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The Philistines Seized David at Gath
Psalm 56: 1-13

For the director of music.
To the tune of "A Dove on Distant Oaks." Of **David**. *A miktam (probably a musical term)*
When **the Philistines** had seized **David at Gath.**

DIG: How desperate must David have been to go into the heart of the enemy of Isra'el? Where do you see that despair reflected in this psalm? What's happening to David? How would you feel in his place, hunted by your former friends? What does it mean that God records you tears? Did David think he was invincible? What does it mean to trust ADONAI in fearful circumstances? How is such trust demonstrated? Or rewarded?

REFLECT: Does being afraid lead you to trust Elohim more, or less? On the other hand, does *not* trusting in the LORD lead you to be *more* afraid? Less? Why? How can you choose faith when you are afraid? If YHVH is with us, why do we fear human threats so much? Can head knowledge of God calm fears, which are emotional? How can you overcome your fears? What does the writer to the Hebrews say (Hebrews 11:6).

Psalm 56 was **David's** prayer in **Gath** when the situation got too dangerous. There is no question that **he** was a frightened man when **he** was in **the Philistine city**, but **he** sustained **his** faith by remembering **God's** promises and **the LORD's** call upon **his** life. And **ADONAI** heard **him**. **YHVH** was merciful and enabled **him** to escape back to **his** own land. No matter how we feel or how dismal the circumstances appear, the safest place in the world is with **God**.[82]

A. Lament: The prayer begins with a typical prayer for **mercy**. Instead of building up gradually to **his** complaint, **David** pours out **his** heart immediately. **He** paints **his adversaries** in rapid strokes. **Be merciful to me, to give me unmerited favor or grace. Elohim, for my enemies are in hot pursuit; all day long they press their attack. His** opponents are only **men**, but considering **their** animosity

and pride, **their** strength and violence are not to be underestimated. **My adversaries pursue me all day long; panting after me in their pride, many are attacking me (Psalm 56:1-2).** Their attacks mentioned seem not to be an actual physical attack yet. At this point, there are verbal battles and plots (see verses 5 and 6), which will eventually lead to a frontal assault. In the midst of opposition that has become hounding and lethal, **David** cries out to **ADONAI** for mercy. The press of **his** circumstances and **his** ability to deal with them throws **David** into the hands of **God**.[83]



B. Trust in God: Difficult as life is, **David** had learned to trust in **ADONAI**. **Most high, when I am afraid, I put my trust in You. He** neither feeds **his** fear nor stares at **his** problems, but instead, looks to **his Redeemer**, who will deliver **him**. **In God, whose word I praise – in God I trust and am not afraid. What can mere mortals do to me (Psalm 56:3-4 CJB)? The LORD's** promise is secure and will come true. After all, trusting in **YHVH** requires a prior commitment to **the Word of God**.

How did **Yeshua** endure the terror of the cross? **He** went first to **the Father** with **His** fears. **He** modeled the words here: **When I am afraid, I put my trust in You**. Do the same with your fears. Don't avoid life's "garden of Eden's." Enter them. Just don't enter them alone. And while there, be honest. Pounding the ground is permitted. Tears are allowed. And if you sweat blood, you won't be the first. Do what **Jesus** did; open your heart. And be specific. **Christ** was. **Take this cup**, **He** prayed. Give **God** the number of the flight. Tell **Him** what your child needs. Communicate the problems with your marriage. Share the details of the job transfer. **He** has plenty of time and plenty of compassion. **He** doesn't think your fears are foolish or silly. **He** won't tell you to "buck up" or "get tough." **He's** been where you are. **He** knows how you feel. And **He** knows what you need.[84]

C. Affliction and Imprecation: With confidence **in ADONAI's** justice as promised in **His Word, David** presents **his** case more clearly before **the LORD**. **All day long they twist my words; all their schemes are for my ruin. They** plot so as to undo whatever the godly person has spoken and has planned to do rightly. **They** treat **him** unjustly. **They conspire, they lurk, they watch my steps, hoping to take my life.** Then **David** invokes **God's** judgment upon **his** enemies. **Because of their wickedness do not let them escape; in your anger, God, bring the** Gentile **nations down.** The record and collection of **tears** serve as assurances to **David** that **YHVH** will vindicate **him**. **Record my misery; list my tears on your scroll – are they not in your record? All of David's sufferings are recorded in God's book of remembrance (Malachi 3:16). He** rests **his** case with the assurance that **God** will hear **him** and respond in justice. **Then my enemies will turn back when I call for help (Psalm 56:5-9a).**

B. Trust in God: By this I will know that Elohim is for me. The emphatic **by this** summarizes **David's** confidence in **God's** acts of vindication. **The LORD's** majestic acts are compelling proof of the covenantal relationship. It is to this effect that **David** looks for the demonstration of **Ha'Shem's** love for **him** so that **he** may "know" again how much **YHVH** cares for **him**. **In God, whose word I praise, in ADONAI, whose word I praise – in God I trust and am not afraid. The traditional interpretation of the two divine names is YHVH in His justice and mercy. What can mere humans do to me (Psalm 56:9b-11)?**

A. Thanksgiving: Instead of ending with lament and petition, **the psalm** concludes with a ringing thanksgiving and declaration of victory. **David** promises to fulfill the vows **he** had made to **God**. In anticipation of **his** deliverance, **he** said: **The vows** I made **to You Elohim** are obligatory upon **me** to fulfill**; I will present my thank offerings to You.** The offering was not a payment for deliverance but an expression of devotion. **The LORD** receives praise because **He** is true to **His** promises. **For you have delivered me** (prophetic perfect) **from death** (**David** anticipated **God's** action against **his enemies**) **and my feet from stumbling** (even though **his enemies** have marked **his** steps)**, that I may walk before God in the light of life (Psalm 56:12-13).** This is the goal of godly living. Only life in **God's** presence gives meaning to **His** children. It is as though **the light of life** is shining as brightly as the sun, in contrast to the darkness of Sh'ol.[85]

David's alternatives are our alternatives. We either fall into the darkness of death,

or stand in the light of **God** and live. As much as we may fight such a contradictory thought, it is biblical to the core. We either serve **YHVH** or the devil. There are only two kinds of spiritual food. There's devil's food and angel's food. And if you're not eating one, you're eating the other. We go either to heaven or hell. There is no fence to sit on because there is no fence.[86] **But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD (Joshua 24:15).**