

# *Ponderings in the Psalms*

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The following is a Messianic Study on

## *Psalm 32*

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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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# *Pondering Psalm 32*

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**1** A Psalm of David. A Maskil. How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! **2** How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit! **3** When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long. **4** For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah.

**5** I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord”; And You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah. **6** Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found; Surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him. **7** You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah.

**8** I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you. **9** Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, Whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, Otherwise they will not come near to you. **10** Many are the sorrows of the wicked, But he who trusts in the Lord, lovingkindness shall surround him. **11** Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous ones; And shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart.

## Introduction

This is a Maskil, an instruction or a teaching, by King David. It is specifically an instruction regarding the forgiveness of transgression, the covering of sin.

There are two Psalms that are connected to David that explicitly deal with sin. This Psalm, and Psalm 51, deal with David confessing his sins after being confronted by Nathan, the prophet (2 Samuel 12). David had not accompanied his men to war, as was the custom of that day, and from his palace roof he saw a beautiful woman bathing. He inquired after her, and was told she was Bathsheba, who was married to Uriah, a foreigner who had joined himself to the Jewish people. David then *takes* her לָקַח (*lekach*) or seized her (2 Samuel 11:1-4). David lusted and abused his position as shepherd over the people by seizing her and having sex with her. Note that Bathsheba purifies herself, which indicates that she was part of the righteous remnant. After some time, she informed David that she is pregnant. In a cunning plan, David recalls her husband from the battle lines, to entice him to sleep with his wife while the battle is being fought (2 Samuel 11:5-13). Uriah (which means *light of the LORD*) refuses to go and sleep with his wife, while the Ark of the Covenant and the army are in danger (2 Samuel 11:11). David then extends Uriah’s stay a little longer and tries to get him drunk and sleep with his wife, in order to cover up his sins. When none of that works, he sends a suicide letter for Uriah to the general and has Uriah murdered (2 Samuel 11:14-17). After mourning her husband, she is brought into the palace and becomes David’s wife (2 Samuel 11:18-26). 2 Samuel 11: 27 ends with “*But the thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the Lord.*”

David lives with the sins and consequences for some time, then in mercy God sends Nathan, the prophet, to confront the King. Using a parable Nathan gets David to acknowledge his sins and pronounces judgement on David (2 Samuel 12:1-12). David confessed his sins, and while God did forgive him, the child still died (2 Samuel 12:13-23).

The confession of David's sins happens primarily in Psalm 51. In Psalm 32 David stresses God's forgiveness and the lessons he had learnt, along with the instructions from God to all men.

### An outline

I have taken the Sela (pause and reflect) as the markers for the outline.

1. The blessedness of forgiveness (32:1-2) and the chastening of God (32:3-4)
2. David's response (32:5)
3. David's advice (32:6-7)
4. God's instructions to sinful men (32:8-11)

### The blessing of forgiveness (32:1-2)

The word אֲשֶׁר־יָרַע (*ash'rei*) translated as "Blessed" or "happy" means having received blessings from the Lord, which causes joy or happiness. The reason he is blessed or happy is that his sins are covered, meaning that they are forgiven, much like an outstanding debt that has been covered by someone else.

### Three words are given for the sinful actions (vv 1-3, 5)

1. Transgression עָשָׂה (*pesha*): "crime" that is the willingly, perhaps even deliberate, breaking away from God. David's, and our sin, is a rebellion against God and his authority. We see this most clearly in the related Psalm "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight" (Psalm 51:4). David had clearly sinned against Bathsheba, and against Uriah, and even against the entire nation, to the point that the consequences of his transgressions were felt by the whole the nation. Even so, David recognizes that the bottom line is, that all his actions were a rebellion against God.

2. Sin חָטָא (*chata'ah*): "missing the mark" David's wandered away from the way of the LORD and so his actions are "falling short" of a mark. This is a word connected to archery, but when used in Scripture, it refers to our actions that fall short of the desired outcome. It is the failure to keep the Law perfectly.

3. Iniquity אָוֵן (*avon*) "guilt" or moral distortion. It comes from the word to "twist" thereby implying it is "crooked." In other words, we become corrupt when committing iniquity.

James Boice observes in his commentary on Psalms: "The first describes sin in view of our relationship to God. It pictures us as being in rebellion against him. The second word describes sin in relation to the divine law. We fall short of it and are condemned by it. The third word describes sin in relation to ourselves. It is a corruption or twisting of right standards as well as of our own beings. That is, to the degree that we indulge in sin we become both twisted and twisting creatures"<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms 1-41: An Expository Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 278.]

And so David said how blessed is man who is forgiven and in whose spirit there is no deceit!

### **The Chastening of God (32:3-4)**

In these verses we see the result of unconfessed sin in David. Please NOTE that not every ailment is due to sin. Here David's failure to confess his sin resulted thus in grief and a physical weakness. On top of that, God used the physical discomfort to discipline David (Deuteronomy 8:5; Hebrews 12:6). There is a three-fold effect of sin: physical (his body), emotional (groaning or moaning), and even spiritual (his vitality was drained).

*Selah*: pause and ponder this.

### **David's response (32:5)**

David makes a full confession, and God restores David, the repentant sinner, to a covenant relationship (Leviticus 26:40-42). God, who is merciful (Exodus 34:6-8), forgave the guilt, literally the "iniquity of my sin." Observe how there are also three words that deal with forgiveness.

#### **Three Words are given for What God Does with Sin**

1. *Whose transgression are forgiven*: meaning that the consequences of the sin is lifted off our shoulders, and these transgressions would be placed on Messiah.
2. *Whose sin is covered*: note our sin is covered by God (Psalms 85:2), not by our own ability, but by the grace and mercy of the LORD (Micah 7:18).
3. *"To whom the Lord does not impute iniquity:"* the Lord does not think of the *iniquity*, He removes it as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12).

David could not have known that all the penalties of sin were going to be transferred from the sinner to Messiah (Isaiah 53:6-8, 11-12). We can see glimpses of it already in Torah, that Messiah would become the scapegoat (Leviticus 16) and bear in Himself both the guilt and punishment, and so take them away (Hebrews 10:1-18; John 1:29; 1 John 3:5).

*Selah*: pause and ponder this.

### **David's advice (32:6-7)**

David's advice is Godly advice and we find the same advice in Isaiah:

*"Seek the Lord while He may be found; call on Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will freely pardon"* (Isaiah 55:6-7).

David then illustrates this with the flood waters. I think he is saying that we may not be swept away in judgments, as the flood was a judgement upon the earth<sup>2</sup>. Secondly, "*You are my hiding place*" is a theme familiar to those who read the Psalms (Psalm 9:9; 27:5; 31:20; 119:114 & 143:9). The Lord preserves the redeemed from troubles (Psalm 107:2). The godly from verse 6 are now surrounding David with shouts of deliverances.

*Selah*: pause and ponder this.

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<sup>2</sup> Alternative the *flood* or *overflowing of waters* are a symbolic way of referring to physical enemies (Nahum 1:8; Daniel 9:26, 11:22). On another occasion when David had once again sinned by taking a census he prayed that he should not fall into the hands of his enemies (2 Samuel 24; 1 Chronicles 21:1-6). If that is the background we can see the connection in 2 Samuel 24:14 "*Then David said to God, 'I am in great distress. Let us now fall into the hand of the Lord for His mercies are great, but do not let me fall into the hand of man.'*"

### God's instructions to sinful men (32:8-11)

The speaker is no longer David, but under inspiration, speaks on behalf of God.

God will instruct and teach us and council us, and He will keep His eye on us to make sure we follow His advice. If we do not listen, we will become a horse or a mule, animals who cannot think (Jeremiah 10:14, 21; Psalm 49:10, 12, 20 & Psalm 73:22). The brutish man does not evaluate his life, and like the wild horse or mule, he cannot be approached without a bit and bridle.

Those who do not know the forgiveness of the LORD are the wicked, and in the end, they will experience a great sorrow and many woes (the flood reference of verse 6). Those who follow the instructions of the LORD, and trust in Him, will receive grace and will be glad and rejoice, for they have been made righteous and upright in heart.

### Summary / Conclusion

In this teaching (*maskil*) David teaches us that if we acknowledged our sins and confess them (James 5:16), then we will discover God's pardoning grace, enabling us to seek the LORD once more and rejoice in His presence.

This is a true *Selah* moment, so let us pause and ponder His Word.

*Selah*

*Blessings in Messiah*

*Paul & Sue*