

Eternal Lessons from the Great Escape

Psalm 34

Superscript

לְדוֹד בָּשְׁפֹתָו אַתְּ-טַעַמָּו
לְפָנֵי אֲבִימֶלֶךְ יוֹגֶרְשָׁהוּ וַיָּלֹךְ :

By David, when he changed his behavior
before Abimelech, and he drove him out, and he left.

And David rose and fled that day from Saul and went to Achish the king of Gath. And the servants of Achish said to him,

"Is not this David the king of the land?
Did they not sing to one another of him in dances,
'Saul has struck down his thousands,
and David his ten thousands'?"

And David took these words to heart and was much afraid of Achish the king of Gath. So he changed his behavior (וַיַּשְׁנַן אֲתְּ-טַעַמָּו) before them and pretended to be insane in their hands and made marks on the doors of the gate and let his spittle run down his beard.

Then Achish said to his servants,

"Behold, you see the man is mad. Why then have you brought him to me? Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this fellow to behave as a madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?"

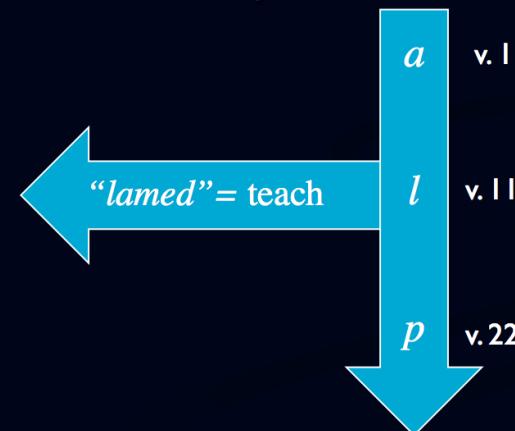
David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam.

1 Sam 21:10-22:1a

Acrostic Wisdom Psalm

אַלְפָן = aleph = "learn, teach,"

1. 22 verses of Hebrew alphabet = completeness
2. Center is v. 11 – "I will teach you" on the horizontal axis
3. Last letter is a פ – creates אלף on the vertical axis



In Psalm 33:18 David wrote, "Behold, the eye of I AM is directed toward them that fear him," and in 34:16 we hear, "the eyes of I AM are directed towards the righteous." David, being pressed by Saul, fled into the territory of the Philistines where he was recognised as the one who killed Goliath. He is seized and brought before Achish, the king. Psalm 56 documents David's prayer for deliverance. David's life is spared by his Academy Award performance playing the part of a madman. The king is deceived and berates his court for adding to the population of madmen in Gath. David is driven away and flees to the the cave of Adullam in the wilderness of Judah. In Psalm 34 David pays his vows (Ps 56:12) with a sacrifice of praise. David is so appreciative for his narrow escape, he turns into a sage, imparting life-changing wisdom to the next generation in highly structured acrostic centered around the theme of "teaching/learning."

