

Ponderings in the Psalms

The following is a Messianic Study on

Psalm 45

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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 45

- 1 For the choir director;
according to the Shoshannim.
a maskil for the Sons of Korah.
a song of loves.
- My heart overflows with a good theme;
I address my verses to the King;
My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.
- 2 You are fairer than the sons of men;
Grace is poured upon Your lips;
Therefore God has blessed You forever.
- 3 Gird Your sword on *Your* thigh, O Mighty One,
In Your splendor and Your majesty!
- 4 And in Your majesty ride on victoriously,
For the cause of truth and meekness *and* righteousness;
Let Your right hand teach You awesome things.
- 5 Your arrows are sharp;
The peoples fall under You;
Your arrows are in the heart of the King's enemies.
- 6 Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;
A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom.
- 7 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You
With the oil of joy, above Your fellows.
- 8 All Your garments are *fragrant with* myrrh and aloes *and* cassia;
Out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made You glad.
- 9 Kings' daughters are among Your noble ladies;
At Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir.
- 10 Listen, O daughter, give attention and incline your ear:
Forget your people and your father's house;
- 11 Then the King will desire your beauty.
Because He is your Lord, bow down to Him.
- 12 The daughter of Tyre *will come* with a gift;
The rich among the people will seek your favor.
- 13 The King's daughter is all glorious within;
Her clothing is interwoven with gold.
- 14 She will be led to the King in embroidered work;
The virgins, her companions who follow her,
Will be brought to You.
- 15 They will be led forth with gladness and rejoicing;
They will enter into the King's palace.
- 16 In place of your fathers will be your sons;
You shall make them princes in all the earth.
- 17 I will cause Your Name to be remembered in all generations;
Therefore the peoples will give You thanks forever and ever.

Introduction

This psalm, like many of the other psalms, is for the choir director, the leader. Although the tune was known in the past, today we have no idea what “*According to the Shoshannim*” sounded like. The same tune is mentioned in Psalm 69. יִשְׁשַׁנִּים “*shoshannim*” means lilies and it comes from the root-word שִׁשׁ (*shish*), meaning bright but it also carries the meaning of delight and cheerful. We can, with our sanctified imagination, perceive a tune that is bright and cheerful. Because the lily has a tubular shape, Rabbi David Kimchi and others think this might infer a tune with silver trumpets. Furthermore, it is a *maskil*, an instruction or a teaching.

Finally, this is a *Song concerning the beloved* and indeed the context does indicate this, “a song of loves” (lit., JPS) which is often interpreted to mean “a wedding song” (NIV).

Possible background

There are some who believe this psalm was written for Solomon,¹ by king David after Nathan’s prophetic address confirming the Davidic Covenant in 1 Chronicles 17:16-27. Though he had no ivory palaces, Ahab king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel did possess an ivory palace (1 Kings 22:39) and married a foreign princess (1 Kings 16:31). Yet it is hard to imagine having a psalm dedicated to him. Personally, I see a blending of a local king, possibly Solomon, with a picture of the true King that God wanted. In a similar way Psalm 72 looks beyond the earthly king towards the fullness of the Kingdom of God.

Solomon had many foreign wives, besides his marriage to Pharaoh’s daughter (1 King 3:1-28), the harem for other princesses is mentioned (1 Kings 11:1-43). When Solomon married Pharaoh’s daughter, he would have received blessings and compliments (Psalm 45:2-5 and 8) as would his bride (Psalm 45:9-16).

Note the verses quoted in Hebrews that are Messianic readings are confirmed! But we do not want to speculate too far beyond them, as some have done, and I believe it would be wrong to read the body of Messiah as the wife, for we (the body of Messiah) are never called a Queen, or daughters of a foreign king. The body of Messiah is not a Gentile bride but Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 2:15).

Jewish Messianic readings

It is clear that both the rabbinical writings and the Brit Chadashah confirm a Messianic reading. The **Targum** (Aramaic translation) asserts that this is about the Messiah and as such translated verse 2: “*Your beauty, O King Messiah, is greater than the sons of men; the spirit of prophecy has been placed on your lips; because of this the Lord has blessed you forever.*”² This rabbinic translation says the beauty of the Messiah surpasses that of other people and that *the spirit of prophecy has been placed* on His lips, indicating that direct revelation of the Holy Spirit was given to Him and communicated by Him.

The second Messianic reference is found in the great rabbinical commentary, **Midrash Rabbah** (on Genesis 49:8) “... *The Scepter shall not depart from Judah* (Genesis 49:10): this

¹ Hebrew scholar Tur Sinai notes that the title “A Love Song” in the Hebrew is “Song of *Yedidot*.” Solomon’s other name was *Yediyah* (2 Samuel 12:25, meaning “beloved of God”). Others suggest the opposite, namely that Psalm 45 was written in reaction to Solomon’s reputation, the poet hinting at this through his use of *Yedidot* see *Rabbi Schechter in A New Psalm*.

² <http://targum.info/pss/ps2.htm> on Psalm 45:2.

refers to the throne of kingship - *The throne given of God is for ever and ever; a scepter of equity is the scepter of your kingdom* (Psalm 45:7).³ The reference in Genesis is confirmed as Messianic and applied or extended via the Davidic covenant here.

In his introduction **RaDaK**, (Rabbi David Kimchi), the authoritative medieval Bible commentator (1160-1235 CE), writes: “*This psalm is said about the Messianic King and is called a song of friendship because in it we see the LORD’s love for Messiah.*”⁴ The **ArtScroll** commentary words it slightly differently: “A song of endearment, describing [the result of] God’s love for His anointed one.”⁵

The author of **Hebrews** confirms the Biblical Messianic reading for he quotes verses 6&7 in Hebrews 1:8-9.

Commentary on the Biblical text

The King’s beauty and glory described, 45:1-8

The psalmist identifies himself as a skilful scribe. This is the description of Ezra as noted in Ezra 7:6. His heart is stirred as he composes the poem for a King.

His heart, biblically speaking his mind, is thinking is over the good words. James Montgomery Boice in his commentary on this psalm writes “The language in this verse (verse 1) is so unusual that some commentators believe the poet is claiming special inspiration.”⁶ I would think he is right, it is indeed a prophetic “*special inspiration*,” not just a historical observation of “a king,” as the Hebrew literally reads, the author avoids naming the king.

You are fairer than.... Shulamite spoke of Solomon in his appearance (Song of Solomon 5:10-16) in the same way. At first glance this seems to contradict Messianic prophecy (Isaiah 52:14, 53:2-3), for while on earth during His first coming “*He had no beauty to look upon*,” but it is not Yeshua’s physical appearance that is addressed, but the beauty of His personality. We see that in the corresponding line “*Grace is poured upon Your lips*,” the beauty is within and as He spoke none had heard anything like it (Luke 4:22, cf. John 7:46).

Note that verses 2, 6 and 17 all indicated an eternal aspect; here in verse 2 God blessed Him forever.

The King comes to battle; many in the body of Messiah see Yeshua as the sweet, innocent little babe, the gentle man from Galilee, the suffering servant who died for me.... but they choose to forget He is also known as the *Man of War* (Exodus 15:3; Psalm 24:8; Isaiah 42:3; Revelation 19:11-21). And while He is mighty to save, there is a day of vengeance in His heart (Isaiah 63:1-6). At His second coming, nothing and nobody will stop Him, the battle belongs to Messiah alone, and He will fight in that day. He will establish a kingdom that is forever, referring to the eternal aspect. Here the language is clearly based on Covenant, for in the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Psalm 89:3-4) we see the future Messianic King reigning forever and ever; in uprightness, literally in fairness or impartiality (Isaiah 9:6-7).

³ Tom Huckel, *The Rabbinic Messiah*, (Philadelphia, PA: Hananeel House, 1998), comment on Psalm 45:6.

⁴ “זוה המזמור נאמר על המלך המשיח ונקרא שיר ידידות כי בו אהבת ה' למשיחו.”
<https://www.sefaria.org/Psalms.45.1?lang=bi&with=Radak&lang2=en>

⁵ *Tehillim*, ArtScroll Tanach Series, Vol. 2, Rabbi Avroham Chaim Feuer, *Commentary on Psalm 45*, pg. 560, 1978.

⁶ James Montgomery Boice. *Psalms*, volume 2.

The uprightness of His character is clear. The Psalmist seems to be quoting God the Father, speaking to the Son, because “*You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness.*” The action that will follow will be that the Father will anoint God the Son, see Hebrews 1:8-9. He will be above all and His kingdom will be over all the earth (Psalm 2).

On that day his garments will smell of the most beautiful fragrant spices. **Myrrh, Aloes and Cassia** are used as a perfume (Proverbs 7:17; Song of Songs 3:6; 4:14 etc) *Myrrh* comes from the dried gum of a balsam tree in Arabia and is one component of the holy oil (incense) (Exodus 30:23). *Aloes*, is a sweet aromatic wood growing in parts of the Middle East and South East Asia. The *Cassia* is a fragrant plant related to cinnamon, used for perfume and also in the holy anointing oil (Exodus 30:24).

Royalty stand nearby including His bride, dressed in gold from Ophir (Genesis 10:29; 1 Kings 9:28; etc). Though the exact location of Ophir is unknown, Josephus seems to point to India (Antiquities 8.6.4).

Elohim

It would seem that in verse 6, the psalmist sees the king as God אֱלֹהִים (*Elohim*). Back then the king represented God in judgements and rulership. Similar language is seen in Exodus 21:6; 22:8-9; and Psalm 82:1, where Moses and Asaph called Israel’s judges *elohim* because they represented God. However here, the King is indeed Elohim. Hebrews 1:8-9 tells us that Yeshua is the King Eternal, whose throne is forever and ever. For God the Father has anointed God the Son, the Messiah Yeshua who is the King-Elohim with the oil of gladness.

Word of warning

Since the body of Messiah was a mystery (Ephesians 3:3-6), something not revealed in the Tanach (Older Testament), we should not read the Church into it. Many Christian commentators claim that the Kings’ daughters, the noble ladies, and the Queen of this text, are the body of Messiah, but the body of Messiah is never addressed with those terms. She is the bride of Messiah, these are all gentiles, and the Body of Messiah is not only Gentile, it is Jew and Gentile. The Bible does not interpret who they are; as such we ought to be very careful as they may just be part of the historical background and not a prophetic element of the psalm.

The word for queen is not the normal מַלְכָּה (*malkah*), but שֶׁגַל (*shegal*), which is only used here and in Nehemiah 2:6. Bullinger noted that this word is from the Akkadian *sha* - meaning a bride, and *gal* - indicating great, a *great bride* or royal consort, indicating she is a foreign consort.⁷

The Bride and her companions 45:10-16

The bride is now instructed to *forget your people and your father’s house*, and to submit to her husband (אָדוֹן - *adon*) who will adore her. These are the first steps in their marriage. The bride assumes now a high status, which can be seen in the gifts and servants. They will be led in bridal procession to the kings temple/palace הֵיכָל (*hecal*). She is no longer mourning her loss (her father’s house) but instead we see a blessing of children and knowing that they will rule.

⁷ Notes on Nehemiah 2:6 in the *Companion Bible*, E.W. Bullinger 1922.

Giving thanks to the King, 45:17

In the final verse we are left to wonder if it is the Name of the LORD or the name of the unnamed king? The former seems more likely, as His Name will be mentioned from generation to generation, דֹר וְדֹר (*dor v'dor*). Yes, the peoples shall praise You forever and ever.

Conclusion

This Psalm is based on both a real historical occasion, and the prophetic / Messianic element which the Brit Chadashah (New Covenant) confirms. The author of Hebrews confirms that the Messiah is in verses 6-7, but there is no indication that the Psalmist sees the body of Messiah in the *consort*. We would do well not to stray beyond the scriptural interpretations into the wild and woolly sanctified imaginations of men's mind.

Let us give praise to the Name of King Messiah, that His Name may be remembered for good in all generations; and let all the peoples give thanks to You forever and ever.

Selah

Blessings in Messiah

Paul & Sue