos 2:13 [H 15]; Hos 4:6; Hos 13:4-6 (Wolff. To forget God is not to know God.

Either God or man (Israel) may be the subject of shakah. Seventeen times God is the subject, nine of which are in the Psalter. Some of these may be statements of affirmation in God's faithfulness, "He forgets not/ignores not the cry of the humble" (Ps 9:12).

More often it appears in the form of a lament, "How long will you forget me?" (Ps 13:1); "Why have you forgotten me?" (Ps 42:9); "Why do you bide your face and forget our affliction?" (Pa 44:24); "Why do you forget us forever?" (Lam 5:20). Of the wicked, however, God has no amnesia (Ps 10:11). More often man is the subject of shakah, the one who forgets. Forgetting is not simply a psychological act of having a thought pass from one's consciousness, a temporary or permanent lapse of memory. This is indicated by the frequent identification of the verb with an action. To forget God is to ignore his commandments (Dt 8:11). To forget God is to follow other gods (Deut 8:19); to forget God is to stand in fear of harm and danger, to live fretfully and timidly (Isa 51:13). To forget God is to challenge him (Ps 106:13). The Bible would indicate that satiety is the major factor for forgetting God (Dt 8:12ff; Hos 13:6 for example).

In a few instances shakah cannot mean "to forget" but something like "to wither." Psalm 137:5 illustrates this, "If I forget you (shakah), O Jerusalem let my right hand 'wither' (shakah)" and not as KJV who must supply "Let my right hand forget (its cunning)." Cf. also Psa 31:12; Psa 59:11; Psa 77:9; Psa 102:4.

As the people worshiped strange gods, Jeremiah reminded Judah that "all thy lovers have forgotten thee; they seek thee not" (Je 30:14).

But God does not "forget" His people: Isa. 49:15

When destruction came, Judah complained: "Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever...?" (La 5:20).

Israel would often "forget" God's law (Hos 4:6) and God's name (Je 23:27).

## ALL OT USES OF SHAKACH

**Shakach** - 95 verses in OT - ever forget(1), forget(47), forgets(3), forgot(10), forgotten(39), who forget(1).

Genesis 27:45 until your brother's anger against you subsides and he forgets what you did to him. Then I will send and get you from there. Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?"

Genesis 40:23 Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

Genesis 41:30 and after them seven years of famine will come, and all the abundance will be forgotten in the land of Egypt, and the famine will ravage the land.

Deuteronomy 4:9 "Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons.

23 "So watch yourselves, that you do not forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything against which the LORD your God has commanded you.

31 "For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.

Deuteronomy 6:12 then watch yourself, that you do not forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

Deuteronomy 8:11 "Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today;

14 then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

19 "It shall come about if you ever forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you will surely perish.

Deuteronomy 9:7 "Remember, do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness; from the day that you left the land of Egypt until you arrived at this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD.

Deuteronomy 24:19 "When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow, in order that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

Deuteronomy 25:19 "Therefore it shall come about when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you must not forget.

Deuteronomy 26:13 "You shall say before the LORD your God, 'I have removed the sacred portion from my house, and also have given it to the Levite and the alien, the orphan and the widow, according to all Your commandments which You have commanded me; I have not transgressed or forgotten any of Your commandments.

Deuteronomy 31:21 "Then it shall come about, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify before them as a witness (for it shall not be forgotten from the lips of their descendants); for I know their intent which they are developing today, before I have brought them into the land which I swore."

Deuteronomy 32:18 "You neglected the Rock who begot you, And forgot the God who gave you birth.

Judges 3:7 The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth.

1 Samuel 1:11 She made a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head."

1 Samuel 12:9 "But they forgot the LORD their God, so He sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the army of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them.

2 Kings 17:38 "The covenant that I have made with you, you shall not forget, nor shall you fear other gods.

Job 8:13 "So are the paths of all who forget God; And the hope of the godless will perish,

Job 9:27 "Though I say, 'I will forget my complaint, I will leave off my sad countenance and be cheerful,'

Job 11:16 "For you would forget your trouble, As waters that have passed by, you would remember it.

Job 19:14 "My relatives have failed, And my intimate friends have forgotten me.

Job 24:20 "A mother will forget him; The worm feeds sweetly till he is no longer remembered. And wickedness will be broken like a tree.

Job 28:4 "He sinks a shaft far from habitation, Forgotten by the foot; They hang and swing to and fro far from men.  
Job 39:15 And she forgets that a foot may crush them, Or that a wild beast may trample them.

