

# Psalms 10:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Why standest thou afar off, O LORD? why hidest thou thyself  
in times of trouble?

## Analysis

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**Why standest thou afar off, O LORD? why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?** Psalm 10 continues the acrostic pattern begun in Psalm 9, suggesting they originally formed one composition. However, the tone shifts dramatically from celebration to complaint. David now questions why God seems absent precisely when His presence is most needed.

"Why standest thou afar off" (lamah Yahweh ta'amod berachok, לָמָּה יְהוָה תַּעֲמֹד בְּרָחוֹק) employs the interrogative lamah (why?) to express perplexity and anguish. Amad (to stand) suggests God standing at a distance, uninvolved, observing from afar rather than intervening. Berachok (at a distance, far off) intensifies the sense of divine remoteness. The question is not philosophical but existential—David needs God's help but perceives Him as distant.

"Why hidest thou thyself" (ta'lim, תַּעֲלִים) uses alam, meaning to hide, conceal, or veil oneself. God's hiddenness is a recurring theme in lament psalms (13:1, 22:1, 27:9, 44:24, 69:17, 88:14). This is not atheistic denial of God's existence but anguished protest at His perceived inaction. The righteous sufferer knows God is there but cannot perceive His presence or activity.

"In times of trouble" (le'ittot batzarah, לְעֵתוֹת בַּצָּרָה) repeats the phrase from 9:9. There, God was declared a refuge in times of trouble; here, He seems to hide in those very times. This creates theological tension: the doctrine declares God's nearness; experience suggests His absence. Rather than suppressing this tension,

David brings it directly to God in prayer. Authentic faith includes honest questioning.

The verse models faithful lament—bringing doubts, fears, and complaints to God rather than away from Him. The question "why?" presupposes relationship and accountability. David interrogates God precisely because he believes God is present, powerful, and good, even though circumstances suggest otherwise.

## Historical Context

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The experience of divine hiddenness troubled Israel throughout its history. Job felt God had hidden from him (Job 13:24, 23:8-9). Isaiah lamented: "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself" (Isaiah 45:15). The exile intensified this experience—where was God when Jerusalem fell, the temple burned, and the people were deported?

Yet Scripture also explains God's hiddenness. Sometimes God hides His face because of sin (Isaiah 59:2, Micah 3:4). Other times, hiddenness is a test of faith (Deuteronomy 31:17-18). Occasionally, God appears to hide to draw His people into deeper seeking (Song of Solomon 5:6). The tension is that God promises never to forsake His people (Deuteronomy 31:6, Hebrews 13:5) yet sometimes seems conspicuously absent.

The lament psalm tradition gave Israel permission to voice these perplexities directly to God. Rather than demanding stoic acceptance or suppression of doubts, the Psalms model bringing our hardest questions into God's presence. The very act of questioning God in prayer demonstrates faith—we question the One we believe is there and is good, even when we cannot perceive Him.

## Related Passages

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**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## **Psalm 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

### **Study Questions**

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1. What is the difference between questioning God (as David does here) and doubting God's existence or goodness?
2. How can believers hold together the doctrine of God's nearness with the experience of His apparent absence?
3. Why might God 'hide Himself' during times of trouble, and what purposes might this serve?
4. How does bringing our 'why' questions directly to God in prayer function as an act of faith?

### **Interlinear Text**

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לִמָּה	! הָיָה	תַּעֲמֹד	בְּכַח וּקִי	תַּעֲלֵי יָמִים	לְעֵת וְזֹת
H4100	<b>O LORD</b>	<b>Why standest</b>	<b>thou afar off</b>	<b>why hidest</b>	<b>thou thyself in times</b>
	H3068	H5975	H7350	H5956	H6256

בְּצָרָה:  
**of trouble**  
H6869

### **Additional Cross-References**

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**Psalms 22:1** (Parallel theme): My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

**Psalms 27:9** (Parallel theme): Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

**Jeremiah 14:8** (Parallel theme): O the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?

**Psalms 88:14** (References Lord): LORD, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me?

**Psalms 44:24** (Parallel theme): Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression?

**Psalms 30:7** (References Lord): LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.

**Psalms 46:1** (Parallel theme): God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

**Job 13:24** (Parallel theme): Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?

**Job 34:29** (Parallel theme): When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only: