

מוט MEANS “COLLAPSE,” NOT “BE SHAKEN”

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My thesis in this paper is that the definition of the Hebrew verb מוט (not to be confused with the verb מות) means “to collapse,” and not “to be shaken,” as it is primarily defined in all the lexicons. Chart A shows the definitions offered for the Qal, Niphal, Hithpoel, and Hiphil stems of מוט in several commonly used English lexicons or dictionaries. As can be seen by the entries highlighted in bold print, it is not a new idea to see the concept of collapsing or falling attached to this verb. All of these dictionaries, however, see the basic idea as “shake” and then adjust the meaning in particular passages as they feel the particular context requires. My argument is that the verb nowhere means “shake,” and everywhere means “collapse.” Therefore, I believe the basic definition ought to be modified.

The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament (TDOT) is of special interest here, in that one would expect this reference work to provide the most thorough discussion of the meaning and use of this verb. Surprisingly, in the Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament A. Baumann¹ strives hard to remain rooted to the basic sense of “totter, waver.” He begins by stating that the West Semitic term means “to totter, waver,” but also “to ponder (in the sense of to weigh),” and “to sink.” He points out that “the root *mwṭ* is attested only in the West Semitic languages” (152), and he lists attestation in several of these cognate languages.² He links the verb to the

¹ A. Baumann, “מוט,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 152–58. Citations to this source hereafter are in-text.

² The information provided in the lexicons regarding cognate verbs does not seem to support the traditional definition. BDB (Francis Brown, Edward Robinson, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament: With an Appendix containing the Biblical Aramaic* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979], s.v. מוט) lists an Assyrian cognate “*matu* is *dwindle, diminish, grow weak*,” which would seem to support something about decline rather than an idea of shaking or vibration. However, Baumann in TDOT states that “the root *mwṭ* is attested only in the West Semitic languages: in Jewish-Aramaic, Syriac, Aramaic, and Palmyrene *mwṭ* means ‘to totter, waver,’ in part also ‘to ponder (in the sense of to weigh),’ ‘to sink.’” Both TDOT and BDB list an Arabic cognate as “to deviate, retire,” “remove, retire ... repel, push, thrust”; that does not seem to support a sense of shaking or tottering. Both of these sources also list an Ethiopic verb meaning “to turn, bend.” But HALOT (Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Leiden: Brill, 1995], s.v. מוט) lists only cognates in Jewish, Syriac, and Palmyrene Aramaic, and then also in Arabic and Ethiopic, but suggests that these cognates stem from the verb *nwṭ* instead of *mwṭ*. Baumann tries to keep all of the similar words tied to the same root idea, but he acknowledges that such a connection does not seem to be within the recognition of the Jewish writers. In short, the cognate language verbs do not seem to support a

similar nouns מוט and מוֹטָה, both of which mean “carrying pole, yoke,” and tries to accommodate this relationship in his discussion of the definition. However, he also points out that the Hebrew noun מֹטָה “staff, branch” derives from the root נוטה, rather than the root מוט, and that these nouns may be connected to that other verb instead. Baumann notes that the verb מוט and the nouns מוט and מוֹטָה “nowhere occur in the same context” (152), which suggests that they may not be related. Based on my discussion below, I think the connection between these nouns and the verb מוט should be severed. Baumann, however, maintains this connection and offers the harmonization that “the common notion seems to be the deviation from an accustomed position, of the kind observed, e.g., in the beam of a scale or in the bending of a pole” (152). The only reason to mention “bending” or “deviation from an accustomed position” is that he wants to connect these words for staff or yoke to some kind of movement which he can then link to the traditional definition involving “shaking.” He then brings this supposed connection between bending poles and shaking to his discussion of the usage in the Bible by stating that “the basic meaning of mwṭ is probably ‘totter, waver,’ whereby the reference is always to something firm, such as the human body or bodily parts, or the earth or its foundations. ... The root is not suited for descriptions of fear in its external and internal manifestations. Rather, the root mwṭ suggests primarily the stability or firmness—threatened or secure—of a solid mass” (153). Baumann wants to distinguish the type of physical shaking denoted by mwṭ from the shaking that is associated with fear and trembling. I do not find this distinction convincing. The trembling that results from human fear is not something that can be distinguished from the shaking that is involved when a person is tottering on the edge of a fall: both are the vibration of a physical body. The verb is not used of wavering such as when a person’s voice is quivering or shaking, so he is correct that it is associated with the motion “of a solid mass,” but this connection does not necessitate any derivation from a bending pole. Baumann illustrates the usage of the verb and its connection to the movement of physical things by quickly summarizing much of the usage in Scripture. In all of this he continues with the sense of “totter, become unsteady,” a sense which I argue he has assumed and not really demonstrated. Thus Baumann: “A person’s steadiness is threatened especially when his feet slip or otherwise become unsteady” (153). The earth will “not totter.” He ties the use of the verb to earthquakes in Isaiah 24 and Psalm 46. In his discussion of Job 41 the Leviathan’s flesh “does not move.” In the Psalms the foundations of the earth “shake and totter.” Even in Isaiah 40–41 the idols must be nailed so they do not “totter” or “wobble.” He notes: “Since idols are such a shaky thing, how can one

sense of shaking or quaking, and the argument of this paper against a sense of shaking may well be able to be extended to the other later Jewish texts. That would mean there is little but tradition to support the sense of shaking or wobbling. Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Babli, Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* ([1903] Reprint, New York: the Judaica Press, 1992), 740 lists the standard definition for both the Hebrew and Aramaic verbs, but all of the examples cited therein can be better interpreted as “collapse.”

expect them to exhibit stability (kwn) or strength (hʒq) when they themselves need stabilizing?” (156). In regard to the psalms about the righteous man’s safety under God, without God he would “totter,” but Yahweh will never allow the righteous to “stagger.”

Chart B further illustrates the current situation by listing the translation used in various English versions in particular passages to be discussed below. Though the translations switch to a sense of collapse when they feel necessary, they all clearly begin with a sense of shaking or tottering. In order to contest these translations, let me first describe how this verb is used in the Bible, and then examine more carefully many of the actual passages where this verb occurs.

The verb מוט occurs 40 times in the Old Testament (in 3 or 4 cases there are suggestions to amend the text to another verb). There are 13 Qal uses, 25 Niphal, and once each in the Hiphil, and Hithpoel stems. The English translations of the Qal and Niphal are practically identical, though the uses in the Qal (4 as participles) seem to focus attention on the act of collapsing, while the 25 Niphal uses can be viewed as focusing attention more on the result: something like “I will not be collapsed.”¹ The verbs with which it occurs in parallel are: מוך “be low, be humbled,” מוש “give way,” מור “be changed,” מוג “melt,” the passive of לקח “being taken,” and רעע and פּרר in the Hithpoel “be smashed” and “burst.” It occurs in contrasting parallelism with the verbs סעד “support,” שׂוה (Psalm 16) “set up,” כּוּן (Niphal) “stand firm, be stable, be lasting,” יסד “found firmly,” בּהּ (forever), ישב “sit (forever),” and שכן “dwell, inhabit.” The following paragraphs describe the types of expressions found.

One common usage of this verb מוט is to signify the endurance of the earth or of mountains. An example is Psalm 93:1:²

*Indeed the world is established,
it shall not collapse.*

אַף־תִּכּוֹן תִּבְּלָה
בְּלִיתִמוֹט:

The traditional sense that the world will not “be moved” or “be shaken” fits fine here. But it must be observed that the sense of what is being said here is not a matter of vibration, but a matter of endurance. When one says that the world “will not be moved,” what one means is that the establishment by God will not be undone. The earth is so stable and permanent that it cannot even be rocked. But we are already using this sense of non-movement to indicate non-collapse, not something more proper to shaking, wavering, or reeling. Similarly in Psalm 104:5 God “set the earth (אָרֶץ) upon its foundations, [and] it shall not collapse forever and ever.” In contrast, in Psalm 82:5 due to the

¹ Baumann counts two apparently Niphal infinitives as Qal infinitives, as do some other lexicons.

