

Ponderings in the Psalms

The following is a Messianic Study on

Psalm 20

By Paul Cohen, Messianic Bible Teacher.
Brit Chadashah (Sydney)
www.BCSydney.com



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The *Pondering* studies were published in the Brit Chadashah Newsletter. Brit Chadashah (*New Covenant*) is a Messianic Fellowship in Sydney. Led by Paul Cohen a Jewish believer in Messiah Yeshua (Jesus). We meet together fortnightly for Bible studies from a Messianic Jewish Perspective. We are a unique fellowship made up of Jewish and Gentile people who are believers in Yeshua as the promised Messiah of Israel.

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.

Brit Chadashah is part of Celebrate Messiah (Australia). Celebrate Messiah's desire is to bring the Good News message of Messiah to the Original Messengers and to see God's Chosen People fully restored through faith in Yeshua the Messiah. Celebrate Messiah was founded in 1995 by Lawrence and Louise Hirsch. Lawrence is a Jewish believer in Yeshua. <http://www.CelebrateMessiah.com.au>.

Brit Chadashah is committed to building the Messianic Community of Jews and Gentiles who are a living testimony for Yeshua the Messiah. By donating to Brit Chadashah, you are partnering with us to do the work of "Reaching the Original Messengers". The funds will be used in outreach to Jewish people as well as in educating Christians in effective ways to reach out.

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Brit Chadashah; P.O. Box 304; Caulfield South, VIC 3162, Australia
Email: bc@celebratemessiah.com.au
Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/BritChadashah.Sydney>
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Pondering Psalm 20

Psalm 20:1-9

1 For the choir director. A Psalm of David.

May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble!
May the Name of the God of Jacob set you securely on high!
2 May He send you help from the sanctuary
And support you from Zion!
3 May He remember all your meal offerings
And find your burnt offering acceptable!

Selah.

4 May He grant you your heart's desire
And fulfil all your counsel!
5 We will sing for joy over your victory,
And in the Name of our God we will set up our banners.
May the LORD fulfil all your petitions.

6 Now I know that the LORD saves His anointed;
He will answer him from His holy heaven
With the saving strength of His right hand.

7 Some (*trust*) in chariots and some in horses,
But we will remember the Name of the LORD, our God.
8 They have bowed down and fallen,
But we have risen and stood upright.
9 Save, O LORD;
Let the King answer us when we call in the day for help.

Commentary

Introduction

This Psalm is a **prayer** (verses 1-5) and a song of **thanksgiving** (verses 6-9), which the faithful of the people of Israel prayed. It is an intercession for the king's success during the wars; together the people and the king affirm their confidence in God's salvation and pray for the gracious response of the Lord.

Psalm 20-21

The 20th and 21st Psalms are related in that the arrangement and contents overlap. Both include a prayer and a song of thanksgiving for the anointed king who the representative of the LORD. In Psalm 20 the king is preparing to go out to battle while in Psalms 21 the battle is over, the king was victorious. And so the people and the king give thanks to the Lord for the salvation He has brought about.

Setting

There is no clue as to when in David's life this event happened, he had been in many wars (almost annually 2 Samuel 11:1 indicates that in springtime every year the battles happened). Probably this was a battle against Egypt, as the reference to *trusting in chariots and horses*

implies (Exodus 15:1-2; Isaiah 31:1), and the faithful amongst the Jewish people are praying for David that he might be restored to God's favour.

Psalm 20:1-5 Prayer for the King

Note the repeated phrase the *Name of the God*, verse 1, 5 & 7. The name of a person is significant in the Old Testament and sometimes in the New Testament it often reflects who they are. Classic examples would be Nabal (*fool*) in 1 Samuel 25, or Samuel (*heard from God*) in 1 Samuel 1:20. The reflection of His character is even stronger when we meditate on God's Names.

