

# 1 Samuel 21:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard.

## Analysis

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**And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard.**

David's feigned madness represents desperate improvisation. The Hebrew 'vayishanneh et-ta'amo' literally means 'he disguised his judgment/discernment'—ironic since this very act displayed remarkable discernment. The behaviors described—scratching (Hebrew 'vayitav') on doors and drooling—mimicked symptoms ancient peoples associated with divine possession or madness. Such individuals were typically considered untouchable, protected by taboo. David's willingness to humiliate himself for survival shows both his desperation and his practical wisdom. This episode reveals that God's servants may employ unconventional means for self-preservation, though Scripture neither explicitly endorses nor condemns David's stratagem.

## Historical Context

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Mental illness in the ancient Near East was often attributed to divine or demonic influence. Killing such persons was considered dangerous, as it might provoke supernatural retaliation. This cultural belief provided protection David shrewdly exploited.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

## Study Questions

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1. When has God delivered you through unconventional or humiliating means?
2. What does David's willingness to appear foolish teach about pride and survival?

## Interlinear Text

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וַיִּשַׁן וְ	אֶת	טַעֲמוֹ	בְּעֵי יְנִיָּהּ מִ	וַתְּהִל לְ	
And he changed	H853	his behaviour	before	them and feigned himself mad	
H8138		H2940	H5869	H1984	
בְּיָדָם	וַיִּתְּנוּ	עַל	בָּלַת וְ	הַשַּׁעַר	וַיִּפֹּד
in their hands	and scrambled	H5921	on the doors	of the gate	fall down
H3027	H8427		H1817	H8179	H3381
וַיִּרֶם	אֶל	זָקְנוֹ:			
and let his spittle	H413	upon his beard			
H7388		H2206			

## Additional Cross-References

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**Proverbs 29:25** (Parallel theme): The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.