² English translations are by the author unless otherwise noted.

disobedience of the lower אֱלֹהִים (gods), God observes that “they do not know, they do not understand, in darkness they walk about, all the foundations of the earth collapse.” In this passage it is not the case that the divine order is being threatened or simply shaken; it is being undone, it is collapsing. Psalm 96:10 and 1 Chronicles 16:30 contain phrases nearly identical to Psalm 93:1. The contrast stated in 1 Chronicles 16:30 is worth noting:

*Writhe/tremble before Him, all
the earth.
Indeed the world is established,
it cannot collapse.*

חִילוּ מִלְפָּנָיו כָּל־הָאָרֶץ
אֶרֶץ־תִּכּוֹן תִּבְלַל
בְּלִי־תַמוּט:

In the first line the poet exhorts the world to tremble and shake; obviously he is not asserting a contradiction in the second line, namely that the earth cannot shake. In Isaiah 54:10 we read:

*For the mountains may give way,
and the hills collapse,
but My devotion with you will not
give way,
and My covenant of shalom will
not collapse,
says your compassionate one,
YHWH.*

כִּי הָהָרִים יִמוּשׁוּ
וְהַגְּבָעוֹת תִּמוּטְנָה
וְחֶסְדִּי מֵאֲתָךְ לֹא־יִמוּשׁ
וּבְרִית שְׁלוֹמִי לֹא תִמוּט
אֲמַר מְרַחֵמְךָ יְהוָה:

Again, the emphasis is on endurance, not freedom from vibration or movement.

The verb occurs three times in Psalm 46. In verse 3 we read that:

*Therefore we will not fear
though the earth should change,
and though the mountains
collapse into the heart of the seas.*

עַל־כֵּן לֹא־נִירָא
בְּהִמְרֵי אָרֶץ
וּבְקוֹט הָרִים בְּלֵב יַמִּים:

It is true that in verse 4 the mountains are shaking under the pounding of the seas' waves, but that is not the issue in verse 3. In verse 3 the psalm states that believers in God need not fear even though the world itself collapses around them. Verse 4 shifts from discussing the possible end result, the collapse, to the period of terror leading up to that result, the fear and shaking under the pounding threat. This threat is then contrasted with the water under God's control that brings joy to God's city. Thus, in verse 6 we read that “God is in [the city's] midst, she [the city] will not collapse.” The city will be threatened from time to time; it will know fear and shaking; but it will not be defeated: its walls, its structure, its government, its society will not collapse. In verse 7 the contrast is made between the effect of human political raging, and God's rage:

*Nations roared: kingdoms
collapsed;
He [God] uttered with His voice:
the earth melted.*

הָמָו גּוֹיִם מָטוּ מִמְּלָכּוֹת
נָתַן יְקוּלָּו תְּמוּג אֶרֶץ:

Notice should also be given to Psalm 125:1, where “All those who are trusting in YHWH are like Mt. Zion, (which) will not collapse, forever it will sit.” It is not the case that Mt. Zion has never known an earthquake or shaking, but it will never collapse: it will endure and sit securely forever.

Psalm 125:1 also leads to the next major subject used with this verb, which is people. Psalm 125:1 effectively stated that “those who trust in YHWH” will not collapse. A large number of verses indicate that this will be the case for the “righteous.” In all these cases it is not that God’s followers will never be troubled and shaken, but that in spite of these attacks they will never collapse, they will never give way and be lost. Thus, we have Psalms 15:5, 21:8, 55:23, 62:3,7, 112:6, and Proverbs 10:30. In all these passages the sense is that the person of God will not fall and be destroyed; the focus is not on whether they might experience threats that may rock them. The following quotations are from the NIV with a correction indicated.

Psalm 15:5 ... who lends money to the poor without interest; who does not accept a bribe against the innocent. Whoever does these things will never be shaken/collapse.

Psalm 21:8 (Eng. 7) For the king trusts in the LORD; through the unfailing love of the Most High he will not be shaken/collapse.

Psalm 55:23 (Eng. 22) Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken/collapse.

Psalm 62:3 & 7 (Eng. 2 & 6) Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken/collapse. ...Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken/collapse.

Psalm 112:6 Surely the righteous will never be shaken/collapse; they will be remembered forever.

Proverbs 10:30 (ESV) The righteous will never be removed/collapse, but the wicked will not dwell in the land. (NIV “be uprooted”).

In Proverbs 12:3 we read that “a man shall not be established through evil, but the root [probably: progeny, or family line] of the righteous ones shall not collapse.” In a related sense we also find the statements both of the believer and of the wicked in Psalms 30:7 and 10:6 that they thought they would never collapse or cease to be prosperous, happy, and secure. In Psalm 13:5 the idea of complete destruction is evident:

Lest my enemy say, I have finished him, my adversaries rejoice because I collapse.