In this Psalm, we see the "Name of the God of Jacob", God is mentioned by this name 23 times in the Scriptures! That is besides a number of similar names for God in connection with Jacob: "Mighty One of Jacob" (Genesis 49:24; Psalm 132:2, 5; Isaiah 49:26, 60:16); the "King of Jacob" (Isaiah 41:21); the "Portion of Jacob" (Jeremiah 10:16 and 51:19) and the "Holy One of Jacob" (Isaiah 29:23). Over 30 times God is called Jacob's God in one form or another, there are many more (over 200) references to the God of Israel, Jacob's other name. This shows us that God has a very high opinion of Jacob, even though many others don't, not only because He is the God of grace and mercy, but because Jacob was like David a man after God's heart seeking the Lord and worshiping even in old age (Genesis 32:22-32, Genesis 47:31, Hebrews 11:21).

And so the people of Israel prayed May the Lord bless you with victory and success, then we will sing of your triumph and set up banners (לְגָדִים *nid'gol* from לִגְדָּה *degel*) in the Name of our God, the word banner is not the same word as in Exodus 17:15, the Lord our Banner (נִסִּי - *Nissi*).

Banners were set up in preparation for war (Jeremiah 51:27) and at the end of the battle to signal who had the victory (Jeremiah 50:2). Here I think it is a declaration of trust, that the Lord will bring victory and so we trust in the name of the LORD our God, may He answer and save his anointed.

Psalms 20:6-8 the confidence for the king

Here the psalm takes a turn, no longer a prayer from the people but a response "Now I know". This expression of confidence is declared by an unknown speaker. Who was he? We don't know but two significant individuals do come to mind who had prayed for David, Nathan the prophet and Zadok the priest. It is possibly one of them who express confidence in the up and coming war because David was the Lord's anointed. And God's right hand; an expression of God's might and power (Psalm 17:7, 60:5) will save him.

In verse 7 we see a comparison between the faithful of Israel and the Gentiles. 'They' the gentile enemy, like Pharaoh (Exodus 14), and Sennacherib (2 Kings 19:23); but also the unfaithful of Israel who relied on chariots and horses (Isaiah 31:1-3). For in the laws for the king (Deuteronomy 17:14-20) it is mentioned that the king *must not acquire many horses* (verse 16) for that would cause him to rely on his own strength. Rather than rely on the strength of the God of Israel; the Rock who would save them (Psalm 18:31; Deuteronomy 20:1). In Psalm 33:16-17 it re-affirms that "*the king is not saved by the size of his army; nor is a warrior by his own great strength. The war horse will bring a false hope for rescue, and even with (all them) there is no escape.*"

The phrase we will remember “the Name of the LORD our God” The Name here refers not to El or Elohim (God) or Adonai (Lord), no it is the Covenant Name of God; Yud, Hey, Vav, Hey (יהוה) Yahweh or Je-Ho-Vah, and is called the “Four-Letter” name of God, or the “Tetragrammaton” in Greek. The Jewish sages tell us the four letters represent the verb *to be*: הָיָה hayah (‘He was’), הוּוֹה hoveh (‘He is’), and יִהְיֶה yihyeh (‘He will be’);, or put together in one Word יהוה the **Eternal!** It is in this Name that God made and will keep the eternal unconditional covenants for He is the Eternal LORD, this is the Covenant Name of God.

We will remember is sharply contrasted to the misplaced trust of the heathen. They will bow down; here the defeat of the enemy and the triumph of Israel is not based on human strength, but the Eternal will bring victory and establish David’s kingdom because of the promises to him.

Finally the people pray once more *Save LORD! Let the King answer us when we call.* For You are the LORD who saves, and may your representative respond to our cry.

An application

This psalm presents three simple guidelines for Israel and for all God’s people in their fight against the enemy.

1. The faithful and the king (leader) must be a praying people (Psalm 20:1-5; 1 Timothy 2:1-3).
2. The king (leader) must lead out of God’s conviction (Psalm 20:6-8). The starting point for Biblical leadership is not the leader but the Eternal Himself and the truths that He has revealed in His word to us.
3. There must be a continual reliance on the Lord (Psalm 20:9).

Selah
Blessings in Messiah
Paul & Sue