

# *Ponderings in the Psalms*

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The following is a Messianic Study on

## *Psalm 34*

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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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# Pondering Psalm 34

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**1** A Psalm of David when he feigned madness before Abimelech, who drove him away and he departed. I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. **2** My soul will make its boast in the Lord; The humble will hear it and rejoice. **3** O magnify the Lord with me, And let us exalt His name together. **4** I sought the Lord, and He answered me, And delivered me from all my fears. **5** They looked to Him and were radiant, And their faces will never be ashamed. **6** This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him And saved him out of all his troubles. **7** The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, And rescues them. **8** O taste and see that the Lord is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him! **9** O fear the Lord, you His saints; For to those who fear Him there is no want. **10** The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; But they who seek the Lord shall not be in want of any good thing. **11** Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. **12** Who is the man who desires life And loves length of days that he may see good? **13** Keep your tongue from evil And your lips from speaking deceit. **14** Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it. **15** The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous And His ears are open to their cry. **16** The face of the Lord is against evildoers, To cut off the memory of them from the earth. **17** The righteous cry, and the Lord hears And delivers them out of all their troubles. **18** The Lord is near to the brokenhearted And saves those who are crushed in spirit. **19** Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the Lord delivers him out of them all. **20** He keeps all his bones, Not one of them is broken. **21** Evil shall slay the wicked, And those who hate the righteous will be condemned. **22** The Lord redeems the soul of His servants, And none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned.

## Introduction

This psalm is written in an acrostic pattern, meaning that David begins each verse with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet, א ב ג ד ה ו (abc...) and so on. The sixth letter ו (vav) is missing in the text and the last verse skips the pattern. This is likely because it is the conclusion, which has the word הוֹדָה (*padah*), meaning ransom or redeem.

David appreciates all that the Lord has done so he celebrates and praises the LORD. He then extends the call to all those who fear the LORD, that in spite of our circumstances in life, He will watch over us and He knows what is happening. He will ransom (redeem) us, as such we can bless the LORD.

## Trilogy

This psalm is part of a trilogy of '*flights of David*' Psalms. In Psalm 3 we read about David's *flight before Absalom*, here he is *fleeing from Saul to Abimelech* (Psalm 34), and finally we will read about another *flight because of the betrayal* of Doeg the Edomite (Psalm 52, 1 Samuel 22:9).

## Brit Chadashah (New Testament) connections

1. Verse 8 is quoted by Peter in 1 Peter 2:3.
2. Verses 12-16 are cited in 1 Peter 3:10-12.
3. Verse 20 is alluded to in John 19:36.

## Pondering

Verse 1 in the Hebrew, or the subscript in Christian Bibles, tells us that David is the author. This gives us an approximate date of about 1000BCE. David describes the specific situation, namely when he changed his behaviour and pretended to lose his mind, even feigning madness before Abimelech. The background story is in 1 Samuel 21:10-15, when David was fleeing from Saul and went to the Philistines. There we read that the name of the king was Achish, king of Gath, although in this Psalm we read about Abimelech. In Genesis we encounter two other kings with the name Abimelech; during the time of Abraham (approximately 1920 B.C.E.) in Genesis 20-21, and during the time of Isaac in Genesis 26 (approximately 1820 B.C.E.). These two stories are about 80 to 100 years apart, so most likely it was not a name, but as Rashi points out, a hereditary title. Egypt had their Pharaohs, Rome had their Caesars and the Philistines had their Abimelechs. When we read the psalm and the background we see that his title was Abimelech (my father *was* king) and his name was Achish (1 Samuel 21:11). Now David must have been in a real pickle, having to flee to Gath, the home of his enemies. Gath was where Goliath, the Philistine champion whom he had killed some years earlier, had come from (1 Samuel 17).

This inscription set the Psalm up as a lament, *Oy vey*, why am I in such troubles once again that I have to flee. Yet David does the opposite, despite his troubles he cries *I will bless the LORD at all times*. And he extends the invitation to us, *let us exalt His Name together*. Many, if not all the Lament Psalms, have the complaint but also elements of *praise to the LORD*. It is a lesson for us that it is ok to bring our complaints to the LORD, He knows what is happening, but once you have unburdened your heart we should praise Him for all His wondrous things in our lives.

In verse 7 we read *behold “The Angel of the Lord” מַלְאָכֵי יְהוָה* (mal’ach-YHVH). As we encounter **this** specific Angel in the Tanach (Older Testament)<sup>1</sup>, He speaks, acts and claims to exercise privileges that belong only to the LORD. Because the Angel of the LORD ceases to appear with the coming of Messiah Yeshua, it is often inferred that this Angel is the pre-incarnate appearance of God Himself, especially of Yeshua the LORD. In many of the references we note that those who had seen the Angel of the LORD feared for their lives, because as they claim, they had “*seen the LORD*” (Genesis 32:30; Judges 6:22).

David’s self-description “*this poor man*” is almost an understatement. He was on the run from Saul, absent from family and friends, living with the enemy. David had nothing left but his life and his faith that the LORD would hear his prayer (Psalm 102:17). As such he proclaims *taste and see that the LORD is good* (verse 8), such tangible sensations. The Aramaic Targum has “*recognise and see ...*” and that is a good way to understand this. We do not literally taste the LORD, but we do *recognise and see* what the Lord has done and is doing in our lives.

From verse 11 David becomes the teacher and gives us a proverb ‘*come you who fear the LORD*’ (see Proverbs 9:10), and he instructs us on three things:

1. Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit (Proverbs 12:19), that is be honest in your speech.

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<sup>1</sup> While it goes beyond us for today to explore every reference to the Angel of the LORD, it would be amiss not to list some, as this angel is a Divine Appearance (*Theophany*). Genesis 16:7-14; 21:17-21; 22:11-18; 31:11-13; Exodus 3:2; Judges 2:1-4; 5:23; 6:11-24; 13:3-22; 2 Samuel 24:16; Zechariah 1:12; 3:1; 12:8.

2. Depart from evil and do good (Proverbs 3:7), that is turn away from your sins, and actively walk with the LORD, doing what is right.
3. Seek *שָׁלוֹם* *shalom*, peace and pursue it (1 Peter 3:11). Peace does not just happen; it must be chased. The war between David and Saul would last many more years, and so from personal experience, David tells us to go after shalom! How much more is this true with God? We are at war with the flesh (1 Peter 2:11) and need to be at peace with God, so Yeshua left us this peace if we abide in Him (John 14:27).

This short list is something we still ought to practice as it demonstrates our faith. We should have honest lips, walk away from sin and do what is right, always seeking peace with God and men.

The LORD watches over the righteous to see if we obey, and it is to Him that we cry out, *have mercy*. It is amazing to realise that while David and his men were stuck in the cave at Adullam (1 Samuel 22), David was teaching on righteous behaviour and our need to pursue peace. While Saul is trying to kill him, David still says that we should praise Him for He will deliver us out of all our troubles. You get the sense that his men were brokenhearted, crushed in spirit, and felt afflicted, but David keeps His eyes on the LORD, He is near to deliver them all. They will be vindicated and the wicked will receive their punishment.

David concludes that the ransomed, those who have been redeemed and purchased by the LORD (Deuteronomy 24:18), could proclaim that God has rescued their lives (soul). They understood, as they His servants trusted in and walked with the LORD, that there would be no condemnation from Him. The Apostle Paul makes this very clear “*Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Messiah Yeshua*” (Romans 8:1). Those who trusted in the LORD, be they Old or New Covenant Saints, knew that by faith they were saved. As such there is no condemnation.

Friends, let us taste and see that the LORD is good and after spouting our complaints praise Him for His mercy endures forever.

*Selah*

*Shalom in Messiah Yeshua*

*Paul & Sue*