

# *Ponderings in the Psalms*

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The following is a Messianic Study on

## *Psalm 13*

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ברית חדשה

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If you don't know Yeshua as your Messiah, we encourage you to search out the Scriptures for yourself. God promised in the book of Jeremiah, "*You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart*" (Jeremiah 29:13). And we hope you will make contact with us so that we can share more about the Messiah, His life and ministry.

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# Pondering Psalm 13

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## *The faithful servant having the blues*

### **Introduction**

In this psalm David describes his state of mind. After reading and re-reading this psalm over and over, it seems that despite the lack of change in the hopeless situation David continues to rejoice in the Lord. The psalm reads as a brutally honest and deeply personal lament. This is the life of the believer, yes we too will have troubles (1 Peter 4:12) and we too should rejoice, even in troubled times (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

David described three obstacles he perceived: a sense of abandonment by God (spiritual), his inconsolable feelings (psychological) and his enemies (physical).

David describes his troubles very honestly. Through David God made sure that we knew that it's ok to cry-out to Him and weep. Don't get me wrong though, it is not ok to endlessly whinge. You know what I mean, those continual 'self-pity-party' complaints where we forget that God is on the throne and that nothing escapes His attention. David saw all the troubles clearly, he was honest and yet he did not lose hope. Elsewhere this is expressed three times, in Psalm 42:5, 11 and 43:5:

“Why are you in despair, O my soul?  
And why are you disturbed within me?  
Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him.”

David was not the only saint that suffered. Moses heard the murmurings and complaints of the Jewish people over and over (and over) again. He suffered greatly and even when he knew that he had been denied entrance into the Promised Land, he still concluded the Book of Deuteronomy (31:30-32:47) on a two-fold note of praise. Firstly, there is the song “הַשִּׁירָה” (*ha'shirah*) and then the blessing “הַבְּרָכָה” (*ha'brachah*). Think about Job and Jeremiah; or Paul and Silas, who were stripped naked, beaten within an inch of their lives and then thrown into the pit (Acts 16:22-23). During that evening and into the night they were found praying and singing psalms to God (Acts 16:25). I can imagine them singing this psalm or Psalm 103 “... *Bless the LORD, O my soul,.. who redeems your life from the **pit**, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, ....*” And of course think of Messiah Yeshua, the author and perfecter of our faith, “*who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame*” (Hebrews 12:2a). Knowing that the hour of His suffering had come, Yeshua celebrated the Passover and then sang the Hallel (these are Psalms 113-118 & 136). They are also known as the Praise Psalms (Matthew 26:30). He sang the Hallel even though He was greatly troubled (verse 38).

### **In this Psalm David gives us a model for prayer for when we are discouraged:**

1. When we are disheartened be honest with God, let Him know your thoughts and feelings (Psalm 13:1-2).
2. Request that God turns towards you again (Psalms 13:3-4)
3. Continue to trust in the Lord, for He was and is looking after you (Psalm 13:5-6).

### **Note the Numerical Arrangement**

1. **David complains four times** *How long..*(verses 1-2)
2. **David shares three requests** *Consider, Answer & Enlighten* (verse 3)

3. **David confesses three fears** Sleep the sleep of death, my enemy, my adversaries  
(verses 3-4)
4. **David gives two responses to trusting in God's Mercy** Rejoice and Sing His praise!  
(verses 5-6)

**Study note:** If you are reading this Psalm in a Jewish edition you will note that the verses are split differently.

### Psalm 13:1-2 the lament

1 For the Chief Musician, a Psalm of David.  
**How long**, O LORD? Will You forget me forever?  
**How long** will You hide Your face from me?  
 2 **How long** shall I take counsel in my soul,  
 Having sorrow in my heart all the day?  
**How long** will my enemy be exalted over me?

### Comment

(Superscript) This is a Psalm מִזְמוֹר (*mitzmor*). The word indicates that it was to be accompanied with musical instruments. It was written by King David and given to the choir director, the supervisor of the music in the Tabernacle and later the Temple. The position of “choir director” is mentioned some 55 times in the Psalms alone (Psalms 4-6, 8-9, 11-14 etc). In Hebrew, the choir director is always mentioned first in the opening line, perhaps indicating that he has “copyright” over the Music by the Chief Musician and Words by King David or the Sons of Korah. The words of songs have been preserved for us but the music hasn't so we do not know what it sounded like. The Jewish translator, who wrote the Greek edition of the Bible (Septuagint, or LXX), wrote “For the end, a Psalm of David.” They saw a link between the word מְנַצֵּחַ (*m'nats-tseach*) for the *choir-director* and נָצַח (*natsach*), meaning enduring as if to never end.

*How Long, O LORD*, it is probable that this was written during the time when King Saul persecuted David, and when David's friends, counselors and even his family had abandoned him. Reflecting on the life of David, we see that he is relentlessly pursued by Saul and that he flees from place to place. From his initial flight we see the following stops, Naioth in Ramah (1 Samuel 19:19), Philistine country of Gath (1 Samuel 21:10), Cave of Adullam (1 Samuel 22:1), the wilderness of Ziph (1 Samuel 23:15-29); the wilderness of Maon (1 Samuel 23:25) and Engedi (1 Samuel 23:28). The list goes on and on up to 1 Samuel 31. All the time he was being chased and hunted by Saul and his henchmen he must have wondered if today was the day he would die at the hands of Saul.

