

Psalms 40:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.

Analysis

I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. This psalm's opening establishes the pattern of patient waiting rewarded by divine response. The Hebrew phrase qavoh qaviti (קָוָה קָוִיתִי) is emphatic—literally 'waiting I waited' or 'I waited eagerly'—using verbal repetition to intensify meaning. This waiting wasn't passive resignation but active, expectant hope grounded in confidence in God's character and promises.

'For the LORD' (el Yahweh, אֱלֹהֵינוּ) identifies the specific object of waiting—not circumstances improving, not human help arriving, but for God Himself to act. The verse doesn't specify how long David waited; the emphasis is on the waiting's character (patient) and result (God heard). Biblical waiting often involves extended periods—Abraham waited decades for Isaac, Joseph waited years in prison, David waited years between anointing and coronation. Waiting tests and refines faith.

'He inclined unto me' (vayyet elai, וַיָּעַן) pictures God bending down, stooping to hear. The sovereign God of the universe condescends to listen to human prayers. This anthropomorphic language emphasizes divine accessibility and responsiveness. God isn't distant or indifferent but personally attentive to His people's cries. Isaiah 66:2 says God looks 'to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.'

'And heard my cry' (vayishma shav'ati, וַיִּשְׁמָע שְׁוֹעִתִּי) uses shava (שָׁוָה), meaning a cry for help, a distress call, often in contexts of desperate need. This wasn't casual

prayer but urgent plea from the depths. The verb 'heard' (shama, שָׁמַע) in Hebrew implies not just auditory reception but responsive action—God heard and therefore acted. Throughout Scripture, when God 'hears' prayers, deliverance follows (Exodus 2:24, Psalm 34:17).

Historical Context

Psalm 40 is Davidic in superscription and likely reflects periods of extended trial in David's life—perhaps his years fleeing Saul, when vindication seemed delayed indefinitely. During this time, David was anointed king yet lived as fugitive, promised a kingdom yet hiding in caves, recognized by some as God's chosen yet hunted as criminal by the reigning monarch. These contradictory circumstances required patient waiting for God's timing.

The concept of waiting on the Lord is central to Old Testament piety. The psalms repeatedly encourage this posture: 'Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD' (Psalm 27:14). Isaiah counseled, 'They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles' (Isaiah 40:31). Waiting isn't wasted time but faith-building process.

Ancient Near Eastern religion often featured attempts to manipulate deities through magic, ritual, or offerings. In contrast, Israel's faith centered on waiting for YHWH's sovereign action in His timing. This distinguished biblical religion—God couldn't be manipulated, bribed, or controlled. He acted according to His wisdom and purposes, and believers' role was trusting submission. This required patience, particularly when circumstances suggested God had forgotten or abandoned them.

The New Testament sees this psalm messianically. Hebrews 10:5-7 quotes verses 6-8 as Christ's words upon entering the world. Verse 1's patient waiting thus applies to Christ's entire incarnational mission—waiting for the Father's appointed time to inaugurate the kingdom, to go to the cross, to rise from the dead. Jesus modeled perfect patience, never acting ahead of the Father's timing (John 2:4,

7:6). Believers are called to similar patient waiting for Christ's return and God's final vindication of His people.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What are you currently waiting for God to do, and how patient is your waiting?
2. How can you distinguish between patient, faith-filled waiting and passive resignation?
3. What does it mean practically that God 'inclined' toward you—that He stoops to hear your prayers?
4. How has extended waiting refined your faith and character in the past?
5. In what ways does Christ's perfect patience in waiting for the Father's timing model faith for you?

Interlinear Text

קָוִי יְהִי	קָוִי יְהִי	יְהוָה	וַיִּט	אֵלַי	וַיִּשְׁמַע
I waited	I waited	for the LORD	and he inclined	<small>H413</small>	unto me and heard
<small>H6960</small>	<small>H6960</small>	<small>H3068</small>	<small>H5186</small>		<small>H8085</small>

שִׁוְעָתִי:

my cry

H7775

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 37:7 (References Lord): Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.

Psalms 116:2 (Parallel theme): Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.

Daniel 9:18 (Parallel theme): O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.

Psalms 130:2 (References Lord): Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.

Psalms 34:15 (References Lord): The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.