

# Psalm 4

Righteousness, Peace, and Joy  
in the Holy One

# Translation by Nate Wilson

1. *For the concert-master with stringed instruments: a psalm belonging to David.*  
God of my righteousness, answer me while I am calling. During this stress You opened up margin for me. Be gracious to me and heed my prayer!
2. Sons of man, how long – will my glory be turned to shame? will you love vanity? will you seek falsehood? *Selah.*
3. But y'all should know that Yahweh caused to separate a godly man for Himself. Yahweh will heed when I call to Him.
4. Y'all should shudder and stop sinning! Speak into your heart upon your bed, and be still. *Selah*
5. Y'all should sacrifice sacrifices of righteousness and trust to Yahweh.
6. Many are saying, "Who will cause us to see good?" Lift upon us the light of your face, Yahweh!
7. You gave joy to my heart more than a time when their grain and their juice were abundant.
8. In peace I will lie down and sleep at once, for You – You alone, Yahweh, cause me to settle down confidently.

# Intro - לְמוֹנֵצִים

- First word in the superscript is: *Lamnatzzaykha* – To/for the chief musician/choirmaster/ director of music
- Introduces 1/3 of Psalms (esp. 3-21 & 40-70), Hab.3
- Refers to temple construction foremen except in...  
**1Chron 15:12** [David] said... "You are the heads of the fathers' *households* of the Levites; consecrate yourselves both you and your relatives, that you may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel to *the place* that I have prepared for it... 16 Then David spoke to the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their relatives the singers, with instruments of music, harps, lyres, loud-sounding cymbals, to raise sounds of joy.... 21 so Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed-edom, Jeiel and Azaziah, [were appointed] to lead [לְמוֹנֵצִים] with lyres...
- Analogous to violin section leaders?

## Intro2 - בְּנִינּוֹת

- **Neginoth = stringed instruments**  
(cf. Psalms 6, 54, 55, 61, 76, & Hab. 3)
- Also “pop” songs:
  - Drinking songs (Psalm 69:12)
  - Kid’s songs (Lam. 5:14)
  - Taunt-songs (Job 30:9, Lam. 3:14)
- **By David**
- **Many think this is a follow-up to Psalm 3 – same circumstances of Absalom’s coup d’état**
- **A moral lesson (10 do’s and don’ts) in the middle of a prayer.**

# Present prayer, Past Deliverance, Present Instruction, Future Trust

1. God of my righteousness, answer me while I am calling.

During this stress You opened up margin for me.

Be gracious to me and heed my prayer!

2. Sons of man, how long – will my glory be turned to shame?  
will you love vanity?  
will you seek falsehood? *Selah.*

3. But Know that **Yahweh separated a godly man for Himself.**

**Yahweh will heed when I call to Him.**

4. Y'all should shudder and stop sinning!

Speak into your heart upon your bed, and be still. *Selah*

5. Sacrifice sacrifices of righteousness & trust Yahweh.

6. Many are saying, "Who will cause us to see good?"

**Lift upon us the light of your face, Yahweh!**

7. You gave joy to my heart

more than a time when their grain and their juice were abundant.

8. In peace I will both lie down and sleep,

for You – You alone, Yahweh, cause me to settle down confidently.

v.1 God of my righteousness, answer me while I am calling. During this stress You opened up margin for me. Be gracious to me and heed my prayer!

- Cf. 3:5 “With my voice I will call [called] unto Yahweh and He [answered] will answer me from the mountain of His holiness.”
- Present tense (participle) Right now I am calling you!
- **Praying to the “God of my righteousness”**
  - The source of determining right from wrong
  - The giver of righteousness to “set apart ones” v.3
  - The one who vindicates/proves you are in the right
  - **God’s Righteousness = salvation**

# God's Righteousness = salvation

**Isaiah 46:13** "I bring near My righteousness, it is not far off; And My salvation will not delay...

**Isaiah 51:5-6** "My righteousness is near, My salvation has gone forth... My salvation will be forever, And My righteousness will not wane. (Cf. Isa. 51:8 & 56:1).

**Jeremiah 23:6** "In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, 'The LORD our righteousness.' (Cf. Jer. 33:16)

**Psalms 4:1** God of my righteousness... have mercy on me"

# v.1 Chiasm

When I call

Answer me ('anan)

God of my righteousness

During stress you caused relief for me

Be gracious to me

And hear (shema')

My prayer



v.1 God of my righteousness, answer me while I am calling. During this stress You opened up margin for me. Be gracious to me and heed my prayer!

