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My God, My God,
Why Have You Forsaken Me?
Psalm 22: 1-31

For the director of music. To the tune of “The Doe of the Morning.” A **psalm** of **David**.

My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me DIG: What is David’s basic struggle? What seems worse: God’s distance or people’s mocking? Where is David’s faith in the midst of these struggles? What does he recall about ADONAI’s past action that leads him to the words of verses 1 and 11? What is David’s claim in verses 9-11? How is this true? How would you describe the mood shift between verses 1-21 and 22-31? What details of this psalm turn up in the crucifixion narrative? How does this help you to understand this psalm?

REFLECT: When you are stricken with grief, feeling abandoned even by God, how do you express yourself? At such times, what does it mean to you to know that Jesus felt the same way? Put verses 3-5 and verses 9-11 in your own words. If you were to host a feast for your King to celebrate His grace and mercy in your life, what one thing would you say? The author of Hebrews quotes verse 22, saying that Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers (Hebrews 2:11-12). Do you think of Messiah as your brother? What does that relationship mean to you?

The last four chapters of Second Samuel serve as an appendix to David’s career. These events occurred earlier in the king’s life but are presented here to show the other kinds of problems David had to face – famine and plague (Chapters 21 and 24) – the men David relied on to fight his battles (Chapter 23), and how the king learned to praise God through his trials (Chapter 22 and Psalm 22).

As **David** looked back on **his** life, there were times when **he** felt abandoned by **God** and surrounded by **his** enemies. **He** lamented about **his** tremendous suffering and

desperate struggle with death, pleading with **YHVH** to deliver **him** from such a terrible fate. But at the end of **his** life **David** could see that **his** prayer had been answered, and **he** was able to declare wonderful news to the righteous of the TaNaKh and the Gentile nations.

The gospel writers also saw connections between some of the words in this **psalm (verses 1, 8, 16-18)** and other events in the last days of **Yeshua's** life. Also **Hebrews 2:12** quotes **Psalm 22:22**. Therefore, believers down through the ages have understood this **psalm** to point to the death of **Messiah**. This means that **David** used many poetic expressions to portray **his** immense suffering, **but these poetic words became literally true of the suffering of Jesus Christ at the hands of His enemies**. This is a **psalm** of the cross.



A. God's Abandonment, Rule and Praise of Isra'el: The fact that **David** opened this **psalm** by addressing **YHVH** so personally is extremely ironic. Although **he** *felt* abandoned, and although those around **him** thought **he** was abandoned – **David** still prayed. The lamp of faith had not been extinguished in the face of **the LORD's** silence. The prayer begins with a threefold cry to **El** and with three questions. **My God (My Father), my God (my Father), why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish?** For **David**, these words were not a lapse of faith, or of a broken relationship, but a cry of disorientation as **God** built **his** character for future leadership as king. The strain of being hated and hunted was almost too much, and **his** faith was being stretched to its limits. **God** was there all the time. But it *seemed* to **David** like **he** had been **forsaken**.

On the cross Yeshua cried out in His native Aramaic: Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani? which means My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me.

Jesus used **David's** same words, but there was a difference. **Christ** *was* abandoned. For the first and only time in all eternity, **God the Father** had turned **His** back on **God the Son** and the unity of **the Trinity** was broken. At that point, **Yeshua** uses, **My God, My God,** because **He** was no longer in a parental relationship with **the Deity**, but a judicial relationship because **Jesus** had **become** our **sin sacrifice. God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (Second Corinthians 5:21)**. **He** was suffering the wrath of **God** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ, to see link click Lv – Jesus' Second Three Hours on the Cross: The Wrath of God Stage 19 – Christ's Fourth Words from the Cross**).

We know from this that our redemption was purchased at an awful cost. **Jesus** took on all the sins of the world, past, present and future **in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness (First Peter 2:24)**. **He** cried out in agony as our **sin** and the separation from **the Father** took its toll on **Him**. **My God, I cry out by day** (being crucified at nine o'clock in the morning)**, but you do not answer, by night** as the sun was darkened from noon until three o'clock in the afternoon (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Lv – Jesus' Second Three Hours on the Cross: The Wrath of God Stage 18 – Darkness That Covers the Entire World**)**, but I find no rest. Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; You are the one Isra'el praises. In You our ancestors put their trust; they trusted and You delivered them. To you they cried out and were saved; in You they trusted and were not put to shame (Psalm 22:1-5).** Where are **Your** answers now? How those thoughts must have been upon **Yeshua's** heart as **He** hung between heaven and earth. It was **God's** holiness that had put **Him** on the cross and it was **God's** deliverance that would bring **Him** through. Yet, in the pain of **Divine** silence, the temptation was for those thoughts to become accusations, weapons against **Ha'Shem**. In that **Messiah has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted (Hebrews 2:18 ESV).** The darkness of the **Divine** withdrawal was also Satan's final opportunity to tempt **the Son of God**.[481]

> **B. Public Spectacle:** **God's** distance was also an opportunity for human accusation. Suffering undercuts our self-esteem. So **David** had not only lost **his** sense of dignity, but **he** felt less than human. If **David** had trusted in **the LORD**, then why was **he** suffering? They conclude that either **he** had boasted of trusting in **God** but was hypocritical or that **YHVH** really didn't love **him**. The support of **ADONAI's** invisible hand *seemed* not to be there for **David**, and **the**

mockers made the most of it.[482] **But I am a** lowly **worm,** trodden under foot, treated with contempt, **and not a man, scorned by everyone, despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. "He trusts in ADONAI," they say, "let God rescue him, since He delights in him (Psalm 22:6-8).**

It is not difficult for us to see **Yeshua** hanging from the cross as we read these verses. **In a futile attempt to get Jesus to come down from the cross, the Jewish religious leaders quoted Psalm 22:8.** Some of **them** were so smug that **they** threw some scripture in **His** face. **They** said: **He trusts in God? Let God rescue Him now if He wants Him, for He** said: **I am the Son of God** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Lu – Jesus' First Three Hours on the Cross: The Wrath of Man Stage 12: The Sixth Mockery**).

> **C. God's Sovereignty:** In reflecting on **his** own desperate situation, **David** turned **his** thoughts from **the mockers** around **him** to **YHVH**. The problem of suffering finds some solace in **God's** sovereignty and love for **His** own. From birth **David** had owed **his** life to **God**, and from birth **ADONAI** had been **his** covenantal **God**.[483] **Yet You brought me out of the womb; You made me trust in You even at my mother's breast. From birth I was cast on you; from my mother's womb You have been my God. Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help (Psalm 22:9-11).**
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> Similarly, in the birth narratives of both **Matthew** and **Luke** there is a constant affirmation of the plan, providence, protection and power of **ADONAI** in **Yeshua's** coming into the world. The virgin birth is **God's** miraculous work (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Aq – The Birth of Jesus**). Beit-Lechem, the angels, the Sh'khinah glory, and the flight into Egypt are all part of **God's** sovereignty. In a very special way, **YHVH** took **Jesus** from Miryam's **womb** as **His one and only Son (John 3:16)**. **God the Son** had experienced a oneness with **God the Father** from all eternity past. Therefore, **Ha'Shem's** distance, **His** silence, was overwhelming. And because **He** had **become sin's sacrifice on our behalf, trouble** was **near** and **He** had to bear the penalty for our **sin** alone. Hence, there was **no one to help Him**. **Jesus** certainly experienced this distress on the cross. For the one and only time in **His** life **He** was separated from **God the Father** and **God the Holy Spirit**.

C. God's Protection: There were times in **David's** life when **he** felt the anguish of being hunted down by **his** enemies, who are portrayed by a number of metaphors. **David** compared **his** enemies to **bulls**. **Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan** (a district east of the Jordan known for its rich pasture and cattle) **encircle me.** Again, **roaring lions that tear their prey open their mouths wide** to spring **against me. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me. My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; You lay me in the dust of death.** Every Jewish city had **a pack** of hungry **dogs**, howling at night, and devouring even dead bodies when **they** could get to them. So **David** compared those who surrounded **him** and wanted to kill **him** in this way. And just as the imagery of **his** enemies as **bulls** and **lions** evoked feelings of fear and powerlessness, so also the imagery of **dogs** created a picture of **dogs** viciously attacking **him**, gnawing at, and biting into **his hands and feet. Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet (Psalm 22:12-16).**

David said: **All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me (Psalm 22:17). The Ruach ha-Kodesh** would look down the long road of history to see **Christ** being treated in the same brutal manner by the Romans that **David** ascribed to **himself** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ls – Then They Brought Jesus to Golgotha, the Place of the Skull Stage 4 – The Arrival at Golgotha**). Moreover, **David** remembered that **his** enemies divided **his clothes among them and cast lots for his garment (Psalm 22:18).** As part of the shame of the cross, the Roman **soldiers cast lots for the** last piece of **Christ's clothing** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Lu – Jesus' First Three Hours on the Cross: The Wrath of Man Stage 8 – The Dividing Up of His Clothes**).

But suddenly **David** remembered **his God**, which evoked the memory of **His** promises to be near, to support **His** people, and to protect them from dangers. **But** the turning point, for both **David** and **Christ**, was when they said: **You, ADONAI, do not be far from me. You are my strength; come quickly to help me. Deliver my life from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs. Rescue me from the lion's' mouth; from the horns of the wild oxen** (and then the sudden, dramatic change back to Hebrew for the last word, a single Hebrew verb in the perfect

tense: *anitani*) **You have answered Me (Psalm 22:19-21).** The work was done!

When He had received the drink, Jesus said in Aramaic**: It is finished (John 19:30a). He** said **"It" is finished**, *not* **"I" AM finished**. **Jesus** spoke in Aramaic, but the Bible is written in Greek and this is one word in Greek, *tetelestai,* and it is in the perfect tense, indicating a past, completed action, with continuing, and in this case, permanent results. *Tetelestai* was a Greek word used in accounting. Archeologists found an enormous amount of invoices at a dig in Egypt. Many Jews had fled Jerusalem before the Roman destruction and settled in Alexandria. There they translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, the international language of the day. In Alexandria, Egypt, archeologists found a large quantity of invoices with *tetelestai*, written on clay tablets. In accounting terms, it means **paid in full**. In other words, what **Messiah** was saying, was that the price for **sin** had been **paid in full** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Lu – Jesus' First Three Hours on the Cross: The Wrath of Man Stage 23 – Christ's Sixth Words from the Cross**).

B. Public Praise: After **David** had been **rescued,** and **his** prayers had been **answered**, **his** mood changed: **I will decree Your name to my people; in the congregation** of the righteous (which excludes the ungodly and the mockers) **I will praise You. He** encouraged the righteous of the TaNaKh to join in: **You who fear the LORD, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him! Revere Him, all you descendants of Isra'el! For He has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; He has not hidden His face from him but has listened to his cry for help (Psalm 22:22-24).** The doctrine of the Resurrection is not revealed here, but the theme is present. **God** makes alive, **God** heals, **God** restores, **God** answers. In **His** resurrection, **Yeshua** declared the mighty works of **YHVH** to **His** apostles. **He presented Himself alive after suffering by many infallible proofs (Acts 1:3). The Savior's** witness led to **their** worship, and the apostles praised, glorified and feared **Him** as they fell at **His** feet **(Yochanan 20:28)**.[484]

A. God's Presence, Rule and Praise of Isra'el and the Gentile Nations: The poor will eat and be satisfied; those who seek YHVH will praise Him – may your hearts live forever! All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the Gentile **nations will bow down before Him, for dominion belongs to ADONAI and He rules over the**

nations. All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before Him – those who cannot keep themselves alive. God's work of salvation will not only go out throughout the earth but will also be passed down from generation to generation. **Posterity will serve Him; and future generations will be told about YHVH. They will proclaim His righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn.** The righteousness of **God** is made clear in the **psalms** final line: **He has done it (Psalm 22:25-31)!** The universal application of this **psalm** can only find its fulfillment in **the One** whose **name is above every name; the One** to whom **every knee shall bow (Philippians 2:9b-10a).** But it not only points to **Messiah**, as we have proposed; it was on **Christ's** heart as **He** hung on the cross. **He** endured the silence of **Ha'Shem** in that awful moment knowing that **His cry** would be **answered** and that through **His** suffering the Gentile nations would be blessed. **Psalm 22** held **Him** in support in **His** hour of need, and it can hold us also. We will say with **David** and our **Savior, "You have answered Me."**[485]