

Psalms 41:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

Analysis

Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me. This verse describes one of life's deepest pains: betrayal by a trusted intimate. The language shifts from general enemies (v.5-8) to personal betrayal by someone close. Tradition identifies this with Ahithophel's betrayal during Absalom's rebellion, though it may describe other instances. The verse's prophetic significance emerged when Jesus quoted it regarding Judas's betrayal (John 13:18).

"Yea" (gam, וְ) is emphatic particle: "even," "also," "moreover." This intensifies what follows—not merely enemies but even a close friend. The betrayal is particularly painful because unexpected and intimate.

"Mine own familiar friend" (ish shelomi, אִישׁ שְׁלֹמִי) literally means "man of my peace" or "man of my wholeness/welfare." Shalom encompasses peace, wholeness, well-being, harmony. This person was in covenant relationship characterized by mutual trust, shared well-being, and peaceful harmony. The phrase suggests more than casual acquaintance—this was someone with whom David enjoyed intimate friendship.

"In whom I trusted" (asher-batachti vo, אֲשֶׁר-בָּטַחְתִּי בָּו) emphasizes the betrayal's depth. Batach means to trust, rely upon, feel secure. The perfect tense indicates settled, ongoing trust: "in whom I had placed my confidence." This wasn't superficial friendship but deep relational investment with corresponding

vulnerability. Trust makes betrayal possible—we cannot be betrayed by those we never trusted.

"Which did eat of my bread" (okhel lachmi, אוכל לחמי invokes ancient Near Eastern hospitality customs. Sharing bread established covenant bond and mutual obligation. To eat someone's bread implied protection, loyalty, gratitude. This phrase indicates David had extended hospitality, provision, and trust. In Middle Eastern culture, sharing meals created sacred bond—violating this through betrayal was particularly heinous.

"Hath lifted up his heel against me" (higdil alay akev, הגדיל עלי עקב is vivid imagery. Gadal means to magnify, make great; akev means heel. The phrase suggests kicking, trampling, showing contempt—possibly image of horse kicking or person striking with heel. The Hiphil form emphasizes deliberate, aggressive action. This "friend" not only withdrew support but actively turned against David with hostility. The heel lifted in violence contrasts with bread shared in peace.

Historical Context

Most commentators identify this verse with Ahithophel's betrayal during Absalom's rebellion (2 Samuel 15-17). Ahithophel was David's counselor, described as one whose "counsel...was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God" (2 Samuel 16:23). When Absalom rebelled, Ahithophel joined him, advising Absalom to pursue David immediately and publicly violate David's concubines. David prayed: "O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness" (2 Samuel 15:31). God answered by raising up Hushai to give contrary counsel. When Absalom followed Hushai instead, Ahithophel went home and hanged himself (2 Samuel 17:23).

Why did Ahithophel betray David? 2 Samuel 23:34 identifies Ahithophel as Eliam's father, and 2 Samuel 11:3 identifies Eliam as Bathsheba's father—making Ahithophel Bathsheba's grandfather. David's adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah (Bathsheba's husband) may have created irreparable breach. Ahithophel's betrayal might have been personal vendetta for family dishonor. This adds tragic irony—David's sin produced consequences including trusted counselor's treachery.

Jesus quoted this verse at the Last Supper: "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me" (John 13:18). After washing the disciples' feet and instituting communion, Jesus announced: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me" (John 13:21). When asked who, Jesus gave Judas the sop (John 13:26), then told him: "That thou doest, do quickly" (John 13:27). Judas, who had shared three years of ministry, countless meals, intimate discipleship, would betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.

The pattern of intimate betrayal runs throughout Scripture. Joseph was betrayed by brothers. Samson by Delilah. David by Ahithophel. Jesus by Judas. Paul wrote of desertion: "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me" (2 Timothy 4:16). The pain of betrayal by trusted friend cuts deeper than enemy's attack because it violates trust, contradicts expectations, and undermines sense of security.

Early church fathers saw typological connection: David betrayed by Ahithophel foreshadowed Jesus betrayed by Judas. Both betrayers ate at the table of those they betrayed. Both ended by suicide. Both betrayals occurred during significant crises (Absalom's rebellion, Jesus's crucifixion). Yet Jesus's response differed from David's—He loved Judas to the end, even calling him "friend" at arrest (Matthew 26:50).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Why is betrayal by a trusted friend often more painful than attack by a known enemy?
2. What does the phrase 'ate of my bread' reveal about ancient Near Eastern hospitality customs and the sacred nature of shared meals?

3. How did David's sin with Bathsheba potentially contribute to Ahithophel's betrayal, illustrating consequences of moral failure?
4. What does Jesus's quotation of this verse regarding Judas teach about the Messianic nature of the Psalms?
5. How can believers respond to betrayal in ways that honor God while acknowledging genuine pain and loss?

Interlinear Text

אָמַר	אֵישׁ	שְׁלֹמֹךְ	אֲשֶׁר	בְּטַחַת	בְּנֵי	אָמַר
H1571	friend	Yea mine own familiar	H834	in whom I trusted	H0	which did eat
H376		H7965		H982		H398
לְחַמְתִּי	עַל	הַנֶּכֶד יָלַךְ	עַל־בָּבֶן			
of my bread	hath lifted up	H5921	his heel	H6119		
H3899		H1431				

Additional Cross-References

John 13:18 (Parallel theme): I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.

Matthew 26:23 (Parallel theme): And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.

Job 19:19 (Parallel theme): All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me.

Jeremiah 20:10 (Parallel theme): For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him.

Obadiah 1:7 (Parallel theme): All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; they that eat thy bread have laid a wound under thee: there is none understanding in him.

2 Samuel 15:12 (Parallel theme): And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.

Micah 7:5 (Faith): Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom.

Job 19:13 (Parallel theme): He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me.

Deuteronomy 32:15 (Parallel theme): But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org