

# *Ponderings in the Psalms*

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The following is a Messianic Study on

## *Psalm 3*

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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.

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# Ponderings on Psalm 3

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## Introduction

Psalm 3 falls into a category of a Personal Lament Song, the Biblical laments are not self-pity-party songs. A Lament may be understood as a call of help to the Lord from either a personal event as here in Psalm 3 or on a national basis when Israel was unable to defend herself, and they cried to the Lord to rescue them. Simply put; it is an appeal to the God of Israel to help in what appears to be a hopeless situation.

This psalm appears to be a part of a trilogy of flight Psalms, here we read about Absalom's attempt to overthrow the kingdom and David fleeing (Psalm 3 see 2 Samuel 15-16), then there is the flight of David from Abimelech (Psalm 34 see 1 Samuel 21:10-15), and the third flight Psalm is about the betrayal by Doeg the Edomite (Psalm 52 see 1 Samuel 21:7; 22:6-23).

## The Background to this Psalm is found in 2 Samuel 13-19

2 Samuel 13 we read about the horrific rape of Tamar by her half-brother Amnon, particularly sad is the response from King David when he was informed of the rape of Tamar, he was angered but did nothing. Interestingly the Jewish translation into Greek (Septuagint) and the Dead Sea Scrolls have a significant addition in 2 Samuel 13:21, "... he did not punish his son Amnon, because he loved him, for he was his firstborn." This seems to clarify why he did nothing about this, however, the consequences would be very significant.

Absalom the full-brother of Tamar and so the half-brother of Amnon, waited for two years before he avenged the rape (2 Samuel 13). Afterwards, Absalom fled to Talmai, the king of Geshur (2 Samuel 13:37), his maternal grandfather, and did not return to Jerusalem for three years (2 Samuel 13-14).

When Absalom does return to Jerusalem, he starts to build support for himself (in modern terms he runs for the office of Chief Justice) and undermines the authority of King David who as king was the supreme chief justice in the land. 2 Samuel 15:5-6, shows his stratagem to bring the people over to his side and the conspiracy against David grew strong.

After four years (1 Samuel 15:7) he deceived his father and had himself declared king and started a revolt at Hebron, the former capital. All Israel and Judah flocked to his side, and David, with only a few men, found it expedient to flee. It is the sad and sorry state of affairs, David had won the war with the House of Saul, and now is drawn in to a long war with his own son, Absalom (his name ironically means my father has peace). It is during this crisis that this Psalm is penned.

## Psalm 3

- 1 A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.  
O Lord, how my adversaries have increased!  
Many are rising up against me.
- 2 Many are saying of my soul,

“There is no deliverance for him in God.”

Selah.

- 3 But You, O Lord, are a shield about me,  
My glory, and the One who lifts my head.  
4 I was crying to the Lord with my voice,  
And He answered me from His holy mountain.

Selah.

- 5 I lay down and slept;  
I awoke, for the Lord sustains me.  
6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people  
Who have set themselves against me round about.  
7 Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God!  
For You have smitten all my enemies on the cheek;  
You have shattered the teeth of the wicked.  
8 Salvation belongs to the Lord;  
Your blessing *be* upon Your people!

Selah.

## Introduction and Stanza's

Verses 1-2 Superscript and the Lament of David before the Lord

Verses 3-4 The reason for David's confidence in the Lord

Verses 5-6 Because of past experience David trusted the Lord

Verse 7 The petition of David to the Lord

Verse 8 Vow of Praise

## Verses 1-2 Superscript and the Lament of David before the Lord

In Jewish Bibles the superscript; those little lines above the Psalms are considered part of verse 1, as they should be for they are indeed Biblical text.

David is honest about his fears; describing them the foes rising up against for these are folks from his own family, his former advisors and friends. And David heard their claim there is no salvation for David with God. Salvation (*yeshuatah* - יְשׁוּעָה) in the Older Testament is rarely spiritual; though the word is connected to the name of the Messiah Yeshua. Here it might be better translated as a (physical) rescue. Still, their claim that there was no rescue was false for there is always rescue / salvation with God. David will use twice more a variant of this word in Psalm 3. Despite their claims David lays his need before the LORD.

The verse ends on the word Selah, סֶלָה in the book of Psalm this is most likely a musical notation, meaning pause, asking the choir to be silent. For us too we ought to pause and ponder or reflect on these things. The word Selah occurs some 70 times primarily in the Psalms.

## Verses 3-4 The reason for David's confidence in the Lord

In ancient times a soldier carried a shield in front of him for his protection, God was to David a better shield, He was all around him. The Hebrew word for shield is ma-gen מגן it is also used in Hebrew for the Star of David (Magen David מגן דוד). According to a Jewish tradition, David had a six-pointed star on his shield so as to make his shield different from his men. God was a special shield and David is not relying on his own physical shield but claims God is my shield, He is my defence, something we see also with Abraham in Genesis 15:1, and a promise for Israel in Deuteronomy 33:29.

David believed that God had not and would not abandon him; throughout the Psalms we see this thought repeated that the LORD is the shield, meaning the protector (Psalm 7:10; Psalm 18:2; Psalm 18:30; Psalm 28:7; Psalm 33:20; Psalm 59:11; Psalm 84:11; Psalm 115:9-11; Psalm 119:114; Psalm 144:2).

David spoke of the Lord as being his glory and the one who lifted up his head. David had come from humble beginnings a simple shepherd, God was David's glory not just because the Lord was the object of praise and adoration. For the Lord had bestowed on David, the kingdom, and an eternal covenant. Based on this gift and covenant David could have felt confident that God would restore him to his throne. God was the one who had lifted him from shepherd life, a life of insignificance to the throne. This is what the expression "lift the head" means, to restore to dignity and to the former position (cf. Genesis 40:13&20; 2 Kings 25:27).

And so David cries out to the Lord with 'his voice', not a standard repetitive prayer! And God responded from His holy hill (see my last email). Selah is repeated; Ponder this: the goodness of the Lord, who was David's shield, glory and the lifter of his head.

## Verses 5-6 Because of past experience David trusted the Lord

David rested in the Lord and the Lord refreshed him, this is much more than a good night sleep. David is saying because the Lord is a shield of protection around him, he is protected from the enemies and therefore he will not fear. David had been a man of courage from his youth; you remember the stories, the lion and the bear (1 Samuel 17:34), when he kept his father's sheep, his battle with Goliath (1 Samuel 17), and his exploits amongst the uncircumcised (1 Samuel 18:27). Even though he has seen his fair share of battles, he trusts in God even against these new overwhelming odds.

## Verse 7 The petition of David to the Lord

Arise (קוּמָה qumah) this word is taken straight from the mouth of Moses in Numbers 10:35. "Arise, LORD, and let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you."

The God of Moses is invoked, in similar language smite my enemies upon the cheek and break the teeth of the wicked. Perhaps not a prayer you and I have prayed. The smiting on the cheek was a great insult, (Cf. 1 Kings 22:24; Job 16:10; Lamentations 3:30 and Micah 5:1). In Psalm 58:6 David used the same imagery of the teeth, David portrays the wicked as young lions aggressively biting their prey, so David prays that God swiftly smites them on the cheek and deprives them of their strength and power over the prey.

Note that David waited on the Lord, to renew his strength (Isaiah 40:30-31) he did not take revenge, he waits for God to step in. In the Hebrew for the second time, the root of the word to save / salvation (הוֹשִׁיעַ hoshi'e) is used reflecting that physical rescue.

### **Verse 8 Vow of Praise**

For the third and final time the word save / salvation is used (יְשׁוּעָה y'shuah). David in true Hebrew poetry style is using one word to express an alternative meaning (parallelism), the words Salvation and Blessing are the corresponding terms. Those whom God rescues are blessed by Him. Selah is repeated; so we too need to Ponder this.

### **What can we learn**

Like David, we will go through difficult experiences, many of us could write our own Lament Psalm, it may not be divinely inspired, but it will help us.

When we as believer continually look at our enemies and listen to their taunts, we will lose faith, as such we like David need to cry out to the Lord, refocus on the Lord, declare, sing that He is our rescuer our shield and our glory. It would be foolish of me to promise everyone a victory, only He can. What I can promise is peace; remember the words of Messiah Yeshua in John 14:27 "I am leaving you with shalom. I am giving you My own shalom. I am not giving it to you as the world gives. So don't let your hearts be troubled, and don't be afraid."

*Selah*  
*Shalom in Messiah*  
*Paul & Sue*