<p>1 לְדוֹד בְּשִׁנְטוֹ אֶת־עַמּוֹ לְפָנֵי אֲבִימֶלֶךְ וַיַּגְרְשָׁהוּ וַיָּלֹךְ :</p> <p>2 אַבְרָכָה אֶת־יְהוָה בְּכָל־עַתָּה תְּמִיד תְּהַלֵּתוֹ בְּפִי :</p> <p>3 בְּיְהוָה תְּהַלֵּל נְפָשָׁי וַיְשִׁמְעוּ עֲנוּנִים וַיִּשְׁמַחוּ :</p> <p>4 נְדֻלוּ לְיְהוָה אַתִּי וְגַרְזָמָה שָׁמָן יְחִדָּה :</p> <p>5 בָּרְשָׁתִי אֶת־יְהוָה וְעַנְנִי וּמְכָל־מְגַדּוֹתִי הָאִילָנִי :</p> <p>6 נְבִיטָה אֲלֹיו וְנָהָרוּ פְּנֵינֵהֶם אֶל־יְהִקְרָבוּ :</p> <p>7 הָעַנִּי קָרָא וַיְהִי שָׁמָעַ וּמְכָל־אַרְוֹתִיו הַזְּשִׁיעַו :</p> <p>8 הָנָה מֶלֶךְ־יְהוָה סְבִיב לִירָאוּ וַיַּחֲלַצּוּ :</p>	<p>By David, when he altered his demeanor before Abimelech, and he drove him out, and he left.</p> <p>1 I will bless I AM at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.</p> <p>2 In I AM my soul makes its boast; let the humble hear and rejoice.</p> <p>3 Oh, magnify I AM with me, and let us exalt his name together!</p> <p>4 I sought I AM, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears.</p> <p>5 Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.</p> <p>6 This poor man cried, and I AM heard [him] and saved him out of all his troubles.</p> <p>7 The angel of I AM encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.</p>	<p>Superscript (1 Sam 21:10-22:1a)</p> <p>I. Call to Praise (1-3)</p> <p>A. Commitment to ceaseless praise</p> <p>“bless” = (<i>barak</i>) to acknowledge I AM as the giver of life, which allows one to flourish & subdue evil “at all times” – even in Abimelek’s clutches</p> <p>B. Praise resonates and awakens the humble</p> <p>“humble” (עַנְנִי <i>‘anāw</i>) – humble, needy, afflicted, poor</p> <p>C. Praise resounds throughout the congregation</p> <p>“together” implies that God’s faithfulness to the king impacts the entire nation</p> <p>II. David’s Thanksgiving and Praise (4-7)</p> <p>A’ Thanksgiving: Personal testimony</p> <p>note: w/o the psalm we would have never known that David’s initiative to act like a madman was divinely inspired through prayer</p> <p>B’ Praise: Universal application</p> <p>“radiant” נָהָר (<i>nāhar</i>) be radiant, shine, beam (Isa 60:5) “the gracious countenance of God is reflected on their faces” (K&D)</p> <p>A’ Thanksgiving: Personal testimony</p> <p>“poor” (עַנְנִי <i>‘anāw</i>) – humble, needy, afflicted, poor</p> <p>B’ Praise: Universal application</p> <p>“angel of I AM encamps” – David evokes the memory of Jacob’s deliverance from Esau (Gen 32:2) and Hagar’s deliverance (Gen 16:11), Elisha’s servant (2 Kgs 6:16).</p>
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<p>ט עַמּוֹ וְרָאֹ כִּי־טוֹב יְהֹוָה אֲשֶׁר־הָנָבֵר יְחִסָּה־בּוּ :</p> <p>לְאֹ אֲתִיהָנָה קָדְשָׁי כִּי־אֵין מִחְפֹּזֶר לִירָאֵי :</p> <p>כְּפִירִים רְשָׁוֹ וְרָעָבוֹ וְדָרְשָׁ יְהֹוָה לְאִיחָסְרוֹ כָּל־טוֹב :</p> <p>לְכִינְגִּים שְׁמֻעוֹ־לְלִי יְרָאַת יְהֹוָה אַלְמָדְכָם :</p> <p>מִרְדְּהָאִישׁ הַחֲפֹץ חַיִם אֲהָבָתִים לְרָאוֹת טֹוב :</p> <p>נָצֶר לְשׂוֹנָה מְרַע וְשְׁפָחִיךְ מְכַבֵּר מְרַמָּה :</p> <p>סָור מְרַע וְעַשְׂה־טוֹב בְּקַשׁ שְׁלוֹם וְרַקְפָּהּ :</p>	<p>8 Oh, taste and see that I AM is good! Blessed is the one who takes refuge in him!</p> <p>9 Oh, fear I AM, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack!</p> <p>10 The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek I AM lack no good thing.</p> <p>11 Come, O children, listen to me; the fear of I AM I will teach you.</p> <p>12 Who among you is there who delights in life and loves to see many good days?</p> <p>13 Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit.</p> <p>14 Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.