

# 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

**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

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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וַיַּתְהַלֵּל	לְ	בְּעֵד	יִנְחַז	בְּ	עַת	עַתְּמָה	וַיַּשְׁפֵּן	וְ
And he changed	H853	his behaviour	H2940	before	H5869	them and feigned himself mad	H1984	
	H8138							
וַיַּזְרַק	בְּפַדְּסָה	עַל	יִתְחַזֵּן	דַּלְתָּה	וְתָ	הַשְׁעָר	וַיַּזְרַק	
in their hands	H3027	and scrabbled	H8427	H5921	on the doors	H1817	of the gate	fall down
							H8179	H3381
וְ	רִיר	וְ	זְבַתְּנָה	אֶל				
and let his spittle	H7388	H413	upon his beard	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.