It is during this time he laments four times אֲדֹנָי-יְהוִה (ad-anah) **How long**, this feeling is not just repeated here but throughout the book of Psalms: “O God, why have You cast us off forever?” (74:1); “Awake, why do You sleep, O Lord? Arise, cast us not off forever. Why do You hide Your face and forget our affliction and our oppression?” (44:24-25); “How long, Lord? Will You be angry forever?” (79:5).

#### 1. **How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever?**

It would not have been easy for David to write these words. The covenant making God seems to have abandoned David leaving him despondent (Psalm 51:11). The life of the believer is not only mountain tops but also dark valleys of the shadow of death (Job 10:21-22; Psalms 44:19). Reading this psalm feels more like reading Lamentations or parts of Jeremiah, it is

not the sweet songs of joy and happiness, but the weeping lamenting of the sufferings of David.

## 2. How long will You hide Your face from me?

*Hide Your face* is a phrase that is repeated over and over in the Psalms (13:1; 27:9; 44:24; 51:9; 69:17; 88:14; 102:2; 104:29; 143:7.) God declared that He would surely hide His face and forsake Israel temporarily because of all the evil Israel would do (Deuteronomy 31:17-18). Yet in this Psalm we do not sense that God is hiding His face because David sinned.

An honest reading of the scriptures of the life of Jeremiah or Job shows that God will allow our faith to be tested. In Job's case God even allowed Satan (Job 1-2) to torment him and Job expresses that same feeling of being abandoned by God (Job 10:1).

## 3. How long shall I take counsel in my soul?

David laments how long, do I take advice from my own emotions and intellect, rather than hear from God.

## 4. Having sorrow in my heart all the day?

This is an example of Hebrew poetry. This line parallels verse 3, for now David's own counsel could not bring consolation into his life, but only added to his worries. Rephrasing this complaint it could read: *How long will I think these thoughts, How long will I sorrow.*

## 5. How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

Note David here focuses on his personal nemesis King Saul, who sought David's life continually (Psalm 12:8).

## Psalm 13:3-4 the request

**3 Consider and answer me, O Lord my God;  
Enlighten my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,  
4 And my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"  
And my adversaries will rejoice when I am shaken.**

### Comment

David asks the Lord to ponder his situation and respond to the obstacles mentioned in his laments above and to the enemy and adversaries who are about to be described.

So he asks that his eyes that are dimmed with grief *הָאֵיירָה* (*ha-irah*) be enlightened. This means to be brought back to life (see Psalm 38:10 and Lamentations 5:17), that God's face might shine on him *הָאֵיירָה* (*ha-irah*) (Psalms 31:16). This links it to the Aaronic benediction in Numbers 6:22-27. For without God's presence, his light and life seemed lost, and then he will "**sleep the sleep of death,**" a perpetual sleep leading to death (Jeremiah 51:39, 51:57).

David described both his enemies, King Saul and now his henchmen, *the adversaries* who with their aim wanted to overcome him. They wanted to kill David or at least have him shaking in his boots. David is so sorely troubled by them that at one point he even fled to Gath and hides with the Philistines (1 Samuel 21:10-15), pretending that he had gone mad.

As such the request to the LORD "**Enlighten my eyes**" means more than just dry my tears. It means revive my sight and make Your face shine on me, Lord be gracious unto to me. It is a revitalization of life itself.

## Psalm 13:5-6 trust and rejoice

**5 But I have trusted in Your lovingkindness;  
My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.**

**6 I will sing to the Lord,  
Because He has dealt bountifully with me.**

### Comment

Though there was no change in the situation, David clung to his confidence in the Lord “*And I in your loving-kindness trust*”.

It was the lesson that Job had taught David, “Though He (the Lord) slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him.” Job 13:15. And that is what we saw David do, he presented his lament, his complaint, nevertheless his hope in the Lord is steadfast.

And so he sings “I will sing to the Lord, because He has dealt *bountifully* with me.” While I do not believe David had the Millennial or Eternal kingdom in mind, I am aware that only in the end is there the promise for a better life (John 16:33). And until then we should pray and rejoice in our salvation.

I love the simplicity of the faith of Corrie Ten Boom who acknowledged that while in solitary prison for months she felt depressed and alone. Many years later in reflection on that time she said: “If you look at the world, you’ll be distressed. If you look within, you’ll be depressed. If you look at God you’ll be at rest.”

Corrie Ten Boom struggled with depression, as did and many of the saints (amongst them are Job, David, Elijah, Martyn Lloyd Jones, C.S. Lewis and Charles Spurgeon). With them, we need to simply trust the Lord and rejoice in His salvation.

### Where does this leave us?

There will be times in our lives when we might live with the blues and feel God is far, far away. Then as always we can and should be honest with God, and cry out even though the gates of heaven over our heads may seem like bronze. The situation might not make us want to praise God, but it seems to be one medication we can take. The other medication would be to share your heart with the Lord and with the saints, so that together we can carry the load “*Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Messiah*” (Galatians 6:2).

Friends, let us be honest with God at all times, ask Him to turn towards us again and continue to trust in the Lord, for He is good.

*Selah*

*Shalom in Messiah*

*Paul & Sue*