

Psalm 119

119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34 - 6th Sunday Year A

119:57, 72, 76-77, 127-130 - 17th Sunday Year A

Parts of Psalm 119 appear regularly in the Prayer during the Day

Part 14 – Evening Prayer 1 Sunday Week 2

Part 19 – Morning Prayer Saturday Weeks 1& 3

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 nine words almost interchangeably for literary variation.

1. tōrâ [תּוֹרָה] ‘law’ occurs 24 times, perhaps with the nuance of ‘the way we are to respond to God’s ḥesed as revealed by God’.

2. miṣwōt [מִצְוֹת] ‘commandments’ occurs 22 times

3. mišpāṭîm [מִשְׁפָּטִים] ‘judgments’ occurs 23 times, perhaps expressing the idea of an oral verdict resulting from a judgment.

4. ḥuqqîm [חֻקִּים] ‘statutes’ occurs 22 times, perhaps retaining something of the etymology of ‘engraved’; that is, God’s will as fixed in writing.

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

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

7. dābār [דָּבָר] ‘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. ’imrâ [אִמְרָה] ‘promise’ occurs 19 times: literally ‘what God has said’.

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

Happiness and obedience to God

This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says YHWH: 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

The law of YHWH is perfect, reviving the soul;
the decrees of YHWH are sure, making wise the simple;
the precepts of YHWH are right, rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of YHWH is clear, enlightening the eyes;
the fear of YHWH is pure, enduring forever;
the judgments of YHWH are true and all of them just.
More precious are they than gold, than the finest gold;
sweeter are they than honey, sweeter than a dripping honeycomb.
Your servant is enlightened by them;
in keeping them there is great reward.

– Psalm 19:7-11

Stanza One. [N] [Tuesday Week 1 Prayer during the Day]

**¹Happy* are those whose way is blameless,
who follow the law* of YHWH*.**

**²Happy* are those who keep his decrees,
and seek him with all their heart*,**

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

³who do no wrong, but follow his way.

⁴You have decreed that your precepts to be kept diligently.

God as lawgiver appears only here and verse 138

⁵O that I was steadfast in keeping your statutes!

**⁶Then I should not be put to shame,
with my eyes fixed on your commandments.**

**⁷I will praise you with an upright* heart*,
when I learn your righteous* judgments*.**

⁸I will observe your statutes; do not utterly forsake me.

Stanza Two. [ב] [Wednesday Week 1 Prayer during the Day]

- ⁹How can young people keep themselves pure?
 By paying attention to your word.
¹⁰With all my heart* I seek you;
 do not let me stray from your commandments.
¹¹I treasure your promise in my heart*,
 so that I may not sin* against you.
¹²Blessed* are you, YHWH; teach me your statutes.
¹³With my lips I recite all the judgments you have uttered.

Note that it is God who begins the dialogue

- ¹⁴I delight in the way of your decrees as much as in all riches.
¹⁵I will meditate on your precepts, and fix my eyes on your way.
¹⁶I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

Stanza Three. [ג] [Thursday Week 1 Prayer during the Day]

- ¹⁷Deal bountifully with your servant,
 so that I may live and observe your word.
¹⁸Open my eyes, so that I may behold
 wondrous things in your law.
¹⁹I live as an alien in the land;
 do not hide your commandments from me.
²⁰I* am consumed with longing
 for your judgments at all times.
²¹You rebuke the insolent:
 wretches who wander from your commandments.
²²Take away from me their scorn and contempt,
 for I have kept your decrees.
²³Even though princes sit plotting against me,
 your servant will meditate on your statutes.
²⁴Your decrees are my delight, they are my counsellors.

Stanza Four [ד] [Friday Week 1 Prayer during the Day]

- ²⁵I am stuck in the dust; revive me by your word.
²⁶I told you of my straying and you answered; teach me your statutes.
²⁷Make me understand the way of your precepts,
 and I will meditate on your wondrous works.
²⁸My soul melts away in sorrow; strengthen me with your word.
²⁹Put false ways far from me; and graciously teach me your law.
³⁰I have chosen the way of faithfulness;
 I set your judgments before me.
³¹I cling to your decrees, YHWH; let me not be put to shame.
³²I hasten along the way of your commandments,
 for you enlarge my understanding.

I love your will

Stanza Five. [י] [Saturday Week 1 Prayer during the Day]

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

³³Teach me, YHWH, the way of your statutes,
and I will observe it to the end.

³⁴Give me understanding, that I may keep your law
and observe it with all my heart*.

³⁵Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it.

³⁶Turn my heart* to your decrees, and not to selfish gain.

³⁷Turn my eyes away from looking at vanities; give me life in your way.

³⁸Confirm to your servant your promise,
which is for those who fear* you.

³⁹Turn away the disgrace that I dread, for your judgments are good.

⁴⁰See, I have longed for your precepts;
in your righteousness* give me life.

