

Jeremiah 23:37

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thus shalt thou say to the prophet, What hath the LORD answered thee? and, What hath the LORD spoken?

Analysis

Thus shalt thou say to the prophet, What hath the LORD answered thee? and, What hath the LORD spoken? (כֹּה תֹאמַר אֶל־הַנָּבִיא מִה־עַנָּךְ יְהוָה וּמִה־דִבֶּר יְהוָה, koh tomar el-hannavi meh-anakh YHWH umah-dibber YHWH). This verse repeats verse 35's corrective language but applies it specifically to questioning prophets (אֶל־הַנָּבִיא, el-hannavi, 'to the prophet'). The repetition emphasizes instruction: when consulting prophets, use this respectful formula. The verbs remain עָנָה (anah, 'answer') and דִּבֶּר (dibber, 'speak'), maintaining God as active subject.

The pedagogical repetition drills proper theological language into communal memory. Like children learning manners through repeated correction, Israel must unlearn corrupted patterns and relearn reverent speech. The specific application to prophets addresses the professional class most responsible for linguistic degradation. By forcing prophets to respond to 'What has the LORD answered you?' rather than 'What is the burden?', the formula requires prophets to take personal responsibility—God answered you specifically, not some generic oracle. This accountability mechanism combats false prophecy's vagueness.

Historical Context

This instructional repetition suggests catechetical intent—teaching Israel proper liturgical/theological language through memorization. Ancient oral cultures relied on repetition for retention. The verse's pedagogical structure indicates Jeremiah was not merely condemning but reforming, providing alternative frameworks for

approaching divine revelation. The specific mention of questioning prophets addresses the crisis of prophetic authority plaguing Jeremiah's era.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How do you test those who claim to speak for God, demanding personal accountability for their messages?
2. What liturgical or theological language needs reforming in your church to restore reverence?
3. How might repetitive practice of right speech patterns reform your theological imagination?

Interlinear Text

כָּה	תֹּאמַר	אֶל	הַנָּבִיא	מָה	עָנָה
H3541	Thus shalt thou say	H413	to the prophet	H4100	answered
	H559		H5030		H6030
יְהוָה:	וַיֹּמַר	דִּבֶּר	יְהוָה:		
What hath the LORD	H4100	spoken	What hath the LORD		
H3068		H1696	H3068		