

Psalms 13:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Consider and hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes,
lest I sleep the sleep of death;

Analysis

Consider and hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death. At verse 3, the psalm pivots from lament to petition. Having expressed complaint ("How long?" four times), David now makes specific requests. The imperative verbs signal movement from describing the problem to asking for divine intervention. The shift demonstrates the proper function of lament—not ending in despair but moving toward trust expressed in petition.

"Consider" (habitah, הַבִּיטָה) means to look at, regard, pay attention to. David asks God to direct His attention toward the sufferer. The verb implies more than mere seeing—it suggests engaged, active consideration of the situation. God's omniscience means He already sees, but David asks for responsive attention leading to action.

"Hear me" (aneni, עַנְנִי) intensifies the request. Anah means to answer, respond, give attention. This is not merely listening but responding—hearing that leads to action. Throughout psalms of lament, "hear" implies "answer favorably," "intervene on my behalf." The plea recognizes that God's hearing is efficacious—His attentive hearing initiates deliverance.

"O LORD my God" (Yahweh Elohai, יְהָוָה אֱלֹהֵי) combines the covenant name (Yahweh) with personal possessive (my God). Despite feeling forgotten, David maintains personal relationship. This is not "God" generically conceived but "MY God"—the God who has bound Himself to me in covenant faithfulness. The dual

naming emphasizes both transcendent power (Elohim) and immanent relationship (Yahweh).

"Lighten mine eyes" (ha'irah eynai, הָאֵרֶת עַיִן) is a vivid metaphor with multiple dimensions. Physically, dimming eyes signal approaching death (1 Samuel 14:27-29 describes Jonathan's eyes brightening after eating, having been dimmed by exhaustion). Emotionally, darkened eyes suggest despair, loss of hope, depression's numbness. Spiritually, enlightened eyes indicate renewed vision, restored perspective, divine illumination. David asks for renewed life force, restored hope, spiritual clarity to perceive God's presence and purposes.

"Lest I sleep the sleep of death" (pen-ishan hamavet, פָּנָאֵשׁ הַמָּוֵת) uses euphemistic language for dying. Sleep is both metaphor and reality—death as final sleep, but also the spiritual death of despair that can overtake the living. David faces real danger (physical death) and spiritual danger (death of faith through prolonged suffering without divine response). The plea is urgent: without divine intervention, death—physical or spiritual—appears imminent.

Historical Context

The request to "lighten mine eyes" recalls Jonathan's experience in 1 Samuel 14:27-29. Having not heard Saul's rash oath forbidding food, Jonathan ate honey during battle: "his eyes were enlightened." The narrator explains that fasting had weakened the soldiers; food restored strength and clarity. The phrase became idiom for restoration of vitality, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual.

Ancient Israel understood the interconnection of physical and spiritual health in ways modern Western culture often misses. Depression ("sorrow in my heart daily") could manifest physically (dimmed eyes, approaching death). Divine intervention addressed the whole person—physical strengthening, emotional restoration, spiritual renewal. The psalm doesn't compartmentalize suffering but brings the whole self before God.

The "sleep of death" imagery appears throughout Scripture. Jacob said of Joseph: "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning" (Genesis 37:35). Job spoke of

death as sleep (Job 14:12). Daniel prophesied: "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake" (Daniel 12:2). Jesus described Lazarus's death as sleep (John 11:11). Paul used sleep as euphemism for death (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14). Yet this euphemistic usage doesn't deny death's reality or terror; rather, it anticipates resurrection—sleep implies waking.

For New Testament believers, Christ's resurrection transformed the sleep metaphor. Death remains real enemy (1 Corinthians 15:26) but no longer final victor. Christ tasted death for everyone (Hebrews 2:9), descended into death's realm, and emerged victorious. Believers who "sleep in Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 4:14) will awaken at resurrection. Until then, the prayer "lighten mine eyes" asks for sustained life and hope to endure until that awakening.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does the shift from lament (v.1-2) to petition (v.3) model a healthy pattern for prayer during suffering?
2. What is the significance of David calling God 'LORD my God' even while feeling forgotten, and how does this maintain relationship despite distress?
3. In what ways might our 'eyes' need 'lightening'—physically, emotionally, spiritually—and how might God provide this illumination?
4. What is the relationship between physical exhaustion, emotional despair, and spiritual darkness, and how does biblical anthropology address the whole person?
5. How does the resurrection of Christ transform our understanding of the 'sleep of death' from terror to hope?

Interlinear Text

בְּבָבְ יְתָה
Consider and hear me O LORD my God
H5027 H6030 H3068 H430 H215 H5869 H6435

אִישׁ | פָּמִיתָ
lest I sleep the sleep of death
H3462 H4194

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 18:28 (Light): For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.

Ezra 9:8 (Light): And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage.

Psalms 5:1 (References Lord): Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation.

Jeremiah 51:39 (References Lord): In their heat I will make their feasts, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the LORD.

1 Samuel 14:27 (Light): But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath: wherefore he put forth the end of the rod that was in his hand, and dipped it in an honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened.

1 Samuel 14:29 (Light): Then said Jonathan, My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey.

Psalms 31:7 (Parallel theme): I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities;

Psalms 25:19 (Parallel theme): Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred.

Psalms 119:153 (Parallel theme): Consider mine affliction, and deliver me: for I do not forget thy law.

Psalms 9:13 (References Lord): Have mercy upon me, O LORD; consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death:

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