

Psalm 85
O God Our Help

Introduction: From book 3 of the Psalms, focusing on The End of the Historical Davidic House. It answers the question, Is God's covenant with David abandoned?

God is referred to as "helper/help" (nearly 12 x) in Exod. 18:4; Deut. 33:7, 29; Ps. 10:14; 27:9; 30:10; 54:4; 70:5; 121:2; 124:8; and 146:5. Women reflect this aspect of God's image in Gen. 2:18, 20.

If one looks and listens carefully, one can hear echoes of Exod. 34:6-7.

Note also the 5 uses of turn/return: 85:1, 3, 4, 6, 8

Superscription: *For the choir director. Of the sons of Korah. A Psalm.*

1) THE PAST: restoration from Exile (second and third person)—**85:1-3**

- Six perfect verbs emphasizing God's completed actions toward Israel

a) **God's pleasure**—85:1 ¹ *O Yahweh, **You showed favor** [Qal pf. *ratsah*] (emphatic) to Your land; You returned [Qal pf. *shub*] the fortunes [shebuth] of Jacob.*

i) It is His land to give to whomever He pleases. He has given it to Israel. However, cf. 85:9, 12.

ii) "Returned the fortunes" is a technical phrase for the restoration of the oppressed and harassed people from Exile. (Willem VanGemeren) (cf. Ps. 14:7; 53:6; 126:1; Jer. 29:14)

b) **God's forgiveness**—85:2 ² *You forgave [Qal pf.] the iniquity of Your people; You covered [Piel pf.] all their sin. Selah.*

i) Cf. Jer. 25:1-11

ii) God answered Daniel's prayers. (Dan. 9:19)

c) **God's anger**—85:3 ³ *You withdrew [Qal pf.] all Your fury; You turned back [Hiphil pf. *shub*] from Your burning anger.*

i) Cf. 2 Kings 17:18; 2 Chron. 36:16-21; Isa. 40:2

2) THE PRESENT: be loyal to us (first person)—**85:4-7**

- Can the experience of forgiveness be repeated now? Is the situation so bad that God will abandon His covenant?
- They are back where they once were, in need of forgiveness.

a) **Two requests**—85:4

i) ⁴ *Turn us back [Qal impv. *shub*], O God of our salvation,*

ii) *And cause Your vexation toward us to cease.*

- iii) As Charles Spurgeon said, It is not that God needs turning from his anger so much as that we need turning from our sin; here is the hinge of the whole matter.
- b) **Three legitimate, yet rhetorical, questions—85:5-6**
- i) ⁵ *Will You be angry with us forever?*
 - ii) *Will You prolong Your anger from generation to generation?*
 - iii) ⁶ *Will **You** (emphatic) not Yourself return [Qal impf. *shub*] to revive us, That Your people may be glad in You?*
- c) **Two requests—85:7**
- i) ⁷ *Show us (lit. “cause us to see”), O Yahweh, Your lovingkindness [*chesed*],*
 - ii) *And give us Your salvation.*
- 3) THE FUTURE: trust in His revealed truth (first, second, and third person)—85:8-13**
- Ultimate fulfillment of this will be in the Millennial Kingdom of Jesus Christ. (Peter Steveson)
- a) **The desire for God’s Word—85:8**
- i) ⁸ *Let me hear what the God, Yahweh, will speak;*
 - ii) *For He will speak peace [*shalom*] (wholeness) to His people, to His holy ones;*
 - iii) *But let them not turn back [Qal impf. *shub*] to folly.*
- b) **The sufficiency of God’s Word—85:9**
- i) ⁹ *Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him,*
 - ii) *Why? That (the Shekinah?) glory may dwell [*shakan*] in our land (cf. 85:1, 12).*
 - (1) The glory cloud gradually (reluctantly) departed in Ezek. 8-11 in @ 586 BC.
 - (a) From the front door (9:3; 10:4) to the East gate by the outer wall (10:18-19) to the Mount of Olives (11:22-23)
 - (2) The glory (in the person of Jesus Christ) is promised to return during the Millennial Kingdom. (Ezek. 43:1-7; 44:4)
 - (a) This helps us establish a date for this psalm, after the prophecy was recorded in Ezekiel.
- c) **The demonstration of God’s Word—85:10-11**
- Heaven and earth are in harmony, no longer in opposition.
- i) God and people: ¹⁰ *Lovingkindness [*chesed*] and truth [*emeth*] have met together; Righteousness [*tsedeq*] and peace [*shalom*] have kissed each other.*
 - ii) From the saved people: ¹¹ *Truth [*emeth*] springs up from the earth,*
 - iii) From God: *And righteousness [*tsedeq*] looks down from heaven.*

d) **The fulfillment of God's Word—85:12-13**

- i) Fertility: ¹² *Indeed, Yahweh will give what is good [tob], And our land (cf. 85:1, 9) will yield its produce.*
- ii) Salvation: ¹³ *Righteousness [tsedeq] will go before Him And will establish the way of His steps.*

4) **Things we need to remember:**

- a) **Rejoice that God's purpose** for Israel will be completed at just the right time.
- b) **Rejoice that God's glory** in the person of Jesus Christ will one day rule from His rightful throne in Jerusalem so that these attributes of God will be manifested on this earth.
- c) **Remember God's self-revelation** of His character and what our response should be: *"Yahweh, Yahweh God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; ⁷ who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."* ⁸ *And Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship. (Exod. 34:6-8)*