

Ponderings in the Psalms

The following is a Messianic Study on

Psalm 47

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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 47

Genre

This is called an “enthronement psalm” because it deals with the universal reign of the LORD (cf. Psalms 93, 95-99). He is king, or enthroned, so it encourages all peoples, Jews and Gentiles, to loudly proclaim His praise, to declare that God is the King over all the earth.

It is also called a Psalm of Zion. Psalms 46, 47 and 48 are all linked, because they speak of the Lord reigning from Zion over all the earth.

- In Psalm 46 the LORD is in the midst of His city, He is our refuge and strength, so the people have confidence.
- In Psalm 47 the LORD reigns as the King of all the earth, He is Israel’s protector.
- In Psalm 48 the LORD reigns in Zion, He makes her secure, the city reflects God’s presence.

Summary

In line with the genre, the psalmist urges all peoples to clap and shout loudly to God (v. 1), for He will reign victoriously as King over all peoples and He will establish the Jewish people in their land (vv. 2–4). The coronation, or God’s ascension to the throne, comes in the midst of praise (vv. 5–7). The psalm concludes with the King who reigns (sits) over all the nations and the people of Israel (vv. 8–9).

The historical background is found in 1 Chronicles 16 when the Ark of the Covenant, God’s throne, was brought to Jerusalem by King David. The prophetic picture is the Messianic or Millennial Kingdom, when Messiah reigns upon the earth.

Author

Psalms that have the title “Of the Sons of Korah,” could just as easily be translated “*for the sons of Korah*,” which makes it more for the choir and something to be sung. This is after all a מִזְמוֹר (*mitzmor*), a song that was accompanied with music.

Keywords

As we read through this Psalm, we see these keywords which help us frame the enthronement of Messiah.

1. There are four references to kingship; three times **king** מֶלֶךְ “*Melech*” and a related Hebrew word is **reign** מָלַךְ “*malach*.”
2. There are ten words connected to giving honour to the King: five times **sing** and twice we have **shout**, and once we have **clap**, **fear**, and blow the **shofar**.
3. There are ten references to **God** in total; אֱלֹהִים “*Elohim*” seven times, the **God of Abraham** אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם “*Elohei Avraham*” once, one **the LORD Most High** יְהוָה עֶלְיוֹן “*YHWH Elyon*,” and finally there is a reference to the **LORD** יְהוָה “*YHWH*.” We can see that these ten references to giving honour to the king, the singing, shouting, clapping, blowing of shofar and the fearing are actually worship.
4. And finally, there are eight references to the peoples of the earth: “**people(s)**” four times, “**earth**” three times, and **nations** once.

In this psalm we see the unique phrase (it is only used once in the whole Bible), where the words “holy throne” is put together” קַדְשׁוֹ כִּסֵּא “*kad’sho kisse*.”

Jewish Liturgy

This Psalm is chanted seven times on the days of Rosh Hashanah (2 days) in Ashkenazi tradition.

Psalm 47

1. To the choirmaster,
 a Psalm of the Sons of Korah.
 Clap your hands, all peoples!
 Shout to God with loud songs of joy!
2. For the LORD, the Most High, is to be feared,
 the Great King over all the earth.
3. He subdued peoples under us,
 and nations under our feet.
4. He chose our heritage for us,
 the pride of Jacob whom He loves.
 Selah.
5. God has gone up with a shout,
 the LORD with the sound of a **ram's horn**.
6. Sing praises to God!
 Sing praises!
 Sing praises to our King!
 Sing praises!
7. For God is the King of all the earth;
 Sing praises with a psalm!
8. God reigns over the nations;
 God sits on his Holy throne.
9. The princes of the peoples gather
 as the people of the God of Abraham.
 For the shields of the earth belong to God;
 He is highly exalted!

Commentary

Much of what we read in Psalm 47 can be seen in the descriptions we have of a king being crowned.

1. **Clapping**, as a sign of respect and joy, occurred during coronations, for example Jehoash's coronation in 2 Kings 11:12.
2. **Shouts of joy** greeted Saul when he was crowned king (1 Samuel 10:24)
3. **The sound of the shofar** or the ram's horn at Absalom's coronation (2 Samuel 15:10).

However, this psalm does not draw on such ceremonies, since these verses are also connected to the giving of the Law and worship. The shofar, the ram's horn, was blasted at the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. There God entered into a marriage covenant with Israel and came into their midst by residing in the Tabernacle, about the Ark of the Covenant. There are also references of shofar blowing at other festivals and celebrations (Leviticus 25:9; 2 Samuel 6:15; 1 Chronicles 15:28; Isaiah 27:13).

This is about God's kingship. God is not king over just one nation, as a result He is addressed as the LORD Most High (YHWH *Elyon*). Abraham had already identified the *LORD* as the *God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth* (Genesis 14:22).

Verse 1 All you **peoples**, this includes Jews and Gentiles, and we are all commanded in light of the psalm to start with these two things: 1) clap your hands, 2) cry out with the voice of joy to the LORD. In other words, rejoice and be happy, for the King of Israel is the King over all the nations and peoples of the earth.

Verse 2 gives us the reason for our joy and jubilations: For the LORD is most high with authority over all the earth. In the older translations (KJV/ASV) it will say “For the LORD most high *is* terrible.” Terrible? The JPS has awful? The Hebrew word אָרַץ (*yare*) means ‘to be feared.’ He is ‘truly awesome’ so this should cause us to be fearful, full of reverence, to give honour. He is to be feared, with Godly reverence!

