

Psalm 119 v 49 to 112

Prayer: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” Thank you, Lord. (Psalm 119 v 105)

Introduction: This is a special ‘acrostic’ psalm, in that each stanza is assigned a sequential letter of the Hebrew alphabet, with every verse in the stanza beginning with that letter. Thus each of the eight verses in the first stanza begins with the letter *aleph* א, all verses in the second stanza begin with *beth* ב, and so on. Part 2 of our study of Psalm 119 covers *zain* ז through to *nun* נ, eight x 8-verse stanzas...

Vocabulary: Almost every verse contains at least one of the following handful of words:

1. Way = דֶּרֶךְ, *derek* (705), or אֶרַח, *orach* (58) – road, direction, habit, manner or course of life (used in New Testament – see John 14 v 6, Acts 9 v 2)
2. Law = תּוֹרָה, *torah* (219) – instruction, teaching, revelation (more general than just the Law of Moses)
3. Testimonies = עֲדוֹת, *edot* (26) – witness, faithfulness, dependability – see Deuteronomy 31 v 26
4. Precepts = פְּקֻדִים, *piqqudim* (24) – detailed instructions, after root word פָּקַד, *paqad*, which means to pay attention to, look after, care about, look closely and take action (like a military officer or overseer)
5. Statutes = חֻקִּים, *chug(qim)* (127) – engraved (in stone), inscribed, permanent – see Isaiah 30 v 8
6. Commandments = מִצְוֹת, *mitzvot* (181) – the authority of God’s word (unconditional, not optional)
7. Judgments = מִשְׁפָּט, *mishpat(im)* (421) – the decisions of a wise and righteous Judge (Exodus 21 v 1), God’s righteous justice – see Psalm 119 v 137
8. Word = דְּבַר, *davar* (1,439) – general term, God’s truth stated, promised or commanded
9. Promise = אִמְרָה, *imrah* (49) – after root word אָמַר, *emer* (to say), utterance, saying, word, speech

Notes and questions for discussion:

- *Zain* ז, (v 49 to 56) – The word ‘remember’ (זָכַר, *zakar*) occurs three times (v 49, 52 (“think”), 55). What does the psalmist ask God to remember? What does the psalmist remember? What comforts the psalmist during times of affliction?
- *Cheth* ח, (v 57 to 64) – In this stanza the word “I” occurs eight times. What does the psalmist promise he will do? How does he express urgency in v 60? The first verse (v 57) and the last verse (v 64) make important statements about God – what are they? Do you think Paul and Silas remembered v 62 when they were in prison in Philippi (see Acts 16 v 25)? With v 64 see also Psalm 24 v 1, 2.
- *Teth* ט, (v 65 to 72) – The key word in this stanza is “good” (טוֹב, *tov*). What good things does the psalmist say about God? What does he say is good for him? With v 71 see Hebrews 12 v 7 to 11.
- *Jod* י, (v 73 to 80) – This stanza contains two of the most precious words in the Bible: חֶסֶד, *chesed*, “steadfast love” (v 76) and רַחֲמִים, *rachamim* “(tender) mercies” (v 77). Notice how the prayers pour out in the last five verses. The stanza begins with another key statement about God (v 73) – how does this truth lead to the prayers and commitments that follow? What is the relationship between the psalmist and “those who fear” God (v 74, 79 and also v 63)?
- *Kaph* כ, (v 81 to 88) – This stanza, at the very centre of the psalm, is the ‘midnight’ or the low point – how many expressions show that the psalmist is in great difficulty and danger? For what does he pray? What does the psalmist promise he will do – even during these dark times?
- *Lamed* ל, (v 89 to 96) – It seems that the psalmist finds the answer to his troubles (in the previous stanza) in God’s eternal and unchanging “word” (v 89). What other attributes of God provide comfort and encouragement? In v 96 the psalmist contrasts earthly “perfection” (not really perfect because it is finite) with God’s commandment, which is “broad” in the sense of providing freedom.
- *Mem* מ, (v 97 to 104) – The theme of this stanza is the psalmist’s love of God’s word. This commitment causes him to outshine three classes of people: (i) his enemies (v 98); (ii) his teachers (v 99; and (iii) his elders (v 100). How does the psalmist express his love for God’s word?
- *Nun* נ, (v 105 to 112) – Verse 105 is very well known – remember that lamps in those days were made of clay and cast their own shadow – so at best you could only see a few steps ahead. But how we need the light of God’s word in a world that grows darker by the day! How does the psalmist contrast the affliction caused by evil men with the joy he experiences in God’s word?