

# Psalms 86:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I am poor and needy.

## Analysis

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**Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I am poor and needy.** David's opening petition uses hateh (הַפְּעֵה, incline/bow down), anthropomorphic language depicting God stooping to hear His servant's prayer. This humble request assumes God's transcendence—He must descend to attend to human voices. The plea **hear me** (aneni, אַנְּצִי, answer me) expects not mere listening but responsive action.

The self-identification as **poor and needy** (ani ve-evyon, עַנְּיָן וְעַדְיָן) echoes Psalm 109:22, establishing David's stance before God as one without resources or recourse except divine mercy. This isn't false humility but accurate recognition of creatureliness and dependence. The anawim (humble poor) throughout Scripture are those who know their spiritual bankruptcy and cast themselves wholly on God's grace.

This opening verse establishes the theological foundation for prayer: God's willingness to incline His ear to the lowly, and the worshiper's posture of acknowledged need. It anticipates Jesus's teaching that the tax collector's prayer "God, be merciful to me, a sinner" finds acceptance, while self-sufficient religiosity does not (Luke 18:9-14).

## Historical Context

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Psalm 86 is the only psalm in Book III (Psalms 73-89) attributed to David. Titled 'A Prayer of David,' it's a lament psalm combining petition, trust, and praise. The

repeated use of covenant name 'Adonai' (Lord/Master) emphasizes David's relationship as servant to divine King. Scholars debate the historical occasion, but the tone suggests personal crisis requiring urgent divine intervention during David's reign.

## Related Passages

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**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

## Study Questions

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1. What prevents you from approaching God as 'poor and needy' rather than bringing Him your strengths and achievements?
2. How does recognizing God's transcendence (He must 'bow down' to hear) affect your confidence in prayer?
3. In what areas of life are you self-sufficient rather than dependent on God's provision and grace?

## Interlinear Text

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פָּתָח	תְּבֻנָּה	יְהִי	אֶזְרָךְ	נָתַן	כִּי	נָתַן	לִי	נָתַן	אֲנִי	אָנֹכִי	וְאַנְחָי
<b>Bow down</b>	<b>O LORD</b>	<b>thine ear</b>	<b>hear</b>	H3588	me for I am poor	and needy	H589				

## Additional Cross-References

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**Psalms 31:2** (Parallel theme): Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me.

**Psalms 40:17** (References Lord): But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.

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

**Matthew 5:3** (Parallel theme): Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven.

**James 2:5** (Parallel theme): Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

**Daniel 9:18** (Parallel theme): O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.

**Luke 4:18** (References Lord): The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

**Isaiah 37:17** (References Lord): Incline thine ear, O LORD, and hear; open thine eyes, O LORD, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God.

**Isaiah 66:2** (References Lord): For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

**Psalms 17:6** (Parallel theme): I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech.