

Ponderings in the Psalms

The following is a Messianic Study on

Psalm 26

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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.

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Psalm 26

1 A Psalm of David. Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity, And I have trusted in the Lord without wavering. **2** Examine me, O Lord, and try me; Test my mind and my heart. **3** For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes, And I have walked in Your truth.

4 I do not sit with deceitful men, Nor will I go with pretenders. **5** I hate the assembly of evildoers, And I will not sit with the wicked. **6** I shall wash my hands in innocence, And I will go about Your altar, O Lord, **7** That I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving And declare all Your wonders. **8** O Lord, I love the habitation of Your house And the place where Your glory dwells.

9 Do not take my soul away along with sinners, Nor my life with men of bloodshed, **10** In whose hands is a wicked scheme, And whose right hand is full of bribes.

11 But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity; Redeem me, and be gracious to me. **12** My foot stands on a level place; In the congregations I shall bless the Lord.

Author

Psalm 26 is simply titled “Of David”; we are unable to determine when he wrote this psalm. In this psalm David proclaims that he is innocent of something he was accused of. He does not state what the issue was but the issue must have been known to the people. David is not claiming perfection, but David trusted the Lord’s perfect justice on this issue and he prayed that he would be declared innocent on this point.

Summary of Psalm 26:1–12.

After appealing to God’s judgment on his acknowledged integrity and innocence of the charges laid by his enemies, David professes delight in God’s worship, and prays for exemption from the fate of the wicked, expressing assurance of God’s favour.

Verses 1-3 David’s plea for the recognition of his integrity.

David asks the Lord to vindicate him; this request implies that David was unable to defend himself against a charge. Despite the false claim, David declared he is walking in his integrity, by trusting in the Lord without wavering. We see that David expresses a confidence that God would answer his prayer.

He then proclaims a three-fold search: *examine* me, *prove* me; and *try* me. David asks the Lord to examine him as a judge would in a court of law, second to prove or test him, just as God had tested Abraham (Genesis 22) to see if he feared the LORD and finally to try his actions as precious metals are tried for purity. David asks God to examine his heart and mind. His heart, literally his kidney כִּלְיָהּ (*kil-yah*), was seen as the seat of emotions. His mind in Hebrew is his heart לֵב (*lev*), which biblically is the seat of knowledge & understanding, so by putting these together David asks the LORD to check his inner being and his actions.

In verse 3 we see why David asked the LORD to scrutinise him, for David trusted God and knew His lovingkindness – חֶסֶד (*chesed*) and always kept it in mind, and in light of that David walked habitually in faithfulness or truth אֱמֶת (*emet*). These are things David often raises (Psalm 16:8 & 25:10). And we too need to meditate on His *chesed*, covenant faithfulness, kindness and truth.

Verses 4-8 David's reasoned claim of innocence

Here David addresses what he has not done (verses 4-5) - he has kept himself from sitting openly debating with deceitful men, proclaimers of falsehood; neither did he go in with pretenders (KJV: dissemblers), these are men who veil things, not open debaters but those who have hidden motives. These men he denounced as evil-doers and refused to sit with them.

David then declares what he wants to do (verses 6-7); to wash his hands and circle the altar, proclaiming psalms of thanksgiving, and telling of the wondrous works of the LORD. David sees himself in a priestly ministry, for when the priests came to serve at the altar of the tent of meeting, they first had to wash their hands and feet with water from the laver (Exodus 30:17-21) in order to sacrifice on the holy altar, and the priest would circle about the altar (Mishnah Sukkah 4:5 and in 1 Maccabees 6:7).

We too need to rely on the LORD's lovingkindness, and we should walk in integrity and truthfulness, and be washed by the water, the Word of God (Ephesians 5:26), and sing psalms of thanksgiving, and tell of the wondrous works of the LORD. As such let us enter into the heavenly sanctuary as priests of Yeshua the messiah and serve in His presence, the God and Father of Yeshua (Hebrews 10:19-22; 13:15).

David proclaims "I love the abode of Your house, the Tabernacle of God, the place where God's glory dwelled (Exodus 24:16; 33:22; 40:35)." The LORD's *glory* is His localised manifested Presence, often symbolised in and associated with the Ark of the Covenant (1 Samuel 4:21-22). His *glory* is the Hebrew word כְּבוֹד (*kavod*), a word connected to heaviness. His glory is weighty, and the word *dwells* is מִשְׁכָּן (*mishkan*) to tabernacle. In rabbinic literature the word for His *glory* become שְׁכִינָה (*shechinah*), from the root שָׁכַן (*shachan*), to tabernacle /to dwell. God's presence is not to be trifled with as something that is light.

Verses 9-10 David prayer for a faithful life

David asks God to preserve his life (here and now) as he will not associate with the sinners and bloodthirsty men. The word soul should be seen as life-force, rather than spirit. David then give three descriptions of the wicked men, 1) bloodthirsty 2) evil devices, plots and 3) they are greedy bribes.

Verses 11-12 David request of redemption

In verse 11, David restates that he will walk in integrity, but I think it might be better to see this in a future tense. I will walk in complete integrity after You O LORD have redeemed me, so Lord be gracious to me.

The word for redeemed is פָּדַי (*p'deni*), from ransom פָּדָה (*padah*) (Exodus 13:13-15) to redeem by price, David asks God to redeem him on the basis of His graciousness or mercy.

David then requests that his feet may stand on level ground, and not on rocky ground, as he walks with God (Psalm 27:11). Finally, the psalm ends with “in the assembly I will bless the LORD.” I note Robert Alter’s interpretation here, where instead of assembly, he has “*In the chorus I bless the LORD*”, reminding us that this is a song. We sing publicly, not just privately, and it was not just the Levitical singers, but all the assembly. We sing “bless the LORD” in a chorus (see 1 Chronicles 29:20), and we sing this as a chorus (the part of a song which is repeated). We will sing “*I bless the LORD*” (Psalm 103) as we, the redeemed, stand in God’s Shechinah glory, proclaiming His grace and mercy.

Conclusion

In Psalm 26 we see various requests from David:

1. A request for examination (verse 1-3)
2. A request for recognition of his integrity (verses 4-8)
3. A request not be condemned with the evil ones (verse 9-10)
4. A request for redemption (verse 11-12)

Friends, we who are in Messiah, ought to examine ourselves (1 Corinthians 11:28) and walk with integrity (1 Timothy 4:12), for we have been bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20, 7:23). As such we are no longer under condemnation (Romans 8:1) therefore with our bodies let us glorify God, and be a chorus and sing that chorus *Bless the LORD oh my soul and all that is within me bless His holy Name!* (Psalm 103).

Selah

Blessings in Messiah

Paul & Sue