



Questions as Prayer in Sefer Tehillim

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(texts from sefaria.org)

I. Questions in Psalms

A. Psalms 22:1-8

(1) For the leader; on *ayyeleth ha-shahar*.^a A psalm of David.

(2) My God, my God,
why have You abandoned me;
why so far from delivering me
and from my anguished roaring?

(3) My God,
I cry by day—You answer not;
by night, and have no respite.

(4) But You are the Holy One,
enthroned,
the Praise of Israel.^b

(5) In You our fathers trusted;
they trusted, and You rescued them.

(6) To You they cried out
and they escaped;
in You they trusted
and were not disappointed.

(7) But I am a worm, less than human;
scorned by men, despised by people.

(8) All who see me mock me;
they curl their lips,^c
they shake their heads.

תהילים כ"ב:א-ח'

(א) לְמִנְצַחַח עַל־אֵילַת הַשָּׁחַר מִזְמוֹר
לְדָוִד:

(ב) אֱלֹהֵי אֱלֹהֵי לָמָּה עָזַבְתָּנִי רְחוֹק
מִיִּשׁוּעָתִי דְבַרִי שְׁאַגְתִּי:

(ג) אֵילָקִי אֶקְרָא יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה תַעֲנֵה
וְלִילָה וְלֹא־דַמְיָה לִי:

(ד) וְאַתָּה קְדוֹשׁ יוֹשֵׁב תְּהִלּוֹת
יִשְׂרָאֵל:

(ה) בְּהַ בְּטַחְנוּ אֲבֹתֵינוּ בְּטַחְו
וְתִפְלְטָמוּ:

(ו) אֵלֶיךָ זָעַקְנוּ וְנִמְלָטוּ בְּהַ בְּטַחְנוּ
וְלֹא־בוֹשׁוּ:

(ז) וְאַנְכֵי תוֹלְעֵת וְלֹא־אִישׁ חֲרַפְתָּ
אָדָם וּבְזוּי עָם:

(ח) כָּל־רְאִי יִלְעָגוּ לִי יִפְטִירוּ בְּשִׁפְהַ
יִגְיְעוּ רֹאשׁ:

B. Psalms 44:18-27

(18) All this has come upon us,
yet we have not forgotten You,
or been false to Your covenant.
(19) Our hearts have not gone astray,
nor have our feet swerved from Your path,
(20) though You cast us, crushed, to where
the sea monster^b is,
and covered us over with deepest
darkness.
(21) If we forgot the name of our God
and spread forth our hands to a foreign
god,
(22) God would surely search it out,
for He knows the secrets of the heart.
(23) It is for Your sake that we are slain all
day long,
that we are regarded as sheep to be
slaughtered.
(24) Rouse Yourself; why do You sleep, O
Lord?
Awaken, do not reject us forever!
(25) Why do You hide Your face,
ignoring our affliction and distress?
(26) We lie prostrate in the dust;
our body clings to the ground.
(27) Arise and help us,
redeem us, as befits Your faithfulness.

תהילים מ"ד:י"ח-כ"ז

(יח) כָּל־זֹאת בָּאתָנוּ וְלֹא שָׁכַחְנוּךָ
וְלֹא־שָׁקַרְנוּ בְּבְרִיתְךָ:
(יט) לֹא־נִסּוּג אַחֲזֹר לְבַגְנוּ וְתַט
אֲשֵׁרֵינוּ מִגַּי אֲרַחֶךָ:
(כ) כִּי דָפִיתָנוּ בְּמִקְוֵם תַּנְיִים וְתַכַּס
עָלֵינוּ בְּצִלְמוֹת:
(כא) אִם־שָׁכַחְנוּ שֵׁם אֱלֹהֵינוּ
וּנְפָרַשׁ כְּפִינֵנוּ לְאֵל זָר:
(כב) הֲלֹא אֱלֹהִים יַחְקֵר־זֹאת
כִּי־הוּא יֹדֵעַ תַּעֲלָמוֹת לֵב:
(כג) כִּי־עָלֶיךָ הִרְגָנוּ כָּל־הַיּוֹם
נָחַשְׁבָנוּ כְּצֹאן טְבָחָה:
(כד) עֹרָה וְלָמָּה תִישָׁן וְאֲדוּשָׁם
הֲקִיצָה אֶל־תִּזְנַח לְנִצָּח:
(כה) לָמָּה־פָּנִיךָ תִסְתָּר תִּשְׁכַּח
עֵינֵינוּ וְלִחְצֵנוּ:
(כו) כִּי שָׁחָה לְעַפָּר נַפְשֵׁנוּ דָבַקָה
לְאַרְץ בְּטֹנְנוּ:
(כז) קוּמָה עֲזֹרְתָה לָנוּ וּפְדֹנוּ
לְמַעַן חֲסִדְךָ: {פ}

Other examples from Psalms: 6:4; 60:12 (//108:12); 74:1;79:1-5; 80:5-14

II. Questions to God

C. Jeremiah 12:1-3

ירמיהו י"ב:א-ג'

(1) You will win, O LORD, if I make claim against You,
 Yet I shall present charges against You:
 Why does the way of the wicked prosper?
 Why are the workers of treachery at ease?
 (2) You have planted them, and they have taken root,
 They spread, they even bear fruit.
 You are present in their mouths,
 But far from their thoughts. (3) Yet You, LORD, have noted and observed me;
 You have tested my heart, and found it with You.
 Drive them out like sheep to the slaughter,
 Prepare them for the day of slaying!

(א) צָדִיק אַתָּה ה' כִּי אָרִיב אֵלֶיךָ אֵת מִשְׁפָּטִים
 אֲדַבֵּר אֵתְךָ מִדּוֹעַ דָּרָה וְשָׁעִים צִלְחָה שְׁלֹן כָּל־בְּגֵדֵי
 בְּגָדִי: (ב) וְנִטְעַתֶם גַּם־שָׂרְשׁוֹ יִלְכוּ גַם־עָשׂוּ פְרִי
 קָרוֹב אֵתְךָ בְּפִיָּהֶם וְרַחֲוֹק מִכְּלִיּוֹתֵיהֶם: (ג) וְאַתָּה
 ה' יִדְעַתָּנִי תִרְאֵנִי וּבְחִנְתָּ לִּבִּי אֵתְךָ הִתְקַם כְּצֹאֵן
 לְטַבְחָה וְהִקְדַּשְׁם לַיּוֹם הַרְגָה: (פ)

D. Exodus 32:11-13

שמות ל"ב:י"א-י"ג

(11) But Moses implored the Lord his God, saying, "Why, Oh Lord', shall Your anger blaze forth against Your people, whom You delivered from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand. (12) Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he delivered them, only to kill them off in the mountains and annihilate them from the face of the earth.' Turn from Your blazing anger, and relent from the evil against Your people. (13) Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, how You swore to them by Your self and said to them: I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, and I will give to your offspring this whole land of which I spoke, to possess forever."

(יא) וַיִּתַּל מֹשֶׁה אֶת־פָּנָיו ה' אֱלֹהָיו וַיֹּאמֶר
 לָמָּה ה' יַחַרְה אַפָּיךָ בְּעַמֶּךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתָ
 מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּכַח גְּדוֹל וּבְגֵד חֲזָקָה: (יב)
 לָמָּה יֹאמְרוּ מִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר בְּרָעָה הוֹצִיאָם
 לְהַרְג אֶתֶם בְּהָרִים וּלְכַלְתֶּם מֵעַל פְּנֵי
 הָאָדָמָה שׁוֹב מִחֲרוֹן אַפָּיךָ וְהִנַּחְתֶּם עַל־הָרָעָה
 לַעֲמֹה: (יג) זָכֹר לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל
 עַבְדֶּיךָ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לָהֶם בְּךָ וַתְּדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים
 אַרְבָּה אֶת־זַרְעֲכֶם כְּכּוֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם
 וְכָל־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתִּי אֲתֹן
 לְזַרְעֲכֶם וְנַחֲלוּ לָעַלְמִים:

III. Questions in Babylonian Trial Records

E. Lawsuit from Alalakh (Old Babylonian: early-mid 2nd millennium BCE)

(1–3) Concerning the estate of Ammurabi's wife, Abbael brought suit (*dīnam igrēma*) against his sister, Bittatti.

(4) [Th]us [he (said)]: "The entire [house] is mine. Bit[ta]ti, you have no part in the house" (*ūl ballāti*).

(5–12) [B]ittatti [(said) thus:] ". . . in the town of Suḫaruwa, [through] my [m]other I have a part. [W]hy ([*am*]-*mi*-[*nim*]) do you seek (*tuba*)^u an extra share? I, with you (*anāku ittīka*), together, we shall divide our father's estate!"

(13–14) They sued each other. They came before Niqmepa, the king.

(15–18) Before Niqmepa, Abiadu spoke his testimony (to the effect) that Bittatti had a share in the property.

(19–24) The king (said) thus: "Abbael shall choose and take possession of the property he wishes from the property. Bittatti shall take the property he rejects." This is what the king said.

(25–27) Gimil-Addu and Niwari-adu, the royal officials (?), were sent to divide the property.

(28–29) Abbael chose and took possession of the upper house with a loft.

(30–31) He gave the lower house to Bittatti, his sister.

(32–37) From this day, they shall not turn back, concerning Bittatti's property-share, nor raise a claim—Abbael against Bittatti nor Bittatti against Abbael.

(38–41) Whoever raises a claim shall pay 500 shekels of gold to the palace, and shall forfeit his share. (42–49) 9 Witnesses. Date.

F. Trial Record from Uruk (Neo-Babylonian: 6th century BCE)

Ibni-Nabû, an oblate of Ištar of Uruk . . . said thus to Nabû-mukīn-apli, the *šatammu* of the Eanna . . . and the assembly of the *mār banî*:

"For the past ten years, Anu-šarra-ušur, the official in charge of the building wing, (illegally) removed many things from the storehouse in my charge."

Nabû-mukīn-apli, *šatammu* of the Eanna, said thus to Ibni-Nabû:

"Why (*minamma*) did you not report (this) to the *šatammu* or the royal official who was appointed before me, and, after I was appointed, (why) did you not report (it)? Now, whatever you see in his possession, bring and show us!"