פְּנֵי־אֹיְבִי אֵיבִי יִכְלְתֵנוּ
צָרֵי אֶגְלוּ כִּי אָמוּט:

Another passage deserving comment is Proverbs 25:26:

A muddied spring and a polluted fountain is a righteous one collapsing before a wicked one.

מַעְיֵן גִּרְפָּשׁ וּמְקוֹר מְשֻׁחָת
צָדִיק מֵט לִפְנֵי־רָשָׁע:

It is not simply the idea that the righteous one is threatened and wavering under the pressure of the wicked that is so offensive; it is the fact that the opposite of what is right has occurred. The spring is full of mud/dirt; the fountain spews contamination instead of clean water; wickedness has triumphed and justice has failed, not merely wavered but collapsed.

Leviticus 25:35 and Proverbs 24:11 express somewhat similar ideas. The Israelite is exhorted to rescue those in the process of collapsing:¹

When your brother becomes low/poor and his hand collapses among you, then you shall take hold of him, (foreigner or resident), and he shall live among you.

וּכְיִימֹוֶךָ אֲחִיךָ
וּמָטָה יָדוֹ עִמָּךָ
וְהִחַזַּקְתָּ בּוֹ גֵר וְתוֹשָׁב
וְתִי עִמָּךָ:

Prov. 24:11:

Rescue those being taken to death, and hold back those collapsing to death/murder.

הַצֵּל לְמֹתִים לְמוֹת
וּמָטִים לְהִרְגָּ אִם־תִּחְשָׂוּךָ:

The concept of the righteous believer collapsing before the wicked is also expressed in a slightly different form. In six cases we have the word “foot” or “steps” used with the verb. Psalm 94:18 illustrates this well:

¹ In the Leviticus passage the idea of taking hold of the hand is attractive, but *yad* is feminine and the pronoun is masculine, and the following words “sojourner or resident” seem to be appositive to the pronoun. “Hand” may signify his power or ability here, thus “when he becomes humble and his ability to provide for himself collapses ...”

If I said, my foot is collapsing,
Your devotion, O YHWH, supports
me.

אִם־אָמַרְתִּי מָטָה רַגְלִי
חֲסִדְךָ יְהוָה יִסְעָדָנִי:

Similar passages are Psalms 38:17(E16), 66:9, and 121:3. Deuteronomy 32:35 expresses the opposite outcome, that God will take vengeance upon Edom and “their foot will collapse.” In all these cases it is clear that the foot is not just shaking or slightly slipping; the foot is ceasing to support the psalmist (or Edom) and is causing him to fall.

In fact, we should probably understand “foot” in these passages as “lower leg,” and thus find an expression very similar to the English phrase “my legs collapsed under me.” If the yad “hand” signified not only the apparatus below the wrist, but also the lower arm up to a point somewhere below the elbow, it may be that the regel “foot” also signified the limb above the ankle, up to somewhere below the knee. This would explain 1 Samuel 17:6 where Goliath wore bronze greaves (shin guards) upon his “feet” (though some understand a type of boot here).¹

A slightly different idea in regard to feet is present in Psalm 17:5. Here the psalmist is pleading his faithfulness to God's directions:²

My tracks have held firmly in
your wagon-tracks,
my steps have not collapsed.

תַּמְךָ אֲשִׁרִי בַמַּעֲגָלוֹתֶיךָ
בְּלִי־נַמוּטוֹ פְּעָמַי:

In other words, not only has the psalmist followed the correct path, but he has persevered and has not quit.

Further support for the argument that the verb means “collapse” and not simply “totter” comes from the two usages for idols in Isaiah 40:20 and 41:7. The idol is “set up” (כּוּן Hiphil) and it is nailed up so that it will not

¹ Matthew Henry says in connection with this verse that “he wore brass boots” (*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994]). Likewise John Wesley defines the greaves as “boots” rather than shin guards (*John Wesley's Explanatory Notes*, accessed November 7, 2019, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/wesleys-explanatory-notes/>).

² BHS reads this verb as the infinitive absolute of מָךְ with a plural subject (tracks), and the editors suggest a different clause structure for the words of verses 4-5: “My tracks held fast (to) the rugged paths, and in Your track-paths my steps did not collapse.” But is this indeed the verb מָךְ? We could read the verb בָּרַךְ/מָךְ/מָךְ with the meaning: “My track (singular?) descended [i.e. followed] in Your track-paths and my steps never gave out [collapsed]”; or with the alternate phrasing: “My track descended (in) the rugged paths, and in Your track-paths my steps never collapsed.” Cf. A.A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, New Century Bible, vol. 1 (Greenwood, SC: The Attic Press, 1972), 149; and Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I*, Anchor Bible, vol. 16 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 95–96.

