
A Prayer by David.

PSALM 86: 1 Hear, LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.

The psalmist prays to God for support, from a conviction that he is merciful, good, ready to forgive, and that there is none like him, Psa 86:1-8; all nations shall bow before him because of his wondrous works, Psa 86:9, Psa 86:10; he prays to be instructed, and promises to praise God for his great mercy, Psa 86:11-13; describes his enemies, and appeals to God, Psa 86:14-16; begs a token for God, that his enemies may be confounded, Psa 86:17.

The title attributes this Psalm to David; and in this all the versions agree: but in its structure it is the same with those attributed to the sons of Korah; and was probably made during the captivity. It is a very suitable prayer for a person laboring under affliction from persecution or calumny.

Verse 1

Bow down thine ear - Spoken after the manner of men: I am so low, and so weak, that, unless thou stoop to me, my voice cannot reach thee.

Poor and needy - I am afflicted, and destitute of the necessaries of life.

PSALM 86: 2 Preserve my soul, for I am godly. You, my God, save your servant who trusts in you.

Verse 2

Preserve my soul - Keep it as in a strong place.

For I am holy - **כי חשיד אני** ki chasid ani, for I am merciful. The spirit of this prayer is, "The mercy I to others show,

That mercy show to me!"

Save thy servant - I have long taken thee as my Master and Lord; I receive the word from thy mouth, and obey thee.

PSALM 86: 3 Be merciful to me, Lord, for I call to you all day long.

Verse 3

Be merciful unto me - I have no merit; I plead none, but trust in thee alone.

I cry unto thee daily - My state deeply affects me; and I incessantly cry for thy salvation.

PSALM 86: 4 Bring joy to the soul of your servant, for to you, Lord, do I lift up my soul.

Verse 4

Rejoice the soul of thy servant - I want spiritual blessings; I want such consolations as thou dost impart to them that love thee; I present that soul to thee which I wish thee to console.

PSALM 86: 5 For you, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive; abundant in loving kindness to all those who call on you.

Verse 5

For thou, Lord, art good - I found my expectations of help on thy own goodness through which thou art always ready to forgive. And I found it also on thy well-known character, to which all thy followers bear testimony, viz., that "thou art plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee."

PSALM 86: 6 Hear, LORD, my prayer. Listen to the voice of my petitions.

Verse 6

Give ear, O Lord - Attend to me. Millions call upon thee for help and mercy; but who has more need than myself? That the psalmist was deeply in earnest, his conduct shows.

1. He prayed.
 2. His prayer was vehement; he lifted up his voice.
 3. He continued in prayer; he abounded in supplications.
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PSALM 86: 7 In the day of my trouble I will call on you, for you will answer me.

Verse 7

Thou wilt answer me - Because thou art good, merciful, and ready to forgive; and I call upon thee fervently, and seek thee in thy own way.

PSALM 86: 8 There is no one like you among the gods, Lord, nor any deeds like your deeds.

Verse 8

Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord - None that trusted in an idol ever had help in time of need; none that prayed to any of them ever had an answer to his petitions. Thou savest; they

cannot; thou upholdest; they must be upheld by their foolish worshippers. Thou art my Director, אֲדֹנָי Adonai; but they cannot direct nor teach; they have mouths, but they speak not.

PSALM 86: 9 All nations you have made will come and worship before you, Lord. They shall glorify your name.

Verse 9

All nations - Thy word shall be proclaimed among all the Gentiles: they shall receive thy testimony, and worship thee as the only true and living God.

PSALM 86: 10 For you are great, and do wondrous things. You are God alone.

Verse 10

For thou art great - Almighty, infinite, eternal.

And doest wondrous things - ועשה נפלאות veoseh niphlaoth; thou art the Worker of miracles. This thou hast done in numerous instances, and thereby showed thy infinite power and wisdom.

This appears to be a prophecy of the calling of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ, and the evidence to be given to his Divine mission by the miracles which he should work.

Thou art God alone - Σὺ εἶ ὁ Θεὸς μόνος ὁ μέγας - Sept. Thou art the only, The Great God. In this the Ethiopic and Arabic agree.

PSALM 86: 11 Teach me your way, LORD. I will walk in your truth. Make my heart undivided to fear your name.

Verse 11

Teach me thy way - Instruct me in the steps I should take; for without thy teaching I must go astray.

