

Ponderings in the Psalms

The following is a Messianic Study on

Psalm 6

By Paul Cohen, Messianic Bible Teacher.
Brit Chadashah (Sydney)
www.BCSydney.com



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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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Brit Chadashah; P.O. Box 304; Caulfield South, VIC 3162, Australia
Email: bc@celebratemessiah.com.au
Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/BritChadashah.Sydney>
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Pondering Psalm 6

Psalm 6

(1) For the choirmaster: with stringed instruments; according to the Sheminith (upon an eight-string lyre), a Psalm of David.

O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath. (2) Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am waste away; heal me, O LORD, for my bones are affrighted. (3) My soul also is greatly disturbed, and You, O LORD, - until when?

(4) Return, O LORD, deliver my soul; save me for the sake of your mercies. (5) For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol who will give you thanks? (6) I am weary with my groaning; every night I swim in my bed; (*for*) I drenched my couch with my tears. (7) My eye fails because of grief; they grow old because of all my adversaries.

(8) Depart from me, all you workers of evil, for the LORD has heard the voice of my weeping. (9) The LORD has heard my supplication; the LORD accepts my prayer. (10) All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly affrighted; they shall turn back and be put to shame in a moment.

Outline

There are three strophes:

1. Repentance and asking for mercy (Psalm 6:1-3)
2. In distress, asking for life (Psalm 6:4-7)
3. The assurance of answered prayer (Psalm 6:8-10)

Superscripts (title, instructions, author)

- 1) To the choirmaster: For the Leader; chief Musician
- 2) The KJV has “*On Neginoth*” many others translated this to mean with stringed instruments or musical accompaniment; And so we may see this as a song, a poem set to music.
- 3) According to The Sheminith: Probably an instrumental musical notation; The Septuagint translated it as: “*among the Hymns for the eighth*” and many modern translations follow in this with the “**eight**-stringed harp” or the “**eight**-stringed lyre”.
- 4) Author *from David*: this is a Psalm of King David, we know it dates back to about 1000 BCE.

Comments

Introduction

David does not mention a specific incident, but what we can see is in this Psalm that David acknowledged his need for repentance and he cries out for mercy and relief from the Divine discipline he was suffering. This type of Psalm is called a *Penitential Psalm*. (Other *Penitential* Psalms are 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143). Together these seven Psalms are occasionally mentioned under the title “*Psalms of Atonement*”. In both the morning and afternoon services of the Synagogue part of this psalm is recited in the Tachanun (Hebrew: Tachanun: תחנון literally meaning supplication (humbly asking God); the Tachanun is

composed of 2 Samuel 24:14, and Psalm 6:2-11) in which the worshipper brings a personal request.

Commentary

1. Repentance & asking for mercy

Note the words “rebuke... anger... discipline ...wrath.” David recognises that due to a specific unmentioned sin the Lord is rebuking him, and so he seeks repeatedly for mercy, *rebuke me not, be gracious, and return to me*. David’s request for relief from the distress and from the Lord’s wrath. Note that this is similar language to Psalm 32:3-4 Where David tells us that when he kept silent about his sin, his body wasted away. This was because God’s hand was heavy upon him. The wrath of God is translated as “hot displeasure”

As I am writing this I think of some of the sins listed against David:

1. David’s infidelity; the adultery with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:1-5).
2. And his subsequent compound error of trying to cover up his adultery and the arrangement of the death of Bathsheba’s husband Uriah (2 Samuel 11:6-27).
3. David’s failure to discipline his sons. (Neither Amnon nor Absalom were chastised by their father David (2 Samuel 13).
4. David taking the census (2 Samuel 24:1-17 & 1 Chronicles 21:1-17) David ignored the purpose of the census which was for the giving of atonement money (see Exodus 30:12) and he ignored Joab’s advice when he took the national census (2 Samuel 24:3) as David relied on the strength of the army (Psalm 20:7).

Verses 2–3a

David pleads with the Lord to have “חן” *chen*, mercy or favour on him, because of his suffering and so he prays for relief. Note the intensity, he is pining away and his bones, meaning his whole body was greatly afflicted. Then David says his soul was greatly disturbed, reading carefully we can sense an increase from general suffering, the whole body was afflicted to even his spiritual life being in distress. What David describes here are not mere repetitions but he shares his pain as a broken man, physical, emotional and even in spiritual distress.

Verse 3b

“And You, O LORD, until when” or “how long!” David shifts his eyes from the consequences of his sin and asks; When is it enough O Lord? Have I not suffered enough? How long O Lord will You punish me for my sin, and how long will I suffer this condition?

The consequences of our actions may be with us for a long time, this does not mean that God has not forgiven us, God forgave Israel for the golden calf for He renews the covenant (Exodus 34) yet the consequences of murmuring and the golden calf did prohibit the exodus generation to possess the Promised Land (Numbers 32:13)

2. In distress, asking for life instead of death

“Return ...deliver my soul”

The first word Return / turn is שׁוּבָה *shuvah* (from שׁוּב *shuv*), return, come back, i.e. turn back to me in gracious (*chen*) lovingkindness preserve my soul נַפְשִׁי (*nephesh*) my breath, my life.

David requests for life and limb indicates the severity of his case. David references to death and sheol indicate he is dying. As the apostle, Paul would proclaim “the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Messiah Yeshua our Lord” David is appealing to God as he too recognises that the consequences of sin is causing his death and he needs the a renewal of life through the grace of God.

שְׁאוֹל - Sheol; the Jewish Publication Society Bible has: *nether-world*; the KJV: *grave*, this term *Sheol* occurs in the Older Testament as a synonym for death and the grave.

Sadly Sheol is sometimes translated as the hell, but this is an inadequate rendition. Sheol is mentioned 64 times throughout the Older Testament from Genesis to Proverbs and Isaiah to Habakkuk, if we would examine each one we see that both the righteous and the unrighteous expected to go upon death (Psalm 89:48). The unrighteous were confined to the *lowest Sheol* (Deuteronomy 32:22; Psalm 86:13) awaiting judgement. From there both groups the righteous and the unrighteous awaited the resurrection, while the Older Testament saints may not have known all details about the resurrection, it was known as a fact from at least the time of Abraham, so David knew about life after death (Job 19:25-26 “*For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall rise on the earth at the last; and even after they corrupt my skin, yet this: in my flesh I shall see God*”). Yet in the grave David thought there would be silence, and no praise.

One reason why we should not see Sheol as hell is because the righteous also went to Sheol but instead of down they went to a segment called the “*Bosom of Abraham*” (Luke 16:19-31) a place of comfort inside Sheol where they wait until the resurrection of the righteous (Daniel 12:2-3, 13; Isaiah 26:19).

According to Jewish teaching during the life and times of Yeshua, the righteous went to Sheol and met the patriarchs there “*For if we so die, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob will welcome us, and all the fathers will praise us.*” (4 Maccabees 13:17 see also Matthew 8:11). Yeshua also taught on *Abraham’s bosom* when he talked about Lazarus in Luke 16, note this is not a parable, for specific people are mentioned by name, which does not happen in parables, nor is it said to be a parable. This is an actual account of a man called Lazarus, (there is a deeper play here as well, Lazarus is the Greek for Eliezer, (who was the foreign servant of Abraham Genesis 15:2-24) Yeshua had a ministry not just to rich and powerful in Israel, but also to the poor and the strangers of the covenant.

Verses 6-7

David hyperbole that he flooded his bed with tears, over his sin, is a figure of speech to evokes in us the same strong feelings he felt, in the same way that Jeremiah expresses his pain over the sins of Israel, when he wrote that his “*eyes flow with rivers of tears*” (Lamentations 3:48).

David now brings in a new antagonist, not just his own sin but also adversaries who cause his eyes to age.

3. The assurance of answered prayer

David asks that his adversaries may depart from him. For the Lord heard his weeping and the Lord heard his supplication, yes David is confident that the Lord accepts (literary: took up) his prayer. As such it is as of David now warns his enemies as his lament has gone up to be received by God and He will take action and provide aid to David, as such he declares away, away you evildoers.

David expresses his confidence in God once more, He has accepted my Tachanun / his supplication & his תְּפִלָּה Tefillah; his prayer.

This last verse might be best thought of as David's hope 'may all my enemies....' As in previous psalms we note that David had plenty of troubles with foes, friends and even family.

Conclusion

Friends sometimes God's discipline is on us, to correct us and like David and the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 10:24), we should not pray for the removal of the chastisement but for the chastisement to be in His mercy and His steadfast love for His grace is sufficient for us.

Warning

Many of us have fallen into the trap of reading one verse and applying it in all situations. David in this Psalm indicates that sin and sickness go hand in hand. And not only that, but that God was a cause of his affliction. Is this always true?

I am paraphrasing a sound warning from William MacDonald about this common error; in the Believers Bible Commentary (page 554) when he address this question is sickness always the result of sin:

Sometimes it is the case (1 Corinthians 11:30) but not in all cases. God does permits illness as a springboard for the display of His glory (John 9:3; 11:4), or as a means of producing spiritual fruit (Romans 5:3), or as a natural result of being overwork and continually burdened (Philippians 2:30) or even old age (Ecclesiastes 12:3-6).

Whenever we become sick the first thing we should do is to make sure that we have no unconfessed sin in our life, and then ask the Lord to work out His purpose in the illness and to heal us. Sometime miraculous and more often via the aid of the medical profession, and so let us remember not to be like wicked king Asa in 2 Chronicles 16:12 who when he became unwell "did not seek the LORD, but sought help from healers (physicians)", but seek the Lord our Healer (Exodus 15:26).

Selah

Shalom in Messiah

Paul & Sue