

Psalm 119: Delighting in God's Will



Psalm 119 (118) (Mode 2. 5....31 / 4.....32)

This is an acrostic psalm (compare psalms 111-112). Each stanza is composed of eight lines. Each line in the first stanza begins with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet [א]. Each line in the second stanza begins with the second letter in the Hebrew alphabet [ב], and so on throughout the psalm. In including the whole alphabet in this way, the psalmist conveys the idea of being all-encompassing. Psalm 119 is dedicated to the ways in which God has expressed his will (compare Psalm 19), using the following 9 words almost interchangeably for literary variation.

law: Hebrew words in Psalm 119

1. torah [תּוֹרָה] ‘**law**’ occurs 24 times, perhaps with the nuance of ‘the way we are to respond to God’s hesed as revealed by God’.
2. mitswot [מִצְוֹת] ‘**commandments**’ occurs 22 times
3. mishpatim [מִשְׁפָּטִים] ‘**judgments**’ occurs 23 times, perhaps expressing the idea of an oral verdict resulting from a judgment.
4. huqqim [חֻקִּים] ‘**statutes**’ occurs 22 times, perhaps retaining something of the etymology of ‘engraved’: God’s will fixed in writing.

5. piqqidim [פְּקֻדִים] ‘precepts’ occurs 22 times, perhaps with the nuance of obligations to which God wants us to pay special attention.

6. ‘edut [עֵדוּת] ‘decrees’ occurs 23 times, perhaps with the nuance that these are decrees backed by God’s testimony.

7. dabar [דְּבָר] ‘word’ occurs 23 times, perhaps with the nuance of God’s will as revealed by what God has done in history and in creation.

8. ‘imrah [אִמְרָה] ‘promise’ occurs 19 times: ‘what God has said’.

9. derek [דֶּרֶךְ] ‘way’ occurs 13 times.

‘This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people’(Jeremiah 31:33).

‘I delight to do your will,
O my God; your law is
within my heart’(Psalm 40:8).



Psalm 19:7-11

‘The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.’

Stanza One. [λ]

Open to welcome your blessing
are those whose lives are blameless,
who follow the law of the Lord,
seeking God with all their heart,
who do no wrong,
but follow your way.

Note that obedience to the law is within context
of seeking God

God as lawgiver appears only here and verse 138

Stanza One. [N]

You have laid down your precepts
to be observed with care.

O that I was steadfast in keeping your statutes!
I would be without shame,
if my eyes were fixed
on your commandments.

I praise you with an upright heart,
as I learn your righteous judgments.
Hold me close to you,
and I will observe your statutes.

Stanza Two. {ב}

How can young people keep themselves pure?

By paying attention to your word.

With all my heart I seek you;
do not let me stray.

I treasure your word in my heart,
to avoid offending you.

Blessed are you, Lord;
teach me your statutes.

With my lips I recite
the judgments you have uttered.

Note that it is God who begins the dialogue

Stanza Two. [ב]

I delight in your ways,
more than in great riches.

I meditate on your precepts,
and fix my eyes on your way.

I delight in your statutes.

I remember your word.

Stanza Three. {א}

Deal bountifully with your servant,
so that I may live and observe your word.
Open my eyes, that I may behold
wondrous things in your law.

I am a pilgrim on the earth;
do not hide your commandments from me.
Night and day I long
to follow your judgments.

Stanza Three. {א}

You rebuke the insolent,
who wander from your commandments.
Save me from their scorn and contempt,
for I keep your decrees.

Even though princes sit plotting against me,
I, your servant, meditate on your statutes.
Your decrees are my delight;
they are my counsellors.

Stanza Four [7]

I lie in the dust;
revive me by your word.
I tell you of my straying
and you answer by teaching me your statutes.

When you make me understand your precepts,
I recognize your wondrous works.
When I am numb with grief,
revive me with your word.

Stanza Four [T]

Turn me away from false paths,
graciously teach me your law.

I have chosen the way of faithfulness,
cherishing your judgments.

Lord, I cling to your decrees.

Do not disappoint me.

I hasten along the way of your commandments,
for you set free my heart.

Stanza Five. {ה}

God is the one to whom the psalmist looks to change things

Teach me, Lord, the way of your statutes,
and I will observe them closely.
Help me understand your will,
that I may keep your law with all my heart.

Guide me along your path,
for in it I delight.

Turn my heart to your decrees,
and not to selfish gain.

Stanza Five. {ה}

Keep my eyes from looking at vanities;
give me life in your way.

Confirm to your servant your promise,
which is for those who revere you.

Keep me from the disgrace that I dread.

How good are your judgments.

See, I long for your precepts;

in your righteousness, give me life.

Stanza Six. [1]

Touch me, Lord, with your love.

Save me as you promised.

Then I will have an answer for those who taunt me,
for I trust in your word.

Let me speak the whole truth,
for my hope is in your judgments.

I keep your law,
now and always.

Stanza Six. [1]

I walk freely,
following your precepts.

I will speak of your decrees before kings,
and not be ashamed.

I find my delight in your commandments,
because I love them.

I revere your commandments, which I love,
and I meditate on your statutes.

Stanza Seven. [7]

Remember your word to your servant.

It has given me grounds for hope.

This is my comfort in distress,
that your promise gives me life.

The arrogant utterly deride me,
but I do not turn away from your law.

When I think of your judgments from of old,
I take comfort, Lord.

Stanza Seven. {ṯ}

Indignation seizes me because of the wicked,
who forsake your law.

Your statutes have been the subject of my songs
in the land of exile.

I remember you in the night,
and cherish your law.

This is what counts for me:
to obey your precepts.

Stanza Eight. {ᠨ}

The Lord is my portion.

I promise to keep your word.

I implore your favour with all my heart.

Be gracious to me according to your promise.

When I think of your ways,

I turn my steps to your decrees.

I hasten, O Lord,

to keep your commandments.

Stanza Eight. {᠒}

Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me,
I do not forget your law.

At midnight I rise to praise you
for your righteous judgments.

I am a companion of all who revere you,
who keep your precepts.

The earth, Lord, is full of your love;
teach me your statutes.

Stanza Nine. [v]

You have dealt well with your servant,
just as you promised.

Teach me right discernment and knowledge,
to put faith in your commandments.

Before I was humbled I went astray,
but now I obey your word.

You are good and your deeds are good;
teach me how to obey.

Stanza Nine. [٧]

The arrogant smear my name with lies,
but with all my heart I keep your precepts.
Their hearts are cold and closed to good,
but I delight in your law.

It is good for me that I was humbled,
so that I might learn your statutes.
Your law is better to me
than untold wealth.

Stanza Ten. [1]

It was your hands that fashioned me.
Give me understanding
that I may know your ways
and obey your commandments.

Those who revere you see me and rejoice,
because I hope in your word.
How right your judgments.
Lord, how wisely you humble me.

Stanza Ten. [1] Comfort me with your love,
just as you promised.

Let your mercy cover me, that I may live,
for your law is my delight.

Let the arrogant be put to shame,
because they undermine me with guile.

As for me,
I meditate on your precepts.

Let those who revere you turn to me,
so that they may know your decrees.

Keep me true to your statutes,
free of all shame.

Stanza Eleven. [ב]

I yearn for your salvation;

I hope in your word.

My eyes grow dim

from watching for your promise.

When will you comfort me?

I never forget your statutes.

How many days do I have left?

When will you punish those who persecute me?

Stanza Eleven. [ד]

The arrogant scheme to trap me;
they flout your law.

Your commandments are true.

My enemies know only lies.

I am persecuted without cause;

O Lord be my strength!

They have almost made an end of me;
but I have not forsaken your precepts.

