

Ponderings in the Psalms

The following is a Messianic Study on

Psalm 21

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Brit Chadashah
ברית חדשה

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>.

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Pondering Psalm 21

¹ *For the choir director. A Psalm of David.*
O Lord, in Your strength the king will be glad,
And in Your rescue¹ how greatly he will rejoice!
² *You have given him his heart's desire,*
And You have not withheld the request of his lips.
Selah.

³ *For You meet him with the blessings of good things;*
You set a crown of fine gold on his head.

⁴ *He asked life of You,*
You gave it to him,
Length of days forever and ever.

⁵ *His glory is great through Your rescue,*
Splendour and majesty You place upon him.

⁶ *For You make him most blessed forever;*
You make him joyful with gladness in Your presence.

⁷ *For the king trusts in the Lord,*
And through the lovingkindness of the Most High he will not be shaken.

⁸ *Your hand will find out all your enemies;*
Your right hand will find out those who hate you.

⁹ *You will make them as a fiery oven in the time of your anger;*
The Lord will swallow them up in His wrath,
And fire will devour them.

¹⁰ *Their offspring You will destroy from the earth,*
And their descendants from among the sons of men.

¹¹ *Though they intended evil against You*
And devised a plot,
They will not succeed.

¹² *For You will make them turn their back;*
You will aim with Your bowstrings at their faces.

¹³ *Be exalted, O Lord, in Your strength;*
We will sing and praise Your power.

Introduction

(Note the Jewish translations have the superscript as verse 1, which means that verse 2 is verse 1 in Christian translations, verse 2 is verse 3 etc etc).

¹ Many of if not most have “salvation” but the word יְשׁוּעָה “yeshuat” and generally the word yeshuah יְשׁוּעָה carries the meaning of physical rescuing in the Tanach (Older Testament).

Psalm 20-21

Psalms 20 and 21 are connected by the way they are written, and their contents overlaps. Both include a *Prayer* and a *Song of thanksgiving* for the anointed who is the king who is the representative of the LORD.

In Psalm 20 we noted the king who was 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 triumph He has brought about.

Messianic Connection

In both Jewish and Christian circles Psalm 21 is considered Messianic. Counting the references back to this Psalm in the Jewish literature; the Targum; the rabbinic commentary of the Midrash and the Talmud collectively they have some 20 references to Messiah the King. As such the greatest Jewish commentator Rashi attaches the same interpretation this is about *King Messiah*, though his comment in the Talmud, *Bavli Succah 52a*, which quotes Psalm 21:1 Rashi remarks that this Messianic interpretation ought rather to be given up for the sake of the believers in Messiah “*Our Rabbis interpreted it as referring to the King Messiah, but the matter may correctly be interpreted further as referring to David himself, in order to refute the sectarians*”.

In light of the comment by Rashi and noting that the rabbinic writings refer Psalm 21 to the Messiah, I recommend on this connection two books that have collected many Messianic references from the vast ocean of rabbinic writings:

- 1) Tom Huckel, *The Rabbinic Messiah*, (1998) and
- 2) Risto Santala, *Rabbinical Writings and Messiah in the Bible*, (2002). (Online at <http://www.ristosantala.com/>)

Targum

It is well worth reading how Jewish people at the time of Yeshua saw this Psalm here is a quote from the Targum (the Aramaic translation in English, translation by Edward Cook 2001 <http://targum.info/pss/ps1.htm>)

The verses with which this Messianic expectation is associated:

Verse 2: O Lord, in your strength **the King Messiah** will rejoice, and how greatly will he exult in your redemption!

Verse 8: Because **the King Messiah** hopes in the Lord; and through the favour of the Most High he is not shaken.

Not only the translator (the Targumist) saw strong Messianic overtones from the words of King David in verses 1 and 7 but also the hearers, i.e. the faithful who attended. We must remember that in the synagogue at the time of Yeshua a short section of the Hebrew text was read followed by the Aramaic translation so as to clarify the Biblical text for the people who spoke Aramaic.

In connection with the verses the Targum says that the “*King- Messiah*” trusts in the LORD. It is significant that according to the Rabbis the robe and the crown were to be part of the

Messiah's attire. Yeshua on earth was given both a crown and a significant robe (Matthew 27:29; Mark 15:17 & John 19:2-5) they were temporary on Him, but the day is coming when God will crown Him (Psalm 2:6) and His garments will be glory (Psalms 104:2).

Ponderings on this Psalm

Thanksgiving for Past Victories verses 1-7

The Psalms opens up (verses 1-7) with an explicit prayer of thanksgiving directed to God thanking Him for the victory. Note the past tense "*the victories you gave*", the battles are over the king lives another year.

Why are they thanking God? There are blessings mentioned to Israel and the King:

1) *LORD, in Your strength*

God granted victory, and like the battles of the Exodus it is His doing that brought victory (Exodus 14).

2) *You have given him his heart's desire*

Both the people and the king prayed for victory and He has given is to the King.

2) *blessings of good things*

This is the war booty they picked up from the battle, today we would be tempted to ignore this, but it was common practice back then (Genesis 14:13-16), and as this is about King Messiah who in the day of His battle He too will receive His reward (Ephesians 4:8).

3) *Length of days forever and ever*

Not many soldiers live a long live, when year after year they go out to battle, as such a prayer of David that the king should thank God for length of days is fitting.

Prophetically the phrase "Length of days **forever and ever.**" Seems to be a reference back to the Covenant promise of 2 Samuel 7 in which God promised David that his house would last forever. David's Kingdom will find fulfilment in the God-Man the Messianic King Yeshua the Eternal Messiah only in Him can we see the fullness of this Psalm.

4) *Glory, splendour, and majesty*

In the immediate context the people and the king give thanks to the LORD for the glory revealed through the rescue, and now splendour and majesty have been bestowed on David as a result of his victories. But as the rabbis recognised this is about the splendour of Messiah; In light of the New Testament we note that through His victory over sin on our behalf He disarmed rulers (Colossians 2:15) and shared His booty with us which are His manyfold gifts to us.

5) *You make him joyful with gladness in Your presence.*

As I hope you have been able to see with me this is a Messianic Psalm, as such this is when Messiah Yeshua will reign from Jerusalem in the age to come. For God will keep His Covenantal promises, and this is an extension of the Covenant with David (2 Samuel 7:1-17 and 1 Chronicles 17:1-15).

6) *Through the lovingkindness of the Most High*

The King expressed his thanks, for the *chesed*; the mercy and lovingkindness of *Elyon* The first two occurrences of this name of God, is in connection with Gentiles when Melchizedek king of Salem blessed Abram and when Balaam gave his final oracle (Genesis 14 and Numbers 24). You will forgive me, as I read into the text, that here this God (the God of Israel) gave a victory over the Gentiles. If I had to make a guess it would be over the Edomites, as the description of the enemy and the punishment fits the account elsewhere in scripture (Obadiah).

The Lord in Battle verses 8-13

In the second part of this Psalm we see the Lord who battles (Exodus 15:3) and He Himself devoured the enemy, which is something that will happen again for He will come to purify (Isaiah 66:16). In the Church we often hear about “Jesus meek and mild, Look upon a little child” and while Yeshua come to save what was lost, when He returns He will come back as the conquering King (Revelation 19:11-16). Therefore we must present the Saviour also as the King, the Lamb all so as the Lion (Revelation 5:5-6) for it is Yeshua who come as a sacrifice to save but will return as the Lion (Hosea 5:14-15; Micah 5:8) devouring those who opposed Him and His reign.

The Psalm concludes:

¹³ *Be exalted, O Lord, in Your strength;
We will sing and praise Your power.*

Verse 13 is a prophetic declaration of praise and prayer in that the LORD “*Be exalted*” He alone will be lifted high *רומה* (*rumah*), the expression in the Psalms is uniquely to David. Only when the Lord is exalted, lifted on high that we declare that what we have done was only in *His strength* for He prepared it all of the works for us (Ephesians 2:10).

So let us collective rejoice as the Targum renders the last verse

“*Rise up, O Lord, in Your might;
and let us sing, praise and dance in your strength”.*

*Selah
Blessings in Messiah
Paul & Sue*