Psalms 9:12 For He who requires blood remembers them; He does not forget the cry of the afflicted.

18 For the needy will not always be forgotten, Nor the hope of the afflicted perish forever.

Psalms 10:11 He says to himself, "God has forgotten; He has hidden His face; He will never see it."

12 Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up Your hand. Do not forget the afflicted.

Psalms 13:1 For the choir director. A Psalm of David. How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?

Psalms 31:12 I am forgotten as a dead man, out of mind; I am like a broken vessel.

Psalms 42:9 I will say to God my rock, "Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?"

Psalms 44:17 All this has come upon us, but we have not forgotten You, And we have not dealt falsely with Your covenant.

20 If we had forgotten the name of our God Or extended our hands to a strange god,

24 Why do You hide Your face And forget our affliction and our oppression?

Psalms 45:10 Listen, O daughter, give attention and incline your ear: Forget your people and your father's house;

Psalms 50:22 "Now consider this, you who forget God, Or I will tear you in pieces, and there will be none to deliver.

Psalms 59:11 Do not slay them, or my people will forget; Scatter them by Your power, and bring them down, O Lord, our shield.

Psalms 74:19 Do not deliver the soul of Your turtledove to the wild beast; Do not forget the life of Your afflicted forever.

23 Do not forget the voice of Your adversaries, The uproar of those who rise against You which ascends continually.

Psalms 77:9 Has God forgotten to be gracious, Or has He in anger withdrawn His compassion? Selah.

Psalms 78:7 That they should put their confidence in God And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments,

11 They forgot His deeds And His miracles that He had shown them.

Psalms 102:4 My heart has been smitten like grass and has withered away, Indeed, I forget to eat my bread.

Psalms 103:2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits;

Psalms 106:13 They quickly forgot His works; They did not wait for His counsel,

21 They forgot God their Savior, Who had done great things in Egypt,

Psalms 119:16 I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word. Gimel.

61 The cords of the wicked have encircled me, But I have not forgotten Your law.

83 Though I have become like a wineskin in the smoke, I do not forget Your statutes.

93 I will never forget Your precepts, For by them You have revived me.

109 My life is continually in my hand, Yet I do not forget Your law.

139 My zeal has consumed me, Because my adversaries have forgotten Your words.

141 I am small and despised, Yet I do not forget Your precepts.

153 Look upon my affliction and rescue me, For I do not forget Your law.

176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant, For I do not forget Your commandments.

Psalms 137:5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem, May my right hand forget her skill.

Proverbs 2:17 That leaves the companion of her youth And forgets the covenant of her God;

Proverbs 3:1 My son, do not forget my teaching, But let your heart keep my commandments;

Proverbs 4:5 Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding! Do not forget nor turn away from the words of my mouth.

Proverbs 31:5 For they will drink and forget what is decreed, And pervert the rights of all the afflicted.

7 Let him drink and forget his poverty And remember his trouble no more.

Ecclesiastes 2:16 For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise man as with the fool, inasmuch as in the coming days all will be forgotten. And how the wise man and the fool alike die!

Ecclesiastes 8:10 So then, I have seen the wicked buried, those who used to go in and out from the holy place, and they are soon forgotten in the city where they did thus. This too is futility.

Ecclesiastes 9:5 For the living know they will die; but the dead do not know anything, nor have they any longer a reward, for their memory is forgotten.

Isaiah 17:10 For you have forgotten the God of your salvation And have not remembered the rock of your refuge. Therefore you plant delightful plants And set them with vine slips of a strange god.

Isaiah 23:15 Now in that day Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years like the days of one king. At the end of seventy years it will happen to Tyre as in the song of the harlot:

16 Take your harp, walk about the city, O forgotten harlot; Pluck the strings skillfully, sing many songs, That you may be remembered.

Isaiah 49:14 But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, And the Lord has forgotten me."

15 "Can a woman forget her nursing child And have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.

Isaiah 51:13 That you have forgotten the LORD your Maker, Who stretched out the heavens And laid the foundations of the earth, That you fear continually all day long because of the fury of the oppressor, As he makes ready to destroy? But where is the fury of the oppressor?

Isaiah 54:4 "Fear not, for you will not be put to shame; And do not feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced; But you will forget the shame of your youth, And the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more.