“collapse.” As in Isaiah 46, the idols must be supported or held up by people, rather than these empty gods supporting the humans.

Psalm 140:11 contains a kethib/qere variation of this verb, with the Hiphil written, but the correction made to a Niphal. The Niphal is indeed to be preferred because there is no appropriate plural subject for a plural Hiphil verb. The Niphal verb in this case clearly contains the concept of something falling over; notice the other two verbs in this verse:¹

*May charcoals collapse upon
them,
in the fire may He cast them,
in watery pits may they not arise.*

יְמוּטוּ עֲלֵיהֶם גְּחָלִים
בְּאֵשׁ יִפְּלוּ
בְּמַהְמָרוֹת בְּלִיָּקוּמוֹ:

The one instance of the Hiphil usage of this verb also demonstrates the sense of something falling, and not just something moving. In Psalm 55:4 the psalmist is suffering from the onslaughts of foes:

*... from the voice of the enemy,
before the pressure of the wicked
one,
for they caused harm to collapse
upon me,
and in anger they bear a grudge
against me.*

מִקּוֹל אוֹיֵב
מִפְּנֵי עֲקַת רָשָׁע
כִּי־יִמְיֹטוּ עָלַי אֹנֶן
וּבְאַף יִשְׁטְמוּנִי:

What evidence is there for the standard lexicon definition of the verb מוט as “shake, reel, totter”? Three passages may be presented, but in my opinion each of these actually favors the sense “collapse” better. These three passages are Psalm 46:3, Psalm 60:4, and the Hithpolel usage in Isaiah 24:19. In these three cases there is a verb in either the same or the following verse that signifies “shaking.” The opportunity is thus presented to interpret the verb מוט as parallel to this verb of shaking. Psalm 46:3 was discussed above, where I argued that the proper parallel is “to be changed, transformed,” and that the concept of quaking is not yet in view in verse 3. In Psalm 60:4-5 we read:

¹ BHS suggests a different clause structure from that indicated by the accents of the Masoretic text: “May charcoals collapse upon them in the fire; may He throw them into miry pits (where) they shall never arise.” Also, follow the qere reading for the first verb.

*You caused the earth to quake,
 You split it open.
 Heal its breaks, for it is
 collapsing.
 You have made Your people
 experience harshness,
 You have made us drink wine
 [that causes] staggering.*

הִרְעִשְׁתָּהּ אֶרֶץ פְּצַמְתָּהּ
 רָפָה שְׁבָרֶיהָ כִּי־מָטָה:
 הִרְאִיתָהּ עִמּוֹן קָשָׁה
 הִשְׁקִיתָנוּ יַיִן תְּרַעְלָהּ:

If in interpreting the parallelism one assumes an implied verb in the noun “break” and associates the second verb of verse 4 “split” with this “break,” then one could associate the first verb “quake” with the final verb of verse 4, מוט. This would make מוט parallel to “quake.” But in fact the third verb of verse 4 is “heal.” The first half of verse 4 refers to the shaking and splitting effects of an earthquake. The second half of this verse refers to repairing the damage, because it is “broken” and “is collapsing.” Without God’s repair and support, the earth will crumble away and cease to exist. Verse 5 goes on to mention staggering, but the subject has changed to the human population. The earth suffers; the people suffer. Nothing in this passage forces the conclusion that מוט means “shake, quake.”

A similar situation applies to the one instance of the Hithpolel verb in Isaiah 24:19. In verse 19 three verbs are used. Each is prefaced by a Qal infinitive absolute form, followed by a Hithpolel form. These three verbs all signify the destruction of the earth. The following verse 20 shifts the image to that of shaking or tottering, but it also shifts the sentence structure: the first verb (after the infinitive) is Qal, rather than Hithpolel, the second verb is Hithpolel but is not preceded by a Qal infinitive absolute. Most importantly, both of the phrases in this half-verse are similes, rather than simple descriptions. Verse 20 continues to speak about a heavy burden, falling, and not arising:

*Smashed up is the earth,
 burst open is the earth,
 collapsed is the earth.
 Totters the earth like a drunk,
 it sways like a (shaky) night-hut.
 Heavy upon it is its transgression,
 and it fell, and will not arise
 again.*

