

# *Ponderings in the Psalms*

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The following is a Messianic Study on

## *Psalm 29*

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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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# Psalm 29: The seven-fold voice of the LORD

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## Introduction

This Psalm by David is difficult for academics, because some see David merging songs from the Canaanite poets regarding the ‘god of thunder’ (*Ba'al hadad*) with the true God.<sup>1</sup>

Others reduce this psalm to a weather poem: “*To appreciate this psalm we have to get out in the fields, watch the majesty of some ferocious storm, and recall that God is in the storm, directing it, as He is in all other natural and historical phenomena.*”<sup>2</sup>

Both approaches sit uneasily with me, and so I ask these simple questions:

- 1) Is it in this text? and
- 2) Is it Biblical?

With that in mind let’s explore this beautiful psalm.

## Title

The Hebrew text has “*Of David*” so that gives us the author and a rough date, about 1000 BCE.

## Outline: the Psalm has three strophes

1. The three-fold call to the angels to bring praise to the LORD. (Psalm 29:1-2)
2. The seven-fold “Voice of the LORD,” to observe His majesty on earth (Psalm 29:3-9)
3. The two-fold promise of the LORD (Psalm 29:10-11).

## The three-fold call to the angels to bring praise to the LORD, Psalm 29:1-2

**1** A Psalm of David.

**Ascribe** to the Lord, O sons of the mighty,

**Ascribe** to the Lord glory and strength.

**2 Ascribe** to the Lord the glory due to His Name;

Worship the Lord in holy array..

The openings verses are addressed to the angels, “*Sons of the Mighty*,” or literally “*Sons of God*” (from the Hebrew בני אלים, (*benei Elim*)).<sup>3</sup> See also variants in Genesis 6:2-4 and Job 1:6; 2:1 and 38:4-7. These are all references to the angels. Here the Holy angels are called upon to give glory to the LORD, they are commanded, the command is to ascribe, not please not, if you would, I would appreciate if you could NO!

**1 Ascribe** to the Lord, O sons of the mighty,

**Ascribe** to the Lord glory and strength.

**2 Ascribe** to the Lord the glory due to His Name;

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<sup>1</sup> John W. Baigent The Psalms (1-72) in F.F. Bruce, (editor) *International Bible Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986, 575). See also John Goldingay *Psalms: Psalms 1-41*.

<sup>2</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms 1–41: An Expository Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 255.

<sup>3</sup> The Targum renders this as “the angels” [http://targum.info/pss/ps1.htm#\\_ftnref174](http://targum.info/pss/ps1.htm#_ftnref174) *The Psalms Targum: An English Translation* by Edward M. Cook © 2001.

David may be the author but this is not his voice, he does not command the angels, Messiah does, He is speaking. David is writing prophetically, he is a prophet according to Acts 2:29-31 and Hebrews 11:32.

And when Yeshua returns He will send His angels:

**29** “But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. **30** “And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. **31** “**And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.**

(Matthew 24:29–31)

Note in verse 10 David mentions the flood (Genesis 6:17), There are two categories of angels, some of the angels have fallen with the anointed-cherub, Satan (Ezekiel 28:14; Isaiah 14:12-15). These angels rebelled against God at the flood (Genesis 6:2) and they are the fallen angels or demons.

Secondly, there are those that remained with God, and these are holy angels. Here we have a call to the holy angels to ascribe (to give) glory and strength to the LORD. We see David calling **us** in the same way in Psalm 96:7-9<sup>4</sup> & 1 Chronicles 16:28-29<sup>5</sup>, to ascribe glory and strength to the LORD. The holy seraphim (a class of angels) call out to one another “Holy, Holy, Holy,” in Isaiah 6:3 and Revelation 4:8.

We, like the holy angels, are to give glory to His Name and bow down (worship) before the Lord in the splendour of His holiness. The NASB (New American translation) interprets this for us as “holy array” (בְּהַדְרֵי-קֹדֶשׁ) that is, the priestly robes (Exodus 28:40). Indeed worship is part of our priestly ministry. But the words of Isaiah come to mind

10 I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, My soul will exult in my God; For He has **clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness,** (Isaiah 61:10a)

His Salvation, His righteousness, it is His holy Array in which we worship His beauty  
It is then that we too will see the Lord high and lifted up and the train of His robe fills the temple (Isaiah 6:1)

1 Bless the Lord, my soul!  
O Lord my God, You are very great;  
You are **clothed** with splendor and **majesty** (הַדְרָה),  
(Psalm 104:1)

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<sup>4</sup> **Psalm 96:7-9** “Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. **8** Ascribe to the Lord the glory of His name; Bring an offering and come into His courts. **9** Worship the Lord in holy attire; Tremble before Him, all the earth.”

<sup>5</sup> **1 Chronicles 16:28–29** “Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. **29** Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name; Bring an offering, and come before Him; Worship the Lord in holy array.”

### **The seven-fold “Voice of the LORD”, to observe His majesty on earth, Psalm 29:3-9**

**3** The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; The God of glory thunders, The Lord is over many waters. **4** The voice of the Lord is powerful, The voice of the Lord is majestic. **5** The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars; Yes, the Lord breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon. **6** He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, And Sirion like a young wild ox. **7** The voice of the Lord hews out flames of fire. **8** The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; The Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. **9** The voice of the Lord makes the deer to calve And strips the forests bare; And in His temple everything says, “Glory!”

In this short psalm David writes about the “Voice of the LORD”, to display His power over creation, and in nature, from breaking the mighty cedars to enabling a doe to give birth. The phrase “voice of the Lord” is used seven times in verses 3-9. Seven often symbolised completion, as in the seven days of creation when God completed His works.

Verse 3: The voice of the LORD is over the waters, these are the waters above and below in creation (Genesis 1:6-7<sup>6</sup>), and the God of glory thunders, as in the deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 9:23).

Verse 4 describes the voice of the LORD as powerful, and He demonstrates his power to men through His wondrous works (see also Psalm 77:14<sup>7</sup>). He is full of majesty and this is connected to splendour. Psalm 68:33 *“To Him who rides upon the highest heavens, which are from ancient times; Behold, He speaks forth with His voice, a mighty voice.*

The response there is what we saw as the call of the angels earlier

**34** Ascribe strength to God; His majesty is over Israel And His strength is in the skies.  
**35** O God, You are awesome from Your sanctuary. The God of Israel Himself gives strength and power to the people. Blessed be God!  
(Psalm 68:34–35)

Verses 5&6: The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon. These are the strongest trees mentioned in the Bible and at times they are taken as a sign for worldly strength (Isaiah 2:13). But God’s voice does not stop at trees, entire mountain ranges skip like a calf, and Sirion, that is Mount Hermon (Deuteronomy 3:9), like a young wild ox. The LORD moves at His command the mountains of Zion, by the might of His voice.

Verse 7: The voice of the LORD carves out flames of fire. Similar language is found in Psalm 105:32 *“He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land,”* referring back to the plagues that befell Egypt (Exodus 9:18-28). The Lord demonstrates His power through the natural elements.

Verse 8: Kadesh was a stop during the exodus from Egypt (Numbers 14-20) and was a place of great rebellion against the LORD. It was where Miriam died, and a great shaking of the people happened there.

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<sup>6</sup> Genesis 1:6-7 “Then God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” **7** God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so.”

<sup>7</sup> Psalm 77:14 “You are the God who works wonders; You have made known Your strength among the peoples.”

Verse 9: “*The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth and strips the forests bare*”  
Interestingly the Young Literal translation and the NIV are significantly different here and translate this verse as “*The voice of the Lord twists the oaks and strips the forests bare.*” This seems to me more consistent with the rest of this psalm that the oak אֵלֹן (*alon*), a symbol of strength אֲזִילוֹת (*e’yalot* in Psalm 22:19) in the forest, would be addressed here rather than the deer אֲזִלוֹת (*a’yalot*)<sup>8</sup>. If it is the deer, it seems the quick, frightened animal gives birth at His call, and with that same Voice the LORD debarks (strips) entire forests bare. This shows two extremes, on the one hand the gentle voice, which is compared to another voice, the all-powerful voice. Either way, the response should be that *all* the saints, ministers and holy angels, yes all who are in His holy Temple, cry out “*Glory*” כְּבוֹד (*kavod*). This is a keyword for believers, for we are to declare His glory among the nations, His marvellous works among all the peoples (1 Chronicles 16:24)!

### **The two-fold promise of the LORD, Psalm 29:10-11.**

**10** The Lord sat as King at the flood; Yes, the Lord sits as King forever. **11** The Lord will give strength to His people; The Lord will bless His people with peace.

Verse 10: The word rendered “flood” מַבּוּל (*mabbul*) is only used in Genesis chapters 6-11 concerning the Noachic flood. When used with the definite article it connects back to this event, confirming verse 1, which refers to the sons of God being the angels. And the LORD sat upon His throne for the flood, He was and is and always will be the KING, and here He sits as the Judge. He took His seat, His throne, in order to execute that judgement (Psalm 9:7).

Verse 11: Contains the two fold promise of the LORD; to give strength, His strength (verse 1) to His people and shalom (Numbers 6:26). The Hebrew word for “peace and wholeness” is of course שְׁלוֹמִים “*shalom*.” It’s a word that carries the meaning of wellbeing in a lot of ways: peace of mind, health, security and safety. These words all reflect the word ‘shalom.’ Messiah Yeshua gives us this Shalom (John 14:27).

As we meditate on this psalm we ought to both tremble before the LORD (Psalm 114:7) at the power of His Voice, and at the same time receive His power and shalom, so we may fulfil the mission to which He has called us.

*Selah*  
*Blessings in Messiah*  
*Paul & Sue*

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<sup>8</sup> Psalm 22:19 אֲזִילוֹת *e’yalot* is translated as *strength* [JPS/ISV] or *help* [ASV/ESV].