Isaiah 65:16 "Because he who is blessed in the earth Will be blessed by the God of truth; And he who swears in the earth Will swear by the God of truth; Because the former troubles are forgotten, And because they are hidden from My sight!

Jeremiah 2:32 "Can a virgin forget her ornaments, Or a bride her attire? Yet My people have forgotten Me Days without number.

Jeremiah 3:21 A voice is heard on the bare heights, The weeping and the supplications of the sons of Israel; Because they have perverted their way, They have forgotten the LORD their God.

Jeremiah 13:25 "This is your lot, the portion measured to you From Me," declares the LORD, "Because you have forgotten Me And trusted in falsehood.

Jeremiah 18:15 'For My people have forgotten Me, They burn incense to worthless gods And they have stumbled from their ways, From the ancient paths, To walk in bypaths, Not on a highway,

Jeremiah 20:11 But the LORD is with me like a dread champion; Therefore my persecutors will stumble and not prevail. They will be utterly ashamed, because they have failed, With an everlasting disgrace that will not be forgotten.

Jeremiah 23:27 who intend to make My people forget My name by their dreams which they relate to one another, just as their fathers forgot My name because of Baal?

40 "I will put an everlasting reproach on you and an everlasting humiliation which will not be forgotten."

Jeremiah 30:14 'All your lovers have forgotten you, They do not seek you; For I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, With the punishment of a cruel one, Because your iniquity is great And your sins are numerous.

Jeremiah 44:9 "Have you forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, the wickedness of the kings of Judah, and the wickedness of their wives, your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your wives, which they committed in the land of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?

Jeremiah 50:5 "They will ask for the way to Zion, turning their faces in its direction; they will come that they may join themselves to the LORD in an everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten.

6 "My people have become lost sheep; Their shepherds have led them astray. They have made them turn aside on the mountains; They have gone along from mountain to hill And have forgotten their resting place.

Lamentations 2:6 And He has violently treated His tabernacle like a garden booth; He has destroyed His appointed meeting place. The LORD has caused to be forgotten The appointed feast and sabbath in Zion, And He has despised king and priest In the indignation of His anger.

Lamentations 5:20 Why do You forget us forever? Why do You forsake us so long?

Ezekiel 22:12 "In you they have taken bribes to shed blood; you have taken interest and profits, and you have injured your neighbors for gain by oppression, and you have forgotten Me," declares the Lord GOD.

Ezekiel 23:35 "Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Because you have forgotten Me and cast Me behind your back, bear now the punishment of your lewdness and your harlotries.'"

Hosea 2:13 "I will punish her for the days of the Baals When she used to offer sacrifices to them And adorn herself with her earrings and jewelry, And follow her lovers, so that she forgot Me," declares the LORD.

Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

Hosea 8:14 For Israel has forgotten his Maker and built palaces; And Judah has multiplied fortified cities, But I will send a fire on its cities that it may consume its palatial dwellings.

Hosea 13:6 As they had their pasture, they became satisfied, And being satisfied, their heart became proud; Therefore they forgot Me.

Amos 8:7 The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob, "Indeed, I will never forget any of their deeds.

## HEBREW WORD STUDY

### IDOL - PESEL

**Idol** (06459)(**pesel** from **pasal** = to hew, cut as in Ex 34:1) is a noun that refers to something carved (graven) or cast image - normally carved from wood or chiseled from rock, but it can also be poured or cast (Isa40:19; 44:10). Isa40:19 describes the "casting" of an idol that is then plated or overlaid with gold.

The first use of **pesel** is Ex 20:4 (Lev 26:2, Dt 5:8) which is God's command "You shall not make for yourself an idol." In the **Septuagint (Lxx)** the Greek word used for **pesel** here in Ex 20:4 is **eidolon** (from **eidos** = that which is seen, what is visible,

figure, appearance) is primarily a phantom, form, image, shadow or likeness. Note that other uses of pesel are translated with a word found only in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#), the adjective gluptos which means a thing carved or a graven image. (Used in Lxx of Lev 26:1, Dt 4:16, 23, 25).

In Dt 4:23 the result of forgetting the Mosaic covenant is that they make a graven image. Dt 4:25 is a prophecy saying Israel would make idols. In Dt 27:15 God says the man who makes an idol is cursed!

The concentration of uses of **pesel** in Judges 17:1-13 ([note](#)) and Judges 18:1-33 ([note](#)) shows the defiling, abominable effect of forgetting the LORD their God (Judges 3:7).

The evil king Manesseh even became so depraved (sin will take you further than you ever dreamed you'd go beloved!) that "set the carved image of Asherah that he had made, in the house of which the LORD (the HOLY TEMPLE!)" (2Ki 21:7, 2Chr 33:7)

The most concentrate use of pesel is found in Isaiah (9x) where we see men will "be utterly put to shame who trust in idols," (Isaiah 42:17, 44:9) instead of the only Trustworthy God! Isa 44:17 says men will worship idols and vainly call on them for deliverance and salvation (Isa 45:20).

The last OT uses is instructive in Hab 2:18 ([note](#)) as it uses two words for idol and sets up a striking contrast between false gods and the one True and Living God.

18 "What profit is the **idol (pesel)** when its maker has carved it,  
Or an image, a teacher of falsehood?  
For its maker trusts in his own handiwork  
When he fashions speechless **idols (elil)**.

19 "Woe to him who says to a piece of wood, 'Awake!  
To a mute stone, 'Arise!  
And that is your teacher?  
Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver,  
And there is no breath at all inside it.

20 "**But** (Note the striking contrast with idols) the LORD is in His holy temple.  
Let all the earth be silent before Him."

**Baker** - The prophets often demonstrated the folly of these idols: they were profitable for nothing (Isa. 44:10; Hab. 2:18); they could easily be burned (Isa. 44:15); they had no breath (Jer. 10:14); and they could not save (Isa. 45:20). Idols could be made of metal (Judg. 17:3, 4; Isa. 40:19); wood (Isa. 40:20; 44:15, 17); or possibly stone (Hab. 2:18; cf. Hab. 2:19). ([Warren Baker - The Complete Word Study Dictionary: OT](#))

**Rooker** - The English word for idolatry comes via Greek [eidololatrea](#), which is based on a root that relates to that which strikes the eye, that is, the external appearance. The word thus focuses on the external image of an idol.

Webster's definition of an **idol** is interesting to ponder

[Middle English, from Old French idole, from Late Latin idolum, from Greek eidōlon image, idol; akin to Greek eidos form] **1**: a representation or symbol of an object of worship; broadly : a false god; a material object, esp a carved image, that is worshipped as a god. An image, form or representation, usually of a man or other animal, consecrated as an object of worship; a pagan deity. Idols are usually statues or images, carved out of wood or stone, or formed of metals, particularly silver or gold. **2a** : a likeness of something **2b** obsolete : PRETENDER, IMPOSTOR **3**: a form or appearance visible but without substance <an enchanted phantom, a lifeless idol —P. B. Shelley **4** : an object of extreme devotion; **Any thing on which we set our affections; that to which we indulge an excessive and sinful attachment.** **5** : a false conception : FALLACY

## DICTIONARY ARTICLES ON IDOL/IDOLATRY

- [Idol, Idolatry](#) - Baker Evangelical Dictionary
- [Idolatry](#) - Naves (Huge list)
- [Idolatry](#) - Torreys topic
- [Idolatry](#) - Holman
- [Idolatry](#) - Hastings NT
- [Idolatry](#) - Hastings Dictionary
- [Idolatry](#) - Fausset Bible Dictionary
- [Idolatry](#) - ISBE



- [Idolatry](#) - Encyclopedia Britannica
- [Idolatry](#) - Kittos Biblical Cyclopedia
- [Idolatry and Idols](#) - Jewish Encyclopedia

## OTHER OT WORDS FOR IDOL

- **Idols** ([0457](#)) [elil](#) = something worthless, vain, no value, thing of naught.
- **Idols** ([01544](#)) [gillul/gillulim](#) = means logs, blocks, shapeless things.

## OTHER OT WORDS FOR IDOLS:

- **selem** "image," which emphasizes its representational character (used seven times);
- **semel** of uncertain etymology (5x);
- **terapim**, apparently meaning a "thing of shame" used for Laban's household gods stolen by Rachel;
- **mippeleset** "thing of horror";
- **'awen** "sinful thing" BDB (KB suggests, a "thing of mystery" from a possible etymology, but BDB is better on the basis of the usage of 'awen).
- **ashera**, which are cult objects, perhaps sacred poles, but are more symbols of the goddess 'ashera rather than idols in the normal sense.