רָעָה הִתְרַעְעָה הָאָרֶץ
 פֹּרַח הִתְפּוֹרְרָה אֶרֶץ
 מוֹט הִתְמוֹטְטָה אֶרֶץ:
 נֹוֶעַ תְּנוּעַ אֶרֶץ כַּשְׁפוֹר
 וְהִתְנוּדָה כַּמְלוּנָה
 וְכָבֵד עָלֶיהָ פִּשְׁעָה
 וְנָפְלָה וְלֹא־תִסָּרַף קוֹם:

Shall the verb מוט be associated with the first two verbs, and thus signify the destruction of the earth, or shall it be associated with the following two verbs,

and thus signify the shaking of the earth? In the context of the whole, the first choice is better. The conclusion of verse 20 signifies the destruction and collapse of the earth (“it has fallen and will not arise”). Verse 19 tells the result that the earth is destroyed. Verse 20 backs up and tells us the same story, this time dramatizing both the process (in the first three lines of verse 20) and result of the destruction (in the final line).¹

One final instance of the verb מוט seems to be of no help in determining the meaning of the verb. However, it may be that this improved understanding of the verb may aid in interpreting this passage. In Job 41 Leviathan is described as a terrifying creature that cannot be mastered by humans. This is most likely the picture of a terrifying crocodile. In verse 15 of this description we read:

מִפְּלֵי בָשָׂרוֹ דָּבְקוּ יְצִיּוֹק עֲלָיו בַּל־מָוֹט:

English translations of this verse differ. The first part of the verse has a plural noun and a plural verb. In the second part of the verse the verb מוט occurs in the singular. If we assume that the first noun signifies the droplet-shaped scales of the crocodile, then I suggest that the second verb refers to the word “flesh” in the sense of the crocodile's armored hide. One may translate thus:

*The scales of his hide cleave firm upon it,
it [his armored hide] does not collapse.*

Because of the consistency of meaning found in every usage in the Bible, and because of the clarity provided by selecting a different English word, I argue that the verb מוט is an intransitive verb meaning “collapse” and not “shake, stagger.” It is a verb signifying a change of condition, and not a verb of motion (such as go, walk, enter, exit, etc.) or vibration.

This improved understanding is particularly valuable when interpreting the many passages above that refer to God's disciples. If one uses the current definition referring to shaking, then the passages would seem to assert that the followers of God always stand firm and confident, never wavering or experiencing any doubt in the walk of discipleship. Such an understanding is highly idealized, and contrary to real experience. In real life the Christian experiences many instances of being threatened with danger, or with the possibility of being overwhelmed by events, or with difficult situations or questions that inspire significant confusion and doubt. With this improved understanding the import of these passages is not that the believer will not waver under such buffeting, but that he will not be

¹ It should be noted that the greater context of verses 17–23 contains other references to both shaking and falling.

overcome: he will not collapse, he will not succumb, he will not be defeated. The presence of God with the believer will carry him through the ordeal, and he will come out secure on the other side. This kind of assurance is not necessary if the people of God are the kind who never stagger under the attacks of the Tempter, but it is of great value for real humans who experience genuine spiritual difficulties. The improper understanding of this verb (“to quake”) provides an opportunity for the Tempter to attack the disciple when he reads that as a follower of God he should never waver in his faith or discipleship, and his personal experience is that he does not measure up to such a strong faith. This may also lead him to focus attention on the quality of his discipleship or the strength of his faith, and turn him away from relying on the power and promises of God. The proper understanding of this verb (“to collapse”) provides the assurance that even though disciples are assailed by the forces of the Tempter in many ways, the connection with the Savior will uphold them and carry them through whatever they have to face.

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CHART A: DEFINITION OF מוֹטַט IN COMMON LEXICONS

Lexicon	Qal 13x	Niphal 25x	Hithpolel 1x	Hiphil 1x
BDB ¹	totter, shake, slip	be shaken, be moved, be overthrown	be greatly shaken	dislodge, let fall, drop
KB-2 nd 2	totter	be caused to totter, be caused to reel, stagger	be tottering constantly	
KB-3 rd 3	sway	be made to stagger, be made to totter	reel; also, extra-Bib. re ship “tossed about”)	
Holladay ⁴	waver, reel, totter, stagger, flinch	be made to stagger, stumble, totter, be made to wobble	shake, reel	
Jastrow ⁵	incline, waver, decline ; give way , bend	be shaken, bent	be declining, sink	bend, shake

¹ Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

² Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden: Brill, 1953).

³ Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, M. E. J. Richardson, and J. J. Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vols. 1-4. (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

⁴ William Lee Holladay and Ludwig Köhler, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

⁵ Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Babli, Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* ([1903] Reprint, New York: The Judaica Press, 1992).

CHART A (Cont.): DEFINITION OF מוֹט IN COMMON LEXICONS

Lexicon	Qal 13x	Niphal 25x	Hithpolel 1x	Hiphil 1x
TDOT ¹	totter, waver			
Analytical H-C Lex. ²	totter, shake (re foot) slip, slide (re hand) be weak, fail	be moved, shaken		cause to fall or come down
Langenscheidt ³	waver, totter, quake	totter, stumble, fall , tremble	“same as Q & N”	cause to totter, cause to fall , precipitate
Alcalay, dictionary of modern Hebrew ⁴	totter, shake, quake, waver, collapse, fall, decline , bend, become poor, slip	waver, fall , totter, be shaken, be destroyed	collapse , be shaken, be moved, come down, decline ; also Polel: collapse , shake, move, overthrow , knock down	cast, throw down, humble oneself, bring disaster to/on

¹ G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003).

² Benjamin Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970).

³ Karl Feyerabend, *Langenscheidt's Pocket Hebrew Dictionary (English and Hebrew Edition)* (London: Methuen & Company, 1955).

⁴ Reuben Alcalay, *The Complete English-Hebrew Dictionary* (Tel Aviv: Massadah, 1959).

CHART B: ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF מוט IN SELECTED PASSAGES (Bold text indicates fall instead of shake)

Version	NIV	NASV	NKJV	NRSV	REB	NAB	JB
Deut. 32:35 Q pf	will slip	will slip	shall slip	shall slip	slips	lose (their footing)	make a false step
Psalms 13:5 (E4) N impf	fall	am shaken	am moved	am shaken	downfall	downfall	stumble
Psalms 15:5 N impf	be shaken	be shaken	be moved	be moved	unshaken	be disturbed	shake
Psalms 16:8 N impf	be shaken	be shaken	be moved	be moved	be shaken	be disturbed	shake
Psalms 17:5 N pf	slipped	slipped	slip	slipped	faltered	faltered	slip
Psalms 46:3,6,7 (E 3,5,6) Q inf, N impf, Q pf	quake, fall , fall	quake, be moved, tottered,	shake, be moved, were moved	tremble, be moved, totter,	quake, be overthrown , overturned	be shaken, be disturbed, totter	tottering, fall , tottering,
Psalms 55:4 (E3) Hi impf	bring down	bring down	bring down	bring upon	heap	bring down	Bring down
Psalms 60:4 (E2) Q ptc	quaking	totters	shaking	tottering	shattered	tottering	tottering
Psalms 82:5 N impf	are shaken	are shaken	are unstable	are shaken	giving way	are shaken	under-mining
Psalms 93:1 N impf	be moved	be moved	be moved	be moved	immovably	be moved	(un-) shakable
Psalms 94:18 Q ptc	is slipping	has slipped	slips	is slipping	slipping	slipping	slipping
Psalms 104:5 N impf	be moved	totter	be moved	be shaken	be moved	be moved	(un-) shakable
Psalms 125:1 N impf	be shaken	be moved	be moved	be moved	be shaken	immovable	(un-) shakable
Psalms 140:11 (E10) N impf	fall	fall	fall	fall	be rained	rain	rain down
Proverbs 12:3 N impf	be uprooted	be moved	be moved	be moved	be disturbed	be disturbed	shakes
Proverbs 24:11 Q ptc	staggering	staggering	stumbling	go staggering	hauled off	tottering	being dragged
Proverbs 25:26 Q ptc	gives way	gives way	falters	give way	gives way	gives way	trembling
Isa. 24:19 (Ht pf + Q inf. abs.)	shaken	shaken	shaken exceedingly	shaken	reels wildly	be convulsed	shiver and shake
Isa. 40:20, 41:7 N impf 2x	topple , topple	totter, totter	totter, totter	topple , be moved	secure, secure	be unsteady, steady	sturdy
Isa. 54:10 (2x) Q impf 2x	be removed	shake	be removed	be removed	shake, be shaken	be shaken	keep it steady
I Chron. 16:30 N impf	be moved	be moved	be moved	be moved	immovably	be moved	(un-) shakable

