

Psalms 86:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications.

Analysis

David's urgent plea demonstrates the language of desperate prayer. The imperative **הָאֲזִינָה יְהוָה תַּפְּלָתִי** (ha'azinah YHWH tefillati, 'Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer') uses **הָאֲזִינָה** (ha'azinah), meaning to 'turn the ear' or 'incline to hear'—not casual listening but focused attention. The repetition with **וְהִקְשִׁיבָה** (vehaqshivah, 'and attend') intensifies the request; this verb means to 'pay attention' or 'prick up the ears,' suggesting alert responsiveness. The parallel structure creates poetic emphasis on one central request: be heard by God.

The phrase **בְּקוֹל תַּחֲנוּנוֹתַי** (beqol tachanunai, 'to the voice of my supplications') is revealing—**תַּחֲנוּנוֹת** (tachanunot) derives from 'grace' or 'favor,' suggesting prayers for unmerited mercy rather than earned rewards. The word **קוֹל** (qol, 'voice') emphasizes the personal, vocal nature of David's crying out, not silent meditation but audible petition. This verse assumes God can choose to listen or not, encouraging believers to persist in prayer, trusting God's covenant relationship. David's use of two different verbs for divine hearing suggests nuanced understanding of prayer—God doesn't merely hear sound, but attends to meaning and responds to need.

Historical Context

Psalms 86 is the only psalm in Book III (Psalms 73-89) attributed to David, suggesting it may have been written during the tumultuous period of his reign—possibly during Absalom's rebellion or another crisis. Unlike many psalms, this one

lacks a specific historical superscription, making it universally applicable to times of distress. The psalm is rich with quotations and allusions to earlier Scriptures, showing David's deep knowledge of Israel's prayers and traditions. In ancient Israel, prayer was often vocal and public—the 'voice' of supplication was literal. The temple and tabernacle were places where people cried out audibly to God. This verse reflects the covenant relationship where Israel could confidently approach YHWH, knowing He had promised to hear His people's prayers (Exodus 22:23, 1 Kings 8:28-30).

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to ask God to 'give ear' to prayer—doesn't He always hear?
2. How does the Hebrew concept of 'supplications' (prayers for grace) differ from other types of prayer?
3. Why does David use two different verbs for God's hearing—what nuance does this add?
4. What role does persistence play in prayer, based on David's urgent language?
5. How can we cultivate the kind of confident approach to God that David demonstrates here?

Interlinear Text

הָאֵזְ יָנָה	! הָהָה	תִּפְלֵת י	! הִקְשׁ יָבָה	בֶּק וֹל
Give ear	O LORD	unto my prayer	and attend	to the voice
H238	H3068	H8605	H7181	H6963

תַּחֲנוּנוֹתַי:
of my supplications
H8469

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 130:2 (References Lord): Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.

Psalms 17:1 (Prayer): Hear the right, O LORD, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips.