

Psalms 85:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease.

Analysis

Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease.

The psalm shifts from recounting past mercy (vv. 1-3) to urgent present petition (vv. 4-7). The imperative shuv (שׁוּב, "turn us") is causative—"cause us to turn, bring us back, restore us." This prayer recognizes human inability to turn ourselves and God's necessary initiative in restoration. Without divine action enabling repentance, we remain in rebellion. This theology anticipates Jeremiah 31:18 ("Turn thou me, and I shall be turned") and Lamentations 5:21 ("Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned").

"O God of our salvation" (Elohei yish'enu, אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵנוּ) addresses God by His saving character. Yesha (יִשְׁע) means deliverance, victory, salvation. By invoking God as "God of our salvation," the psalmist appeals to established pattern—God IS savior; salvation is His nature. The appeal assumes: since You ARE the God who saves, act according to Your character by saving us now.

"And cause thine anger toward us to cease" (vehapher ka'asekha immanu, וְהָפֵר כְּאַסֶּכְחָאֵנוּ) requests termination of divine displeasure. Hapher (הָפֵר) means "break, annul, frustrate, make cease"—cause to stop operating. Ka'as (כְּאַס) is vexation, anger, provocation. The phrase "with us" (immanu, עִמָּנוּ) acknowledges that anger is justified—we provoked it through sin. The prayer doesn't claim innocence but pleads for mercy despite guilt.

Historical Context

This verse reflects the tension post-exilic Jews experienced. Physically they had returned to the land (starting 538 BC under Cyrus's decree), but spiritually they sensed incomplete restoration. The second temple, completed in 515 BC, lacked the Shekinah glory that filled Solomon's temple (Ezekiel 10:18-19, Haggai 2:3). Foreign powers still dominated—Persia, then Greece, then Rome. Economic hardship plagued the community (Haggai 1:6, 9). Spiritual compromise crept in through intermarriage with pagans (Ezra 9-10, Nehemiah 13). The people were back in the land but not fully experiencing covenant blessings promised for obedience. This prompted prayers like Psalm 85: "You've forgiven us before—do it again! Turn us back to You completely." The historical context shows that geographic restoration doesn't automatically equal spiritual revival.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. Why does the psalmist pray for God to 'turn us' rather than pledging to turn himself, and what does this reveal about human nature and divine grace?
2. How can believers distinguish between genuine divine discipline and misinterpreting difficult circumstances as God's anger?
3. What does it mean to address God as 'God of our salvation' when currently experiencing His displeasure?

Interlinear Text

שׁ וּבִנּוּ	אֱלֹהֵי י	יִשְׁעֵנוּ	יְהִי ר	כְּעֶסְךָ
Turn	us O God	of our salvation	toward us to cease	and cause thine anger
H7725	H430	H3468	H6565	H3708

נִפְלְמוּ:

H5973

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 80:3 (Salvation): Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

Psalms 80:7 (Salvation): Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

Lamentations 5:21 (Parallel theme): Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old.

Micah 7:7 (Salvation): Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.

Psalms 27:1 (Salvation): The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Psalms 80:19 (Salvation): Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

Psalms 25:2 (References God): O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.

Malachi 4:6 (Parallel theme): And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.