

Ponderings in the Psalms

The following is a Messianic Study on

Psalm 40

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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.

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Pondering Psalm 40

Introduction

Author

The author is David which gives us an approximate date of about 1000 B.C.E.

Wisdom Psalm

In this Psalm David gives us, the believers, an insight into prayer and praise. Following David's pattern, we ought to *praise* the LORD as we *ask* our next request of Him. We so often don't do this and immediately we cry out to the Lord for our next need and forget to praise Him. There is a good reason to follow the pattern of praise and prayer, as we build up our faith, by developing a habit of thanks-giving for all that He has done.

If you are like me and quickly forget things, it also means that we quickly forget to thank God for all that He has done for us. As such making a list, will help. Can I encourage you to make a list today of all that the LORD has done in your life, and keep that in your prayer journal or in your Bible? Perhaps write it on that blank page between the Tanach (Older Testament) and the Brit Chadashah (New Covenant).

I am thankful for my wife, our children, our grandchildren, our home, our fellowship.... For the Lord who rescued me, through Messiah Yeshua, but also for the daily things. As you and I reflect on the last month, we can see His protection, His grace. For some our health is failing, but if you are reading this, your mind is still working so be thankful for that. Most of us have some money in the bank, a roof over our heads and most of us have family and all of us have friends. And every one of you has been called by God through Messiah Yeshua, His redeemer. As such we need to sing our song of praise.... Let us give thanks before we ask.

Outline

This Psalm reads as a composite, a merging of two songs, verses 1-10 and 11-17 (in the Jewish editions it is verses 1-11 and verses 12-18, where the title or superscript serves as verse 1).

Song one: A Psalm a song of praise for past deliverance (1-10).

Song two: A petition for deliverance and an expression of hope for the future (11-17).

What bind the two songs together is that David's uses body references: *my feet* and *footsteps* (2), *my mouth* (3), *my ears* (6), *my heart* [lit. *my entrails/guts*] (8), *my lips* (9), *my heart* (10, 12), *hairs of my head* (13) and so in summary *my life* (14). And in all these references we see David's urgent request for deliverance from his circumstances.

Descriptions of God

Within this Psalm we have a sense of the nearness of God, the creator of the universe, who dwells in the heavens (Psalm 123:1). He is bending down (Psalm 18:9) to hear and listen to David's cry. Pause here for a moment. The LORD God who dwells in the Highest Heavens, hears our faint cry for mercy, and He bends down. There is even a sense that He too was waiting upon David, and then the LORD extends His arms and pulls David free from the sticky mud and sets his feet on the rock. What a picture of the nearness of God.

Song one: A Psalm a song of praise for past deliverance (1-10)

¹ For the choir director. A Psalm of David. I waited patiently for the Lord; And He inclined to me and heard my cry. ² He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, And He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm. ³ He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; Many will see and fear And will trust in the Lord. ⁴ How blessed is the man who has made the Lord his trust, And has not turned to the proud, nor to those who lapse into falsehood. ⁵ Many, O Lord my God, are the wonders which You have done, And Your thoughts toward us; There is none to compare with You. If I would declare and speak of them, They would be too numerous to count. ⁶ Sacrifice and meal offering You have not desired; My ears You have opened; Burnt offering and sin offering You have not required. ⁷ Then I said, “Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me. ⁸ I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart.” ⁹ I have proclaimed glad tidings of righteousness in the great congregation; Behold, I will not restrain my lips, O Lord, You know. ¹⁰ I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have spoken of Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth from the great congregation.

I waited patiently for the Lord the Hebrew here has the doubling קָנִיתִי קָנִיתִי, (*kivviti kavvoh*), literally it would read “*Waiting I have waited on you LORD*”. The doubling of this word signifies that David is waiting and waiting and waiting some more, as though there is a delay. We see him waiting often (Psalm 25:5, 21; 27:14; 37:7, 9...). I wonder, and perhaps you do too, if we can really say this, *I waited patiently for the Lord!* We live in an instant age, instant coffee, instant meals, instant...., but character development takes time (Romans 5:3-4). As with David, so with us too, we must all wait patiently for the Lord.

The God of heaven *inclined*, He was attentive and heard the plea of David, His servant. David is not literally stuck in the mud. It is poetic language, and he is saying that God brought him up from the pit of destruction in which he was stuck. Perhaps this was his own *pride* or *falsehood* (verse 4), or perhaps it was that of others. He does so by lifting him up and placing him securely on a rock. David uses a real-life event as the backdrop here, when he was delivered from Saul in the *wilderness of Maon* (1 Samuel 23:25-28).

And in response David sings a new song about the rescue, and he hopes that many who hear will respond and trust the LORD, as they too ponder the many wonderful works and know that the Lord is watching over them too.

David said that the LORD did not desire blood sacrifices and grain offerings, and that He did not required burnt offerings for consecration and sin offerings; but this is contrary to the Torah! For God did request all these things. There are blood sacrifices in Leviticus 3, grain offerings in Leviticus 2, burnt offerings in Leviticus 1 and the sin offerings in Leviticus 4. However, the point that is being made is that bringing these sacrifices endlessly without faith, without obedience, without a contrite spirit, was pointless and the Lord reminded Israel of this from time to time (1 Samuel 15:22; Psalm 51:16; Isaiah 1:11; Jeremiah 6:20; 7:22-23; Amos 5:22; Micah 6:6-8). These verses teach that faithfulness and obedience go before sacrifice and without them we cannot please God. He wants people who hear with an open ear and delight to do His will, keeping the Law in their hearts (Proverbs 7:2-3). To *open someone's ears* has come to mean to listen attentively, though biblically it was a sign of full obedience to God (Isaiah 50:4-5).

Based on Exodus 21:6 “to open an ear” signified the obedience of a servant to his master, by piercing an earlobe you would enter into perpetual servanthood. In essence, David indicates his obedience by stating that the Law of the Lord is in his heart and that he delights to do the will of the LORD.

The *scroll of the book* represents the whole of scripture, for it does speak about Messiah (Luke 24:27, 44).

Verses 9-10 are a call to declare the goodness of the LORD, not just privately, but in the midst of the assembly. We are not to hide our faith but to declare it. I realise that flamboyant people will do so loudly, and that reserved people will do so quietly, and that is ok, but we should declare the goodness of the Lord. In light of the sacrifice of Messiah Yeshua, *the once for all sacrifice* (Hebrews 7:27, 10:10), how much more should we speak of the goodness of the LORD.

The Messianic application of Psalm 40 is found in Hebrews 10.

Psalm 40:6-7

⁶ *Sacrifice and meal offering You have not desired; My ears You have opened; Burnt offering and sin offering You have not required.* ⁷ *Then I said, “Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me.*

Hebrews 10:5-7

⁵ Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, “Sacrifice and offering You have not desired, But a body You have prepared for Me; ⁶ In whole burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin You have taken no pleasure. ⁷ “Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come (In the scroll of the book it is written of Me) To do Your will, O God.’”

Putting the two texts next to each other, you can see that “*My ears You have opened*” becomes “*But a body You have prepared for Me.*” This is based on the Greek translation and it follows the rabbinic idea that a part, *the ears*, represent the whole, *the body*. The author of Hebrews (10:5) indicates that God prepared a body for Him. The body of Messiah is seen as a contrast to, and therefore a substitute, for the Levitical animal offerings. God made the animals, just as He made the body for Messiah. The Messiah would replace the sacrificial offerings, and He would be that substitution for us, the final sacrifice for sin.

For what the animal sacrifices could not do, the blood of Yeshua could, and did do. And so it was God’s will to arrange a sacrifice by preparing *a body* with which He could die for all of mankind. Yeshua was the obedient sacrifice. No obedience was involved on the part of the animals, but the Messiah, God the Son, said to God the Father: *I have come to do your will*, stating His willingness and in full obedience, He became the final sacrifice for sin.

Song two: A petition for deliverance and an expression of hope for the future (11-17).

¹¹ *You, O Lord, will not withhold Your compassion from me; Your lovingkindness and Your truth will continually preserve me.* ¹² *For evils beyond number have surrounded me; My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to see; They are more numerous than the hairs of my head, And my heart has failed me.* ¹³ *Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me; Make haste, O Lord, to help me.* ¹⁴ *Let those be ashamed and humiliated together Who seek my life to destroy it; Let those be turned back and dishonoured Who delight in my hurt.* ¹⁵ *Let those be appalled because of their shame*

Who say to me, "Aha, aha!"¹⁶ Let all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; Let those who love Your salvation say continually, "The Lord be magnified!"¹⁷ Since I am afflicted and needy, Let the Lord be mindful of me. You are my help and my deliverer; Do not delay, O my God.

Verses 11-12 express a confidence in the Lord. David knew the Lord, he had waited upon Him and he recognises the problem, sin! The evils surrounding him came as external pressure from sinful men, and then there were internal issues, his iniquities, that is, David's own sins. This is still true today, the sins of others and our own sins, will affect us. It is a life-long struggle. And while they felt insurmountable to David, and at times to us too, we need to plea with the Lord for deliverance. Recall the words of Yeshua, as He promised to strengthen us with Shalom, in this world full of tribulation, "*These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33).

Verses 13-17 are almost identical to Psalm 70. They reflect the concluding prayer, an urgent request for help, that the LORD may discomfort wicked, David's enemies. David also prays for the distress that they caused him, to fall back on them. In contrast, may the Godly rejoice and be glad in You. We do not rejoice in the downfall of man, or in their suffering, and we should not seek personal vengeance. We are to rejoice in God our saviour as we also cry out "The LORD be magnified!" Yes "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised" (1 Chronicles 16:25; Psalms 48:1; 96:4; 145:3). I can just picture the Temple filled with worshippers, the Levitical choir singing a song to magnify the LORD, and rejoice in all that He has done and the throngs shouting in response "*Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised.*" It ought to be the habit of believers in the LORD to sing of His salvation day to day (1 Chronicles 16:23; Psalms 96:2).

In the final verse

*But I am afflicted and needy,
Let the Lord be mindful of me.
You are my help and my deliverer;
Do not delay, O my God.*

David left the throngs of worshippers, and went back home and cried more tears. I am afflicted, this is usually translated as poor, which carries the meaning of the oppressed, but also the humble and lowly (not just financially poor). This combination of poor and needy, is found some 15 times in Scripture (Deuteronomy 15:11; 24:14; Job 24:14; Psalm 37:14; 40:17; 70:5; 74:21; 86:1; 109:16, 22; Proverbs 31:9; Isaiah 41:17; Jeremiah 22:16; Ezekiel 16:49; 18:12; 22:29). The Lord is not only mindful of, but He is also the defender of the poor and needy (Psalm 72:4, 12). In his final breath David cries "*do not tarry Lord,*" words we too cry out to the *Lord Yeshua, come quickly* (Revelation 22:20).

*Selah
Shalom in Messiah Yeshua
Paul & Sue*