</p>	<h3>III. The Experience of One Becomes an Invitation to All</h3> <p>"One's testimony is only valuable to others if it rests on a changeless truth about God." (Motyer)</p> <p>taste and see → "come and see" (John 1:46)</p> <p>Tasting precedes seeing; for spiritual experience leads to spiritual perception</p> <p>"taste" = "take refuge in him" "fear him" = "seek I AM" "good" = "no lack" and "lack no good thing" "young lions" – the governing metaphor</p> <h3>IV. Lessons for Life from the Sage (11-22)</h3> <h4>A. Wisdom's invitation and appeal</h4> <p>"I will teach you" = center words of psalm</p> <p>The poet appeals to our greatest longings</p> <h4>B. Essentials for the good life</h4> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Negative: guard your tongue from deceit (David attempting to disguise his true identity in a foreign land) Positive: "Do good" = "seek peace and pursue it" (1 Sam 24, 26; Rom 12:9-16)
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<p>שְׁנִי יְהוָה אֶל־צַדִּיקִים 16 וְאֹזְנוֹ יְהוָה אֶל־שׁוֹעֲתָם:</p> <p>בְּנֵי יְהוָה בְּעֵשֵׂי רֹעֵ 17 לְהַכְרִית מַאֲרִץ זָכָרֶם:</p>	<p>15 The eyes of I AM are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry.</p> <p>16 The face of I AM is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth.</p>	<p>C. I AM's "way" with humanity</p> <p>1. I AM's stance to the righteous & the wicked "eyes...toward" = constant care and protection (Deut 11:12) "ears...toward" = attentive their prayers "face...against" = fierce resistance ignites wrath note: This assumes that the wicked are given freedom to carry out their devices, but God will ultimately judge (Prov 10:7).</p>
<p>וּמְפַלֵּצְרוֹתָם הָצִילָם: 18 קָרוֹב יְהוָה לְנַשְׁבָּרִידָבָ 19 וְאַתְּ דָּכָאִירָות יוֹשִׁיעָ:</p>	<p>17 [The righteous] cry out, I AM hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.</p> <p>18 I AM is near to the brokenhearted and those who are crushed in spirit he saves.</p>	<p>2. I AM's care of the righteous when evil prevails</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He hears their cries and saves them • He provides an intimacy that transcends the brokenness and pain
<p>לְבוֹת רָעוֹת צַדִּיקָה 20 וּמְכֻלָּם יָצַלְנוּ יְהוָה:</p> <p>שָׁמֵר כָּל־עַצְמוֹתָיו 21 אַתְּ מְהֻנָּה לֹא נַשְׁבָּרָה:</p>	<p>19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but I AM delivers him out of them all.</p> <p>20 He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.</p>	<p>3. The breadth and depth of I AM's loyal-love</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breadth: Though afflictions are many, I AM's faithful record to deliver is impeccable. • Depth: Ultimate preservation and care "bones" is a metaphor for I AM's care for his own, but is literally fulfilled in Jesus on the cross (Exod 12:46; John 19:33-37)
<p>מְוֹתָתָה רְשֵׁעָה 22 וְשָׁנָאֵי צַדִּיקִים יָאִשְׁמוּ</p> <p>בָּזְרָה יְהוָה נֶפֶשׁ עֲבָדָיו 23 וְלֹא יָאִשְׁמוּ כָּל־הַחֲסִים בָּוּ</p>	<p>21 Evil will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.</p> <p>22 I AM redeems the life of his servants; and none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.</p>	<p>4. Ultimate vindication of the righteous</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The wicked reap what they sow vindicating God's moral order • "In his closeness to us the Lord <i>delivers</i> (19), safeguards (20), sides with us against our opponents (21), pays whatever price will meet our need (<i>redeems</i>, 22a), and offers himself as an available refuge (22b)." (Motyer)