

Psalms 77:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice;
and he gave ear unto me.

Analysis

I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me. Psalm 77 opens with personal lament—Asaph's cry to God during deep distress. The doubled expression "with my voice... with my voice" (qoli... qoli, קול!... קול!) emphasizes the intensity and persistence of his prayer. This was not silent meditation but vocal crying out.

"I cried" (etz'aqah, אָצַעַקָּה) uses tza'aq, a verb denoting urgent, desperate crying—the cry of those in distress, oppression, or danger. It appears in Exodus 2:23 for Israel's groaning under Egyptian bondage and in Judges 3:9 for Israel's crying out under foreign oppression. This is the vocabulary of extremity.

"Unto God" (el-Elohim, אֱלֹהִים) is repeated twice, emphasizing that Asaph directed his cry to God alone. No human helper, no other deity, no self-help strategy—only God. The repetition underscores single-minded focus in prayer.

"And he gave ear unto me" (veha'azin elai, וַיַּעֲזִין אֵלָי) provides the verse's climax. Azan means to give attention, to hear with intent to respond. Despite the distress described in following verses, Asaph affirms at the outset that God heard. This creates narrative tension: God heard, yet Asaph still struggled. Being heard by God does not mean immediate relief from trouble.

Historical Context

The superscription attributes this psalm to Asaph, for Jeduthun—likely indicating the musical arrangement or choir director. Jeduthun was one of David's chief musicians (1 Chronicles 16:41-42, 25:1-3). The psalm may have been composed for temple worship, guiding the congregation through lament to faith.

The experience of crying out to God permeates Israelite piety. The Psalter contains numerous examples of urgent prayer: Psalm 18:6 ("In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God"), Psalm 34:6 ("This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him"), Psalm 86:3 ("Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily"). The pattern of crying out and being heard reinforced the community's confidence in God's responsiveness.

The psalm's movement from personal distress (verses 1-10) to communal memory (verses 11-20) suggests that individual struggles find resolution in the context of God's saving history with His people. Personal lament connects to collective faith.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. What does the repetition 'with my voice... with my voice' reveal about the nature of Asaph's prayer?
2. How do you reconcile God 'giving ear' to prayer with the continued distress Asaph describes in the following verses?
3. What is the significance of directing one's cry to God alone rather than seeking human solutions first?
4. When have you experienced God 'hearing' your prayer even before the circumstances changed?

Interlinear Text

אֶל קֹלִי אֶל קֹלִי
with my voice H413 even unto God H430 I cried H6817 with my voice H413
H6963 H430 H6817 H6963

אֶלְיוֹן וַיַּעֲשֵׂה
even unto God and he gave ear H413 H238

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 3:4 (Parallel theme): I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.

Psalms 50:1 (References God): The mighty God, even the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.

Psalms 39:1 (Parallel theme): I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.

Psalms 34:6 (Parallel theme): This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.

Psalms 62:1 (References God): Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation.

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