

away places,” or “the silent dove on distant oaks,” or something similar. Classic commentator Matthew Poole offered a different perspective:

Jonath-elem-reehokim is supposed to be the name of a song; but many render it, as the words signify, concerning the dumb dove afar off; all which agrees very well to David in his present circumstances. He calls himself a dove for his innocency, and folly (which is ascribed to the dove, Ho.7:11) in casting himself into this snare.²

In our lives, we will face frightening, sometimes dangerous, situations. We will also encounter painful hardships that leave us feeling helpless and hopeless. Such crises can be draining, filling us with a wide range of emotions from anguish and anxiety to depression and sheer terror. Along with the emotional stress, extreme adversity can cause headaches, heart attacks, high blood pressure, ulcers, and other physical infirmities.

Like David, we might also make some foolish decisions that result in our situation becoming worse instead of better. Thankfully, our Divine Helper, the Holy Spirit, has given us Psalm 56 for just such times. This psalm is so important that David designated it as one of six *mik-tam* psalms—meditations worthy of remembrance. Bible teacher John Phillips explained: “The word ‘miktam’ literally means ‘to cut’ or ‘to engrave.’ The thought is that this is a permanent writing, that it partakes of the nature of Job’s great cry, ‘Oh that my words were written with an iron pen and graven in the rock forever.’”³ As human beings who are prone to create trouble for ourselves, we should engrave it on our own hearts. This is, *When Unwise Decisions or Actions Create Trouble for You*, 56:1-13.

1. Pour out your heart to God: Cry out for His mercy (vv.1-6).
2. Ask God to execute justice (vv.7-9).
3. Praise God and give thanks to Him (vv.10-13).

1 (56:1-6) **Pour out your heart to God: Cry out for His mercy.**

Trouble upon trouble moved David to beg God for mercy. To *be merciful* (chanan) means to bend down to help someone who cannot help himself. It speaks of “an action from a superior to an inferior who has no claim for gracious treatment.”⁴ Realizing he had gotten himself into this predicament, David cried out for God’s mercy and help.

² Matthew Poole. *Matthew Poole’s Commentary on the Holy Bible*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1985. WORDsearch CROSS e-book.

³ John Phillips. *Exploring Psalms, Volume 1*. WORDsearch CROSS e-book.

⁴ R. Laird Harris, ed. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. WORDsearch CROSS e-book.

a. Cry out because people harass, slander, and boldly attack you all day long (vv.1-2).

Saul and his men were relentless in their attacks on David despite his total innocence. Every day, they harassed, slandered, and sought to devour him (Jb.5:15; Is.42:14). David twice mentioned their daily attacks, emphasizing that they never let up in their efforts and he was never able to rest due to their pursuit.

David was also likely referring to the Philistine officials who were misrepresenting him to Achish. Their accusations against him to Gath’s king were false. David was there only to find safety from Saul. He intended no harm to Achish or Gath.

Scholars differ in their translation of *in their pride* (marowm, v.2), which literally means height, elevated place, or exaltedness. Some translators, like those of the KJV, understand it as referring to God. *Others*, including the NIV translators, see it as referring to the arrogance of David’s enemies in rising up against him. Regardless which translation is accurate, both descriptions are true.

b. Cry out because people strike fear in you; still, you trust in God (vv.3-4).

David had unwisely placed himself in a situation that intensified his fear: not only was Saul seeking his life, but Achish and the officials of Gath were also considering what to do with him. David confronted his fear with unwavering trust in the LORD and by praising the LORD for the reliability of His Word. Years earlier, God had chosen and secretly anointed David to be Israel’s future king (see outline and notes—1 S.16:3-13 for more discussion). Now, David was buoyed by the confidence that God would fulfill that which He had promised. Secure in God’s sovereign plan for his life, David determined that he would not fear what *mortal man* (basar) could do to him. No human being could overrule God’s purpose for his life (Ps.11:6; He.13:6).

c. Cry out because people twist your words and plot against you (vv.5-6).

David’s enemies were doing everything possible to destroy him and to thwart God’s will for him. They twisted his words and plotted against him (v.5). They constantly spied on him, watching his every step as they waited for the opportunity to take his life (v.6).

Thought 1. When we are facing the difficult consequences of our unwise actions or decisions, we need to turn to the Lord for help. When we cry out to Him, He will hear us and help us, comfort us and lift us up. Because God is gracious and merciful, He delights in assisting us when we least deserve His help.

Consider this: our greatest and most fundamental problem—sin—is of our own making. We sin because we foolishly choose to do so. But think about the great lengths God went to in order to rescue us from our