

Lamentations 3:56

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou hast heard my voice: hide not thine ear at my breathing,
at my cry.

Analysis

God's response asserted: "**Thou hast heard my voice: hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry.**" The Hebrew koli shamata al-talem aznekha lervacha leshavati (קָוְלִי שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶל-פָּעֵלִים אֲזַנְבָּכְךָ לְבָסָתִי לְשָׁעָתִי) begins with confident assertion: koli shamata (קָוְלִי שָׁמַעְתִּי, "my voice you have heard"). The perfect tense indicates completed action—God has indeed heard.

The plea continues: "hide not thine ear" (al-talem aznekha, אֶל-פָּעֵלִים אֲזַנְבָּכְךָ). Alam (פָּעֵלִים) means to hide, conceal, or close. The prayer asks that God not close His ear to "my breathing" (lervachati, לְבָסָתִי, "my relief, my breathing") and "my cry" (leshavati, לְשָׁעָתִי, "my cry for help"). The pairing of "breathing" and "cry" captures both whispered gasps and loud shouts—the full range of desperate prayer.

Theologically, this verse moves from past deliverance ("you have heard") to present/future petition ("don't hide your ear"). It demonstrates that past experience of God's faithfulness grounds ongoing appeals for continued help. Believers aren't presumptuous in repeatedly crying to God because He has proven faithful before. Hebrews 4:16 encourages: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Historical Context

The confident assertion "you have heard my voice" reflects Jeremiah's rescue from the cistern (Jeremiah 38:10-13). Ebed-melech intervened at precisely the right

moment, demonstrating divine providence. Jeremiah could testify from experience that God hears prayers even from pits.

The plea not to hide His ear suggests awareness that God sometimes does withhold hearing as judgment (Isaiah 1:15, 59:2, Jeremiah 11:11, 14:12, Lamentations 3:8, 44). The speaker appeals that though past sin warranted such treatment, God's character inclines toward mercy. Psalm 102:1-2 makes similar appeal: "Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee. Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me."

The terms "breathing" (revachah) and "cry" (shavah) encompass all prayer—from sighs too deep for words (Romans 8:26) to loud cries of anguish. Ancient Israelite prayer wasn't merely quiet meditation but often involved physical expression—loud cries, tears, outstretched hands, prostration. Hannah's silent prayer was so unusual that Eli thought she was drunk (1 Samuel 1:12-14). The exile taught Israel to cry out desperately, which prepared them to appreciate God's listening grace.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does past experience of God hearing our prayers (verse 55) give us confidence to cry out again in new troubles (verse 56)?
2. What does the pairing of 'breathing' and 'cry' teach about the range of valid prayer—from whispered sighs to loud shouts?
3. In what ways does Christ's intercession (Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25) assure us that God's ear is always open to believers?

4. How should we understand passages about God hiding His ear (in judgment) alongside promises that He always hears His people's prayers?

Interlinear Text

לֹׁא	שָׁמַע	עַתָּה	אֵל	תַּעֲלִם	אָזְנָךְ	לִבְכּוּתִתְ
my voice	Thou hast heard		H408	hide	not thine ear	at my breathing
H6963	H8085			H5956	H241	H7309
לִשְׁוֹעָתִי						
at my cry						
H7775						

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 55:1 (Parallel theme): Give ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication.

Job 34:28 (Parallel theme): So that they cause the cry of the poor to come unto him, and he heareth the cry of the afflicted.

Isaiah 38:5 (Parallel theme): Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.

Psalms 34:6 (Parallel theme): This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.

Romans 8:26 (Parallel theme): Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.