

Psalm 86: Tender Devotion



Psalm 86 (85) (Mode 3. 3....12 / 4.....271)

The psalmist sings of his tender devotion to God and his trust in God's kindness. God has already saved him from death. Now he asks for another sign of God's favour.

Seven times he calls God 'Lord' ('adonay) [Hebrew: אֲדֹנָי], and four times YHWH [יהוה]. In later times the practice arose of saying Adonai whenever YHWH appeared in the written text.

The title reads: 'A Prayer of David'. It is the only psalm in Book III (Psalms 73-89) to mention David in the title (see the conclusion to Psalm 72).

Listen closely to me, YHWH,
answer me, for I am poor and needy.

‘This is the one to whom I will look, to the humble and
contrite in spirit, who trembles at my word’(Isaiah 66:2).

Watch over me, for to you I am devoted.
Save your servant, for I put my trust in you.

You are my God. Be gracious to me, O Lord,
for to you I cry all day long.

Give joy to your servant,
for to you, Lord, I lift up my soul.

You, my Lord, are good and forgiving,
abounding in kindness to all who call.

Listen, YHWH, to my prayer;
attend to my cry.

In the day of my trouble I call on you,
knowing you will answer me.

‘If you, Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who
could stand? But there is forgiveness with you, so
that you may be revered’(Psalm 130:3-4)

There is none like you among the gods, O Lord.
There are no deeds like yours.

‘Who is like you, Lord, among the gods?
Who is like you, majestic in holiness,
awesome in splendour, doing wonders?’(Exodus 15:11)

‘Who in the skies can be compared to the Lord?
Who among the heavenly beings is like the Lord,
a God feared in the council of the holy ones,
great and awesome above all that are around him?’
(Psalm 89:6-7)

‘What god in heaven or on earth can perform
deeds and mighty acts like yours!’(Deuteronomy 3:24)

All the nations you formed will come
and bow down before you. O Lord.

They will glorify your name,
for indeed you are great.

You do wondrous things;
you who alone are God.

‘Lord of hosts, God of Israel, who are enthroned
above the cherubim, you are God, you alone ... So
now, Lord our God, save us from his hand, so that
all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you
alone are Lord’(Isaiah 37:16,20).

‘Let them know that you alone, whose name is the Lord, are the Most High over all the earth’(Psalm 83:18).

‘Ezra said: You are the Lord, you alone; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. To all of them you give life, and the host of heaven worships you’(Nehemiah 9:6).

Teach me your way, YHWH,
that I may walk in your truth.

The psalmist is confident that he will walk securely because of God's faithfulness to him, and he is praying that he will be faithful to God.

Give me an undivided heart
that I may revere your name.

'I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for all time, for their own good and the good of their children after them'(Jeremiah 32:39).

'Do not disobey the fear of the Lord; do not approach him with a divided mind'(Sirach 1:28).

I thank you, O Lord my God, with all my heart,
and I will honour you forever.

For great is your kindness toward me.

You have rescued me from the grave.

‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.
You shall love the Lord your God with all your
heart’(Deuteronomy 6:4-5).

O God, the insolent rise up against me;
a band of ruffians seeks my life.
They give no thought to you.
But you, O Lord, are God.

‘Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in their hearts; there is no fear of God before their eyes.’

(Psalm 36:1)

You are tenderly compassionate.

You are gracious.

You are slow to anger,
abounding in faithful love.

This creedal formula expresses the essential idea of
God as found throughout the Hebrew scriptures.

See Exodus 34:6; Joel 2:13; Job 4:2; Psalm 103:8, 111:4, 145:8;
Nehemiah 9:17,31.

Turn to me and be gracious.

Give your strength to your servant.

Save the child of your serving girl.

Show me a sign of your favour.

So that those who hate me may see it

and be put to shame,

because you, YHWH,

are my help and my comfort.