

Jeremiah 29:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

Analysis

This verse follows God's promise of restoration in verse 11 and specifies the means by which exiles will experience His good purposes: prayer and divine response. 'Then shall ye call upon me' uses qara (קָרָא), meaning to call out, proclaim, or cry unto—indicating earnest, vocal prayer. 'Ye shall go and pray unto me' employs palal (לִלְאָה), the standard Hebrew term for intercessory prayer, suggesting persistent, deliberate seeking of God. The promise 'I will hearken unto you' uses shama (שָׁמַע), meaning to hear with the intent to respond and act—not merely auditory reception but attentive, favorable response. This divine commitment to answer prayer is conditioned on the exiles' genuine seeking described in verse 13. The structure reveals a reciprocal covenant relationship: God's people call, pray, and seek; God hears, responds, and reveals Himself. This passage anticipates Jesus' teaching on prayer (Matthew 7:7-8, John 15:7) and affirms that God invites His people into intimate communication. The New Testament reveals Christ as the mediator who ensures our prayers are heard (Hebrews 7:25, 1 John 5:14-15).

Historical Context

This promise was delivered to Judean exiles in Babylon circa 597 BC, following Nebuchadnezzar's first deportation. The exiles faced profound theological and practical challenges: How could they pray to Yahweh outside the promised land and without the temple? Did distance from Jerusalem mean distance from God's presence? Jeremiah's letter answered emphatically: God was accessible in Babylon, would hear their prayers, and planned restoration after seventy years.

This teaching represented revolutionary theology for ancient Israelites accustomed to localized deity worship. The exile forced recognition that Yahweh's presence wasn't limited to Jerusalem or the temple—He was God of heaven and earth, accessible anywhere. Historical evidence from the exile period shows Jewish communities in Babylon maintained religious identity through prayer, Sabbath observance, and Scripture study, practices that became foundational to Judaism. Ezekiel's contemporary ministry to exiles reinforced that God's presence accompanied them (Ezekiel 1-3). Daniel's prayer life in Babylon exemplified this promise's fulfillment (Daniel 6:10, 9:3-19). The return under Cyrus's decree (538 BC) vindicated God's promise to hear and restore.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does this promise that God hears prayer in exile challenge any belief that God is distant or uninterested in our circumstances?
2. What does the combination of 'call,' 'pray,' and 'seek' teach about the nature of genuine prayer versus casual religious routine?

Interlinear Text

וְקַרְאָתָּם	אֶתְּנִי	וְלָכַתֶּם	וְתַפְלִלַתְּנִי	אַל	וְהַתְפִלְלָתְּנִי
Then shall ye call	H853	upon me and ye shall go	H1980	and pray	H413
H7121				H6419	
unto me and I will hearken	H8085	אֲלֵיכֶם:	H413		

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 33:3 (Parallel theme): Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.

Psalms 50:15 (Parallel theme): And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

Psalms 145:19 (Parallel theme): He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.

Psalms 10:17 (Parallel theme): LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear:

Isaiah 65:24 (Parallel theme): And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

Zechariah 13:9 (Parallel theme): And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.

Jeremiah 31:9 (Parallel theme): They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.

Isaiah 30:19 (Parallel theme): For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee.

Ezekiel 36:37 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock.