

here as “*statutes*” is choq (Chuqqah): They are decrees, enactments or prescriptions - often to clarify underlying law. In the heart cry of this verse, we see the person seeking for the complete fulfillment of God’s laws in the everyday affairs of his life. He was not one who had a corrupt heart that just wanted to get by, not breaking the basic law, while breaking the spirit of the law.

6 Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

The word translated “*ashamed*” has also been translated “*confounded*”.

We see that diligent heart is seeking a ground of confidence in the Day of Judgment. Looking forward in time to that day of reckoning with God, he knows there will be peace and not condemnation if . . . he pays attention to all God’s commandments.

Here we see another new word. “*Commandments*” is the Hebrew word mitzvah, singular is mitzvah. You might recognize that from the Jewish “Bar or Bat-mitzvahs”. That is when the Jewish child turns 13 and is confirmed as a “Son or Daughter of the Law”. Most simply, the word means “*commandment*”.

So what do we behold in this verse? We see a soul who recognizes that God has respect unto those who fear at His word. They consider a day of accounting with God, a day to live one’s life in the shadow of. For the person who thinks a “*little white lie*” will save some hardship in dealing with a disgruntled customer, take heed! For those who think that way, you do not have respect for God’s word and you will be ashamed in the Day of Judgment!

7 I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.

This “*praise*” is the praise of thanksgiving. It is that expression of saying, “*Thank You!*” Do you realize what has happened here? This Psalmist has just expounded about commitment to obeying God, so he will not stand condemned in the Day of Judgment, and now turns to thanking Him. This Psalmist talks of consecration and obedience, but poses no trust in his own goodness to stand un-

ashamed before God. If self-trust were his grounds of confidence, he would not be thanking God in verse 7! He would not be thanking God for what was owed him, through earning.

He offers this thanksgiving praise “*with uprightness of heart*”. The prayer battle of verses 5 and 6 confess the victory given of God in verse 7.

The second part of this phrase starts “*when*”. I don’t think this the proper choice. The prefix in the Hebrew is most commonly “*in*”. A more literal translation of that portion would be, “*in my learning the judgments of Your righteousness*”. If we just read the “*when*”, we would be in danger of misunderstanding the Psalmist. We would likely see this indicating his confidence and praise to only be after having completely learned all of God’s righteous judgments. If that were the case, he could have no confidence of thanksgiving, until he was perfectly educated. The literal reading makes a very different impression. In that, we can perceive his confidence coming from a revelation of God’s dealings with man. You see, in Christ we learn of God’s judgments of His righteousness. With that revelation, we are able to thank God in uprightness of heart. We walk with a new heart from Him and follow His commands. The righteousness and glory is all of God while the fruit of His Spirit is fulfilled in us.

One last new word for today is the word for “*judgments*”. It is the Hebrew word “*mishpat*”. The specific nuance of this word is “*the application of a law to a life situation*”. What more is the death of Christ on our behalf?

8 I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.

This closing verse, of the Aleph section, expresses consecration to obedience in every application of life. It also expresses dependence upon God, not self-trust.

The very last portion is a tad obscure, but I believe closer examination on this is profitable. It being the part reading, “*O forsake me not utterly*”. One, more literal, translation reads, “*do not forsake me till very much*”. That “*very much*” is the exact same word that finished out verse 4 and was translated “*diligently*”, or as I had used as an alternative translation, “*mightily*”. I believe the concept the Psalmist was driving at, is a prayer for


God to carry him and shelter him through whatever would befall him. Like the conclusion to many an oath, “*So God help me*”.

Fulfilling The Call

We have completed the first leg of our journey through Psalm 119. It has given us some important basic instruction on the “*how*” of living for God. First comes the consecration, then the call for discipleship. In this we see that part of the Great Commission:

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. Matthew 28:18-20

Psalm
119




Aleph

Seek Him With The Whole Heart!

1

Hebrew reads from right to left. Notice the “*Aleph*” that precedes each verse:

הַלְכִים בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה:	אֲשֶׁר־יָמִי-דָרַךְ	1
בְּכָל-לֵב יִדְרֹשׁוּהוּ:	אֲשֶׁר־נִצְרִי עֲדֹתָיו	2
בְּדַרְכֵי הַלְכוּ:	אֵף לֹא-פָעַלְו עוֹלָה	3
לְשׁוֹר מֵאֵד:	אֶתָּה צִוִּיתָה פְקֻדֹתַי	4
לְשׁוֹר חֻקֶּיךָ:	אֶחָדִי יִכְנֹו דַרְכֵי	5
בְּהִבִּטִי אֶל-כָּל-מִצְוֹתֶיךָ:	אֵן לֹא-אֲבוֹשׁ	6
בְּלִמְדֵי מוֹשְׁפָטֶי צִדְקֶךָ:	אוֹדֶךָ בְּיִשָׁר לִבִּב	7
אֶל-תִּשְׁוֹבֵנִי עַד-מֵאֵד:	אֶת-חֻקֶּיךָ אֲשׁוֹר	8

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Reading from the King James Bible.
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 entitled “*Seek Him With The Whole Heart*”

Psalm 119

Aleph

- 1 Blessed *are* the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.
- 2 Blessed *are* they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.
- 3 They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.
- 4 Thou hast commanded *us* to keep thy precepts diligently.
- 5 O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!
- 6 Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.
- 7 I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.
- 8 I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.

This is the beginning of Psalm 119. Having covered a more detailed overview of the Psalm, it is my intention to go more thoroughly through each section. Briefly, each section is according to the letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Each letter contains 8 verses that begin with that specific letter. Aleph is the first letter, so each verse, in the Hebrew, begins with a word starting with the letter Aleph.

In Hebrew, unlike English, each letter originally was also a word. We do not know the meaning of every letter today, but we do know most. Aleph means, “To learn, teach, utter; bring forth thousands; and oxen”. Since the Psalmist built the Psalm based on the letters, it is likely the meaning of each letter played in his thoughts as he composed each section. In this section, we can perceive the initial steps of a consecrated life. We see him seeking God’s help to make this journey in faithfulness to Him. In this, we can see a reflecting of this letter’s meaning. The Psalmist seriously expounds upon needed instruction. This is one of the meanings of Aleph.

This Psalm is also based upon the usage of a host of words that are “legal” terms in the Hebrew. Since the writer is seeking these with all his heart, I felt it at least worthy of our time to find out the most precise meanings of what he felt was so important to learn. For this reason, I have given the Hebrew word used and the meaning, to the best of modern knowledge, of these words.

I remember reading a sermon covering “grace” by an Episcopal minister from about 1900. Though his sermon was very good, I was shocked at his reference to Psalm 119. He referred to its writer as a legalist fanatic! Oh how sorry for that minister who reads an inspired Psalm, and is so blind to the water of life its writer was expressing. Just remember this, this Psalm is an expression of total adoration for God’s Word. The living Word of God is Christ Jesus! It is indeed one of my favorite Psalms, and gives me great strength and comfort. We need to approach this Psalm with the greatest reverence, seeking diligently like its original composer, to have all of God’s Word opened and living before our eyes. May God give us this water.

The Pathway of Life

1 Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.

Being the first section of Psalm 119, it’s interesting

to note it starts with the same word Psalm 1 starts with. Allowing for the progressive nature of the Psalms, we see this same character in Psalm 119. “Aleph” is the beginning of the alphabet. It is also good to note the beginning starts with “blessing”. For those who insist the Old Testament is a book of negatives, it is interesting that God chose to start out both the entire collection and this particular Psalm on the positive side.

We see the word “*undefiled*”. It is a word designating the “completeness, wholeness and healthy soundness” of something. This shows purity, and not corruption, in the pursuit. “*The way*” being the journey of our life.

In short, we see this initial phrase telling us the path of blessing in this life is found in those who walk with complete dedication after the right path, “no part-wayers”.

The second part of this phrase clearly tells what that path of dedication, that brings blessing, is.

We have two words to note in this part:

First is the term translated “*law*”. It is actually the plural form for Torah. That is significant because this particular word actually is a very comprehensive word. It is usually translated “Law” but its meaning is not adequately defined with that single English word. The word, in a larger definition, is that which God gives to us to show us the path we are to go in. It is a pointing out to us, “look there, that is the path, go in it”. With its fuller meaning, it is EVERYTHING that God gives to us to show us His way for our lives. That is why this verse’s use in the plural is important. It includes everything God uses to show us the right path. It includes the New Testament as well as the leading of the Holy Spirit throughout the journey of our lives.

Second, is the name of Yahweh that is used, being translated as “*LORD*”. In this section of “Aleph”, this is the only time God is specifically referred to by name. This path of following all God’s leadings in this life must be in the position of walking in a relationship with Him. Apart from that position, we cannot be walking in all God’s Torahs for us.

2 Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.

The second verse begins with that same “*blessed*”. In Hebrew poetic verse, it repeats the first verse in a new variation. Those who are walking in the path of blessing are those that “*keep*”. The word for “*keep*”

means “watch, keep and guard”. The act of keeping is not a passive act. It means a diligence of guarding to make sure there is no violation. That which they “*keep*” are Yahweh’s “*testimonies*”.

The word translated “*testimonies*” is “*edoth*”. The ten commandments are called the “testimony of God”. Testimonies are particular laws that bear “testimony” to the character of God. The word also means “witnesses”. These might specifically refer to laws such as sacrificial laws that tell us something of God’s particular character. Such laws, termed “testimonies”, are those that are bearing some kind of witness to us of what God is like.

The second part of this phrase is not so bland as some might think. Unless this is practiced, it is false to God and a pathway of cursing instead of blessing. The Hebrew word order is, “In all heart seek Him”. There is a definite weight of complete consecration of the heart. Our innermost being has to be TOTALLY committed to seeking God. This is also enlightening to the fact that to seek God with all the heart means one will be diligent to “keep, watch, guard” His testimonies and walk in His Torah.

3 They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.

From the seeking of the heart, there comes the faithfulness of action. The first two verses took us to the way the “*blessed*” pursued. Here it mentions what they refrained from doing. Plain and simple, to do good is not enough for the consecrated heart. Such consecration of heart also means not doing evil.

The second part of this verse sandwiches this first section. In verse 1 we saw “*the way*” and the “*walk*” split in the two portions of that verse. Now we see the way and walk brought together. It is not merely a walk in some way, it is a walk in His way.

These first three verses contain a simple, basic theme of the choice of life. They give the first and most basic of instructions. This is the launching point. Since it is sandwiched with a “*way*”, I thought it good to read these important words of our Lord Christ Jesus:

6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. *John 14:6*

The blessed are those who are in Christ Jesus.

Personal Dealings

4 Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.

This second section is different to the first, in that it is a direct dialogue with God. The first three verses were to the listener. Verses 4 through 8 are the words of prayer. These take us from the introduction, to the necessary background, to the actual battleground. Without the closing verses, the first three are just beautiful prose that may leave us ignorant of the cost of such a walk.

Verse 4 was written in English as a single phrase. In the Hebrew, the thought is written in this word order: “You have commanded your precepts” “to observe mightily”.

Here we find a new word, “*precepts*”. The Hebrew word is “*Pikood*”. This is an interesting word. It is found 21 times in this Psalm alone, but only three other times in all the rest of the Old Testament. Other than “precept, statute and commandment”, I am unable to distinguish the special characteristic of this word. That which makes it particularly distinct from the rest in the family of words. We know, from the context of this verse, that “*pikood*’s” are contained in God’s commands to us. In this body of commandments from God, we see we are called upon to “*diligent*” observance.

When God lays something upon us, we cannot pick up these responsibilities as something akin to a hobby. Liken this more to the duty of a soldier. For a soldier to fall asleep on his guard duty, calls for a court martial. No, God’s charge is serious.

5 O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!

This verse also reads in the English as a single phrase. The Hebrew has the word order written: “O that were fixed (determined), my ways” “to keep Your statutes”.

What we see here are the words that come from a heart that knows the fear of the LORD. It may seem a simple thing to say, “*seek him with the whole heart*”, but it is quite another to look inside and behold that waffling heart. This verse exposes the pang of that heart that truly wants to seek Him completely, but sees its personal inability.

We are now introduced to another word in the collection of “legal” terms. The word translated