

Psalms 86:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me; give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid.

Analysis

O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me (פָנֵה-אֲלֵי וְחִנְנֵנִי) —Panah means turn, face toward; chanan means show favor, be gracious, have mercy. **Give thy strength unto thy servant** (תְנַהֵעֶצֶךְ לְעָזְךָ) —tenah-uzzkha le-avdekha) —Oz means strength, power, might. **And save the son of thine handmaid** (וְהַשְׁעֵה לְבָנֵעָמְתָךְ) —Yasha means save, deliver; "son of your handmaid" means a homeborn servant, one belonging to the household by birth.

David uses three petitions: turn toward me, give strength, save me. The final phrase "son of thine handmaid" emphasizes belonging—David isn't a stranger asking favors but a household member by birth right. This prefigures Christian adoption language (Romans 8:15-17, Galatians 4:4-7). We approach God not as outsiders but as family.

Historical Context

In ancient households, children born to a master's servants belonged to the household permanently, unlike hired workers or slaves who might be released. David uses this imagery to claim covenant relationship with God—he's not a hired hand but family.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to ask God to "turn toward" you when you feel he's looking away?
2. How does identifying as "son of your handmaid" (household member by birth) transform your prayer confidence?
3. In what area of life do you most need God's strength imparted to you right now?

Interlinear Text

אָלֵךְ	וְנִזְמַנְתָּה	תְּנַתֵּן	עֲזָבָנָה
O turn	unto me and have mercy	upon me give	thy strength
H413	H2603	H5414	H5797
unto thy servant	and save	the son	of thine handmaid
H5650	H3467	H1121	H519

Additional Cross-References

Philippians 4:13 (Parallel theme): I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Ephesians 6:10 (Parallel theme): Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Psalms 116:16 (Parallel theme): O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds.

Psalms 25:16 (Grace): Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted.

Colossians 1:11 (Parallel theme): Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

Psalms 84:5 (Parallel theme): Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them.

Psalms 69:16 (Parallel theme): Hear me, O LORD; for thy lovingkindness is good: turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies.

Psalms 119:94 (Salvation): I am thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts.

Psalms 119:132 (Grace): Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.

Psalms 90:13 (Parallel theme): Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants.