

Deuteronomy 3:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

O Lord GOD, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might?

Analysis

Moses's prayer reveals profound theology and personal anguish. The address **אָדָנִי יְהוָה** (Adonai YHWH, 'Lord GOD') combines two divine titles—sovereign master and covenant name—expressing both reverence and intimacy. The phrase **אַתָּה הָחִילוֹת** (attah hachilot, 'You have begun') is significant—God initiated revealing His greatness to Moses, suggesting there's infinitely more to see. The word **גָּדוֹלָה** (godekha, 'Your greatness') emphasizes magnitude and magnificence, while **יָדָךְ הַחְזָקָה** (yadkha hachazaqah, 'Your mighty hand') refers to God's powerful interventions in history.

The rhetorical question **מַיְ-אֵל בְּשָׁמַיִם וְבָאָרֶץ** (mi-el bashamayim uva'aretz, 'what god in heaven and on earth') asserts absolute uniqueness—no deity compares to YHWH. The phrase **כְּמָעָשֶׂךְ וְכְתָבוֹתֶךְ** (kema'asekha vekhigvurotekha, 'like Your works and like Your mighty acts') references the Exodus, wilderness provision, and victories over Sihon and Og. Moses's use of **עַבְדָּךְ** (avdekha, 'Your servant') shows humility despite his unique relationship with God. This prayer demonstrates that even intimate knowledge of God only reveals how much more there is to know—divine revelation is always partial in this life.

Historical Context

This prayer occurs at a crucial moment—Israel stands east of the Jordan River after defeating the Amorite kings Sihon and Og (Deuteronomy 2-3). Moses, now 120 years old, desperately pleads to enter the Promised Land despite God's prohibition (due to his sin at Meribah, Numbers 20:12). The phrase 'You have begun to show' reflects Moses's 40 years of experiencing God's power—the ten plagues, Red Sea crossing, Sinai revelation, wilderness provision, and military victories. Yet Moses recognizes he's only glimpsed God's greatness. His plea is denied (Deuteronomy 3:26), but God graciously allows him to view Canaan from Mount Nebo before his death. This prayer demonstrates that even the greatest servants face disappointment, yet maintain faith in God's incomparability.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What does Moses's statement 'You have begun to show' reveal about the infinite nature of God's greatness?
2. How can we reconcile God's love for Moses with His refusal to grant this heartfelt prayer?
3. What do Moses's questions about God's uniqueness teach about comparative religion and apologetics?
4. How should we respond when God denies our earnest prayers, as He did with Moses?
5. What mighty works of God in your life have you 'begun' to see, suggesting there's more to come?

Interlinear Text

אַתָּה עָבֹד
את לְפָרָא וְתַבְחַל וְתַבְנֵה
O Lord GOD אֱתָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים
H136 H3069 H859 thou hast begun to shew
H2490 H7200 H853 thy servant
H5650 H853
אֵל מִי אֲשֶׁר פָּרַע הָרָב
thy greatness hand and thy mighty for what God
H1433 H3027 H2389 H834 H4310 H410
כִּמְעָשֶׁךְ יְהֹוָה יְמִינְךָ וְבָאָרֶץ
is there in heaven or in earth that can do according to thy works
H8064 H776 H834 H6213 H4639
כִּי־גָבֹורָתֶךָ
and according to thy might
H1369

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 15:11 (References God): Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

Psalms 71:19 (References God): Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee!

Deuteronomy 11:2 (References God): And know ye this day: for I speak not with your children which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the LORD your God, his greatness, his mighty hand, and his stretched out arm,

Psalms 86:8 (References God): Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto thy works.

2 Samuel 7:22 (References God): Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

Isaiah 40:25 (Parallel theme): To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.

Psalms 145:6 (Parallel theme): And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness.

Psalms 35:10 (References Lord): All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?

Psalms 89:6 (References Lord): For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD?

Psalms 89:8 (References God): O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee?

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