

Psalms 143:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.

Analysis

Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit. David's petition expresses urgency: "Hear me speedily" (maher aneni, מהר עתני) literally means "hurry, answer me." The verb maher (מֵהָר) conveys haste—David cannot wait long; his situation is desperate. "My spirit faileth" uses kalah (כְּלָה), meaning to be finished, spent, consumed, or exhausted. David's ruach (spirit/life-force) is giving out.

"Hide not thy face from me" expresses the terror of divine withdrawal. God's "face" (panim, פָּנִים) represents His presence, favor, and attention. To hide the face is to withdraw blessing and protection (Deuteronomy 31:17-18; Psalm 27:9; 30:7). The Aaronic benediction's climax is "The LORD make his face shine upon thee" (Numbers 6:25). Without God's face, humans descend to the pit.

"Lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit" (pen-emshal im-yordei vor, פֶּן־עַמְשָׁל עַמְּדוּ־רֹדֵי בָּור) expresses dread of death. Bor (בור) means pit, cistern, or grave—Sheol, the realm of the dead. David fears not just physical death but existence without God's presence, which would be indistinguishable from the death of the godless. This anticipates Christ's cry of dereliction: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46)—the ultimate experience of God hiding His face.

Historical Context

In Israelite theology, Sheol was not originally conceived as a place of punishment but as the shadowy underworld where all the dead went—a realm of darkness, silence, and separation from active participation in life and worship (Psalm 6:5; 88:10-12; 115:17; Isaiah 38:18). The dread of Sheol wasn't eternal torment (a later development) but cessation of relationship with God and community. Resurrection hope emerged gradually through Israel's history, with clearer articulation in later prophets (Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2) and full revelation in Christ's resurrection.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to experience God 'hiding His face,' and how do believers navigate seasons of divine silence?
2. How does Christ's experience of the Father hiding His face (on the cross) guarantee believers need never ultimately experience it?
3. When your spirit 'fails,' what spiritual practices help you seek God's face with urgency rather than despair?

Interlinear Text

פָּנָים יְבָשָׁת רָאשׁ אֶל מִנְחָת פָּסָת רָאשׁ אֶל מִנְחָת
me **speedily** Hear O **LORD** faileth my **spirit** H408 **hide** not thy **face**
H4118 H6030 H3068 H3615 H7307 H5641 H6440

בָּורָה: מִתְּמַשֵּׁלְתִּי עַמּוֹדְתִּי עַמּוֹדְתִּי
H4480 from me lest I be like H4911 H5973 unto them that go down H3381 into the pit H953

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 69:17 (Parallel theme): And hide not thy face from thy servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily.

Psalms 28:1 (References Lord): Unto thee will I cry, O LORD my rock; be not silent to me: lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.

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.

Psalms 71:12 (Parallel theme): O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help.

Isaiah 38:18 (Parallel theme): For the grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.

Psalms 102:2 (Parallel theme): Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily.

Psalms 69:3 (Parallel theme): I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.

Isaiah 8:17 (References Lord): And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

Isaiah 57:16 (Spirit): For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.

Psalms 40:17 (References Lord): But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.