Stanza Twelve. [5]

You, Lord, exist for ever;
your word is firmly fixed in heaven.
Your faithfulness endures
to all generations.

You have established the earth,
and it stands firm.
According to your decree
all exist to serve you.

Stanza Twelve. [5]

If your law had not been my delight,
I would have perished in my misery.
I never forget your precepts,
for by them you give me life.

Save me, for I am yours.

I seek your precepts.

The wicked lie in wait to destroy me,
but I observe your decrees.

I have seen a limit to all perfection,
but your commandment is boundless.

Stanza Thirteen. [𐤎]

How I love your law!

It is my meditation all day long.

Your commandment makes me wiser than my foes,
for it is always with me.

I have more understanding than my teachers,
for I ponder your decrees.

I understand more than the aged,
because I keep your precepts.

Stanza Thirteen. [𐤎]

I keep my steps from every false way,
in order to follow your word.

I do not turn away from your judgments,
for you are my teacher.

How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey.

Through your precepts I get understanding;
and so I hate every false way.

Stanza Fourteen. [١]

Your word is a lamp for my feet,
a light for my path.

I have sworn an oath and confirmed it,
to observe your righteous judgments.

I am severely afflicted.

Give me, Lord, the life you promise.

Accept, O Lord, my offerings of praise,
and teach me your judgments.

Stanza Fourteen. [١]

My life is continually at risk,
but I do not forget your law.
For me the wicked lay snares,
but I do not stray from your precepts.
Your decrees are my heritage for ever;
they are the joy of my heart.
I incline my heart to perform your statutes
for ever, to the end.

Stanza Fifteen. [D]

I have no love for the deceitful:
my love is for your law.

You are my hiding place, my shield;
I hope in your word.

Go away from me, you who do evil,
that I may keep the commandments of my God.
Uphold me according to your promise,
that I may live.

Stanza Fifteen. [D]

Let me not fail to attain
that for which I wait.

Hold me up, that I may be safe
and have regard always for your statutes.

You spurn all who swerve away from your statutes;
their cunning is in vain.

All the wicked of the earth you count as dross;
therefore I cling to your decrees.

For fear of you I tremble,
and I am in awe of your judgments.

Stanza Sixteen. [Y]

I live by justice and right;
do not abandon me to my oppressors.
Stand up for your servant's welfare;
do not let the godless oppress me.

My eyes tire from watching for your salvation,
and for the fulfilment of your promise.
Deal with your servant according to your kindness,
and teach me your statutes.

Stanza Sixteen. [Y]

I am your servant; give me understanding,
so that I may know your decrees.

It is time for the Lord to act,
for they are breaking your law.

Truly I love your commandments
more than the finest gold.

I direct my steps by all your precepts;
I hate ways that are false.

Stanza Seventeen. [١٧]

Your decrees are wonderful;
I guard them with my life.
The unfolding of your word gives light;
it imparts understanding to the simple.

Sighing for you,
I long for your commandments.
Turn to me and be gracious to me,
for I love to call on you.

Stanza Seventeen. [١٧]

Keep my steps steady according to your word,
never let evil master me.

Redeem me from human oppression,
that I may keep your precepts.

Make your face shine upon your servant,
and teach me your statutes.

My eyes stream with tears
over those who do not keep your law.

Stanza Eighteen. [١٨]

Lord, you are righteous,
and your judgments are right.
You have established your decrees
in righteousness and truth.

Zeal consumes me
because my foes forget your word.
Your promise is well tested,
and your servant loves it.

Stanza Eighteen. [١٨]

I am small and despised,
yet I do not forget your precepts.
Your righteousness is everlasting,
and your law is true.

When trouble and anguish come upon me,
your commandments are my delight.
Your decrees are for ever righteous;
give me understanding that I may live.

Stanza Nineteen. [12]

With all my heart I cry:
answer me, Lord, so that I keep your statutes.

I cry to you, O Lord;
save me, that I may observe your decrees.

I rise before dawn and cry for help;
I hope in your word.

