

Psalms 85:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?

Analysis

Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee? This heartfelt petition appears in a psalm of national lament and restoration hope. The question form "wilt thou not" (halo-attah, הֲלֹא־אַתָּה) expects affirmative answer—"won't you surely...?" It's rhetorical appeal rather than doubting inquiry. The psalmist confidently expects God to act, yet the question form expresses urgent desire and patient waiting for divine intervention.

"Revive us again" (tashuv techayenu, תָּשׁוּב תַּחַיֵּנוּ) literally means "return and give us life." The verb chayah (חַיָּה) means "to live, be alive, have life"—in causative form it means "cause to live, restore to life, revive." This isn't primarily physical resurrection but spiritual, national, and covenantal renewal. The people feel spiritually dead, nationally defeated, covenantally abandoned—they need God to breathe new life into them as He breathed life into Adam (Genesis 2:7).

"Again" (shuv, שׁוּב) implies previous revival. God has restored Israel before—from Egyptian bondage, Babylonian exile, various judgments. The "again" appeals to established pattern: God is the God of second chances, repeated mercies, continual renewals. Just as He revived in the past, He can revive again. This encourages hope during present spiritual deadness.

"That thy people may rejoice in thee" (ve-yismchu amcha bak, וַיִּשְׂמְחוּ עִמָּךְ בָּךְ) states the purpose of revival. God's goal isn't merely His people's comfort but their joy in Him. Samach (סָמַח) means "to rejoice, be glad"—exuberant celebration, not mere

contentment. True revival produces joy centered in God Himself (bak, "in thee"), not merely joy about circumstances improved. The ultimate purpose of divine restoration is renewed worship.

Historical Context

Post-Exilic Context and Revival in Israel's History

Psalm 85's historical setting is debated, but most scholars place it in the post-exilic period (after 538 BC) when Jews returned from Babylonian captivity. Verses 1-3 reference past restoration: "LORD, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob." This likely refers to the return from exile under Cyrus's decree (Ezra 1). However, verses 4-7 reveal that despite physical return, spiritual restoration remained incomplete—hence the prayer for revival.

The returned exiles faced discouragement. They rebuilt the temple (completed 515 BC), but it lacked the glory of Solomon's temple (Ezra 3:12-13). Economic hardship plagued the community (Haggai 1:6). Surrounding peoples opposed reconstruction (Ezra 4-5). Spiritual compromise crept in through intermarriage with pagans (Ezra 9-10). The people experienced physical return without spiritual renewal—they were back in the land but not fully restored to vital relationship with God.

This pattern repeats throughout biblical history. After Egyptian deliverance, Israel rebelled at Sinai with the golden calf—requiring revival (Exodus 32-34). Following judges' era, Samuel led revival (1 Samuel 7:3-6). During divided kingdom, Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 29-31) and Josiah (2 Kings 22-23) led reforms. Post-exile, Ezra (Ezra 9-10) and Nehemiah (Nehemiah 8-10) called for covenant renewal. Each generation needed fresh revival because spiritual vitality naturally declines without conscious cultivation.

Church history shows the same pattern. Periodic revivals—Great Awakening (18th century), Second Great Awakening (19th century), Welsh Revival (1904-1905), Azusa Street (1906-1915)—renewed spiritually dead churches. These movements shared common features: conviction of sin, repentance, renewed prayer,

evangelistic zeal, and joy in the Lord. Psalm 85:6 remains the church's perpetual prayer: "Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?"

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What does spiritual "revival" mean, and how is it different from mere religious activity or emotional excitement?
2. Why does God's pattern include periodic need for revival rather than sustaining continuous spiritual vitality?
3. How can believers distinguish between legitimate longing for revival and dissatisfaction with God's present working?
4. What role do God's people play in revival (prayer, repentance, obedience) versus God's sovereign work that we cannot manufacture?
5. How does the goal of revival ("that thy people may rejoice in thee") clarify revival's true nature as God-centered rather than self-centered?

Interlinear Text

הָלֵא	אֶתְּהָ	וּבִ	תִּשְׁבֹּ	וְיִרְוֶה	אֶתְּךָ	וְיִשְׂמְחוּ	בְּךָ:
H3808	H859	us again	Wilt thou not revive	that thy people	may rejoice	H0	
		H7725	H2421	H5971	H8055		

Additional Cross-References

Habakkuk 3:2 (Parallel theme): O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.

Psalms 80:18 (Parallel theme): So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.

Isaiah 57:15 (Parallel theme): For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Psalms 90:14 (Parallel theme): O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

Psalms 71:20 (Parallel theme): Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.

Hosea 6:2 (Parallel theme): After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

Psalms 53:6 (Parallel theme): Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

Psalms 138:7 (Parallel theme): Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me.

Jeremiah 33:11 (Parallel theme): The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the LORD of hosts: for the LORD is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: and of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the LORD.

Psalms 149:2 (Parallel theme): Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.