

Psalms 88:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry;

Analysis

Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry—The psalmist pleads for divine attention using the imperative "let...come before" (תָּבוֹא לִפְנֵיךָ, tavo lefanekha), literally "let it enter before your face." This anthropomorphic language emphasizes personal encounter with God, not mere ritual. The parallel "incline thine ear" (הִטָּה אָזְנוֹךָ, hateh aznekha) pictures God bending down to hear—a gesture of attentive compassion, used elsewhere for God's gracious response to the afflicted (Psalm 17:6, 71:2).

Yet the anguished tone reveals doubt whether God is listening at all. The cry (רִנָּה, rinnah)—often translated as joyful shout—here becomes a desperate shriek. This psalm never receives the assurance found in other laments that God has heard; the prayer remains suspended, unanswered. From a Christological perspective, this verse anticipates Christ's cry from the cross (Matthew 27:46), the ultimate experience of divine silence in the face of suffering.

Historical Context

Psalms 88 is attributed to Heman the Ezrahite, a wise man mentioned alongside Solomon (1 Kings 4:31). The superscription identifies it as a Maschil (instructional psalm) of the sons of Korah. Its liturgical use in Israel's worship is remarkable—the community preserved and sang a psalm ending in unrelieved darkness, acknowledging that not all suffering finds immediate resolution.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. When have you experienced the silence of God despite persistent prayer, and how did you respond?
2. What does it mean that Scripture includes prayers that receive no apparent answer?
3. How does Christ's experience of divine abandonment on the cross validate your own seasons of spiritual darkness?

Interlinear Text

וָא	לְפָנֶיךָ	תְּפִלַּתִּי	הִטָּה	אֶזְנוֹךָ	לְרִנָּתִי
come	before	Let my prayer	thee incline	thine ear	unto my cry
H935	H6440	H8605	H5186	H241	H7440

Additional Cross-References

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.

Lamentations 3:8 (Prayer): Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer.