

David Pretended to be Insane Before Abimelech

Psalm 34: 1-22

Of David. When he pretended to be insane before Abimelech, who drove him away. The title says Abimelech rather than Achish because Abimelech was the traditional dynastic name for title for Philistine kings (see Genesis 20, 21:22-34 and 26).

DIG: Who is Abimelek? What does it mean to taste ADONAI and see if He is good? What promises do you see in this Psalm? Which one has your name on it? What destroys the wicked? Why doesn't the LORD intervene? How might this be Yeshua's testimony as well as David's in verses 15 to 22?

REFLECT: Peter uses this Psalm to comfort those who suffer for doing good (verse 8 in First Peter 2:3 and verses 12-16 in First Peter 3:10-12). How do you reconcile the "good things" God promises with the acute suffering experienced by some believers? Yochanan saw verse 20 fulfilled in Yeshua (see John 19:36). In what way is this psalm also your testimony (Romans 8:1)? What does it mean to seek peace and go after it?

Psalm 34 was David's hymn of praise after God had delivered him from the Philistines. The two basic themes of this Psalm are thanksgiving and wisdom.

I. Thanksgiving for God's Goodness and Justice: In this Psalm David called on the congregation to praise the LORD for their salvation. The first half of the Psalm alternates between personal testimony and a repeated call to join in the praise and be stimulated in newness of faith (Psalm 34:1-7).

A. Individual and Communal Praise: David begins very personally, I will bless ADONAI at all times; in joy and sorrow, His praise will always be in my mouth. David calls attention to what God has done rather than boastfully point to his own works and accomplishments. When I boast, it will be about YHVH; the humble will hear of it and be glad. Others, like David, have been victimized by the arrogant. When we learn of his experience, we can take heart. Proclaim with me the greatness of ADONAI; let us exalt his name together (Psalm 34:1-3 CJB). Rabbi Sha'ul, in his great passage on boasting, may have remembered this saying and this episode, and recalled his own humiliating escape from another foreign king (Second Corinthians 11:30-33), and the lessons he had learned as a result.

B. Individual and Communal Experiences: David taught from his own experience. He knew what fears were. **I sought the LORD, and He answered me; He rescued me from everything I feared.** In addition to his personal experience, he had witnessed how the righteous of the TaNaKh radiate confidence and joy. They looked to Him and grew radiant; their faces will never blush for shame. David may have actually pointed to someone in the audience, saying: **This poor man cried; YHVH heard and saved him from all his troubles.** The author goes from the specific to the general. **The Angel of the LORD, who encamps around those who fear Him, delivers them (Psalm 34:4-7 CJB).** Whenever the phrase: **the Angel of the LORD** is seen in the TaNaKh, it is always the Second Person of the Trinity, **Jesus Christ**. It is never a common, ordinary, run of the mill angel. He was with **Hagar** in the wilderness (see the commentary on **Genesis Ej - Hagar and the Angel of the LORD**); He appeared to **Moshe** in the burning bush (see the commentary on **Exodus Aq - Flames of Fire from within a Burning Bush**), and He protected **Yerushalayim** in the days of **Hezekiah** (see the commentary on **Isaiah Gw - Then the Angel of the LORD Put To Death a Hundred and Eighty Five Thousand Men in the Assyrian Camp**).

II. In Praise and Wisdom: After affirming that **God** is good to those who trust Him, David then instructed the people how to live a long life. The lessons of this part of the **Psalm** are chiefly that true goodness can only be found in a relationship with **God**. It is the answer to all life's most pressing questions (**Psalm 34:8-22**).⁸⁷

A. Exhortation to Wisdom: Taste, and see that **ADONAI** is good (**Hebrews 6:5; First Peter 2:3**). How blessed are those who take refuge in Him! Fear **YHVH**, you holy ones of His, for those who fear Him lack nothing (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Dt - Do Not Worry about Your Life What Your Will Eat or Drink, or What You Will Wear**). Young lions can be needy, they can go hungry, but those who see **ADONAI** lack nothing good. Come, children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. David writes in the style of the wisdom instructor, as in **Proverbs 1-9**, with his fatherly tone and his stress on the fear of the LORD as the beginning of wisdom.⁸⁸ Which of you takes pleasure in living? Who wants a long life (evidence of God's approval) to see good things? [If you do,] keep your tongue from evil and your lips from deceiving talk. The sins of the tongue are severely denounced in Hebrew ethics. Lying and slander were deemed by the rabbis as especially hateful to **ADONAI**. Turn from evil, and do good; seek peace, go after it (**Psalm 34:8-14 CJB**).

B. The Rewards of Wisdom: Historian Cassius Dio recorded a revealing event from the life of Hadrian, the Roman Emperor 117-138 AD. "Once, when a woman made a request of [Hadrian] as he passed by on a journey, he first said to her, 'I haven't time,' but afterwards, when she cried out, 'Then cease being emperor,' he turned around and granted her hearing." How often we say or hear, "Not now, I'm busy" or "I'm sorry, I just don't have the time." Yet, our heavenly **Father**, the **Master** and **Creator** of the universe, always has the time for us! **David** wrote: **The eyes of ADONAI watch over the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry. But the face of YHVH opposes those who do evil, to cut off all memory of them from the earth. [The righteous] cried out, and ADONAI heard, and He saved them from all their troubles. God is not like the emperor or a busy executive who tries to avoid interruption. Instead, the Father's joy is to listen and respond to His children.**⁸⁹

The LORD is near to those whose spirit is crushed. David is realistic in his portrayal of life. The righteous suffers many evils, but ADONAI rescues them out of them all. **The Torah does not promise immunity to the righteous; just the contrary, just because they love ADONAI they are liable to be victimized by the unscrupulous.** He protects all their bones; not one of them gets broken. Evil will kill the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned. But they **have their reward in divine deliverance.** ADONAI redeems His servants; no one who takes refuge in Him will be condemned (Psalm 34:15-22 CJB). Evil will overcome the wicked. They will perish **and receive their sentence by the Judge of the world.** The godly, however, will find YHVH to be faithful. Those who trust in Him will never die.⁹⁰