

Jeremiah 23:35

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thus shall ye say every one to his neighbour, and every one to his brother, What hath the LORD answered? and, What hath the LORD spoken?

Analysis

Thus shall ye say every one to his neighbour, and every one to his brother, What hath the LORD answered? and, What hath the LORD spoken? (פָה) (תֹאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל-רֵעֵהוּ וְאִישׁ אֶל-אָחִיו מַה-עָשָׂה יְהוָה וְמַה-דִּבֶּר יְהוָה el-achiv meh-anah YHWH umah-dibber YHWH). God provides alternative language: instead of asking for the **מִשְׁא** (massa, 'burden'), ask **What has the LORD answered?** (מַה-עָשָׂה יְהוָה) and **What has the LORD spoken?** (מַה-דִּבֶּר יְהוָה). The verbs **עָשָׂה** (anah, 'answer') and **דִּבֶּר** (dibber, 'speak') restore proper orientation: God as active speaker, humans as recipients.

The linguistic shift is theologically significant. The old terminology made humans subjects ('What is God's burden for us?'), implying entitlement to divine revelation. The new phrasing makes God the subject ('What has God spoken?'), emphasizing divine initiative and human receptivity. This guards against presumptuous demanding of oracles. Similarly, prayer shouldn't demand that God speak but humbly ask if He has spoken. The reformulated questions restore proper Creator-creature dynamics, where revelation is gift, not right.

Historical Context

This verse provides corrective liturgy—teaching God's people how to speak reverently about divine communication. Ancient Israelite religion was deeply verbal, with set formulas for approaching sacred realities. The prescribed

language ('What has the LORD answered/spoken?') modeled humble inquiry rather than presumptuous demand. This linguistic discipline aimed to reform corrupted theological culture through rehabilitated speech patterns.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does your language about God reveal presumption versus humility in seeking His will?
2. What difference exists between demanding God speak and asking if He has spoken?
3. How might reforming your God-language reform your actual relationship with Him?

Interlinear Text

אָל כֵּן תֹּאמֶר וְאֵלֶּה רְעֵב הַזֶּה וְאֵלֶּה עַל מַה מְהַלֵּךְ וְאֵלֶּה בְּרַכְתָּךְ וְאֵלֶּה

H3541 **Thus shall ye say** and every one H5921 **to his neighbour** and every one H413
H559 H376 H7453 H376

אֶחָד מִתְּמַמָּה שָׁנְתָה יְהִיָּה וְמִתְּמַמָּה שָׁנְתָה בְּרַכְתָּךְ

to his brother H4100 answered What hath the LORD H4100 spoken H1696
H251 H6030 H3068

יְהִיָּה:

What hath the LORD

H3068