

Psa. 56:0 To the chief Musician upon Jonathelemrechokim, Michtam of David, when the Philistines took him in Gath.

According to what I can gather from Strong's, this long word *Jonathelemrechokim* identified a specific tune for this song. The word *Michtam* is the word for *poem*. This seems to be saying that this was a poem written by David in the land of the Philistines that he composed to match an existing melody. The only time I could find that David was afraid in the land of the Philistines is described in 1Samuel 21. He had gone there for refuge and ended up pretending to be mad in order to escape.

Psa. 56:1 Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresseth me.

Psa. 56:2 Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O thou most High.

These verses would be appropriate to the incident in 1Samuel 21 when David was fleeing Saul and hoped to find refuge in Gath.

David is positioning himself as dependent upon the kindness of his Lord. Even though he has been anointed as the next king of Israel, he is a man on the run. Saul is trying to kill him and preserve the throne for Jonathan in rebellion against God. Saul commanded the armies of Israel and David was traveling with approximately 600 men (1Sam 23:13). He knew that the odds against him physically were terrible, but with God on his side he would be invincible.

Psa. 56:3 What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.

David wasn't afraid to admit that he needed help. Although he had proven himself as a mighty warrior, he did not let his pride prevent him from admitting fear. His experiences with God had proven to him that God was sufficient to protect him against any enemy he might face. By this time, he had experienced God's deliverance many times and his faith in God was strong. That is one reason it is important to "remember" what the Lord has done for us. The Lord had commanded His people to be people who remembered all that He had done for them as an encouragement to obedience and faith in Him.

Deut. 5:15 And **remember** that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and *that* the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.

Deut. 7:18 Thou shalt not be afraid of them: *but* shalt well **remember** what the LORD thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt...

Josh. 1:13 **Remember** the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, The LORD your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land.

Psa. 105:5 **Remember** his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth...

Is. 46:9 **Remember** the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; I *am* God, and *there is* none like me...

Psa. 56:4 In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.

I thought it was interesting that David's focus at this time was on praising God's Word—His promises. I am sure that David was familiar with the words of Moses in the Torah:

Deut. 8:2 And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, *and* to prove thee, to know what *was* in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

Deut. 8:3 And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that **man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD** doth man live.

I am sure that he had memorized the words given to Joshua and clung to their promise just as we do today.

Josh. 1:8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Josh. 1:9 Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God *is* with thee whithersoever thou goest.

David never lost his faith in the power of the Word of God as shown by words spoken towards the end of his life.

2Sam. 22:31 *As for* God, his way *is* perfect; the word of the LORD *is* tried: he *is* a buckler to all them that trust in him.

Praising the Word of God is evidence of faith in the God that spoke the words. David had no doubt of God's faithfulness to His word and to the one who submitted to Him as Lord of his life. The fact that David feared (v3) indicated that he knew harm could come to him in the flesh. But---David did not fear that harm to his flesh, because he knew it could only come as God allowed it and that his eternal future was secure in the Lord. He was as sure as Job that he would one day see God face to face.

Job 19:25 For I know *that* my redeemer liveth, and *that* he shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth:

Job 19:26 And *though* after my skin *worms* destroy this *body*, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

Job 19:27 Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; *though* my reins be consumed within me.

I think David expressed this confidence at the death of his first child with Bathsheba.

2Sam. 12:22 And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell *whether* GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?

2Sam. 12:23 But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.

Psa. 56:5 Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts *are* against me for evil.

Psa. 56:6 They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul.

Evidently, David's enemies were adept in the practices of the media today. They would use David's words against him by taking them out of context or whatever to falsify his meaning. The Hebrew for the word *wrest* means "to fabricate or fashion." I can't help but make comparisons to events of today. It sounds like they don't want to credit David with one good character trait, much like the liberal media and political left act today towards President Bush. They are constantly in collusion seeing what they can dig up next to undermine him and his policies. They are ready to jump on any misstep. The comparison stops here. I don't believe they are lying in wait to take the President's life. David's enemies were hoping to kill him.

