

Ponderings in the Psalms

The following is a Messianic Study on

Psalm 9

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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 9

Introduction

This song מִזְמוֹר (*mizmor*) is ascribed to King David and is set “to the tune of ‘Upon the death of a son.’” Some will have the phrase in transliterated Hebrew: (al)mut-labben - עלִמּוֹת לִבֶּן. David had at least three sons who died before he did. These three sons were the firstborn of David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12:15), secondly, there was Amnon by the hand of Absalom, his brother (2 Samuel 13:23-33) and finally, Absalom was killed by Joab (2 Samuel 18 & 1 Chronicles 3:1-2). We don’t know which son this Psalm is referring to but we see that David grieves deeply over Absalom’s death (2 Samuel 18:19-33). David is reproved by Joab in 2 Samuel 19 and it may well be that David composed this song, “Upon the death of a son,” after this event.

Others in ancient times translated the phrase “Muth-labben” as “Concerning the secrets of the Son.” This is done in both the Septuagint and the Vulgate (the Latin translation) and in both of these translation Psalms 9 and 10 were considered one Psalm.

There are some similarities between the two psalms. For example, both these two psalms close with an emphasis on mortal men עֲנוּשׁ (*enosh*) (9:20; 10:18), and both psalms mention the gentile nations גּוֹיִם (*goyim*) (9:5, 15, 17, 19 & 20; 10:16). While some keywords are repeated, we also note that the genre is very different. Psalm 9 is a Psalm of thanksgiving as the opening word אֹדָה (*odeh*) “thanks” indicates, while Psalm 10 is a Prayerful lament, as can be seen in the opening phrase “Why do You stand afar off, O Lord?”

Throughout this psalm, David extolled the Lord for His righteous judgments on the wicked nations, and for delivering (salvation) the poor.

PSALM 9

- 1 For the choir director; on Muth-labben.
A Psalm of David.
I will give thanks to the Lord with all my heart;
I will tell of all Your wonders.
- 2 I will be glad and exult in You;
I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.
- 3 When my enemies turn back,
They stumble and perish before You.
- 4 For You have maintained my just cause;
You have sat on the throne judging righteously.
- 5 You have rebuked the nations, You have destroyed the wicked;
You have blotted out their name forever and ever.
- 6 The enemy has come to an end in perpetual ruins,
And You have uprooted the cities;
The very memory of them has perished.
- 7 But the Lord abides forever;
He has established His throne for judgment,
- 8 And He will judge the world in righteousness;

He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity.
 9 The Lord also will be a stronghold for the oppressed,
 A stronghold in times of trouble;
 10 And those who know Your name will put their trust in You,
 For You, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You.
 11 Sing praises to the Lord, who dwells in Zion;
 Declare among the peoples His deeds.
 12 For He who requires blood remembers them;
 He does not forget the cry of the afflicted.
 13 Be gracious to me, O Lord;
 See my affliction from those who hate me,
 You who lift me up from the gates of death,
 14 That I may tell of all Your praises,
 That in the gates of the daughter of Zion
 I may rejoice in Your salvation.
 15 The nations have sunk down in the pit which they have made;
 In the net which they hid, their own foot has been caught.
 16 The Lord has made Himself known;
 He has executed judgment.
 In the work of his own hands the wicked is snared.

Higgaion
Selah.

17 The wicked will return to Sheol,
Even all the nations who forget God.
 18 For the needy will not always be forgotten,
 Nor the hope of the afflicted perish forever.
 19 Arise, O Lord, do not let man prevail;
 Let the nations be judged before You.
 20 Put them in fear, O Lord;
 Let the nations know that they are but men.

Selah.

Commentary

Verse 1-2

David starts with praise to the Lord with his whole heart, which we are also encouraged to do (Ephesians 5:19). David is able to be glad and exult (*rejoices*) despite the enemies around him, for he has confidence that the Lord is the righteous judge. The Name of God to which David declares this praise is עֵלְיוֹן (Elyon). This name is used to reflect that God is the “Supreme One.” It is translated most often as He is the Most High.

Verse 3-6

David declares the reason for his thanksgiving; the enemies shall fall and disappear before the Lord Himself will bring justice. Through righteous judgment the enemies will be turned back, rebuked, and destroyed, and ultimately even the names of the nations will be forgotten. And in all of this, the Lord is righteous.

Verses 7-10

The nations may perish but the Lord reigns forever, so David shows the other side, for those that are being oppressed, the poor, for their course is championed by the righteous Judge. He is their refuge in times of trouble; “.....ruthless nations will fear you. For You have been a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat;” (Isaiah 25:3b-4).

Twice the Lord is called a Stronghold. This word מִשְׁגָּב (*mis-gov*), has been translated as “refuge” or “stronghold,” and both indicate that the Lord is their security and protection. Other significant attributes of God that reflect this term are “fortress,” “refuge” and a “shelter from danger.” All of these terms reflect God’s protection, the one we can trust. This does not mean we will always be protected, but our lives are in His hands and we can face tomorrow, despite the troubles because we know He will not forsake those who seek Him.

Verses 11-12

תְּזַמְּרֵנּוּ (*tzammeru*) sing instrumental praises to the LORD, for the Lord will sit enthroned in Zion (Psalm 2:6). Today He already sits in the heavenly Zion (Hebrews 8:1; 12:22). We are encouraged to declare this to all peoples for this is what the Lord has done. He has judged them already and will not ignore the cry of the righteous who are afflicted (the humble).

Verses 13-14

David reminds the Lord that he is one who is afflicted and that he would continue to give praise to God for his deliverances. Gates in the Older Testament were places of public gatherings and business. David now refers to two different kinds of gates, the gates of death (Psalm 107:18; Job 38:17; Isaiah 38:10) which refers to physical death, not separation for eternal life. And note that twice in the Psalms we see that there is silence in the grave (Psalm 88:10 & 115:17), so this is contrasted with the next gate.

If the Lord delivers David he would bring praise to the Lord in the *gates of the Daughter of Zion*. Physically, these gates are a reference to the tabernacle that had been moved to Jerusalem, but note David adds Daughter. Daughter implies that these are the people who know God as their loving father. Specifically, this is a reference to the remnant of Israel (the faithful Jewish people) who with David are able to rejoice at the Gates of Zion, longing for the soon coming king who brings salvation (Isaiah 62:11; Zechariah 9:9). Yeshua used the parallel phrase “*Daughters of Jerusalem*” when he referred to the remnant that is crying for him (Luke 23:28).

Verses 15-16

David remarks that the gentile nations who made a pit for another nation (Israel) to fall into, and created a net to capture another nation (Israel), will ultimately fail for the Lord has revealed Himself and so they get trapped and entangled in their own traps. If this had been prophetic I would have said that he is describing the end times, but sadly there have always been nations that oppose the Chosen People. So David asks the Lord if He will bring justice and for the plans of the wicked to return on themselves.

The closing Hebrew phrase in these verses is “Higgaion Selah,” which is left untranslated in most versions. הִגְּיוֹן (*Higgaion*) is found in three other places (Psalm 19:14; 92:3; and Lamentations 3:62). In Psalm 19 it is rendered “meditation,” then in Psalm 92 it is rendered

“solemn sound” and in Lamentations it is rendered as “muttering” or “whispering.” [Note the ASV/KJV translate it as “their device,” as in plotting]. It is my guesstimate (guess/estimate) that it is a musical direction for the choirmaster to slow-down and to restrain some of the louder instruments. This would allow the congregation a moment of Selah; a time of reflective pondering i.e. to meditate on the words.

Verses 17-18

The wicked are those who forget Who God is and What He has done. They return to the grave *שְׁאוֹל* (*sheol*) as though they came from there. Who is God in this Psalm? He is the LORD, who sits enthroned in Zion, the coming judge and king. What has He done in this Psalm? He has executed judgment on the nations.

The needy and the poor are contrasted with the gentile nations that opposed God. The poor *עֲנִיּוֹת* (*ev'yon*) are the poor in spirit or the meek (Matthew 5:3; Luke 6:20). These poor are the “Daughters of Zion,” that is the remnant, and the Lord shall remember them for He is the “hope of the poor” (Isaiah 61:1-2; James 2:5).

Verses 19-20

The psalm closes with two prayers. Firstly, the prayer of Moses “...Arise, O LORD, and let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you” (Numbers 10:35). But also note David’s request “Put them in fear, O LORD! Let the nations know that they are but men!” that is, those mortal men *עֲנוּשִׁים* (*enosh*) may fear the Lord, and come to repentance that they too might know that You are the LORD, the coming Judge and King and that they are but mortal men bringing destruction on themselves.

Selah, ponder this....

Conclusion

There is a clear message here for them and for us. Will they and will we recount Who God is and What He has done? Will we trust in the one who will not forsake us and will we sing the praises of Him who sits enthroned in Zion?

Selah

Shalom in Messiah

Paul & Sue