

# *Ponderings in the Psalms*

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The following is a Messianic Study on

## *Psalm 41*

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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 41

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## **Psalms 41:1-13**

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

Blessed is the one who considers the poor! In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him; 2 the LORD protects him and keeps him alive; he is called blessed in the land; you do not give him up to the will of his enemies. 3 The LORD sustains him on his sickbed; in his illness you restore him to full health.

4 As for me, I said, "O LORD, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you!" 5 My enemies say of me in malice, "When will he die, and his name perish?" 6 And when one comes to see me, he utters empty words, while his heart gathers iniquity; when he goes out, he tells it abroad.

7 All who hate me whisper together about me; they imagine the worst for me. 8 They say, "A deadly thing is poured out on him; he will not rise again from where he lies." 9 Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.

10 But you, O LORD, be gracious to me, and raise me up, that I may repay them! 11 By this I know that you delight in me: my enemy will not shout in triumph over me. 12 But you have upheld me because of my integrity, and set me in your presence forever.

13 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting!  
Amen and Amen.

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## **Introduction**

### **Author**

The author is David which gives us an approximate date of about 1000 B.C.E.  
Situation: David is unwell, due to sin, and so he prays for mercy.

### **Outline**

Psalm 41:1-3 *Blessings belonging to the one who considers the poor.*

Psalm 41:4-6 *David's confession, a plea for grace against evil-speaking enemies.*

Psalm 41:7-9 *Whispers and betrayal.*

Psalm 41:10-12 *David prays for grace and a triumph over his enemies*

Psalm 41:13 an editorial finish

### **Historical Background**

In all likelihood this psalm belongs to the time of Absalom's rebellion, when Ahithophel, his close friend, lifted up his heel against David; Ahithophel was the counsellor of the king, until the rebellion, when he switched sides (2 Samuel 15-18, cf. Psalm 55:12-14, 20).

## Keyword

The keyword of this psalm is חַנּוּן (*channeni*) *be gracious or merciful to me* verses 4 and 10. Grace is the unmerited mercy or favour that God bestows on people.

## Psalm 41:1-3 Blessings to the one who helps the Poor.

In many translations: *Blessed is he who considers the poor*: the helpless (NASB). The poor (KJV) is the word דַּל (*dal*) which may include economic poverty, but it is much broader and it can include the *weak* and *frail*. In the Torah those who blessed the *poor*, the *orphan* and the *widows*, those that needed our help, would receive a blessing from the LORD (Deuteronomy 15:7-11; 24:10-13; 28:1-14, 30:15-16; Proverbs 19:17).

After all, God is a Father to the orphans, and He gives the lonely a home, and He brings release to those who are bound with chains (Psalm 68:5-6). The ministry of Yeshua was to the poor, and the helpless (Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 4:16-21). As such, He invites us to join Him and do likewise (Matthew 25:34-39), as do the apostles (1 Thessalonians 5:14). The brother of the Lord puts it this way: “*Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world*” (James 1:27).

In this Psalm the person who does this is happy / blessed by the Lord, (Psalm 41:1-3). The Septuagint reads this not as a promise from God, but as a prayer. *May the Lord preserve him and keep him alive, .... May the Lord help him upon the bed of his pain*<sup>1</sup>. David himself was in need of healing and is pleading with God to consider him, as he was helpless in the situation.

## Psalm 41:4-6 David’s confession, a plea for grace against evil-speaking enemies

David comes to the appeal, and here he reveals that he is the *helpless* and *in need*. He first acknowledges his sin and makes an appeal for mercy. The specific sin is not named, that is between David and the Lord. After his confession he pours out his complaint about his enemies (*those that hate me*). They want *his name* to *perish*, meaning his legacy, that his memory would be forgotten (Job 18:17). And when they did visit him, it was pretence, not a sincere affection for him, for they continued to devise evil in their hearts against him and to spread gossip.

## Psalm 41:7-9 Whispers and betrayal

They whisper, meaning they muttered incantations against David, as if they prayed and hoped for *the worst for him*, that an evil disease would be poured out upon him. The worst is בְּלִיַּעַל (*beliyya'al*) from two Hebrew words meaning *worthlessness-descending* upon him. Here we see a possible connection to the rebellion of Absalom for this was the abuse hurled at David by Shimei (2 Samuel 16:7).

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<sup>1</sup> Septuagint translation into English; by L.C.L. Brenton; 1884.

The abuse was from his close friend, in whom he had trusted and who had shared meals with him, it was his friend who lifted his heel against David. This close friend is not identified here, but it is often thought that it could be Ahithophel, David's counsellor, who had turned against him (2 Samuel 15).

The Hebrew for *close friend* reads a *man of peace* and so it is translated in the Septuagint. Yet Ahithophel, the *close friend* who betrayed David, was no man of peace.

### **Prophetic Connection verse 9**

There is a prophetic connection here. Messiah Yeshua quoted part of this verse (John 13:18) as He spoke about Judas. Interestingly He left out *close friend - man of peace* for Judas, as he was neither a close friend nor a man who knew peace. Yeshua knew He could not trust men (John 2:24-25) for their heart is deceitful wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). And here it is enacted upon by *lifting up a heel*, which is an idiom for taking action against a person; and there is a further connection, in that both Ahithophel and Judas committed suicide (2 Samuel 17:23; Matthew 27:5).

### **Psalm 41:10-12 David prays for grace and a triumph over his enemies**

In the closing verses David makes a second appeal to grace, and with that a request that he may have victory over the evil-speaking enemies, as a sign that he was forgiven. David had confessed his sins (v4), so he is not claiming innocence (see David Stern's translation), but was forgiven because of his *integrity*, that is, he had honestly confessed his sin. As such he felt confident that the LORD would raise him up and speak with him face to face.

The phrase "*In Your presence forever*" recalls the covenant that God made with David (2 Samuel 7:16) and acts as a reminder to God to remember the covenant He had made.

### **Psalm 41:13 contains an editorial finish**

The book of Psalms, like the Torah of Moses, is divided into five books:

- Book 1: Psalms 1-41
- Book 2: Psalms 42-72
- Book 3: Psalms 73-89
- Book 4: Psalms 90-106
- Book 5: Psalms 107-150

Each of these five books ends with a doxology or a verse of praise. These are considered editorial finishes, i.e. that they were added to the text by the man who compiled the Psalter (the five Books of the Psalms).

1. The final verse of Book 1 ends with: "*Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen.*" (Psalm 41:13).
2. The final verse of Book 2 ends with: "*The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.*" (Psalm 72:20).
3. The final verse that ends Book 3 is: "*Blessed be the LORD forever! Amen and Amen.*" (Psalm 89:52).

4. The final verse of Book 4 ends with: “*Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, “Amen!” Praise the LORD!*” (Psalm 106:48).
5. While Psalm 150, the final psalm, serves as the fitting final doxology for the entire 150 psalms, we see that the final verse contains a closer.  
The final verse of Book 5 ends with: “*Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!*” (Psalm 150:6).

So this psalm comes to a close with *Blessed be the LORD God of Israel,....* There is only one God, and He is יהוה (YHWH), *the Eternal*, who chose to be the God of Israel by covenant and to Him belongs all praise, from everlasting and to everlasting; or as Paul wrote “*throughout all generations*” (Ephesians 3:21). Amen and Amen; this serves as a confirmation and here the doubling, as the ultimate confirmation of all that is said in this first book of Psalms *let it be so*.

*Selah*  
*Blessings in Messiah*  
*Paul & Sue*