Psa. 56:7 Shall they escape by iniquity? in *thine* anger cast down the people, O God.

This question seems to be rhetorical. The obvious answer is, "No." David is calling for God to defeat his enemies.

David is secure in his position as one beloved by God. He is convinced that those who are his enemies are also the enemies of God. He knew from God's word that vengeance belonged to God. He was not hesitant to ask God to judge his enemies.

Deut. 32:35 To me *belongeth* vengeance...

Deut. 32:39 See now that I, *even I, am* he, and *there is* no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither *is there any* that can deliver out of my hand.

Deut. 32:40 For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever.

Deut. 32:41 If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; **I will render vengeance to mine enemies**, and will reward them that hate me.

Deut. 32:42 I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; *and that* with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy.

Deut. 32:43 Rejoice, O ye nations, *with* his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, **and will render vengeance to his adversaries**, and will be merciful unto his land, *and* to his people.

Psa. 56:8 Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: *are they not in thy book?*

This is quite a precious verse. It was inspired by the Holy Spirit just as surely as any other verse in scripture. David knew that God was intimately concerned with all that affected David in life. The Hebrew for the word *wanderings* references times of mourning. David knew that God was aware of every tear that he shed and that they were recorded in a book evidently written for that specific purpose—to record the tears of those who put their faith in Him.

I remember hearing a teaching that it was a custom of Jewish women to keep a bottle of her tears, which she would eventually present to her husband as a most precious gift. I did a search on the internet and found that collecting tears in a

bottle was a custom in Egypt and many middle eastern countries. In ancient Roman times these bottles were placed in burial tombs as symbols of love and respect.

As I reflect back on life and the times I have poured out my tears before the Lord, I am embarrassed to reflect on the situations that prompted those tears at times. I take great comfort in knowing that God knows my heart and considers all my tears from the motivations of my heart for those tears and not from the relative unimportance of those times as I reflect from an older and more spiritually mature perspective.

Psa. 56:9 When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me.

David evidently had faith as “the grain of a mustard seed.” He was confident that God would turn back his enemies when he called out to God in faith for deliverance. I struggle with calling out to God with that kind of confidence because I am so aware that God’s purposes are often different than our desires—i.e., Job, Paul and his thorn in the flesh, Jesus in Gethsemane, etc. I don’t want to ask for anything that would be less than His perfect will for my life. Still, I want to have the power in faith that David had. It is an area in which I am seeking God’s teaching through the Spirit. Maybe David struggled a little bit in the same way in that he knew that “flesh” could do him harm (v4), yet still he was confident in God’s deliverance.

Psa. 56:10 In God will I praise his word: in the LORD will I praise his word.

Psa. 56:11 In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.

I think the key is that David had learned the importance of keeping his mind stayed on the Lord instead of his circumstances. It’s just like Peter when he walked on the water (Matthew 14); when his focus was on the Lord, he walked on water; when he took his eyes off the Lord, he started to sink. David’s words were full of confidence as long as his focus was on God and His Word; when he started to look at the circumstances surrounding him, he would experience fear and depression. I believe this is probably the most important lesson for each child of God to learn—to keep our minds stayed on the Lord.

Psa. 56:12 Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto thee.

What vows were David referencing? I believe it must be the vows to praise His word and rest in his faith in God as declared in this Psalm. David is committed to keeping his focus on the Lord. God does not want us to waiver in our faith. He does not want us to doubt.

Matt. 14:30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

Matt. 14:31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

Mark 11:23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not

doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

1Tim. 2:8 I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

Psa. 56:13 For thou hast delivered my soul from death: *wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?*

As usual, David's Psalm ends on a victorious note. David is confident of his life after death. I like the translation from the Complete Jewish Bible for this verse.

For you rescued me from death, you kept my feet from stumbling,
so that I can walk in God's presence, in the light of life.

The wording speaks from the position of an overcomer, a man of unshakeable faith in God for this life and life to come for eternity.