

Ponderings in the Psalms

The following is a Messianic Study on

Psalm 31

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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 31

1 For the choir director. A Psalm of David. In You, O Lord, I have taken refuge; Let me never be ashamed; In Your righteousness deliver me. **2** Incline Your ear to me, rescue me quickly; Be to me a rock of strength, A stronghold to save me. **3** For You are my rock and my fortress; For Your name's sake You will lead me and guide me. **4** You will pull me out of the net which they have secretly laid for me, For You are my strength. **5** Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have ransomed me, O Lord, God of truth. **6** I hate those who regard vain idols, But I trust in the Lord. **7** I will rejoice and be glad in Your lovingkindness, Because You have seen my affliction; You have known the troubles of my soul, **8** And You have not given me over into the hand of the enemy; You have set my feet in a large place.

9 Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; My eye is wasted away from grief, my soul and my body also. **10** For my life is spent with sorrow And my years with sighing; My strength has failed because of my iniquity, And my body has wasted away. **11** Because of all my adversaries, I have become a reproach, Especially to my neighbors, And an object of dread to my acquaintances; Those who see me in the street flee from me. **12** I am forgotten as a dead man, out of mind; I am like a broken vessel. **13** For I have heard the slander of many, Terror is on every side; While they took counsel together against me, They schemed to take away my life.

14 But as for me, I trust in You, O Lord, I say, "You are my God." **15** My times are in Your hand; Deliver me from the hand of my enemies and from those who persecute me. **16** Make Your face to shine upon Your servant; Save me in Your lovingkindness.

17 Let me not be put to shame, O Lord, for I call upon You; Let the wicked be put to shame, let them be silent in Sheol. **18** Let the lying lips be mute, Which speak arrogantly against the righteous With pride and contempt.

19 How great is Your goodness, Which You have stored up for those who fear You, Which You have wrought for those who take refuge in You, Before the sons of men! **20** You hide them in the secret place of Your presence from the conspiracies of man; You keep them secretly in a shelter from the strife of tongues. **21** Blessed be the Lord, For He has made marvelous His lovingkindness to me in a besieged city. **22** As for me, I said in my alarm, "I am cut off from before Your eyes"; Nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications When I cried to You. **23** O love the Lord, all you His godly ones! The Lord preserves the faithful And fully recompenses the proud doer. **24** Be strong and let your heart take courage, All you who hope in the Lord.

Intro

This is an individual lament Psalm, mixed with elements of trust and closes with thanksgiving. We often pray the same way with mixed elements. This is because our lives, like that of the Biblical heroes, are complex; we lament about certain situations, all the while knowing that the LORD will do what is right, so we also give thanks and sing His praises.

This Psalm is "*to the choirmaster,*" the inspector or the leader of the Levitical choirs, as such this was something to be sung in the Tabernacle! I wonder if you and I would want our *lament* sung in public?

“A *Psalm of David*” gives us the author and approximate date of about 1000 BCE. Though the precise setting is unknown, it is thought that this Psalm was written by David when he had escaped from Saul (1 Samuel 23:7) out of the besieged city (verse 21) and was in the wilderness of Maon (1 Samuel 23:24-26). A further connection is that David fled in *haste*. In verse 22 the JPS and KJV have *in my haste*, the root word being *חָפַז* *chafaz*, and that same word is used in 1 Samuel 23:26 “David *made haste* to get away.” (Note that the NASB is not consistent here, and so it hides this likely connection. The NASB instead uses *alarm* and *hurrying to get away*).

An Outline

1. Confidence in God’s deliverance (verses 1-8)
2. Laments and prays for deliverance (verses 9-13)
3. Confidence in God (verses 14-16)
4. Lament (verses 17-18)
5. Confidence in the Lord and asks us to trust in Him (verses 19-24).

Observations

As you read through this Psalm note how often David uses language about our bodies: ear, hand (four times), spirit, soul (twice), feet, eyes (twice), body (other translations have stomach) and note to life, years, strength, limbs, heart (twice), face (twice, translated as “presence”), lips, tongue, and voice. This tells us how real it all is, it is tangible. David will return to this in Psalm 71 where he quotes the first three verses of Psalm 31.

“*Incline Your ear to me*” (verse 2): David paints the picture of God stooping down to hear his prayer. See also Psalms 17:6; 71:2; 86:1; 102:2.

One keyword is lovingkindness (verse 7, 16, 21) the Hebrew *חֶסֶד*, (*chesed*) in the JPS & KJV is rendered with the words “*unchanging love*”, other translations have “*mercy*” or “*grace*” the NASB has “*lovingkindness*” all of these translations are shades of the meaning of *chesed*. David rejoices and is glad in the LORD’s lovingkindness; ask God to save him in lovingkindness, finally David blessed the LORD for His lovingkindness to him, may we be like David rejoicing in the LORD’s lovingkindness.

Quotations

1. Jeremiah the prophet quoted “*terror on every side*” (verse 13) six times. See Jeremiah 6:25; 20:3–4, 10; 46:5; 49:29; Lamentations 2:22.
2. Jonah the prophet alludes to verse 6 in Jonah 2:8, when he is praying from within the belly of the great fish.
3. The apostle Paul refers to verse 24 in 1 Corinthians 16:13.
4. The first martyr of the church, Stephen, declares “*Into Your hand I commit my spirit*” quoting verse 5 (Acts 7:59).
5. And these same words from verse 5 were quoted by Messiah Yeshua on the cross. They were among His final words before yielding His life (Luke 23:46).

As we carefully read the Psalms, we find that many of them deal with similar themes, and so there is an element of repetition.

The Lament (9-13; 17-18).

The centre of the Psalm concentrates on the Lament or the complaint (9-13; 17-18). Here David tends to focus more on himself, with words like my affliction, my distress, my grief. God knew what was happening to David, and how it made him feel. David's honesty is refreshing, and I wish we all prayed like this. Indeed, it allows us that same freedom of expression, to lament and complain. However, we shouldn't stop there and make it into an ongoing 'pity-party,' a never-ending self-indulgent sorry for yourself prayer. Two things should be observed: 1) *my iniquity* (verse 10), David also acknowledged his sins in his life and appeals to God's mercy 2) David expresses the faithfulness of God (verse 5), which leads to the affirmation of trust in the LORD (verse 14).

The Confidence in the Lord (1-8; 14-15; 19-23)

When David takes his eyes off himself, he declares over and over the Faithfulness of God:

1. You are my refuge (verse 1) see also Psalm 7:1; 11:1; 16:1...
2. You are my Rock of strength (verse 2) see also Psalm 71:3
3. You are my Rock and my fortress (verse 3) see also Psalm 18:2
4. You lead me and guide me (verse 4) see also Psalm 23:5
5. You pull me out of the enemy's net (verse 4) see also Psalm 25:15
6. You have ransomed me (verse 5) see also Psalm 55:18; 71:23
7. I trust in the Lord (verse 6) see also Psalm 52:8
8. I will rejoice in your lovingkindness (verse 7) see also Psalm 90:14
9. You have seen my affliction and know the troubles of my soul (verse 7) see also Psalm 1:6; 142:3
10. You have not handed me over to my enemies (verse 8) see also Psalm 37:33
11. You have set my feet in a large place (verse 8) see also Psalm 18:19; 118:5
12. My times are in Your hands (verse 15) see also Job 14:5; Psalm 116:15
13. You delivered me ... (verse 15) see also Psalm 143:9
14. You make your face (verse 16) see also Numbers 6:25; Psalm 4:6; 80:3
15. How great is your goodness (verse 19) see also Psalm 65:4; 145:7
16. You heard the voice of my pleas (verse 22) see also Psalm 18:6; 66:19; 145:19
17. You preserve the faithful (verse 23) see also Psalm 145:20

Can I encourage you this week, to make a list like this, even a small one, and declare when God has ransomed you, when you saw His hand or sensed His presence in your life. Keep your eyes on the LORD, for He has redeemed us, and He will deliver us because of His goodness and faithfulness, and like David sing of His goodness and faithfulness, knowing that He is your Rock and Deliverer.

Selah

Blessings in Messiah

Paul & Sue