- Cf. 3:5 “With my voice I will call [called] unto Yahweh and He [answered] will answer me from the mountain of His holiness.”
- Present tense (participle) Right now I am calling you!
- Praying to the “God of my righteousness”
- “Answer”=“Hear”=heed/act on my behalf (second word and next to last word in v.1 are parallel in the chiasm)
- *Hirchabta* (הִרְחַבְתָּ) Enlarged/made room for/relieved
  - Used elsewhere in O.T. of opening one’s mouth or of acquiring more land (cf. Gen. 26:22 – “Rehoboth”)
  - Opposite of *tsar* “distress/pressure/tightness”
  - Cf. 3:1 “How many are my oppressors... saying there is no salvation”
- *Channeni* (חַנּוּנִי) Be gracious/merciful/show favor (cf. Psalm 6:2; 31:9; 41:4,10; 51:1; 56:1; 57:1; 86:3; 119:58)

v.2 Sons of man, how long - will my glory be turned to shame? will you love vanity? will you seek falsehood?

Selah.

- Subject change from “God” to humans
  - lit. “Sons of men”/ fig. “leaders” (Kimchi), “mighty men” (Calvin, Plumer), “aristocratic party” (Delitz.)
- “How long?” applies to 3 tragically misplaced values:
  1. My glory/honor/weight (*cevodi*) to shame/reproach/blushing (*liclimmah*)
    - Gen. 45:13 Joseph’s “glory” in Egypt – perhaps his kingly office (David’s shame in flight from Absalom?)
    - Psalm 3:4 Thou, O Lord art... my glory
    - Psalm 35:26 Let those be ashamed and humiliated altogether who rejoice at my distress...
    - Psalm 44:15 All day long my dishonor is before me  
And my humiliation has overwhelmed me,
    - Psalm 69:7 Because for Your sake I have borne reproach; Dishonor has covered my face.
    - Augustine, Vulgate, Ethiopic & LXX read *livlamah* “...will you be thick-hearted?”

v.2 Sons of man, how long - will my glory be turned to shame? will you love vanity? will you seek falsehood?

**Selah.**

- Subject change from “God” to humans (“Sons of men”)
- The question “How long?” applies to three tragically misplaced values:
  1. My glory/honor/weight (*cevodi*) to shame/reproach/blushing (*liclimmah*)
  2. **Love vanity/worthlessness/delusions/emptiness (*riq*)**
    - Cf. 2:1 “Why do the nations meditate on vanity?”
    - Why give your heart to things that will fail and disappoint? (Cohen)
  3. **Seek Leasing/falsehood/lies/deception/false gods (כִּזְבוֹב)**
    - Hosea 12:1 Ephraim feeds on wind, And pursues the east wind continually; He multiplies lies and violence...
    - Zeph. 3:13 "The remnant of Israel will do no wrong And tell no lies... they will feed and lie down With no one to make them tremble."

v.3 But y'all should know that Yahweh caused to separate a godly man for Himself. Yahweh will heed when I call to Him.

- Know
- The LORD set apart (הִפְלִיחַ) *for Himself*
  - **Ex. 8:22** “...I will set apart the land of Goshen where My people are living, so that no swarms of flies will be there, in order that you may know that I, the LORD, am in the midst of the land.” (Cf. Ex 9:4; 11:7)
  - **Exodus 33:16** “For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we... may be distinguished from all the people... upon the earth?”
  - **Acts 17:31** “He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has APPOINTED... by raising Him from the dead.”
  - Luther, Gairo Geniza (827AD), Ethiopic, Syriac, Arabic, Vulgate (407AD) and LXX (200BC) read “do wondrous things” (*Hiphla* instead of *Hiphlah*) which is the sense of this verb in its other two occurrences in the Writings (Ps. 17:7; 139:14), possibly original.

**v.3 But y'all should know that Yahweh caused to separate a godly man for Himself. Yahweh will heed when I call to Him.**

- The LORD set apart (*from the curses of the ungodly* Exodus 8:22, 9:4; 11:7) by being with this person (Ex. 33:16) - “for Himself”
- The godly man (טוֹבִיט) (BDB: “faithful, kind... pious”)
  - **Ps. 2:5** “I have installed my king (David, Jesus, you) on Zion, the mountain of my holiness”
  - **Deut. 33:8** Of Levi he [Moses] said, “*Let Your Thummim and Your Urim belong to Your godly man, Whom You proved genuine at Massah... For they observed Your word and kept Your covenant. They shall teach Your ordinances to Jacob, And Your law to Israel. They shall put incense before You, And whole burnt offerings on Your altar.*”
  - **1 Sam. 2:9** Hannah, Samuel’s mother considered herself *chesed* (as did others of God’s people)
  - **Psalm 16:10** David calls the Messiah God’s “Chesed”
- God heeds prayers from those He has made holy – v.1

## v.4a Y'all should shudder and stop sinning...

- **Tremble/Shudder/Be angry/stand in awe (רָגַזוּ)**
  - The other four times this word occurs in Psalms refer to earthquakes (18:7; 77:16,18; 99:1)
  - but can figuratively mean “shaken up/disturbed/emotionally moved” (cf. Habakkuk 3:7-lit., 3:16-fig.)
  - Septuagint translation of this “οργιζεσθε και μη αμαρτανεετε” quoted in Eph. 4:26 substantiates emotional/figurative meaning, but not necessarily “anger.”
- **Stop sinning/sin not (אַל-תִּקְטְאוּ)**
  - “miss the mark”
  - Cf. v.2 turning honor to shame, loving vanity, and seeking falsehood
  - Pride (anger) and being dazzled by the glories of human society blind us to failing to recognize and value truth, glory, and godliness
  - Repentance begins with fear of God’s judgment and ending disobedience. It results in peace...

v.4b ...Feel compunction/Commune/Meditate/Ponder/  
Search/ lit. “talk (אָמַר) with your heart” on your bed...

- Figure of speech for “think” from Deut (7:17, 8:17, 9:4)
  - **Hosea 7:1-2** ... Bandits raid outside, and they don't tell their heart that I remembered...their wickedness
  - **Jer. 5:23-25** [Y]our sins have withheld good from you ...this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart... They do not say in their heart, "Let us now fear the LORD our God, Who gives rain in its season..."
  - **1Sam. 7:3** Samuel said... "If you return to the LORD with all your heart, remove the foreign gods... and direct your hearts to the LORD and serve Him alone; and He will deliver you from... the Philistines."
- The bed (משכב) is a private place where you can be yourself. Who you really are shows up when you are alone. What do you tell your heart when you are alone?
  - **Psalm 36:4** He plans wickedness upon his bed... He does not despise evil.
  - **Psalm 149:5-6** Let the godly exult in glory; Let them sing for joy on their beds... the high praises of God...

## v.4c ... and be still/silent. (וְדָמָה)

- A. **Grief over sin:** Leviticus 10:1-3 When Aaron the priest's sons were killed by God for leading a pagan ceremony, "Aaron, therefore, kept silent."
- B. **Not laziness or sullenness** (ceasing to pray to God and praise Him condemned in Job 31:34 and Ps. 30:12)
- C. **Trust & peace – after fearing God & ending rebellion**
  - Ps. 37:7-8 Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of evildoers...
  - Ps. 62:4-6 They delight in falsehood... My soul, wait in silence for God only, For my hope is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation...
  - Ps. 131 "O LORD, my heart is not proud... I have composed and quieted my soul; Like a weaned child against his mother... hope in the LORD... forever.
- D. **Otherwise rebels will be silenced by God's judgment**  
Psalm 31:17 "...the wicked are silenced in Sheol"



## v.5a Sacrifice sacrifices of righteousness...

Cf. v.1 “my God, my righteousness”

Only two other places in O.T. with this phrase

- **Moses’ blessing on the tribe of Zebulun: Deut. 33:19**  
“They will call peoples *to* the mountain; There they will offer righteous sacrifices...” זְבַח־צֶדֶק
- **David’s confession of sin: Psalm 51:16-19** ...You are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. By Your favor do good to Zion; Build the walls of Jerusalem. Then You will delight in righteous sacrifices... זְבַח־צֶדֶק
- “spiritual [as opposed to physical] sacrifices... belong to all dispensations... prayer, praise, alms-giving, penitence... entire devotion to God’s cause” ~Plumer
- Contrast with Isa. 1:13. Do not continue to bring vain grain-offerings מִנְחַת־שׁוּא .. I am not able [to brook] iniquity and solemn assembly...

