

Psalms 79:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake.

Analysis

Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake. This verse represents the psalm's central petition, combining appeal for help with confession of sin. The prayer is grounded not in Israel's merit but in God's reputation and character.

"O God of our salvation" (Elohey yish'enu, אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵנוּ) invokes God by His saving character. Yesha (salvation, deliverance) defines who God is to His people. This title reminds God of His own nature: He is the saving God. To fail to save would contradict His identity.

"For the glory of thy name" (al-devar kevod-shemekha, עַל־דְּבַר כְּבוֹד־שְׁמֶךָ) provides the first motivation for God to act. Kavod (glory, weight, honor) and shem (name, reputation) together appeal to God's concern for His own honor. When His people suffer, His reputation suffers. The nations mock, asking, "Where is their God?" (verse 10).

"Deliver us, and purge away our sins" (hatzilenu vekapper al-chattotenu, הַצִּילֵנוּ וְכַפֵּר עַל־חַטֹּאתֵינוּ) combines deliverance from enemies with forgiveness of sins. The verb kaphar (to cover, atone, purge) is central to Israel's sacrificial system. The psalmist acknowledges that Israel's suffering is not undeserved—sin contributed to the catastrophe. Yet he appeals for both physical deliverance and spiritual restoration.

"For thy name's sake" (lema'an shemekha, לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ) repeats the motivation. God's

name—His reputation, His revealed character, His honor among the nations—provides grounds for mercy.

Historical Context

The appeal to God's name rather than Israel's merit appears frequently in biblical prayer. Moses interceded on this basis after the golden calf incident: "Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out?" (Exodus 32:12). Joshua used similar reasoning after the defeat at Ai (Joshua 7:9). Daniel prayed: "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God" (Daniel 9:19).

This theology recognizes that human sin forfeits any claim on God's favor. Israel deserved the judgment they received. Yet God's character provides hope beyond human merit. He is gracious, merciful, slow to anger (Exodus 34:6-7). He is faithful to His covenant promises. His name—His reputation for steadfast love—becomes the basis for appeal.

The connection between forgiveness and deliverance reflects the prophetic understanding that exile was punishment for sin. Return from exile would require both forgiveness (dealing with the cause) and deliverance (reversing the effect). Both flow from divine mercy, not human deserving.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does appealing to God's 'name' and 'glory' differ from appealing to human merit or need?
2. What is the relationship between physical deliverance and spiritual forgiveness in this prayer?

3. Why is confession of sin important even when praying for relief from enemy oppression?
4. How does understanding God's concern for His own name inform the way we pray?

Interlinear Text

שְׁמִי:	כְּבוֹד	דָּבָר	עַל	יִשְׁעֵנוּ	אֱלֹהֵי	עֲזֵרֵנוּ
for thy name's	the glory	for	H5921	of our salvation	us O God	Help
H8034	H3519	H1697		H3468	H430	H5826
שְׁמִי:	לִמְעַן	חַטֹּאתֵינוּ	עַל	וְכִפֵּר	וְהִצִּילֵנוּ	
for thy name's	H4616	our sins	H5921	us and purge away	and deliver	
H8034		H2403		H3722	H5337	

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 14:7 (Sin): O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee.

Psalms 25:11 (Sin): For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.

2 Chronicles 14:11 (References God): And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee.

Isaiah 48:9 (Parallel theme): For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off.

Jeremiah 14:21 (Glory): Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us.

Ezekiel 20:14 (Parallel theme): But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out.

Isaiah 43:25 (Sin): I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

Psalms 65:3 (Sin): Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.

Psalms 31:3 (Parallel theme): For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.

Ezekiel 20:9 (Parallel theme): But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt.

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