

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 your 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).