

Psalm 119:49-72

In the Torah reading for the week, which includes the second portion of the Shema, God makes a number of promises to his people "if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul." (Deuteronomy 11:13)

David is responding to this, thankful for God being faithful to him, and elevating the value of His commandments and doctrine above silver and gold.

ZAYIN

https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/137079/jewish/Zayin.htm

Zayin is the seventh letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Its shape is of a crown, or possibly a sword - both alluding to power and authority. The name *zayin* means "crown." There are actually crowns, called *zayenin*, on seven the letters of the Hebrew alphabet - *shin*, *ayin*, *tes*, *nun*, *zayin*, *gimmel* and *tzaddik*. But *zayin* can also mean "to sustain."

Seven is a number relating to the Sabbath - rest and completion - because God rested on the seventh day after six days of creation. Thus, it is the "crown" of the week, in which the week is fulfilled and completed. (Seven spiritually also represents linear time, with the number eight representing the resurrection and eternity)

The Sabbath rest is also a weapon or a sword against the "evil inclination," according to the rabbis. When tempted by self-seeking or self-effort or leaning on our own "arm of understanding," we can return to the rest:

- **Psalm 116:7** - "Return to your rest, O my soul, For the LORD has dealt bountifully with you."

The rest is fulfilled in Jesus:

- **Matthew 11:29** - "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Psalm 119:49 - "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope."

God's promise to David was in **2 Samuel 7:16** - "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever."

The same as was delivered to Mary by the angel:

- **Luke 1:33** - "And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

The verse then obviously relates to *zayin* - a crown and authority:

- **Matthew 28:18** - "Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me."

- **Revelation 11:15** - "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever."

Comfort and Consolation

Psalm 119:50-52 - "This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me. The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from thy law. I remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD; and have comforted myself."

"comfort" = *nacham* - consolation, to sigh, to breathe deeply. To allow a person to catch their breath.

Psalm 119:53 - "Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law."

"horror" = *zal'âphâh* - horror, a violent quaking, a poisonous hot wind. Could be described as violent indignation.

"A mixed passion, made up of abhorrence of their sins, and dread and sorrow at the consideration of the judgments of God coming upon them" - *Benson Commentary*

This should be our own response to idolatry in our own hearts - to be ready to "revenge the disobedience" (**2 Corinthians 10:6**), and to injustice, tyranny, wickedness or deception in society, through prophetic preaching of the truth. But this verse is mostly concerned with those who once obeyed God, but have forsaken him.

In contrast...

Psalm 119:54 - Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage. I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in the night, and have kept thy law. This I had, because I kept thy precepts.

"pilgrimage" = *mâgûwr* - pilgrimage, wanderings

Rashi - "at night" - At a time of distress and darkness.

"this I had" or "this came to me..." Rashi - A crown that fits me [was given] to me as a testimony and to my children who are fit to reign, as a reward for my having kept Your precepts. So did the Sages of Israel explain it.

CHET

CHET (also spelled Ches and Het) is the eighth letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It is a fusion of two letters: the vav and the zayin. The design shows a man and woman united underneath a chuppah or wedding canopy. The Talmud (Sotah 17a.) says that if a man and woman are meritorious, the Divine presence will rest between them.

The meaning of the word ches is *chayos*, which means "life."

Eight represents transcendence, a level beyond the natural order. (Seven is completion of linear time, eight is resurrection or eternity) Circumcision - the sign of the covenant - was on the eighth day.

Psalm 119:57-58 - "Thou art my portion, O LORD: I have said that I would keep thy words. I intreated thy favor with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word.

NET - The LORD is my source of security.

"portion" = *cheleq* - lot, inheritance

See **Psalm 73:26** - "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

It could also be translated: "My portion, O Lord, I said, is to keep thy words"

"be merciful according to thy word" - Probably referring to **2 Samuel 12:13** - "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die."

Psalm 119:59-60 - "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments."

The Targum is, "I thought to mend my ways", or "make them good"

"turned" = *shuwb* - turn, repent

Psalm 119:61 - "The bands of the wicked have robbed me: but I have not forgotten thy law."

