

Psalm 116:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.

Analysis

Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. In extremity, the psalmist prays. **Then called I** (uvshem-Yahweh ekra, אֶקְרָא) uses the covenant name Yahweh (יהָוָה), appealing to Israel's covenant-keeping God who reveals Himself personally. Calling on God's 'name' invokes His character, promises, and revealed nature.

The prayer is urgent and specific: **O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul** (ana Yahweh malletah nafshi, אָנוּ לְמַלְּתָה נַפְשִׁי). **Ana** (אָנוּ) is an interjection: 'please,' 'I pray,' expressing desperate petition. **Malletah** (הַמְלָטָה) means to escape, deliver, rescue. **Nafshi** (נַפְשִׁי, my soul) represents the whole person—life, self, being.

This is a prayer distilled to essence: desperate cry, covenant appeal, specific request. No elaborate liturgy, no formal structure—just urgent petition to the God who saves. This pattern appears throughout Scripture: Israel crying out in Egypt (Exodus 2:23), Peter sinking and shouting 'Lord, save me!' (Matthew 14:30), Paul's thorn-prompted prayer (2 Corinthians 12:8).

Historical Context

Jewish tradition associated this psalm with moments of national or personal deliverance. The phrase 'I called upon the name of the LORD' appears at crisis points throughout biblical history: Abraham (Genesis 12:8), Elijah (1 Kings 18:24),

early church (Acts 2:21). Calling on God's name presumes covenant relationship—these aren't strangers petitioning a distant deity but covenant children appealing to their faithful Father. Paul quotes Psalm 116:10 ('I believed, therefore have I spoken') in 2 Corinthians 4:13, applying the psalm Christologically and ecclesially.

Related Passages

John 15:13 – Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 – Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What does 'calling on the name of the LORD' mean beyond merely saying a prayer?
2. How does the simplicity and urgency of this prayer inform your own prayer life during crises?
3. What is the relationship between covenant relationship with God (knowing His name) and confidence that He will answer?

Interlinear Text

וּבְשָׁם	וְהִנֵּה אַתָּה אֱלֹהִים	אָמַרְתָּ לְךָ תְּהִלֵּת	מְלֹא תְּהִלָּתְךָ	לְפָנֵיכִי
I upon the name	O LORD	Then called	I beseech	O LORD
H8034	H3068	H7121	H577	H3068

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 118:5 (References Lord): I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me, and set me in a large place.

Psalms 22:20 (Parallel theme): Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.

