

## Psalm 38

“Jacob's heart fainted” - The verse linking this Psalm to the Torah reading is verse 8.

**Psalm 38:1** - “A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance.”

Rashi - To recite it in time of distress, to make remembrance of the distress of Israel before the Holy One, blessed be He, and he recited it as relating to all Israel.

**Psalm 38:2** - “For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.”

Compare Job's complaint: "For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, Their poison my spirit drinks; The terrors of God are arrayed against me." (Job 6:4)

**Psalm 38:7** - “For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh.”

Rashi - For my loins are full of self-effacement, (self-loathing): In my thoughts, I am insignificant in my own eyes.

**Psalm 38:8** - “I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.”

“feeble” = puwg - to faint, to cease, to be cold or benumbed and torpid

Rashi translates this as “I was passed out and was crushed” and connects the word to **Genesis 45:26**, where it says when Jacob heard that Joseph was alive, “Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not.”

This report must have seemed like the last straw for Jacob, a cruel joke played on him after decades of mourning for his favorite son. How could he believe it? At this moment all the trials of his life returned to his mind - deceiving his father, his conflict with Esau and Laban, the loss of Joseph, the death of Rachel - and his soul was crushed down to its lowest point. Just as Jacob later told Pharaoh, “few and evil (full of calamity) have the days of the years of my life been” (**Genesis 47:9**).

Then, when he sees the wagons of supplies from Joseph, “the spirit of their father Jacob was revived.”

So in a sense, this psalm reflects the realization we all have in our darkest moments, before looking up to see our unexpected and undeserved salvation.

Compare **Romans 7:24-25** - “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

**Psalm 38:11** - “My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off.”

David, in his troubles, was a type of Christ in his agony, Christ, on his cross, feeble and sorely broken, and then deserted by his friends and kinsmen, who beheld afar off. - Matthew Henry Commentary

**Psalm 38:13** - "But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth."

His faith did not permit him to respond to or even hear the mockery and accusations of his enemies. Like Christ:

**Isaiah 53:7** - "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth."

**Psalm 38:18** - "For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin."

"be sorry for" - da'ag - fear, be anxious for, be concerned about, dread (Septuagint: merimnetzo "be distressed for" ; Jewish translation= "worry.")

The King James translates this same Greek word in the New Testament as "take thought."

But I thought we were supposed to 'take no thought'!

It refers to anxiety or "care which distracts." We are told by Jesus not to merimna about what we will eat or drink or wear:

**Matthew 6:25** - "Therefore I say to you, Take no thought (merimna) for your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor yet for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"

It's not so much the expression, "don't ever worry or think about anything under any conditions," as it is "don't focus on yourself," on your own life (**Matthew 6:25-34; Luke 12:22-26**), on the things of this world (Luke 10:41) or even how you witness (**Matthew 10:19; Luke 12:11**). Instead, put the focus outside of yourself.

In particular, be anxious (same word, merimnaō) about the "things of the Lord" (**1 Corinthians 7:32-34**) and about one another (**1 Corinthians 12:25**).

In **Philippians 2:20-21**, Paul commends Timothy for being concerned (taking thought, worried, merimnaō) about that which concerned (worried, merimnaō) the Philippians; by contrast, others (besides Timothy) sought after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus.

Besides the labor, toil, watching, fastings, hunger, cold and nakedness he describes, Paul had another burden, the "care for all the churches" - **2 Corinthians 11:28** - care =

merimna, “taking thought.”

But we can be sure he took that burden and emptied it, casting his care upon Him.

**I Peter 5:7** - Having cast all your care (merimnan - taking thought, care, anxiety) upon him for he careth (melei) for you. [All forms of the same root, including merimnaō, to take thought]

So in this psalm, David’s “care” or “fear” about his sins means he took them seriously, but in the end had to “cast his care/burden on the Lord,” as we see in another psalm:

**Psalm 55:22** - “Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.” (The Septuagint uses merimna to translate “burden,” in the sense of worry, anxiety)