## v.5 Sacrifice... and trust (וּבְטָחוֹ) to Yahweh.

Contrast with Isa. 1:13 Do not continue to bring vain grain-offerings... I am not able [to brook] iniquity and solemn assembly...

“The whole venture that Absalom had inaugurated had been launched under the auspices of a solemn sacrifice... [in a fatherly tone, David says,] “substitute for your unholy act a sacrifice brought in a spirit without guile and for the purpose of expressing your own contrition for your wrongdoing.” ~Leupold

“*Batach* construed with *el...* combines with the notion of ‘trusting’ that of ‘drawing near to, hanging on, attaching one’s self to.’” ~Delitzsch

**Prov. 3:5** Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding.

**Zeph. 3:2b** She did not trust in the LORD, She did not draw near to her God.

**Acts 16:31** "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

## **v.6 Many are saying, “Who will cause us to see good?” Lift upon us the light of your face, Yahweh!**

- cf. 3:3 Many saying, “No salvation for him in God!”
- **Where does quote end? (Quotes invented after KJV)**
  - “many” = “godly” offering “sacrifices of righteousness” in a good prayer? (ESV)
  - “many” = “adversaries” and cynics of Ps. 3 (Augustine, Calvin, Henry, Delitzsch, Plumer, Leupold, Spurgeon, NAS, NIV, NKJ)
- **Shift of address from men back to God (v.1) – No more imperatives.**

## v.6 Many are saying, “Who will cause us to see good?” Lift upon us the light of your face, Yahweh!

- “show good” = Ethics is a function of deity, so is Blessing (Looking to men will disappoint)
  - **Ecclesiastes 2:1** I said to my heart, “Come... I will cause to see what is good!” and this also was futility.
  - **Psalm 34:8** O taste and see that the LORD is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!
  - **Psalm 86:17** Show me a sign for good, That those who hate me may see it and be ashamed, Because You, O LORD, have helped me and comforted me.
  - **Quoting Aaronic blessing - Numbers 6:24-26** “Thus you shall bless the sons of Israel: The LORD bless you, and keep you; The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His face/countenance on you, And give you peace.”
- “lift the face” meant a relationship free from offenses (2 Sam. 2:22 Abner, Asahel, and Joab, Ezra 9:6 & Job 11:15-in prayer to God, cf. Job 29:24 “light of my face”)

## v.7 You gave joy to my heart more than a time when their grain and their juice were abundant.

joy/gladness (שְׂמֵחָה) more than in time/season/when (מֵעַתָּה) their grain (corn) & (new) wine/juice (& oil - LXX, Ethiopic, Syriac, Arabic, Vulgate) abound/increased = harvest (1Sam25:8-shearing) Payday

**Ps. 16:11** You make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

**Ps. 21:6** For You make him most blessed forever; You make him joyful with gladness in Your presence.

**Isa. 9:2-3** The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light... They will be glad in Your presence **As with the gladness of harvest, As men rejoice when they divide the spoil.**

**Isa. 30:29** You will have songs as in the night when you keep the festival, And gladness of heart **as when one marches to the flute...**

**Jer. 15:16** Your words were found and I ate them, And Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; For I have been called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts.

**Acts 13:52** And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

**Rom. 14:17** for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

**Gal. 5:22** fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace... goodness, faithfulness

## v.8a In peace (בְּשָׁלוֹם) I will lie down...

**Luke 1:79** Jesus will “shine upon those who sit in darkness... to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

**John 14:27** “My peace I give to you... Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”

**Acts 10:36** “...preaching peace through Jesus Christ...”

**Rom. 5:1** ...justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

**Rom. 8:6** ...the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,

**Rom. 14:17** the kingdom of God is not eating & drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

**2Cor. 13:11** ...the God of love and peace will be with you.

**Gal. 1:3** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,

**Col. 3:15** Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts...

**2Tim. 2:22** ...pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace...

**2Thess. 3:16** the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance.

## v.8 In peace I will lie down and sleep at once, for You – You alone, Yahweh, cause me to settle confidently.

- “Both/at once” (יִתְקַדֵּם) – not lying wide awake!
- Related to vs. 4-5 – what you are “saying to your heart when you are lying on your bed” and “trust (בְּטַח) in the Lord” (“safety” = בְּטַח)
- Quotes a promise from the Law:
  - **Lev. 25:18** 'You shall thus observe My statutes and keep My judgments... that you may  dwell securely on the land.
  - **Deut. 12:10** “... He will give you rest from all your enemies around *you* so that you  dwell in security...”
- Not the security of bars & gates but personal “trust”
  - **Jer. 49:31** "go up against a nation which ... lives  securely... It has no gates or bars, dwelling alone.”
  - **Ezek. 38:11** ...land of unwalled villages... that live securely, all of them... having no bars or gates
  - (Cf. “unsuspecting” - **Judges 8:11, 18:7, & Micah 2:8**)

