

## Psalm 109

This psalm, which is paired with this week's Torah reading **Deuteronomy 2:31–3:22**, is quoted in **Acts 1:16-20** as referring to Judas and is sometimes called the "Iscaiotic Psalm."

Psalm 109 and Psalm 22 are both Messianic psalms and serve as expansions and clarifications of each other.

- **Acts 1:20** - "For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take."

This is a psalm about love betrayed, and of those closest to you turning against you. It expresses that part of what Christ suffered: rejected by his nation, betrayed by Judas and abandoned even by his disciples.

### 'Strong Bulls of Bashan'

In the Messianic **Psalm 22**, David/Messiah cries out that "Many bulls have compassed me; strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round." (**Psalm 22:12**)

Both psalms prophetically focus on Judas and the religious leaders -"the chief priests, scribes, and elders" who along with the Roman authorities conspired with Judas to crucify Christ - and their connection with the spirit of Og, a giant Rephaim or "strong bull" and king of Bashan.

David's specific reference may have been Ahithophel, his counselor who deserted him for Absalom (**2 Samuel 15:12**), or Doeg the Edomite, who told King Saul that the priests of Nob had helped David flee, leading to their deaths. (**1 Samuel 2:9-33**)

**Psalm 109:1-2** - "Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise; For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue."

Rashi - This was Ishmael [who mocked Isaac, the child of the Promise (**Genesis 21:9**)]

**Psalm 109:3** - "They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause."

See **Psalm 22** - "Many bulls have compassed me; strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round." (**Psalm 22:12**)

**Psalm 109:4-5** - "For my love they are my adversaries: but I give myself unto prayer. And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love."

"adversaries" = *satan* - opposer, accuser

i.e. In return for performing miracles, teaching truth, healing their sick, casting out their demons and raising their dead, they persecuted me and nailed me to a cross.

**Psalm 109:6** - "Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand."

i.e. let the accuser be his only advocate.

Satan is depicted in a courtroom scene - Satan tempted him to do the evil he did, and and now accuses him for it when done.

In fact, the Gospels says Satan "entered into" Judas (**Luke 22:3**).

- **John 13:2** - "And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him"

The weeds that try to choke out the Seed are called children of the wicked one." (**Matthew 13:38**)

**Psalm 109:7** - "When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin."

- **Matthew 26:24** - "The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born."

"let his prayer become sin" - Like Esau, who searched for repentance with tears but did not find it; (note that Judas like Esau exchanged his valuable office for a mess of pottage or 50 pieces of silver) Or consider Haman, who begged for his life before King Ahasuerus.

**Psalm 109:8** - "Let his days be few; and let another take his office."

This is the verse referred to in **Acts 1:20** prophesying the betrayal of Christ by Judas.

Judas, like David's adversary Ahithophel, hanged himself, and "falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out" - i.e. what was inside came out and was revealed (**Matthew 27:1-10, Acts 1:18**)

Like Esau, he was not able to find repentance though he may have sought it with tears.

The following verses constitute a litany of harsh imprecatory curses, which fell also on the Jews as a nation as well as on Judas. (Some rabbis however saw this as a curse on the Gentile nations of their exile).

(But compare this curse with the more extensive curse on Israel if they fail to obey God's commandments in **Deuteronomy 28:15-68**).

**Psalm 109:9-10** - "Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places."

The Targum sees a reference to Israel in exile - "after their desolation was made"; when their grand house was left desolate, their temple, (**Matthew 23:38**), and all their other houses in Jerusalem and in Judea; then were they obliged to seek their bread of others elsewhere, and by begging.

**Psalm 109:11** - "Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the strangers spoil his labour."

Some manuscripts have "Let the creditor" instead of "extortioner." Rome destroyed Jerusalem when the Jews rebelled and refused to offer the required tribute owed to Rome.

- **John 11:48** - "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation."

- **Daniel 9:26-27** - "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined..."

**Psalm 109:12-13** - "Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children. Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out."

The genealogies of Jewish families were retained in memory for some time, but died out around 800 A.D. All official Temple documents concerning lineage were lost in the Roman destruction.

Targum: "let his end be for destruction"

"in the generation following" - or in the following age

**Psalm 109:14-15** - "Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the LORD; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. Let them be before the LORD continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth."

- **Ezekiel 16:2-3** - "Son of man, confront Jerusalem with her abominations and tell her this is what the Lord GOD says to Jerusalem: 'Your origin and your birth were in the land of the Canaanites. Your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite.'"

- **Matthew 23:30-32** - "And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' So you testify

against yourselves that you are the sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your fathers."

- **Matthew 23:37** - "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those sent to her, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were unwilling!"

- **Acts 7:52** - "Which of the prophets did your fathers fail to persecute? They even killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One. And now you are His betrayers and murderers"

The iniquity of the fathers and mothers could equally be said of mankind's original father and mother - Adam and Eve, whose sin corrupted the whole human race.

