

# DAY THIRTY-TWO

## “BORN AGAIN”

### PSALM 78:32-39

In the middle of Psalm 78, we come to an eight-verse stanza that serves an important purpose for the rest of the text. Here, the Psalmist declares that in spite of the historical inconsistencies of the people of Israel—from the days of the wilderness journey to the trials leading to David’s ascension to the throne—the only thing that has ever kept them together is the Rock<sup>1</sup> of Israel, God Himself. As you consider just how wretched the history of Ancient Israel often was, in relation to the holiness of the Lord, the concept of humility really begins to intensify in your thoughts. Thankfully, our Creator recognizes mortals’ limitations, *in any generation*, and extends His grace. But before I comment on these predicaments, please take the time to offer up your voices with thanksgiving, for yet another day to give Him praise:

### PSALM 67:1-7

For the choir director; with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song. God be gracious to us and bless us, *and* cause His face to shine upon us—Selah. That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for You will judge the peoples with uprightness and guide the nations on the earth. Selah. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us. God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear Him.

### PSALM 78:32-39

**In spite of all this they still sinned and did not believe in His wonderful works. So He brought their days to an end in futility and their years in sudden terror. When He killed them, then they sought Him, and returned and searched diligently for God; and they remembered that God was their rock, and the Most High God their Redeemer. But they deceived Him with their mouth and lied to Him with their tongue. For their heart was not steadfast toward Him, nor were they faithful in His covenant. But He, being compassionate, forgave *their* iniquity and did not destroy *them*; and often He restrained His anger and did not arouse all His wrath. Thus He**

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. *tzur* (צור).

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**remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes and does not return.**

One of the significant challenges of being human is that each of us has inherited the result of Adam's sin (Romans 5:12ff). While God made Adam and Eve to commune with Him in the Garden of Eden, their sin of eating the forbidden fruit has been passed down to every person since. We all have a proclivity to sin, and each of us needs to be reconciled to God.

When we review the history of Ancient Israel, the most significant salvation act accomplished by God was the judgment upon Egypt and the Exodus. Arguably, the Exodus is the most significant salvation act to date in human history, being second only to Yeshua's death and resurrection. The Exodus demonstrates God acting powerfully on behalf of His people, using the "gods" of Egypt as targets of His retribution, for the sin that Pharaoh committed in failing to recognize Him as the Supreme One. Following this, God leads Israel to Mount Sinai to commission them as the people who will declare forth His goodness and mercy to the entire world (cf. Exodus 19:5-6).<sup>2</sup>

Sadly, the history of Ancient Israel, as seen in the Tanakh Scriptures, is not often one where the Divine mandate was fully accomplished. While extremely important and indeed relevant for all generations, the ultimate salvation for humanity had to come in the person of Yeshua the Messiah, the Son of God.

I cannot help but consider words seen in John's Gospel about how each person must be "born again." While the Scriptures clearly tell us what is required for God's people, **only a complete transformation of the heart and mind**—a total change—will enact His salvation. This is now fully realized with the Messiah having come (cf. Colossians 1:26-28), with redeemed persons turning away from their old sinful life and following Him, and what should empower us today to fulfill the mission that Ancient Israel was originally given. Consider the classic scene of how Yeshua tells Nicodemus that *he must be born again*, something which only comes from a man or woman looking to Him for deliverance:

"Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Yeshua by night and said to Him, 'Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.' Yeshua answered and said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.**' Nicodemus said to Him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?' Yeshua answered, '**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, "You must be born again."** The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.' Nicodemus said to Him, 'How can these things be?' Yeshua answered and said to him, 'Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony. If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how

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<sup>2</sup> Consult the relevant chapters in the *Messianic Spring Holiday Helper* by Messianic Apologetics, for further teaching on the Passover, Exodus, and Yeshua's sacrifice for our sins.

will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:1-16).

In these classic words from Scripture, the discussion between the teacher Nicodemus and Messiah Yeshua is one that I was reminded of when I read the last statement in today’s Psalm selection:

“Thus He remembered that they were **but flesh** [*ki-basar*, כִּי־בָשָׂר], a wind that passes and does not return” (Psalm 78:39).

It is important to be reminded that as human beings, we very much come from the elements of the Earth (Genesis 2:7a). While indeed created by God and possessing His image (Genesis 1:26-27; cf. Psalm 8:4-5), and being implanted with His Divine breath akin to our consciousness (Genesis 2:7a),<sup>3</sup> we are still quite limited creatures compared to Him. As Psalm 103:14 reminds us, “For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are *but dust* [*ki-afar*, כִּי־עָפָר].” While we are indeed the pinnacle of God’s Creation, we are still *the created*. Within his ethical exhortations, James the Just further says that human beings are likened to mere vapor, compared to the eternity of God:

“Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge *of it*. There is *only* one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor? Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.’ **Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.** Instead, *you ought* to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.’ But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. Therefore, to one who knows *the* right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4:11-17).

The key to overcoming some of these realities is that we must have the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit! **It is only the Holy Spirit that will enable us to be transformed, convict us to obey the Lord, and refine us to be useful witnesses of His goodness in the world.**

When we remember commandments like Counting the Omer, we get to focus on our Heavenly Father during a special season of the year, bringing some discipline into our lives. By taking the time to read, study, and meditate upon different passages of Scripture, we can become more sensitive to the will of God, and more discerning regarding how to accomplish His tasks and assignments.

*This is why Counting the Omer is such a blessing to me.* I know that by pursuing God every morning during this special time, that I am relinquishing my will to Him. As a result, I firmly believe He is pouring out His blessings for my obedience, resulting in greater

<sup>3</sup> Editor’s note: Be very much aware that it is only human beings who have *nish'mat chayim* (נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים), “the breath of life,” implanted into them (cf. Isaiah 42:5). Victor P. Hamilton summarizes how,

“Unlike *rûah* [רוּחַ], which is applied to God, man, animals, and even false gods, *n’sâmâ* [נְשָׁמָה] is applied only to Yahweh and man...Thus 2:7 may employ the less popular word for breath because it is man, and man alone, who is the recipient of the divine breath” (*New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Genesis*, Chapters 1-17 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], 159).

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understanding and discernment! I am truly thankful that I am one who has been forgiven by Him, am born again, and is changed so that I can exist forever in His presence!