Unite my heart - יחד לבבי yached lebabi, join all the purposes, resolutions, and affections of my heart together, to fear and to glorify thy name. This is a most important prayer. A divided heart is a great curse; scattered affections are a miserable plague. When the heart is not at unity with itself, the work of religion cannot go on. Indecision of mind and division of affections mar any work. The heart must be one, that the work may be one. If this be wanting, all is wrong. This is a prayer which becomes the mouth of every Christian.

PSALM 86: 12 I will praise you, Lord my God, with my whole heart. I will glorify your name forever more.

Verse 12

I will praise thee - with all my heart - When my heart is united to fear thy name, then shall I praise thee with my whole heart.

PSALM 86: 13 For your loving kindness is great toward me. You have delivered my soul from the lowest Sheol.

Verse 13

Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell - This must mean more than the grave; a hell below hell - a place of perdition for the soul, as the grave is a place of corruption for the body.

PSALM 86: 14 God, the proud have risen up against me. A company of violent men have sought after my soul, and they don't hold regard for you before them.

Verse 14

The assemblies of violent men - עֲדַת עֲרִיצִים adath aritsim, the congregation of the terrible ones. Men of violent passions, violent counsels, and violent acts; and, because they have power, terrible to all.

Have not set thee before them - Who sins that sets God before his eyes? Who does not sin that has no consciousness of the Divine presence?

PSALM 86: 15 But you, Lord, are a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness and truth.

Verse 15

But thou, O Lord - What a wonderful character of God is given in this verse! אֲדֹנָי Adonai, the Director, Judge, and Support; - but instead of אֲדֹנָי Adonai, thirty-four of Kennicott's MSS. have יהוה Jehovah, the self-existent and eternal Being; - אֵל El, the strong God; רַחוּם rachum, tenderly compassionate; חַנוּן channun, the Dispenser of grace or favor; אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם erech appayim, suffering long, not easily provoked; רַב חֶסֶד rab chesed, abundant in blessings; and אֱמֶת emeth, faithful and true. Such is the God who has made himself more particularly known to us in Christ. The scanty language of our ancestors was not adequate to a full rendering of the original words: "And thou driht God gemildsiend, and mildheort, gethyldig and mucel mildheortnyse and sothfaest - And thou, Lord God, art mild, and mildhearted, patient, and of much mildheartedness, and soothfast," - steady in truth.

In the old Psalter the language is but little improved: And thou Lorde God mercier, and merciful, sufferand, and of mykel mercy, and sothefast.

The word mercier is interpreted, do and dede of mercy.

PSALM 86: 16 Turn to me, and have mercy on me! Give your strength to your servant. Save the son of your handmaid.

Verse 16

O turn unto me - He represents himself as following after God; but he cannot overtake him; and then he plays that he would turn and meet him through pity; or give him strength that he might be able to hold on his race.

Give thy strength unto thy servant - The Vulgate renders, Daniel imperium tuum puero tuo, "Give thy empire to thy child." The old Psalter. Gyf empyre to thi barne, and make safe the son of thi hand mayden. Thi barne - thy tender child. Anglo-Saxon; thy knave; signifying either a serving man or a male child. As many servants were found to be purloiners of their masters' property, hence the word knave, became the title of an unprincipled servant. The term fur, which signifies a thief in Latin, for the same reason became the appellative of a dishonest servant.

Quid domini facient, audent cum talia Fures?

When servants (thieves) do such things, what may not be expected from the masters?

Virg. Ecl. 3:16.

So Plautus, speaking of a servant, Aulul. 2:46, says: Homo es trium literarum, "Thou art a man of three letters," i.e., Fur, a thief. The word knave is still in use, but is always taken in a bad sense. The paraphrase in the old Psalter states the handmaid to be the kirk, and the son of this handmaid to be a true believer.

PSALM 86: 17 Show me a sign of your goodness, that those who hate me may see it, and be shamed, because you, LORD, have helped me, and comforted me.

Verse 17

Show me a token for good - עשה עמי אות אזה "Make with me a sign." Fix the honourable mark of thy name upon me, that I may be known to be thy servant. There seems to be an allusion here to the marking of a slave, to ascertain whose property he was. The Anglo-Saxon, "do with me a token in good." Old Psalter: Do with me signe in gude. From tacn we have our word token, which signifies a sign, mark, or remembrancer of something beyond itself; a pledge that something, then specified, shall be done or given. Give me, from the influence of thy Spirit in my heart, a pledge that the blessings which I now ask shall be given in due time. But he wished for such a sign as his enemies might see; that they might know God to be his helper, and be confounded when they sought his destruction.