Stanza Nineteen. [19]

I am awake through the night,
meditating on your promise.

In your love hear my voice;
in your justice preserve my life.

Those who want to harm me draw near;
they are far from your law.

But you, Lord, are close,
your commandments are true.

Long ago I learned about your decrees
that you fixed for all time.

Stanza Twenty. [7]

Look on my oppression and rescue me,
for I do not forget your law.

Plead my cause and redeem me;
give me the life you promised.

There is no salvation for the wicked,
for they spurn your statutes.

Great is your tender compassion.
give me life according to your justice.

Stanza Twenty. [7]

Many are my persecutors and my adversaries,
yet I do not swerve from your decrees.

I look at the faithless with disgust,
because they do not keep your commands.

See how I love your precepts.

Let me live in your love.

Your word is founded on truth;
your righteous judgments endure for ever.

Stanza Twenty-one. {ψ}

Princes persecute me without cause,
but my heart stands in awe of your word.
I rejoice at your word
like one who finds a treasure.

I hate and abhor all falsehood,
because I love your law.
Seven times a day I praise you
for your just judgments.

Note the 7 hours of the Divine Office

Stanza Twenty-one. {ψ}

Great peace they have who love your law;
nothing can make them stumble.

I hope for your salvation, Lord,
and I fulfil your commandments.

I keep your decrees;

I love them dearly.

I keep your precepts and decrees,
for all my ways are before you.

Stanza Twenty-two. {T}

Let my cry come before you, Lord;
give me understanding according to your word.
Let my supplication come before you;
rescue me according to your promise.

My lips pour forth praise,
because you teach me your statutes.
My tongue sings of your promise,
for all your commandments are just.

Stanza Twenty-two. {T}

Reach out, ready to help me,
for I have chosen your precepts.
I long for your salvation, Lord,
your law is my delight.

Let me live that I may praise you,
let your judgments help me.

If I go astray like a lost sheep, seek out your servant,
for I never forget your commandments.

Obeying

Latin

Oboediens

Ob - right up against

Audiens - 'listening'

Greek

hypakouô

Hypo - under

akouô - listening

Hebrew

Shama'

listening

heeding

obeying

Jesus' obedience

‘My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work’(John 4:34).

‘I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me’(John 5:30).

‘The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him.’

(John 8:28-29)

Disciple's obedience

‘Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven’(Matthew 7:21).

‘Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother’(Matthew 12:49-50).

The saints' obedience

‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word’(Luke 1:38).

‘Blessed is she who believed that what was spoken to her by the Lord would be fulfilled’(Luke 1:45).

‘Prepare yourself with determination and every possible effort to bring your will into conformity with God’s will. The greatest perfection attainable along the spiritual path lies in this conformity. ... In perfect conformity to God’s will lies all our good’(Teresa, Interior Castle II. 1. 8).

‘What does it profit you to give God one thing if he asks of you another? Consider what it is God wants, and then do it. You will as a result satisfy your heart better than with something toward which you yourself are inclined’ (John of the Cross, Sayings of light and love 73).

‘More than ever, I now find myself in the hands of God. This is what I have wanted all my life, from my youth. And this is still what I want. But now there is a difference: the initiative is entirely with God. It is indeed a profound spiritual experience to know and feel myself so totally in his hands, in the hands of this God who has taken hold of me’(Pedro Arrupé SJ).

‘Now, abandonment alone guides me. I have no other compass! I can no longer ask for anything with fervour, except the accomplishment of God's will in my soul, without any creature being able to set obstacles in the way’(Therese of Lisieux).

‘The soul must surrender itself to the Divine will completely, passionately, so as to will nothing else but what God wills.’(Elizabeth of the Trinity Heaven in Faith).

‘The soul remains under his touch like a lyre, and all His gifts to it are like so many strings which vibrate to sing, day and night, the praise of His glory.’

(Elizabeth of the Trinity, Last Retreat)