

Psalms 89:46

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

How long, LORD? wilt thou hide thyself for ever? shall thy wrath burn like fire?

Analysis

How long, LORD? wilt thou hide thyself for ever? (עַד־מָה יְהוָה תִּסְתֵּר לְנֶצַח ad-mah YHWH tissater lanetzach)—the cry "How long?" (ad-mah) appears over a dozen times in Psalms, the quintessential lament question. Satar (hide, conceal) expresses God's terrifying absence. Lanetzach (forever, perpetually) voices the sufferer's fear: Will this abandonment ever end? **Shall thy wrath burn like fire?** (תִּבְעַר כֶּמוֹ־אֵשׁ חֲמַתְךָ tiv'ar kemo-esh chamatekha)—ba'ar means to burn, consume; chemah denotes hot fury.

This raw protest is covenant faith at its most honest. The psalmist doesn't piously accept suffering—he demands answers, holding God to His promises. "How long?" assumes God should respond; it's not atheistic despair but theological wrestling. Christ Himself cried from the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46)—echoing Psalm 22:1 and experiencing the ultimate divine hiding. The answer to "How long?" is: until the third day. God's wrath burned against sin in Christ so it need never burn eternally against believers (Romans 8:1).

Historical Context

The exile lasted 70 years (Jeremiah 25:11-12)—more than a lifetime. For exiles wondering "How long?", God's answer came through Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. But the deeper "hiding" ended only at the incarnation, when "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). God who seemed hidden revealed Himself

fully in Christ. The ultimate answer to divine hiddenness is Immanuel, "God with us" (Matthew 1:23).

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. When have you cried "How long?" to God? Is it spiritually legitimate to demand answers from God?
2. How does Christ's cry of dereliction (Matthew 27:46) validate your experience of feeling God has hidden Himself?
3. What does it mean that God's wrath burned fully against Christ so it need never consume believers (Romans 8:1)?

Interlinear Text

עַד	מָה	יְהוָה	תַּסְתִּיר	לָךְ	תִּבְעַר	כְּמוֹ
H5704	H4100	H3068	H5641	H5331	H1197	H3644
		How long LORD	wilt thou hide	thyself for ever	burn	
שֶׁ	אֵשׁ	תִּמְתַּךְ:				
like fire	shall thy wrath					
H784	H2534					

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 79:5 (References Lord): How long, LORD? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire?

Psalms 78:63 (Parallel theme): The fire consumed their young men; and their maidens were not given to marriage.

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