## v.8 ...in Security/confidence.

- Promised in the Law (Lev. 25:18)
- Based on personal trust (Ezek. 38:11)
- Comes only from God (“You alone” – not the “*many*”)
  - **Job 11:14-19** ...put [iniquity] far away... Then, indeed, you could lift up your face without moral defect... Then you would trust... and rest securely. You would lie down and none would disturb you...
  - **Job 24:23** "He provides them with security, and they are supported; And His eyes are on their ways.
  - **Psalm 16:9-11** ...my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will  dwell securely. For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy...
  - **Jer. 23:6** "In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, 'The LORD our righteousness.'””



## v.8 ...in Security/confidence.

- Promised in the Law (Lev. 25:18)
- Based on personal trust (Ezek. 38:11)
- Comes only from God (Jesus)
- Not perfect yet, but will be in heaven
  - **Hosea 2:18** "In that day I will also make a covenant for them... And I will abolish... war from the land, And will make them lie down in safety."
  - **Zech. 14:11** "...there will no longer be a curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in security."

# Application 1: Trust Jesus

1. **“Trust the LORD”** who **“hears”** and is **“gracious”** and who **“alone can make you secure”** and **“give you more joy”** rather than the **“many”** who **“love vanity and seek falsehood,”** add **“stress”** and are cynics **“who will show us good?”**
  - **“God never goes over to the side of deceit, folly and malice, therefore it always ultimately fails.” ~Wm. Plumer**
  - **Romans 14:17 the kingdom of God is not eating & drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.**
  - **Who do you belong to? Where do you get your righteousness (v.1), joy (v.7) your good (v.6), and security (v.8) from?**

# Application 2: Pray!

1. “Trust the LORD” who “hears” and is “gracious” and who “alone can make you secure” and “give you more joy” rather than the “many” who “love vanity and seek falsehood,” add “stress” and are cynics “who will show us good?” (Romans 14:17)
2. **David gives us an example: “When I call... hear my prayer... when I call... lift up the light of your face, Lord”**
  - Encourage yourself by remembering God’s past deliverances: “You have relieved me in distress... The LORD has set apart the godly... He hears when I call... You have given more joy...”

# Application 3: Repent

## *The 10 commands in Psalm 4*

- **Stop**
  - Changing glory to shame (v.2 – implied)
  - Loving vanity
  - Seeking falsehood
  - Sinning (v.4)
- **Start**
  - Knowing the Lord (v.3)
  - Trembling (v.4)
  - Talking to your heart (i.e. not following your feelings, but instructing them from God's word)
  - Being still (i.e. Not frenetically busy like a little god nor drowning out God's still small voice.)
  - Offering sacrifices of righteousness (v.5)
  - Trusting the Lord (Jesus)

# Applications

1. “Trust the LORD” who “hears” and is “gracious” and who “alone can make you secure” and “give you more joy” rather than the “many” who “love vanity and seek falsehood,” add “stress” and are cynics “who will show us good?” (Romans 14:17)
2. “I call... hear my prayer... I call... lift up the light of your face, Lord”
3. “The interposition of [Selah after v.4] perhaps intimates even a transition from the old life to the new life: that on the old man being destroyed or weakened by repentance, the sacrifice of righteousness, according to the regeneration of the new man, may be offered to God; when the soul now cleansed offers and places itself on the altar of faith, to be encompassed by heavenly fire, that is, by the Holy Ghost. So that this may be the meaning... live uprightly, and hope for the gift of the Holy Ghost, that the truth, in which you have believed, may shine upon you.” ~Augustine

# Credits

- **Bible translations include Psalm 1 by Nate Wilson, and mostly NASB quotes.**
- **Commentary Bibliography**
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