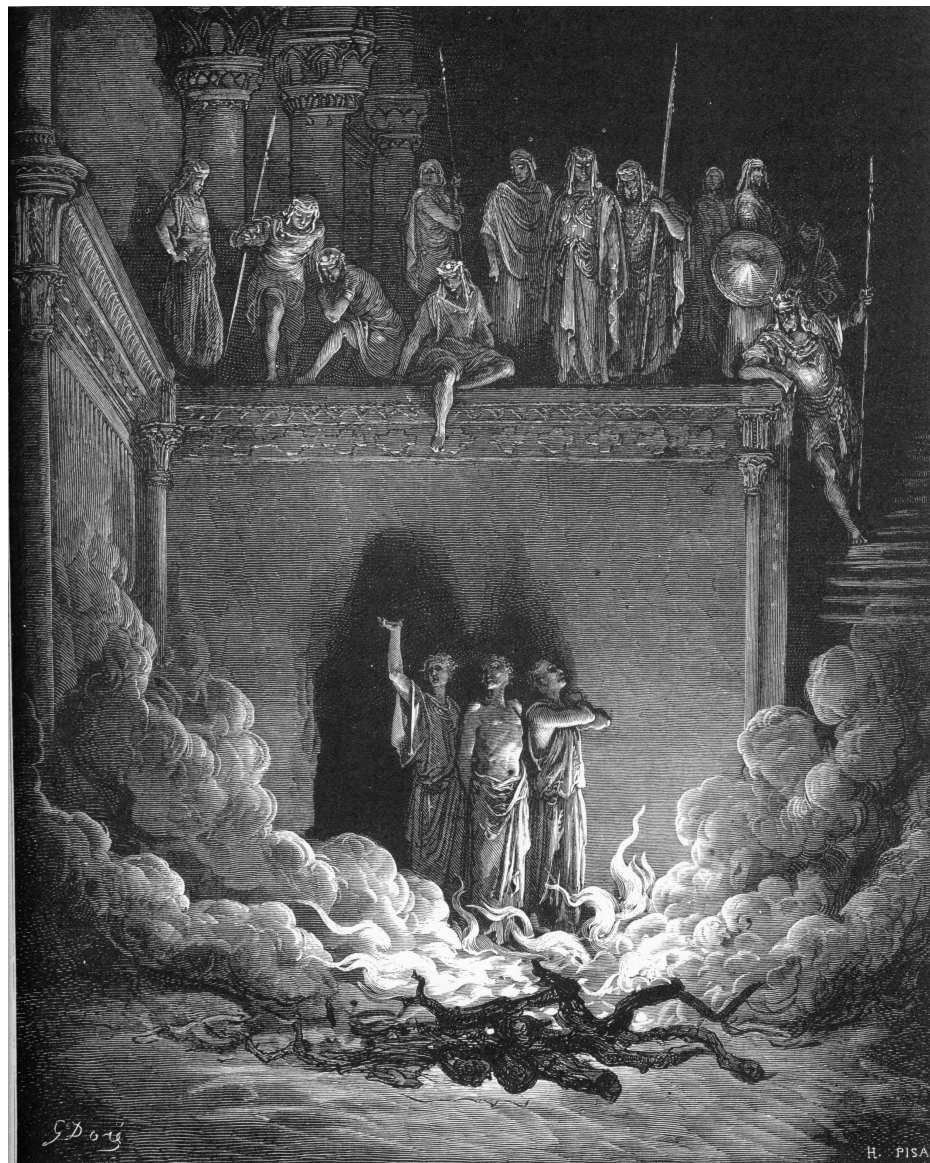


Psalm 17: Plea for protection against enemies



Psalm 17 (16) (Mode 1. 5....65 / 3.....23)

This is an appeal to the Lord from a person who is suffering injustice. He asserts his innocence throughout and asks God to protect him by wiping out his enemies. He is praying at night (verse 3) and concludes with a confident assertion that in the morning (verse 15), the Lord will intervene in his favour.

Note the close links with Psalm 16. The title reads: 'A prayer of David'. Though this is the first of only five psalms (86, 90, 102, 142) that identify themselves in the title as a 'prayer' [t^epillah], this is the word by which the Book of Psalms is known in the Hebrew canon.

Lord, hear my appeal for justice.
Attend to my cry.
Listen to my plea.
My lips are free of deception.
Let my verdict come from you,
for you can see that I am upright.

‘The law becomes slack and justice never prevails.
The wicked surround the righteous – therefore
judgment comes forth perverted ... Dread and
fearsome are they; their justice and dignity proceed
from themselves’(Habakkuk 1:4,7).

‘Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth a just verdict to the nations ... A bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth a just verdict’(Isaiah 42:1,3).

You scrutinize my heart;
You probe it by night and test me by fire.

You will find in me
no wickedness.

There is no error in what I have said
about how people are behaving.

Following the instructions from your lips
I have remained vigilant.

Even on steep paths I have kept my footing.

Keeping to your path I have not strayed.

He is not exaggerating. Things are as bad as he is claiming.
In spite of that he has remained steadfast.

I call upon you, my God;
attend to me, hear my voice.
Show me your wonderful love,
you who save those who trust you.

Keep a loving eye on me;
hide me in the shade of your wings.
Hide me from the wicked who attack me,
and hunt me down to take my life.

‘The Lord sustained him in a desert land,
in a howling wilderness waste;
he shielded him, cared for him,
guarded him as the pupil of his eye’(Deuteronomy 32:10).

They lack all feeling. Their speech is arrogant.

They track me down and hem me in.

They fix their eyes on me,
determined to strike me to the ground.

They are like a lion eager for prey,
like a young lion lurking in ambush.

Rise up, Lord, confront them, overthrow them!

With your sword snatch me away from the wicked.

Lord, use your might and cut short their lives.

Ensure that those you protect are saved from starving.

May their children be satisfied.

May they have more than enough for their little ones.

‘Let them thank the Lord for his kindness,
for his wonderful works to humankind.

For he satisfies the thirsty,
and the hungry he fills with good things’(Psalm 107:8-9).

‘I would feed you with the finest of the wheat, and
with honey from the rock I would satisfy you’(Psalm 81:16).

‘He gave them food from heaven in abundance.’

(Psalm 105:40)

‘I will abundantly bless its provisions;

I will satisfy its poor with bread’(Psalm 132:15).

As for me, I have been righteous.
I will behold your face.
When I awake, I will know you.
That is all I want.

‘When there are prophets among you,
I the Lord make myself known to them in visions;
I speak to them in dreams.
Not so with my servant Moses;
he is entrusted with all my house.
With him I speak face to face—
clearly, not in riddles;
and he beholds the form of the Lord’(Numbers 12:6-8).