

Psalm 70:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD.

Analysis

Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD. This urgent plea opens Psalm 70 with repeated imperative: 'make haste' (chushah, חֻשָּׁה) appears twice, emphasizing desperate need for immediate divine intervention. The verse addresses God with two names—'God' (Elohim, אלֹהִים, emphasizing power) and 'LORD' (YHWH, יְהָוָה, emphasizing covenant relationship). The psalmist appeals to both God's ability to help and His commitment to help based on covenant promise.

Psalm 70 is nearly identical to Psalm 40:13-17, functioning as an independent prayer extracted from the longer psalm. Its brevity and urgency make it suitable for immediate crisis situations—when extended prayer isn't possible, this short petition captures essential need. The repetition 'deliver me... help me' uses synonymous parallelism: natsal (נָצַל, deliver) means to snatch away from danger; ezor (עֹזֶר, help) means to surround with aid and protection.

For Christians, this urgent prayer anticipates Christ's cries in Gethsemane and on the cross. Jesus experienced the full terror of God's wrath and abandonment that sinners deserve, and His desperate prayers for deliverance went unanswered (in the moment) so ours could be answered. Now believers can pray this prayer with confidence that God will hasten to help—not always immediately or in the way we expect, but ultimately and certainly. Romans 8:32 assures, 'He that spared not his own Son... how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?' If God delivered His Son for us, He will deliver us in Him.

Historical Context

Short, urgent prayers appear throughout Scripture, especially in moments of immediate danger. Nehemiah prayed brief 'arrow prayers' while speaking with the Persian king (Nehemiah 2:4). Peter's sinking cry, 'Lord, save me!' (Matthew 14:30), exemplifies this form. These prayers assume that God knows the situation and doesn't require lengthy explanation—they're raw cries of dependence in crisis moments.

Psalm 70's extraction from Psalm 40 suggests liturgical use. Longer psalms could be abbreviated for specific worship contexts or personal devotions. Jewish tradition developed brief prayers for various situations (prayers upon waking, before eating, when facing danger), recognizing that not all circumstances allow extended prayer. The **Shema** (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) served as a compact confession of faith, and **Psalms of Ascent** (Psalms 120-134) were brief enough to sing while walking up to Jerusalem.

The early church practiced 'breath prayers'—short petitions repeated throughout the day, coordinated with breathing. The Jesus Prayer ('Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner') became central to Eastern Orthodox spirituality, modeled on the tax collector's prayer (Luke 18:13) and these urgent psalms. Psalm 70 exemplifies this tradition—prayer so urgent and concise that it becomes a spiritual breath, sustaining life in crisis. Desert fathers and mothers used such prayers to maintain unceasing prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17), demonstrating that quantity of words matters less than heart posture.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. When was the last time you prayed with the urgency of 'make haste' rather than leisurely requests?
2. How can you develop 'arrow prayers' that express dependence on God in immediate circumstances?
3. What crisis in your life requires God to 'make haste' and deliver you quickly?
4. How does knowing Christ's prayers for deliverance went temporarily unanswered so yours could be answered affect your view of unanswered prayer?
5. What role do brief, urgent prayers play in your spiritual life versus longer, more structured prayers?

Interlinear Text

חוֹשֶׁה: לְעִזָּה תִּהְעַזְבֵּנִי לְפָאֵל נִי אֱלֹהִים
Make haste O God to deliver me O LORD to help me make haste
H430 H5337 H3068 H5833 H2363

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 143:7 (References Lord): 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.

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

Psalms 38:1 (References Lord): O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

Psalms 69:18 (Parallel theme): Draw nigh unto my soul, and redeem it: deliver me because of mine enemies.