

Psalms 64:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer: preserve my life from fear of the enemy.

Analysis

Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer: preserve my life from fear of the enemy. This opening plea establishes the psalm's context: David faces enemy threats producing fear, and he turns to God for preservation. The imperative "Hear" (shema, שִׁמָּע) demands God's attention—not merely auditory reception but active, responsive listening that leads to intervention. The same verb opens the Shema, Israel's central confession: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD" (Deuteronomy 6:4). David invokes the covenant-keeping God who hears His people's cries.

"My voice" (qoli, קוֹלִי) emphasizes personal, vocal prayer. David doesn't merely think prayers but speaks them—giving voice to his distress, articulating his fear, verbalizing his petition. This models prayer as communication requiring expression, not just internal contemplation. "In my prayer" (besiachi, בְּשִׁיחִי) uses the word siach (שִׁיחַ), meaning meditation, complaint, concern, prayer—often implying extended, conversational prayer rather than brief petition. David brings his concerns to God through sustained, thoughtful dialogue.

"Preserve my life" (titsor chayai, תִּצֹר חַיָּי) uses the verb natsar (נָצַר), meaning to guard, watch over, protect. The same word describes keeping/guarding God's commandments (Psalm 119:34, Proverbs 3:1). David asks God to guard his life with the same vigilant care believers are to give God's Word. The request isn't for comfortable existence but for life preservation amid genuine danger.

"From fear of the enemy" (mipachad oyev, מִפַּחַד אוֹיֵב) identifies the specific threat. Pachad (פַּחַד) means dread, terror, trembling fear—not mild concern but overwhelming anxiety. David doesn't ask merely for protection from enemies but from the fear itself—from the internal terror that paralyzes and torments even before any actual attack. This recognition is psychologically astute: fear can destroy us before enemies reach us. David requests divine preservation not just from external threat but from internal dread that undermines faith and courage.

Historical Context

Psalm 64 is attributed to David and likely emerged from one of his many experiences of persecution—whether during Saul's pursuit, Absalom's rebellion, or court intrigues. The psalm's description of enemies using words as weapons (v.3-6) suggests political slander and conspiracy rather than open military assault. Ancient Near Eastern courts were rife with intrigue, false accusations, and character assassination. Those seeking power would undermine rivals through whispered accusations, false testimony, and strategic slander.

The legal system in ancient Israel required witnesses to bring accusations (Deuteronomy 19:15), making false testimony a powerful weapon. Naboth was murdered through false witnesses arranged by Jezebel (1 Kings 21:10-13). Daniel faced conspiracy through manipulated legal proceedings (Daniel 6:4-9). Throughout his reign, David dealt with political enemies using slander and conspiracy—from Shimei's curses (2 Samuel 16:5-8) to various court factions opposing his rule.

The fear David describes would have been constant reality for ancient rulers. Without modern security systems or reliable intelligence networks, kings lived with perpetual vulnerability to assassination, poisoning, or coup. Sleep itself was dangerous—hence the value of trusted bodyguards. David's request for preservation from fear recognizes that constant vigilance against threats produces exhausting anxiety that can be more debilitating than the threats themselves. This psalm became a resource for all believers facing slander, false accusation, or persecution—circumstances where the enemy's words wound as deeply as swords.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does vocalizing prayer (giving voice to concerns) differ from merely thinking about them, and why is this distinction important?
2. What is the relationship between protection from enemies and protection from fear of enemies, and which is more difficult to obtain?
3. How does David's example of bringing specific, detailed concerns to God in extended prayer (siach) challenge superficial or rushed prayer practices?
4. In what areas of life do you need God to preserve you from paralyzing fear, even before any actual threat materializes?
5. How does understanding God's hearing as active, responsive intervention rather than passive awareness affect how you pray?

Interlinear Text

שְׁמַע	אֱלֹהֵי יָם	קוֹלִי	בְּשִׁיחִי	מִפֶּחַד	אֶנִּי	תִּצַּר
Hear	O God	my voice	in my prayer	from fear	of the enemy	preserve
H8085	H430	H6963	H7879	H6343	H341	H5341

חַיִּי
my life
H2416

Additional Cross-References

Acts 27:24 (References God): Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

Psalms 140:1 (Parallel theme): Deliver me, O LORD, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man;

Psalms 141:1 (Parallel theme): LORD, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee.

Psalms 34:4 (Parallel theme): I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

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