

Digging Deeper: The Greater Meaning of Psalm 34:18

Wednesday, October 14, 2026

“Jehovah is close to the broken-hearted; He saves those who are crushed in spirit.” (Psalm 34:18)

David wrote this psalm after a frightening escape, at a time when he was running for his life from King Saul, the very man he had loyally served. (See the heading of Psalm 34.) The main point is that when someone we trusted lets us down or betrays us, Jehovah does not stand at a distance. As the day's text says, he is like a loving parent who holds and comforts a hurting child, and he gives us good things to look forward to so that we can keep going.

1 “Close”: Jehovah Draws Near (קָרוֹב, *qarov*)

The Hebrew word קָרוֹב (*qarov*) means near or close. It can describe something nearby, but it is also used of family closeness. The Law spoke of “a close blood relative,” using this word, and Naomi used it when she said of Boaz: “The man is related to us.” (Leviticus 21:2; Ruth 2:20) So when David says Jehovah is “close,” the idea is warm and personal, like a family member who stays by our side.

That is exactly the picture in the day’s text. When people disappoint us, we may feel very alone. But Jehovah does not pull away from us when we are hurting. He comes near. The same word appears

in another of David's psalms: "Jehovah is near to all those calling on him, To all who call on him in truth." (Psalm 145:18)

- However others have treated us, our heavenly Father still loves us and wants to be close to us.

2 **"Brokenhearted": When the Heart Is Shattered (שָׁבַר, shavar)**

The word "brokenhearted" is literally "broken of heart." It comes from שָׁבַר (*shavar*), which means to break or to break in pieces. It is the word used when Gideon's men "shattered the large jars." (Judges 7:20) In the Bible, the heart stands for the inner person, our feelings and thoughts. So a broken heart is like a clay jar that has been smashed. It is a fitting picture of how betrayal can feel.

Jehovah does not ignore a heart in pieces. Another psalm uses the same expression: “He heals the brokenhearted; He binds up their wounds.”

(Psalm 147:3) A human friend may not know how to fix our pain, but Jehovah knows exactly where it hurts, and he is eager to comfort and soothe us.

- No hurt is too deep for Jehovah to notice, and no heart is too broken for him to help heal.

3 “Crushed in Spirit”: When Hope Seems Gone (דָּכָא *daka*)

The Hebrew word behind “crushed” is דָּכָא (*daka*), which means to crush. It describes being pressed down until a person feels he has no strength left. The NWT footnote says that “those who are crushed in spirit” can also be rendered “are discouraged.” As the day’s text ex-

plains, one reference work says this may refer to “those who have nothing good to look forward to.”

Jehovah does not leave such ones in that condition. He “saves” them. Isaiah uses forms of this same word when Jehovah says he resides “with those crushed and lowly in spirit, To revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of those being crushed.” (Isaiah 57:15) One way he revives us is by giving us a sure hope: “For look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be called to mind, Nor will they come up into the heart.” (Isaiah 65:17)

- When we feel that we have nothing to look forward to, Jehovah’s promises give us real things to look forward to.

Key Spiritual Reflections

- **Drawing Close:** When someone I trusted lets me down, do I pull away from Jehovah, or do I let him draw close to me in prayer? (Psalm 145:18)
- **Healing My Heart:** Is there a hurt I have been carrying alone that I could pour out to Jehovah today, trusting him to bind up my wounds? (Psalm 147:3)
- **Looking Ahead:** Which promise about the new world could I think about this week to lift my spirit when disappointment weighs me down? (Isaiah 65:17)