

## Psalm 86

16th Sunday Year A  
Morning Prayer Wednesday Week 3  
Night Prayer Monday

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' ('<sup>a</sup>dōnāy) [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).

The psalmist is feeling abandoned in a state of misery and need, but knows he can call upon YHWH.

This is the one to whom I will look, to the  
humble and contrite in spirit, who trembles at my  
word.

– Isaiah 66:2

'Being' in verse 2, and 'soul' in verse 4, translate the Hebrew *nepeš*. His whole sense of meaning is under threat. See the article 'Being' in the Introduction. He knows he can turn to the one he calls 'my God'.

This is the only occurrence of the adjective 'forgiving' (Hebrew *sallāh* סָלַח) in the Old Testament. The verb occurs 31 times and always with God as subject. The noun is also found:

If you, YH, should mark our guilt, Lord, who  
could stand? But with you there is forgiveness  
(*s'liḥâ*). For this we revere you.

– Psalm 130:3-4

**<sup>1</sup>Listen closely to me, YHWH\*,  
answer me, for I am poor\* and  
needy\*.**

**<sup>2</sup>Preserve my being\*, for I am  
devoted to you; save your serv-  
ant who trusts\* in you. You are  
my God;**

**<sup>3</sup>be gracious to me, O Lord, for  
to you I cry all day long.**

**<sup>4</sup>Gladden the soul\* of your  
servant, for to you, O Lord, I  
lift up my soul\*.**

**<sup>5</sup>For you, my Lord, are good  
and forgiving, abounding in  
kindness\* to all who call on  
you.**

**<sup>6</sup>Listen, YHWH, to my prayer;  
attend to my cry of supplica-  
tion.**

**<sup>7</sup>In the day of my trouble I call  
on you, for you answer me.**

God's wonderful deeds

**<sup>8</sup>There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any deeds like yours.**

YHWH is the only real God.

Who is like you, YHWH, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendour, doing wonders?

– Exodus 15:11

How many wonderful things you have done, YHWH my God, how many things you have thought up to favour us. There is no one like you.

– Psalm 40:5

You have done great things, O God, who can compare with you?

– Psalm 71:19

Who in the skies can be compared to YHWH? Who is like YHWH among the heavenly beings? God is feared in the council of the holy ones, great and awesome throughout his court

– Psalm 89:6-7

What god in heaven or on earth can perform deeds and mighty acts like yours!

– Deuteronomy 3:24

**<sup>9</sup>All the nations that you have formed will come and bow down before you, O Lord, and glorify your name.**

**<sup>10</sup>For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.**

YHWH of hosts, God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim, you are God, you alone ... So now, YHWH our God, save us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone are YHWH.

– Isaiah 37:16,20

Let them know that you alone, whose name is YHWH, are the Most High over all the earth.

– Psalm 83:18

Ezra said: 'You are YHWH, 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

**<sup>11</sup>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.

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

Hear, O Israel: YHWH is our God, YHWH alone. You shall love YHWH your God with all your heart.

– Deuteronomy 6:4-5

‘Soul’ in verse 13 and ‘life’ in verse 14 translate Hebrew *nepeš*. See the article ‘Being’ in the Introduction. The insolent could not care less about God.

Transgression speaks to the irreligious deep within his heart. God is watching him, but still he experiences no fear.

– Psalm 36:1

This credal 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.

The psalm ends with this supplication.

**<sup>11b</sup>give me an undivided heart\* to revere your name.**

**<sup>12</sup>I will give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with all my heart\*, and I will glorify\* your name forever.**

**<sup>13</sup>For great is your kindness\* toward me; you have delivered my soul\* from the depths of Sheol.**

**<sup>14</sup>O God, the insolent rise up against me; a band of ruffians seeks my life\* with no thought of you.**

**<sup>15</sup>But you, O Lord, are a God tenderly compassionate\* and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in kindness\* and faithfulness.**

**<sup>16</sup>Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant; save the child of your serving girl.**

**<sup>17</sup>Show me a sign of your favour, so that those who hate me may see it and be put to shame, because you, YHWH, help me and comfort me.**