

Numbers 11:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD said unto Moses, Is the LORD'S hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.

Analysis

The LORD said unto Moses, Is the LORD's hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.¹ God challenges Moses' doubt about providing meat for Israel. The rhetorical question 'Is the LORD's hand waxed short?' rebukes questioning God's power. The 'hand' represents God's power to accomplish His will. 'Waxed short' suggests insufficient strength—absurd regarding the Almighty. Moses had asked how God could feed 600,000 men with meat (Numbers 11:21-22), showing momentary unbelief. God's response asserts His unlimited capability. The promise 'thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass' declares certainty—God's word always accomplishes its purpose. This teaches that God's power isn't limited by circumstances that appear impossible. We must trust God's promises despite visible obstacles. Isaiah 50:2 and 59:1 echo this theme.

Historical Context

Moses' doubt came after God promised meat for a month (Numbers 11:18-20). The logistics seemed impossible—how could 600,000 men plus families have meat daily for thirty days? Moses calculated that slaughtering all their flocks and catching all the sea's fish wouldn't suffice (Numbers 11:22). This rare moment of Moses doubting God's provision contrasts with his usual faith. God's response came by sending quail in supernatural abundance (Numbers 11:31-32)—the people gathered vast quantities. The incident demonstrates God's power over nature to

fulfill His word. The plague that followed (Numbers 11:33) judged Israel's greedy consumption, showing that receiving what we demand isn't always blessing. The phrase 'Is the LORD's hand waxed short?' became proverbial, appearing when Israel again questioned God's provision (Isaiah 50:2; 59:1).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What does God's challenge to Moses about His 'hand waxing short' teach about limiting God based on visible circumstances?
2. How can we grow in trusting God's promises when fulfillment seems logically impossible?

Interlinear Text

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|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| יִ. אָמַר | יְהִי הָאָלָמָן | מֵשֶׁה | תַּחַזֵּךְ | רַקֵּצָה |
| said | And the LORD | H413 | unto Moses | hand |
| H559 | H3068 | | H4872 | H3027 |
| | | | | And the LORD |
| | | | | waxed short |
| | | | | H7114 |
| תְּרַא הַשְׁתִּית | תִּקְרַב | לֹאמֶד | לֹא: | |
| thou shall see | shall come to pass | now whether my word | H518 | H3808 |
| H6258 | H7200 | H7136 | | |
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Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 59:1 (References Lord): Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:

Isaiah 50:2 (Parallel theme): Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because there is no water, and dieth for thirst.

Ezekiel 12:25 (Word): For I am the LORD: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord GOD.

Numbers 23:19 (Parallel theme): God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

Genesis 18:14 (References Lord): Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

Luke 1:37 (Parallel theme): For with God nothing shall be impossible.

Ezekiel 24:14 (References Lord): I the LORD have spoken it: it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent; according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith the Lord GOD.

Matthew 19:26 (Parallel theme): But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

Matthew 24:35 (Word): Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

Micah 2:7 (Word): O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the LORD straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?