"bands" = *chebel* - cords, ropes, pains

"robbed" = *uwd* - surround, charge, testify against me

Like David, Jesus was beset by false charges and lying witnesses

Targum - "the company of the wicked were gathered together against me"

See **Psalm 18:4** - "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid."

- **Psalm 22:12** - "Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round."

- **Romans 8:33** - "Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies."

Psalm 119:62 - "At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments."

The death of Egypt's firstborn occurred at midnight (**Exodus 12:29**) The Passover Haggadah lists many other miracles of deliverance that "came to pass at midnight."

The greatest miracle was Christ's resurrection, which probably happened at midnight, then was discovered by the women in the morning.

Paul and Silas were delivered from prison when they prayed and sung praises to God at midnight (**Acts 16:25**).

In contrast to the wicked who surrounded him:

Psalm 119:63 - "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts."

i.e. a companion no matter what their social status, wealth or power.

David's original band of followers were mostly social outcasts:

- **1 Samuel 22:2** - "And everyone who was desperate, in debt, or discontent gathered to him and he became captain over them. Those who were with him numbered about 400."

Jesus was a friend of sinners and prostitutes on the margins of society. Rustic fishermen and a despised tax collector were his disciples. The common denominator was they repented and were willing to pick up their cross and follow Him, because they were out of options.

"companion" = *chaber* - companion, fellow, from a root that means "knit together"

Paul describes the believers in Colossae as being "knit together in love" (**Colossians 2:2**).

Psalm 119:64 - "The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes."

"mercy" = *checed* - kindness, love, goodness, mercy, favor

- **Psalm 33:5** - "He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD."

God's mercy is shown by His longsuffering patience in preserving the world, in weaving His will so that "all things work together for good..." and making it to rain "on the just and the unjust."

TETH

TETH or Tet (also spelled tes) is the ninth letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

The meaning of tes is *tov*, which means "good" or "best."

The design is like a vessel or a pot. It represents the womb, and the nine months of pregnancy.

This section focuses on the goodness of God.

Psalm 119:65 - "Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word."

"well" = *towb* - good, best, well

He recalls how what God has promised has come true. God has been faithful. Despite all his suffering and affliction, he sees that it has been "good."

- **Romans 8:28** - "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Psalm 119:66 - "Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments."

"judgment" = *ta'am* - from a root that means "taste." i.e. teach me how to discern and judge correctly and wisely.

- **Psalm 34:8** - "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him"

- **Hebrews 5:14** - "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

Affliction

Psalm 119:67-68 - "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word. Thou art good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes."

"afflicted" = *`anah* - afflicted, chastened, oppressed, depressed, humbled, brought low.

The image is of tilling the ground with a plow.

- **Psalm 129:3** - "The plowers have plowed upon my back; they made long their furrows."

Chastisement is discipline from a loving Father.

- **Hebrews 5:8** - "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered"

Christ became one of us and learned obedience by experiencing life and being tempted as we are, yet without sin. He faced a challenging process, was tested and came out perfect or "complete."

- **Hebrews 12:6** - "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

We were disciplined by our parents "after their own pleasure," but God's chastisement is "for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." (**Hebrews 12:10**)

- **Psalm 94:12** - "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law"

Psalm 119:69-70 - "The proud have forged a lie against me: but I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart. Their heart is as fat as grease; but I delight in thy law."

Targum: "the imagination of their heart is become gross as fat," swelled with pride and glutted with love of this world.

The courtiers of Saul represented David falsely as a traitor that had treasonable designs against Saul to take away his life, and seize his crown and kingdom (**1 Samuel 24:9**). The Pharisees and scribes vowed to kill Jesus, and brought false witnesses against Him at trial.

- **1 Peter 3:16** - "Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ."

Psalm 119:71 - "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes."

"Good" and "affliction" are now equated by the psalmist! Affliction can open our hearts to receive God's discipline and correction.

Rashi - It appeared good to me when I suffered privations in order to learn Your statutes, when I learned the Torah in pain.

- **1 Peter 1:6-7** - "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ"

Psalm 119:72 - "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."

The value system of the world is turned on its head - knowledge and understanding of Gods law is more valuable than silver and gold.

The fulfillment of the Law is Christ's sacrifice:

- **1 Peter 1:18-19** - "For as much as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot..."