

Ponderings in the Psalms

The following is a Messianic Study on

Psalm 7

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>
YouTube <https://tinyurl.com/BC-Video>

Pondering Psalm 7

Psalm 7

1. A Shiggaion of David, which he sang to the LORD, concerning Cush, a Benjamite
O LORD, my God, in You I take refuge; deliver me from all my pursuers and save me,
2. lest he, like a lion, rend me, tear me apart, with no one to save me.
3. O LORD, my God, if I have done this: if my hands bear the guilt of wrongdoing,
4. if I have dealt evil to my ally, or plundered my foe without cause,
5. then let the enemy pursue and overtake me; let him trample my life to the ground, and lay my body in the dust.

Selah.

6. Rise O LORD in Your anger; lift Yourself up against the fury of my foes, bestir on my behalf the judgment You have ordained.
7. An assembly of peoples gathers about You - above it return on high.
8. The LORD brings the peoples to trial; judge me, O LORD, for the righteousness and blamelessness that is in me.
9. Let the evil of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous; He who probes the heart and conscience is the righteous God.
10. My shield is with God, the deliverer of the upright in heart.
11. God judges the righteous; God pronounces doom each day.

12. If one does not turn back, but whets his sword, bends his bow and prepares it,
13. then against himself he prepares deadly weapons, and makes his arrows sharp.
14. See, he hatches evil, conceives mischief, and gives birth to lies.
15. He has created a pit and dug it out, and he will fall into the trap he made.
16. His mischief will turn back on his own head; his lawlessness will come down upon his skull.

17. I will praise the LORD for His righteousness, and sing a hymn to the name of the LORD Most High.

Commentary

Superscript, verse 1.

The precise meaning of “Shiggaion” is uncertain. Possibly it is a musical instrument to which this psalm was set or indicating an ecstatic song. We see the same term in Habakkuk’s prayer when he writes “upon *the* shigionoth” which is the same word in plural (Habakkuk 3:1). Whatever musical instrument it was, David composed this Psalm for that instrument.

“Cush, a Benjamite” we do not know who Cush is and he is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible. But it is best to take him as a man from the tribe of Benjamin, i.e. one who was aligned with Saul. In that context we see that a number of times it was insinuated that David was plotting a rebellion against King Saul (1 Samuel 22:8). David complains about these slanderers (1 Samuel 24:9; 26:19).

Throughout the ages Jewish and Christian interpreters have tried to identify Cush. Some have taken it to mean a Cushite, meaning an Ethiopian (Jerome); others have taken it to mean **black** as a nickname for Saul, who was stained black due to sin (Targum¹); others have chosen Shimei (2 Samuel 16:5-14). The issue is not who Cush is, but rather what did he say, for the Psalm says “*concerning the words of Cush.*” So what did he say? This is a reference to the slander that David was accused of in 1 Samuel 24:9 “*Behold, David seeks your harm*” and in 1 Samuel 26:17-19, when David was accused for plotting evil against the King.

The overall theme of the Psalm is God’s vindication of His servant and judgment on his enemies (vv. 6, 8, 11).

Three Strophes

First strophe (1-5):

David flees into the arms of God (Psalms 11:1; 16:1; 31:1; 57:1; 71:11; 141:8), as he is being lied about, persecuted and pursued (vv. 1, 5, 13). David trusted the Lord to protect and save him from the pursuers (note the plural in verse 1). These now stand with Cush and are likely to be King *Saul*, *Doeg* the Edomite and *Shimei* (2 Samuel 16:5) and possibly others. But in verse 2 David goes over to the singular **he**. I take this to be the spirit behind their evil intent, (1 Peter 5:8) the Devil who is like a roaring lion seeking to tear his soul apart. This lion / animal motive David brings up over and over in the psalms; these are people who stand against him (7:2; 10:9; 17:12; 22; 35:17; 57:4; 58:6).

The animals here are the people who falsely accused David. It seems that David is made an example for us about *suffering for righteousness’ sake* (1 Peter 3:13-17). Note that some of David’s suffering was his own doing because he slept with Bathsheba, plotted and caused the death of her husband (2 Samuel 11), and for not rebuking his sons when they went off the rails (2 Samuel 13-14), but here he claims ‘I am innocent’ of these crimes: slander, repaying a friend with evil intent and plundering his enemy excessively.

David wasn’t claiming to be sinless; but on these crimes he was stating that he was blameless in his motives and actions (v. 8) and is even willing to accept God’s discipline and the fury of his enemies.

David was given two opportunities to murder King Saul and become king, yet he didn’t give into the temptation (1 Samuel 24 & 26). King Saul was clearly an enemy, yet David treated him well as he was the Lord’s anointed. Neither had David slandered the king, there was no malice in his heart nor a desire for revenge. David knew that his thoughts and actions had been righteous and he was confident.

Selah, the verse ends on the word *Selah*, סֶלָה In the book of Psalms, as mentioned in previous emails, this is most likely a musical notation, meaning pause, asking the choir to be silent.

As such we too ought to pause and ponder or reflect on this. Are we innocent? Have we kept our tongue in check, boasted or slandered? As such we should pray and ask God to forgive us (1 John 2:1-2) for we all sin at times, and then ask God to create in us a clean heart and to renew a right spirit within us (Psalm 51:10).

¹ <http://targum.info/pss/ps1.htm> “A rendition of the thanksgiving of David, who gave praise to the Lord; for he spoke a song about the ruin of Saul son of Kish, from the tribe of Benjamin.”

Second strophe (6–11): the Lord is judge

Arise (קומה qumah) this word is taken straight from the mouth of Moses in Numbers 10:35. “Arise, LORD, and let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you.” The God of Moses (Exodus 15:3) is invoked, in similar language to Psalm 3, where he too asks the Lord to smite the enemies.

Note that David didn’t take the situation into his own hands; rather, he turned to the Lord and asked Him to deal with the scheming men of King Saul, to judge them and even to judge him.

The scene that David paints here is a judgement court. The people are summoned round the tribunal where the Lord sits on high. On earth David stood accused by these evil man, and he had not returned evil on to either King Saul or his man (Romans 12:17-21) and so was confident that now it was the turn of his enemies to stand before the Judge of the earth. And so he asks God to ascend His throne on high!

It is good to remember that God is love (1 John 4:8, 16). We hear this a lot. God is love and He will forgive everything. This is true as long as we confess our sins and have an atonement. In that light we need to confess our sins (1 John 1:9), and rely on the atonement that Yeshua made on our behalf (Hebrews 9:15-23). For while God is love He is also Holy, and therefore will judge the wicked and sin, as it says in Psalm 5:5 “*The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers.*”

Verse 9 has the heart and the reins (JPS, KJV). Biblically speaking, the heart is regarded as the intellect, the thought and will of a man, the reins (or kidneys) was seen as the seat of the emotions (for other references see Jeremiah 11:20, 17:10, 20:12; and for a similar expression in the New Testament see Revelation 2:23).

In ancient times a soldier carried a shield for protection. God was to David, His servant, that shield. The Lord always protects and defends those who know Him and who are trusting in Him. The Hebrew word for shield is *magen* מגן this is still used in Hebrew for the Star of David, the “*Magen David*”. According to tradition David had a six-pointed star on his shield. But David is saying God is my shield. He is my defence, something we see also with Abraham in Genesis 15:1, and a promise for Israel in Deuteronomy 33:29².

David believed that God had not and would not abandon him, as such David knew that God was the source of protection, his “shield.” Throughout the Psalms we see this thought “God as Protector” repeated (Psalm 3:3; Psalm 18:2; Psalm 18:30; Psalm 28:7; Psalm 33:20; Psalm 59:11; Psalm 84:11; Psalm 115:9-11; Psalm 119:114; Psalm 144:2).

David knew from past experience that God is a “*very present help in trouble*” (46:1).

Third strophe (12-16):

The heart of the matter is revealed in verse 12. If a man does not repent, God will judge the sinner. Almost as if to say with every sin God’s sword is sharpened, as such His judgements are ready.

² The Lord is my shield / defence where the Hebrew word is מגן - *magen* is found in Genesis 15:1; Deuteronomy 33:29; 2 Samuel 22:31; Psalms 3:3; 18:2 & 30 (2x); 28:7; 33:20; 84:11; 89:18 & 115:9-11 (3x).

The words *conceives* and *pregnant* paint for us that image of sin, that starts small and grows and grows, until it is conceived (Job 15:35) and destroys the sinner. The pit which he made is the one into which he falls. This is demonstrated in history over and over. King Saul wanted to kill David, but his own sword killed him. Pharaoh ordered the Jewish babies boys to be drowned in the Nile, and his own army was drowned in the Red Sea. Haman built gallows on which to hang Mordecai, but in the end Haman himself was hanged on it (see also Proverbs 26:27).

God remained holy (Leviticus 11:44; Isaiah 6:3), righteous (Psalms 129:4) and just (Zephaniah 3:5). He was celebrated by David not because he judged the sinners, but because the righteousness of God has been exalted. Sinners became ensnared and are still ensnared in and by their own sins, yet the grace of God is so amazing. He sent His Son into the world (John 3:16) to redeem sinners. As such we too, like David, ought to rejoice that He is Holy and Righteous and Just.

Concluding note on verse (17):

The Name of God here is “*the LORD Most High*” (17). This combined divine name is rare (Psalm 47:2) but a related name, ‘*God most High*,’ does go back to Genesis 14:18-22. In the New Covenant Yeshua was called the “Son of the Most High” (Mark 5:7; Luke 1:32, 35; 8:28). The *Most High* is seen as the coming Judge and King of all the earth.

In Revelation 19:11-21 Yeshua is seen as the rider called Faithful and True, who in righteousness will judge and make war, coming on a white horse to judge the world. His sword was sharpened by the sins of the people, and on His robe and on His thigh He has the equivalent name: KING of kings and LORD of lords. Friends may we tremble and pay homage in purity, kissing the Son (Psalm 2). Sing praise to the Name of the LORD Most High, Yeshua, who is coming soon.

Selah
Shalom in Messiah
Paul & Sue