CHART B: ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF מוט IN SELECTED PASSAGES (Bold text indicates fall instead of shake)

Version	GWTN	TEV	CEV	ESV	CEB	HCSV
Deut. 32:35 Q pf	will slip	will fall	will slip	shall slip	slips up	will slip
Psalms 13:5 (E4) N impf	been shaken	downfall	am defeated	am shaken	downfall	am shaken
Psalms 15:5 N impf	be shaken	be secure	stand firm	be moved	stumble	be moved
Psalms 16:8 N impf	be moved	shake	(protect me from fear)	be shaken	stumble	be shaken
Psalms 17:5 N pf	slipped	strayed	stumbling	slipped	slipped	slipped
Psalms 46:3,6,7 (E 3,5,6) Q inf, N impf, Q pf	shake, fall, topple	shaken, be destroyed, shaken	shake, be shaken, fall	tremble, be moved, totter,	shake, crumble, crumble	quake, be toppled, topple
Psalms 55:4 (E3) Hi impf	Bring down	bring on	(treat terribly)	drop	bring disaster	bring disaster
Psalms 60:4 (E2) Q ptc	fall apart	fall apart	trembling	totters	shaking apart	shudders
Psalms 82:5 N impf	shake	has disappeared	tremble	are shaken	shake	are shaken
Psalms 93:1 N impf	be moved	be moved	be moved	be moved	be shaken	be shaken
Psalms 94:18 Q ptc	slipping	falling	slipping	slips	slipping	slipping
Psalms 104:5 N impf	shaken	be moved	be shaken	be moved	fall	be shaken
Psalms 125:1 N impf	shaken	be shaken	be shaken	be moved	shaken	be shaken
Psalms 140:11 (E10), N impf	fall	fall	dump	fall	fall	fall
Proverbs 12:3 N impf	be moved	stand firm	be secure	be moved	be disturbed	immovable
Proverbs 24:11 Q ptc	staggering	--	--	stumbling	staggering	stumbling
Proverbs 25:26 Q ptc	gives in	gives in	gives in	gives way	giving in	yields
Isa. 24:19 (Ht pf + Q inf. abs.)	stagger	split open	--	shaken	teetering, tottering	shaken
Isa. 40:20, 41:7 N impf 2x	fall over, won't move	fall, (fasten in place)	fall, fall over	move, be moved	move, move	fall over, fall over
Isa. 54:10 (2x) Q impf 2x	shake, change	(never end)	disappear, won't break	be removed	be shaken	shake, be shaken
I Chron. 16:30 N impf	be moved	be moved	be shaken	be moved	be shaken	be shaken

CHART C: FULL LIST OF USES OF THE VERB מוּט, WITH STEM AND ASPECT NOTES.

(Usages not cited in Chart B are marked with *.)

*Lev. 25:35 Q p	Psalm 104:5 N y
Deut. 32:35 Q y	*Psalm 112:6 N y
I Chron. 16:30 N y	*Psalm 121:3 N i
*Psalm 10:6 N y	Psalm 125:1 N y
Psalm 13:5 (E4) N y	Psalm 140:11 (E10) N y
Psalm 15:5 N y	*Proverbs 10:30 N y
Psalm 16:8 N y	Proverbs 12:3 N y
Psalm 17:5 N p	Proverbs 24:11 Q ptc
*Psalm 21:8 N y	Proverbs 25:26 Q ptc
*Psalm 30:7 N y	Isa. 24:19 (2x) Q i, Ht p
*Psalm 38:17 Q i	Isa. 40:20, 41:7 N y, N y
Psalm 46:3,6,7 (E 3,5,6) Q i, N y,	Isa. 54:10 (2x) Q y, Q y
Q p	*Job 41:15 N y
Psalm 55:4 (E3) Hi y	
Psalm 55:23 Q i	26 in chart B + 14 not in chart B
Psalm 60:4 (E3) Q ptc	=total 40
**Psalm 62:3,7 N y, N y	
*Psalm 66:9 N i!	Q 13 2p 3y 4ptc 4i
Psalm 82:5 N y	N 25 1p 22y 0ptc 2i
Psalm 93:1 N y	Hi 1y
Psalm 94:18 Q ptc	Ht 1p
*Psalm 96:10 N y	