

To See His Face: The Anatomy of Justice

Psalm 17

<p>8 שְׁמֵרֵנִי כְּאִישׁוֹן בַּת־עַיִן בְּצֵל כְּנָפַי תַּסְתִּירֵנִי : 9 מִפְּנֵי רָשָׁעִים וְזוֹ שׂוֹנֵי אֹיְבֵי בְּנֶפֶשׁ יִקִּיפוּ עָלַי :</p> <p>10 תִּלְבְּמוּ סָגְרוּ פִּימוֹ דַּבְּרוּ בְּגָאוֹת : 11 אֲשֶׁרֵינוּ עַתָּה סָבְבוּנוּ עֵינֵיהֶם יָשִׂיתוּ לְנִטּוֹת בְּאַרְצֵי : 12 דְּמִינוֹ כְּאַרְיֵה יִכְסֹף לְטָרוֹף יִכְכָּפִיר יֵשֵׁב בְּמַסְתָּרִים :</p>	<p>8 Keep me as the apple of your eye; in the shadow of your wings hide me (“in secret”), 9 from the wicked who do me violence, my deadly enemies who surround me. 10 They close their hearts to pity; with their mouths they speak arrogantly. 11 They have now surrounded our steps; they set their eyes to cast us to the ground. 12 He is like a lion eager to tear, as a young lion lurking in ambush (“secret place”).</p>
<p>13 קוּמָה יְהוָה קִדְמָה פָּנָיו הִכְרִיעֵהוּ פִלְטָה נַפְשִׁי מִרָשָׁע תִּרְבֹּד : 14 מִמָּוֹת יָדָךְ אֵי יְהוָה מִמָּוֹתִים מִחֹלֶד חֶלְקִים בְּחַיִּים וְצָפוּנָךְ תִּמְלֵא בְטָנָם יִשְׂבְּעוּ בָנִים וְהַנִּיחֵו יִתְּרָם לְעוֹלָלֵיהֶם : 15 אֲנִי בַצְדָק אֲחַנֶּה פָּנָי אֲשַׁבְּעָה בְּהִקְיִן תְּמוּנָתְךָ :</p> <p>18.1 לְמַנְצֵחַ</p>	<p>13 Arise, I AM! Confront him (“his face”), subdue him! Deliver my soul from the wicked by your sword, 14 (deliver) from mortals by your hand, I AM, from mortals of the world whose portion is in this life. But those hidden by you fill their bellies (or wombs) may their sons be satisfied, (or “richly endowed with sons”) and what is left over may they leave for their little ones.* 15 As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness. 18.1 To the choir director <small>*v. 14 b is J. P. Fokkelman’s translation <i>Major Poems of the Hebrew Bible Vol II</i> (Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 2000) 95.</small></p>

To See His Face: The Anatomy of the Journey

Psalm 17

A prayer by David

- 1 Hear [me], I AM, [my plea] is just;
attend to my cry!
Give ear to my prayer
with no **lips** of deceit!
- 2 From **your presence** (lit. *your face*) let my vindication come!
Let **your eyes** behold the right!
- 3 Try **my heart**, visited me by night,
test me, and you will find nothing;
(for) I purposed that **my mouth** will not transgress.

I. Plea to Present his Just Case (1-3)

A. Plea that his just cause be heard (1)

"my cry" (a loud shout) - his situation is critical
and his cause is just (1 Sam 24:15)

"no lips of deceit" – his speech is pure

B. Confident request for divine scrutiny (2-3)

he seeks God's *face* and his penetrating gaze –
your eyes (Ps 139:23-24)

to try his *heart* knowing he is innocent

Reason: he predetermined that his speech
would always be truthful, unalloyed by deceit

- 4 With regard to the works of man, by the word of **your lips**

I have avoided the ways of the violent.

- 5 **My steps** have held fast to your paths;

my feet have not slipped.

- 6 I call upon you,

for you will answer me, O God;

incline **your ear** to me;

hear my words.

- 7 Wondrously show your steadfast love,

O Savior of those who seek refuge

from their adversaries at **your right hand**.

II. Confidence to be Delivered (4-7)

A. Confession of innocence (4-5)

1. Kept God's word, avoiding the violent way

2. With constant tenacity to stay on track

B. Plea for deliverance (6-7)

1. Call with confidence to be heard

2. Call with confidence for a miraculous
deliverance that will be a model for all the
godly in Israel.

8 Keep me as the apple of your eye;
 in the shadow of **your wings** **hide me** (“in secret”)
 9 from the wicked who do me violence,
 my deadly enemies who surround me.

10 They close **their hearts** to pity;
 with **their mouths** they speak arrogantly.

11 They have now surrounded **our steps**;
 they set **their eyes** to cast us to the ground.

12 He is like a lion eager to tear,
 as a young lion lurking **in ambush** (“secret place”)

13 Arise, I AM!
 Confront him (“**his face**”), subdue him!
 Deliver my soul from the wicked by **your sword**,

14 (deliver me) from mortals by **your hand**, I AM,
 from mortals of the world whose reward is this life.

And with your treasure you fill **their bellies**
 there are satisfied with children,
 and they leave their abundance to their little ones.
(or)

But those hidden (*treasured*) by you, fill their wombs,
 may they be richly endowed (satisfied) with sons
 and what is surplus leave to their little ones.

15 As for me, I shall behold **your face** in righteousness;
 when I awake, I shall be satisfied with **your likeness**.

18.1 To the choir director, Lucinda King.

III. Plea for Protection in the Current Crisis

A. Petition for protection from the wicked

1. Keep me precious and hidden
2. From the wicked, intent on his death

B. The threat is determined and imminent

1. Their character: hard hearts and arrogant boasts
 Lit. “*they close their fat*” – speaks of well-fed calloused hearts (Job 15:27; Ps 73:7)
2. The danger is imminent: having their prey surrounded and in their crosshairs, they are poised to pull the trigger

The metaphor of “*a young lion lurking in hiding*” infuses David’s plea with terror and urgency.

IV. Plea that I AM Execute Justice

A. Petition for initiate justice

1. Personally (*face to face*) condemn the oppressor
2. Personally save the innocent king

mortals (מְתִימִים) = refers specifically to males; from the root *mot* (“death”)

B. Petition to execute and consummate justice

1. In this life:
 - a. Give the wicked the full measure of earthly treasures (Exod 20:5)
or
 - b. Seeing God’s presence fill those who are his treasure with fertile wombs, satisfying them with an abundance of children and the ultimate joy of seeing the prosperity of their children’s children.

2. In the age to come: David to behold God’s face in such a way as to become like him.

Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall **see him** as he is. (1 John 3:2)