

# *Ponderings in the Psalms*

---

The following is a Messianic Study on

## *Psalm 22*

By Paul Cohen, Messianic Bible Teacher.  
Brit Chadashah (Sydney)  
[www.BCSydney.com](http://www.BCSydney.com)



**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>.

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.

To Support the Ministry of Brit Chadashah or Paul please go to  
<https://www.celebratemessiah.com.au/donate/>

All "Scripture quotations taken from the (NASB®) New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2020 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. All rights reserved. [www.lockman.org](http://www.lockman.org)" unless otherwise indicated.

For more information on Brit Chadashah, the Sydney Messianic Fellowship:  
Please visit us on the Web [www.BCSydney.com](http://www.BCSydney.com)

© 2021 Brit Chadashah / Paul Cohen  
Brit Chadashah; P.O. Box 304; Caulfield South, VIC 3162, Australia  
Email: [bc@celebratemessiah.com.au](mailto:bc@celebratemessiah.com.au)  
Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/BritChadashah.Sydney>  
YouTube <https://tinyurl.com/BC-Video>

# *Pondering Psalm 22*

## *the Good Shepherd who gives His life for the sheep*

---

### Intro

King David, in about 1000 BCE wrote this Psalm.

### A Trilogy of Psalms

Many have observed how Psalms 22-24 constitute a connected trio, each of the psalms emphasizing the shepherd theme:

Psalm 22 corresponds to Yeshua being the Good Shepherd (**John 10:11**)

Psalm 23 corresponds to Yeshua being the Great Shepherd (**Hebrews 13:20**)

Psalm 24 corresponds to Yeshua being the Chief Shepherd (**1 Peter 5:4**)

There is no known setting that fits the life of David; as such it would appear that this psalm is prophetic and speaks about the Messiah. In this Psalm David wrote about Him being forsaken by God, and the threats of the enemies lay heavily on his heart. David describes that death is close. He refers to a method of execution that did not exist until the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple period (some 600+ years later) and he refers to the enemies as having strong animal motives. Nevertheless the Lord answered the cry for help. We who are in Messiah read this Psalm and understand it is a challenging description of the crucifixion, and a poetic version of Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

### Type

This Psalm is an *individual lament* psalm where the righteous Messiah suffers. It is strongly connected to two prophetic passages Genesis 22:1-18, the Binding of Isaac and the suffering Servant of Isaiah 53.

### Psalm 22

<sup>1</sup> For the choir director; upon Aijeleth Hashshahar. A Psalm of David. My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning. <sup>2</sup> O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer; And by night, but I have no rest. <sup>3</sup> Yet You are holy, O You who are enthroned upon the praises of Israel. <sup>4</sup> In You our fathers trusted; They trusted and You delivered them. <sup>5</sup> To You they cried out and were delivered; In You they trusted and were not disappointed. <sup>6</sup> But I am a worm and not a man, A reproach of men and despised by the people. <sup>7</sup> All who see me sneer at me; They separate with the lip, they wag the head, *saying*, <sup>8</sup> “Commit *yourself* to the Lord; let Him deliver him; Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him.” <sup>9</sup> Yet You are He who brought me forth from the womb; You made me trust *when* upon my mother’s breasts. <sup>10</sup> Upon You I was cast from birth; You have been my God from my mother’s womb.

<sup>11</sup> Be not far from me, for trouble is near; For there is none to help. <sup>12</sup> Many bulls have surrounded me; Strong *bulls* of Bashan have encircled me. <sup>13</sup> They open wide their mouth at me, As a ravening and a roaring lion. <sup>14</sup> I am poured out like water, And all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It is melted within me. <sup>15</sup> My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And my tongue cleaves to my jaws; And You lay me in the dust of death.

<sup>16</sup> For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet. <sup>17</sup> I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; <sup>18</sup> They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots.

<sup>19</sup> But You, O Lord, be not far off; O You my help, hasten to my assistance. <sup>20</sup> Deliver my soul from the sword, My only *life* from the power of the dog. <sup>21</sup> Save me from the lion's mouth; From the horns of the wild oxen You answer me.

<sup>22</sup> I will tell of Your name to my brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You. <sup>23</sup> You who fear the Lord, praise Him; All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, And stand in awe of Him, all you descendants of Israel. <sup>24</sup> For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; Nor has He hidden His face from him; But when he cried to Him for help, He heard. <sup>25</sup> From You *comes* my praise in the great assembly; I shall pay my vows before those who fear Him. <sup>26</sup> The afflicted will eat and be satisfied; Those who seek Him will praise the Lord. Let your heart live forever! <sup>27</sup> All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, And all the families of the nations will worship before You. <sup>28</sup> For the kingdom is the Lord's And He rules over the nations. <sup>29</sup> All the prosperous of the earth will eat and worship, All those who go down to the dust will bow before Him, Even he who cannot keep his soul alive. <sup>30</sup> Posterity will serve Him; It will be told of the Lord to the *coming* generation. <sup>31</sup> They will come and will declare His righteousness To a people who will be born, that He has performed *it*.

## Commentary

The psalm divides into two main parts, the first dealing with the suffering and crucifixion of Messiah in vv. 1–21, followed by His resurrection and exaltation in in vv. 22–31.

### 1. Frustration and faith 22:1-10

David pens about one who is forsaken by God and ridiculed by his enemies, yet also one who has confidence was in the Lord's continuing care.

#### Psalms 22:1-2 Cry for Help

To the choir director, upon *Aijelet Shahar*, upon indicates it might have been an instrument of sorts. This phrase is only used here (some translations have: *on the deer of the dawn*). A song (מִזְמוֹר – mizmor) of David.

This cry by the Messiah can hardly be more dramatic, “Eli Eli Lamah Azavtani” אֱלֹהֵי אֱלֹהֵי לָמָּה עֲזַבְתָּנִי

“My God My God Why have you forsaken me”. These words that Yeshua quoted as He hung on the cross (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34) are amongst the most significant in all of scripture as they are the only ones that are in all three Biblical languages. Here in Psalm 22 it is in Hebrew, Yeshua appears to be quoting the Targum in Matthew, which has a combination of Hebrew (Eli; my God) & Aramaic (sabachthani) followed by the Greek translation while Mark has only Aramaic (*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*; my God, my God why have you forsaken me) followed by the Greek.

These verses express the deep agony of Messiah while hanging on the cross. Yeshua was on the cross for 6 hours, in the first 3 hours He suffers the wrath of men. In the second period He suffers the wrath of God. It is then that He quoted these words, at the end of the three hours of intense darkness.

It is only when the wrath of God was poured out upon Him that He addresses God as “my God” rather than “Father.” It would seem that He was experiencing a judicial relationship with God at that very moment and not a paternal one.

### **22:3-5 His Confession of Trust & Hope of Deliverance**

Regardless of God’s silence, Yeshua expresses His full confidence in God, for God was and is still the Holy One, and just as the Jewish forefathers prayed when in distress and they experienced deliverance, so too Yeshua knows He can trust the Lord for He is able to deliver.

### **22:6-10 Messiah’s humiliation, suffering and trust**

Yeshua compares himself to a worm, expressing his feelings of worthlessness and vulnerability. And indeed his enemies insulted and despised him, even mocking his faith in God because the Lord was not rescuing him (Matthew 27:39, 44). The shaking of the head signifies rejection (Psalm 109:25) or astonishment (Lamentations 2:15).

Nevertheless, Yeshua drew strength by remembering that God had sustained him all his life, even from his birth. Messiah knew He could trust God as such it is a request with confidence.

## **2. Messiah’s enemies and agony 22:11-15**

As the enemies approach, Messiah is well aware of who they are and what it is they want. The enemies are described as strong and dangerous bulls (plural) and a lion. Bulls from Bashan (later named Gilead), a territory east of the Sea of Galilee (Numbers 32:1-5; Amos 4:1), a land known for large and strong cattle.

The animal motive indicates gentiles (strong bulls) and Jews (roaring lion) come together to attack the depicted weak (worm) Messiah. It tells us of the distress He felt because of the attacks of his enemies. David now described Messiah as water poured out, as happened during services within the Tabernacle and later the Temple. Water libations were made, when a jar of water or wine was turned upside down and completely emptied. Messiah too was totally drained of His own strength.

His bones during the crucifixion were all out of joint. A pole would be placed on the ground, a crossbeam attached, and then the person would be nailed to it. After the nailing on the ground, the cross would then be raised vertically and dropped into a hole in the ground deep enough to keep the cross upright. The shock of the drop would cause multiple dislocations, the deeper the drop the more dislocations.

His heart felt like it had melted away like hot wax. This likely indicated his emotional state. He is thirsty but this appears to be more than a physical thirst, for when Yeshua suffered the outpouring of God’s wrath, he experienced what sinners would in Hell (Luke 16:19-31).

### **Messiah’s enemies and agony restated 22:16-18**

The enemies are then compared to dogs, as if they had him surrounded to finish him off. It then says they *pierced* His hands and His feet, this happened when they nailed Him to the cross (Luke 24:39-40).

---

<sup>1</sup> Note that Jewish translations will read differently here: Psalm 22:16 (22:17) “*For dogs have encompassed me; a company of evil-doers have inclosed me; like a lion, they are at my hands and my feet.*” Rather than *they pierced my hands and my feet*. It reads *like a lion כארי* (k’ari), the Dead Sea Scrolls and the oldest Jewish translation the Septuagint both indicate that the reading should be כארי (karu) ‘*pierced*’ as you can see a small

The Hebrew word for piercing used here is not the same as that used in Zechariah 12:10. The word used in Zechariah means “to thrust through” and would be consistent with the Roman spear which pierced Yeshua’s side (John 19:34). The word used here in Psalm 22 is the word which would be used, for example, of an ear or a nose piercing and would be consistent with the nailing of Yeshua’s hands and feet to the cross.

22:17-18 David continues the portrayal of the enemies with a description of the agony. Messiah was evidently weakened and physically spent; his bones were showing prominently under his skin due to loss of weight produced by his distress.

His enemies knew that Messiah would perish so they were already dividing his garments among themselves and casting lots for his clothes. This is precisely what happened when Yeshua was crucified and they divided his garments and cast lots for his mantle (Matthew 27:35).

### **3. Prayer for Rescue 22:19-21**

David writes how Messiah pleaded with God to rescue his life from the fatal attacks of his foes, who he referred to again as wild animals. He cried to God to be near him and to act swiftly to save him.

A marked change in Messiah’s attitude took place in the middle of verse 21. Evidently he received assurance of the Lord’s help because the last part of this verse expresses confidence in His deliverance. This confidence came because He knew God would not allow His body to undergo decay (Psalm 16:10).

Verse 19 “*O You my Help, hasten to my assistance,*” “my Help” (KJV *my strength*) is a word only used here; it might be a Hebrew description for the Lord<sup>3</sup>. And that does fit the Psalm as a whole better, for Messiah is looking to the Lord as His Help!

### **4. The Resurrection of Messiah 22:22-31**

The remainder of the psalm continues this theme of confident assurance of salvation.

22:22 In view of the Lord’s deliverance, Messiah vowed to do two things, 1) tell the story of His deliverance, much like we should (Exodus 10:2; 13:8 etc.) and 2) sing God’s praise publicly and again much like we should (Exodus 15:2; Psalm 42:5, 11 etc.). God did allow His Son to die and taste death, but He raised Him also from the dead, the promise of the resurrection is also for us now, since He is the guarantor the firstborn of the dead (Colossians 1:18). The writer of Hebrews quoted this verse in Hebrews 2:12 as an expression of Yeshua’s praise to God for raising Him from death. What an example to us of someone suffering and yet praising God (James 5:13).

22:23-25 Messiah next called on the descendants of Jacob to join Him in praising God because the LORD had come to His aid. As Messiah had made vows to God during His life, He now promised to complete His vows. Note the change before who, *before those who fear*

---

difference between the two vowel letters, yod (י) and vav (ו). But it is a major difference in interpreting the text. Note that the word for “lion,” is the shortened יָאֵר, not the longer form of “lion” (אֵרִיָּה) that appears in 22:13 and 21.

<sup>2</sup> More explicit “דָּקַר” - “pierced through” as in by stabbing.

<sup>3</sup> See Robert Alter; *The Book of Psalms : a translation with commentary*; 2007; footnote to verse on page 74.

*Him*, no longer just the children of Jacob, Israel but to all who fear the Lord (see verse 27, *all the families of the earth*).

### **22:26-31 The Testimony**

I see Yeshua interpreting verses 26-28 when He said “*blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5:3 & Luke 6:20). The afflicted are the poor and God will be feed them, God’s purpose for Israel is that she would tell His story and sing His praise is extended to the poor, they all will worship before God in Jerusalem. For the King (Psalm 2) is the suffering servant (Isaiah 53) who died and rose and we, all of the families of the earth, are to worship Him.

In verse 28 to 30 we see that the Lord rules over the living (nations) but His kingship does not end there. Even those who go down to the dust, that is the dead, will bow before Him (verse 29), first the saints of old, who are in Abraham’s bosom, will gladly bow the knee, then He address those on the other side, even those *who cannot keep his soul alive*, those in Hades. They too will bow and acknowledge the Lordship of the King (Philippians 2:10-11, Revelation 5:13-14).

Even future generations will serve Him; note the key phrases to serve, to tell and to declare. Who do we serve - Yeshua the Messiah, the coming King, the LORD; what do we declare - what He has done in His righteousness, that He has rescued not only of the Messiah from the dead, but all who are in Him.

### **Conclusion**

Psalm 22 is a graphic description of death by crucifixion. All his bones are out of joint; the intense suffering; the emotional state of the heart; the physical strength exhausted, and extreme thirst; piercing of the hands and feet, are all associated with one method of death; crucifixion.

### **Application**

Jews and Gentiles, who are now in Messiah Yeshua, can learn from this psalm. Even though it may appear that the Lord has forgotten and forsaken us in times of extreme persecution, we can count on Him delivering us from death, in answer to our prayers, for now He has conquered Sin and Death. With this assurance of deliverance, we need to tell what He has done and praise God even today, and encourage others to trust in and worship Him as well.

### **This Psalm in the New Covenant**

“My God, my God” Psalm 22:1 quoted in Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34

The mocking of the onlookers Psalm 22:6-8; see Matthew 27:39-43

The piercing of His hands and feet Psalm 22:16; see John 20:24-27

The casting of lots for His garments Psalm 22:18; see John 19:24

Finally the writer to the Hebrews quoted Psalm 22:22 in Hebrews 2:12 as the words of Yeshua this confirms the view that the psalm is about the Messiah.

Selah

*Blessings in Messiah*

*Paul & Sue*