## NT WORDS RELATED TO IDOLATRY

- **Idols** ([1497](#)) [eidolon](#)
- **Idolatry** ([1495](#)) [eidololatreia](#)
- **Idolater** ([1496](#)) [eidololates](#)

## ALL OT USES OF PESEL

31 verses - NAS Usage: carved image(2), graven image(14), graven images(1), idol(10), idols(3), image(1).

Exodus 20:4 ¶ "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.

Leviticus 26:1 ¶ "You shall not make for yourselves idols, nor shall you set up for yourselves an image or a sacred pillar, nor shall you place a figured stone in your land to bow down to it; for I am the LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 4:16 so that you do not act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female,

23 "So watch yourselves, that you do not forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything against which the LORD your God has commanded you.

25 ¶ "When you become the father of children and children's children and have remained long in the land, and act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD your God so as to provoke Him to anger,

Deuteronomy 5:8 ¶ "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.

Deuteronomy 27:15 ¶ 'Cursed is the man who makes an idol or a molten image, an abomination to the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and sets it up in secret.' And all the people shall answer and say, 'Amen.'

Judges 17:3 He then returned the eleven hundred pieces of silver to his mother, and his mother said, "I wholly dedicate the silver from my hand to the LORD for my son to make a graven image and a molten image; now therefore, I will return them to you."

4 So when he returned the silver to his mother, his mother took two hundred pieces of silver and gave them to the silversmith who made them into a graven image and a molten image, and they were in the house of Micah.

Judges 18:14 ¶ Then the five men who went to spy out the country of Laish said to their kinsmen, "Do you know that there are in these houses an ephod and household idols and a graven image and a molten image? Now therefore, consider what you should do."

17 Now the five men who went to spy out the land went up and entered there, and took the graven image and the ephod and household idols and the molten image, while the priest stood by the entrance of the gate with the six hundred men armed with weapons of war.

18 When these went into Micah's house and took the graven image, the ephod and household idols and the molten image, the

priest said to them, "What are you doing?"

20 The priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod and household idols and the graven image and went among the people.

30 The sons of Dan set up for themselves the graven image; and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of the Danites until the day of the captivity of the land.

31 So they set up for themselves Micah's graven image which he had made, all the time that the house of God was at Shiloh.

2 Kings 21:7 Then he set the carved image of Asherah that he had made, in the house of which the LORD said to David and to his son Solomon, "In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever.

2 Chronicles 33:7 Then he put the carved image of the idol which he had made in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his son, "In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever;

Psalms 97:7 Let all those be ashamed who serve graven images, Who boast themselves of idols; Worship Him, all you gods.

Isaiah 40:19 As for the idol, a craftsman casts it, A goldsmith plates it with gold, And a silversmith fashions chains of silver.

20 He who is too impoverished for such an offering Selects a tree that does not rot; He seeks out for himself a skillful craftsman To prepare an idol that will not totter.

Isaiah 42:17 They will be turned back and be utterly put to shame, Who trust in idols, Who say to molten images, "You are our gods."

Isaiah 44:9 ¶ Those who fashion a graven image are all of them futile, and their precious things are of no profit; even their own witnesses fail to see or know, so that they will be put to shame.

10 Who has fashioned a god or cast an idol to no profit?

15 Then it becomes something for a man to burn, so he takes one of them and warms himself; he also makes a fire to bake bread. He also makes a god and worships it; he makes it a graven image and falls down before it.

17 But the rest of it he makes into a god, his graven image. He falls down before it and worships; he also prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god."

Isaiah 45:20 "Gather yourselves and come; Draw near together, you fugitives of the nations; They have no knowledge, Who carry about their wooden idol And pray to a god who cannot save.

Isaiah 48:5 Therefore I declared them to you long ago, Before they took place I proclaimed them to you, So that you would not say, 'My idol has done them, And my graven image and my molten image have commanded them.'

Jeremiah 10:14 Every man is stupid, devoid of knowledge; Every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols; For his molten images are deceitful, And there is no breath in them.

Jeremiah 51:17 All mankind is stupid, devoid of knowledge; Every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols, For his molten images are deceitful, And there is no breath in them.

Nahum 1:14 The LORD has issued a command concerning you: "Your name will no longer be perpetuated. I will cut off idol and image From the house of your gods. I will prepare your grave, For you are contemptible."

Habakkuk 2:18 "What profit is the idol when its maker has carved it, Or an image, a teacher of falsehood? For its maker trusts in his own handiwork When he fashions speechless idols.