Verse 3 reveals that Israel will have a leadership position in the Kingdom, not because they will conquer the world, no! *The Lord* will subdue and place peoples, nations under their leadership. They will be the head and not the tail (Deuteronomy 28:13, 44) in the kingdom to come. The leadership position is given to Israel because of His promises.¹ The Psalmist looked forward to the time when HE, that is the righteous Messiah Yeshua (Psalm 2), would reign as the great King, exercising dominion over all the earth, including Israel.

Verse 4 The LORD chose an inalienable inheritance, that is a reflection on both the Land, part of the unconditional Covenant with Abraham, and also that leadership position.

“*The glory of Jacob*” (NASB) the *Excellency* (KJV), or as some translations have “*the pride of Jacob*,” here again we have an older use of a word, for it does not mean pride as in haughty or self-centred. The word גָּאוֹן (*gaon*) carries the meaning of **splendour** or “*eminence*” (Nahum 2:2; Isaiah 60:15).

So here too, the glory of Israel refers to the beautiful land, the Land of Promise. The Land is called ‘*the excellency of Jacob*,’ on account of its beauty, and the quality of the seven species of fruit and grain that grow there (Deuteronomy 8:7-9; 2 Kings 18:32). This part of the Psalm finished with **Selah**, meaning *Pause and ponder* this.

Verse 5 When an earthly king sat on a throne he had to ascend to it, as the throne was placed on a raised platform (1 Kings 10:19-20, 2 Chronicles 9:18-19). He was to be given shouts of praise as he was going up, the shofar was blown and peoples clapped and were fearful as he would act in the role of judge and king. How much more so when the King of all the earth is crowned? Does he deserve praise and worship from ALL peoples?

Yeshua has not yet ascended to the royal throne. In Heaven He is currently our High Priest (Hebrews 7:11-9:28). Only when He finishes His priestly ministry, then He will set up the Kingdom, then we will hear the shout of peoples and the sound of the shofar.

Verse 6 This is not a suggestion made by the psalmist; this is a commandment, **SING!** The Hebrew is briefer with 6 words, while there are 12 words in English.

<i>Tzimru Elohim, Tzimru</i>	זָמְרוּ אֱלֹהִים זָמְרוּ
<i>Tzimru L’Malkenu Tzimru</i>	זָמְרוּ לְמַלְכֵנוּ זָמְרוּ

And it is right for us to obey that command today, in light of this Psalm; Sing praises to God the coming King of all the earth. Note the repetition Sing Praise, the root-word for sing זָמַר (*tzemer*) also means to praise with the playing of an instrument.

¹ From individual nations like Moab in Numbers 24:18-19, to Messiah’s reign on the throne of David over all the earth in Isaiah 9:7

Verse 7 We continue to sing, sing, sing praises to God who is now declared as the King over all the earth. And we do this with the *skilful psalm*, the Hebrew word is “מִשְׁכִּיל” (*maskil*). The KJV is here much clearer, we are to **sing praises with understanding** (Brenton Translation). We are to sing and praise the LORD. How did Yeshua put that? “*And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength*” (Mark 12:30). It is not to be just words floating up, we need to stop and confirm the truth of it. Then sing “*with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.*”

Verse 8 What are we to sing, *the LORD reigns* let the people tremble, He is enthroned above the Cherubim (Psalm 99:1), the LORD our God He reigns in Zion He is a great and an Awesome KING...

God sits on His holy throne; the phrase “*holy throne*” is only mentioned here in all of scripture. It is unique to and for Him, for He will not share His glory with another. The author of Hebrews makes a play on this. In Hebrews 4:16 by equating the *holy throne* with the throne Yeshua currently has, as our high priest, which is the *throne of grace*, they are two different thrones, but both unique.

Verse 9 First the nobility of the nations, that is the peoples, have all come together **with**, not **as**, or **even**, **instead of**, or **to be the people of the God of Abraham**. **No**, the point the psalmist made was that both will come and assemble together. The nations will send representatives (the nobles or the princes), and *with* the people of the God of Abraham, they will come together in worship, in honour of the coronation of the King of kings, to honour the Lord of lords, and during the kingdom they will come together for a thousand years to celebrate.

We also see “*the shields of the earth*,” which is probably a reference to the military, the nobles and the military that defend the kingdom of the LORD (Psalm 89:18). These two will play a significant role at the end of the Messianic kingdom, when once again there will be war (Revelation 20:7-9). The deceiver will be released for a short time and stir the nations up so that they will come against the LORD and His anointed for the final time.

The psalm ends with **He is greatly exalted**; that is, Messiah Yeshua the KING, who by then has been given all power in heaven and in earth; He is highly exalted at the right hand of God and ALL the angelic hosts and all peoples will acknowledge that Yeshua is LORD.

CONCLUSION

Friends, in this Psalm the faithful are praising and worshiping God and they participate in shouting and clapping at the coronation of the KING.

What about us? We need to declare the Good News of the Kingdom. We do that in song, we sing aloud His praises, clap our hands, and blow the shofar, not piccolos, as Yeshua is the soon coming King over all the earth, and He is highly exalted.

Selah

Blessings in Messiah

Paul & Sue