[Rashi and other interpret this verse as "iniquity 'against' his forefathers" and relate it to Esau.]

**Psalm 109:16** - "Because that he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart."

Later in **verse 22**, David calls himself "poor and needy" and "wounded in heart."

"They remembered not to show mercy" — To Him who showed it to all the world; they persecuted Him who for our sakes became poor; they betrayed and murdered the lowly and afflicted Jesus, whose heart was broken with sorrow for their sins, and with a sense of the punishment due to them." - Benson Commentary

Jesus was poor in spirit, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief (Isaiah 53:3)

- **2 Corinthians 8:9** - "...though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich."

-**Matthew 23:23** - "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You pay tithes of mint, dill, and cumin, but you have disregarded the weightier matters of the Law: justice, mercy, and faithfulness."

**Psalm 109:17-19** - "As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually."

We either wear the "garment of righteousness," which is Christ's own sinlessness, or the garment of cursing, reflecting the accusations, curses, guilt and bitterness that issue from a life lived without blessing.

**Matthew 27:25** (NET)- "In reply all the people said, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!"

Calling down a curse upon Jesus - "Crucify him, crucify him" - Those Jews who called for Christ's crucifixion called down a curse upon themselves.

**Psalm 109:20** - "Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the LORD, and of them that speak evil against my soul."

"adversaries" = *satan* - opposer, accuser

- **John 6:70-71** - "Jesus answered them, 'Jesus answered them, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!' He was speaking about Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. For although Judas was one of the Twelve, he was later to betray Jesus."

"soul" = *nephesh* - life

Besides Judas' betrayal, false witnesses testified against Him,, accusing him of sedition and blasphemy.

### **Christ on the Cross**

**Psalm 109:21-25** - "But do thou for me, O GOD the Lord, for thy name's sake: because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me. For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me. I am gone like the shadow when it declineth: I am tossed up and down as the locust. My knees are weak through fasting; and my flesh faileth of fatness. I became also a reproach unto them: when they looked upon me they shook their heads."

"shadow" - "I am made to go" like a shadow ... When shadows "decline," they are just about to cease and disappear.; life is often compared to a shadow, because fleeting, momentary, and soon gone.

"tossed up and down as the locust." = a helpless insect swept away by the wind

- **Matthew 26:38** - "Then He said to them, 'My soul is consumed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with Me.'"

- **Isaiah 53:12** - "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

"reproach" - Christ was mocked, reviled and vilified on His way to the cross.

- **Psalm 89:50-51** - "Remember, Lord, the reproach of Thy servants; how I do bear in my bosom the reproach of many peoples: wherewith Thine enemies have reproached, O Lord; wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of Thine Anointed."

**Psalm 109:26-27** - "Help me, O LORD my God: O save me according to thy mercy: That they may know that this is thy hand; that thou, LORD, hast done it."

Targum: "that they may know that this is thy stroke" i.e. the judgment that would avenge His reproach

Or possibly, "Deliver me, in some signal way, so that my enemies may be forced to recognize thy hand in my deliverance, and to confess that thou, Lord, hast done it." As in the Resurrection.

**Psalm 109:28** - "Let them curse, but bless thou: when they arise, let them be ashamed; but let thy servant rejoice."

Or "let them be cursed" as in the Aramaic version.

"when they arise" - **Daniel 12:2** - "And many who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life, but others to shame and everlasting contempt."

### More on the Garment

**Psalm 109:29** - "Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame, and let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a mantle."

"shame" = *kəlimmah* - shame, dishonor, reproach

"confusion" = *bo'-sheth* - shame, confusion, disappointment, failure (also used to describe an idol)

One interpretation of this is Christ's prayer for forgiveness of those crucifying Him.

- **Luke 23:34** - "Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

They would first have to see themselves clothed with shame and moral failure before they could repent. All believers go through that process.

This seems to go against the previous curses that have been called down on Christ's enemies and his betrayer Judas in this psalm. In fact, we all need to embrace and acknowledge this curse before we're able to repent and abandon ourselves to Him. We must first see we are clothed with shame and moral failure. Then we can take off the old robe (and the old man Adam) and put on the new.

The previous curses then would be merely a description of the natural result of Christ's enemies' own curses "coming home to roost" on themselves.

**Psalm 109:30** - "I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth; yea, I will praise him

among the multitude. For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul."

To stand at the right hand is the position of a defense attorney during a court scene. God serves in this capacity for David/Messiah here, answering the accusations of Satan and declaring His innocence.

And similarly for us, Christ stands at our right hand:

- **Romans 8:34** - "Who is there to condemn us? For Christ Jesus, who died, and more than that was raised to life, is at the right hand of God--and He is interceding for us."

- **Romans 8:1** - "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."