Stanza Six. [י] [Monday Week 2 Prayer during the Day]

⁴¹Let your kindness* come to me, YHWH,
the salvation* you have promised.

⁴²Then I shall have an answer for those who taunt me,
for I trust* in your word.

⁴³Do not take from my mouth the word of truth,
for my hope* is in your judgments*.

⁴⁴I will keep your law continually, forever and ever.

⁴⁵I shall walk at liberty, for I have sought your precepts.

⁴⁶I will also speak of your decrees before kings,
and shall not be put to shame;

⁴⁷I find my delight in your commandments, because I love them.

⁴⁸I revere your commandments, which I love,
and I will meditate on your statutes.

Stanza Seven. [י] [Tuesday Week 2 Prayer during the Day]

⁴⁹Remember your word to your servant,
which has given me grounds for hope.

⁵⁰This is my comfort in my distress, that your promise gives me life.

⁵¹The arrogant utterly deride me, but I do not turn away from your law.

⁵²When I think of your judgments* from of old, I take comfort, YHWH.

⁵³Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked,
those who forsake your law.

⁵⁴Your statutes have been the subject of my songs
wherever I make my home as your guest.

⁵⁵I remember your name in the night, YHWH, and keep your law.

⁵⁶This blessing has fallen to me, for I have kept your precepts.

Stanza Eight. [ז] [Wednesday Week 2 Prayer during the Day]

- ⁵⁷YHWH is my portion; I promise to keep your word.
⁵⁸I implore your favour with all my heart*;
 be gracious* to me according to your promise.
⁵⁹When I think of your ways, I turn my steps to your decrees;
⁶⁰I hasten to keep your commandments.
⁶¹Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me, I do not forget your law.
⁶²At midnight I rise to praise you, because of your righteous* judgments*.
⁶³I am a companion of all who fear* you,
 of those who keep your precepts.
⁶⁴The earth, YHWH, is full of your kindness*; teach me your statutes.

Stanza Nine. [ח] [Thursday Week 2 Prayer during the Day]

- ⁶⁵You have dealt well with your servant, YHWH, according to your word.
⁶⁶Teach me good discernment and knowledge,
 for I believe in your commandments.
⁶⁷Before I was humbled I went astray, but now I obey your word.
⁶⁸You are good and you do good; teach me your statutes.
⁶⁹The arrogant smear me with lies,
 but with all my heart* I keep your precepts.
⁷⁰Their hearts* are fat and gross, but I delight in your law.
⁷¹It is good for me that I was humbled, so that I might learn your statutes.
⁷²The law of your mouth is better to me
 than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

Stanza Ten. [ט] [Friday Week 2 Prayer during the Day]

- ⁷³Your hands have made and fashioned me;
 give me understanding that I may learn your commandments.
⁷⁴Those who fear* you shall see me and rejoice,
 because I have hoped* in your word.
⁷⁵I know, YHWH, that your judgments* are just*,
 and that in faithfulness you have humbled me.
⁷⁶Let your kindness* become my comfort
 according to your promise to your servant.
⁷⁷Let your mercy come to me, that I may live;
 for your law is my delight.
⁷⁸Let the arrogant be put to shame,
 because they have subverted me with guile.
 As for me, I meditate on your precepts.
⁷⁹Let those who fear* you turn to me,
 so that they may know your decrees.
⁸⁰May my heart* be blameless in your statutes,
 so that I may not be put to shame.

Stanza Eleven. [ז] [Saturday Week 2 Prayer during the Day]

- ⁸¹I* languish for your salvation*; I hope* in your word.
⁸²My eyes grow dim with watching for your promise;
I ask, 'When will you comfort me?'
⁸³For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke,
yet I have not forgotten your statutes.
⁸⁴How long must your servant put up with this?
When will you judge* those who persecute me?
⁸⁵The arrogant have dug pitfalls for me; they flout your law.
⁸⁶All your commandments are enduring;
I am persecuted without cause; strengthen me!
⁸⁷They have almost made an end of me on earth;
but I have not forsaken your precepts.
⁸⁸In your kindness* spare my life,
so that I may keep the decrees you have spoken.

Stanza Twelve. [ח] [Monday Week 3 Prayer during the Day]

- ⁸⁹YHWH exists forever; your word is firmly fixed in heaven.
⁹⁰Your faithfulness endures to all generations;
you have established the earth, and it stands firm.
⁹¹By your judgment they stand today, for all things are your servants.
⁹²If your law had not been my delight,
I would have perished in my misery.
⁹³I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life.
⁹⁴I am yours; save* me, for I have sought your precepts.
⁹⁵The wicked lie in wait to destroy me, but I observe your decrees.
⁹⁶I have seen a limit to all perfection,
but your commandment is exceedingly broad.

Stanza Thirteen. [ט] [Tuesday Week 3 Prayer during the Day]

- ⁹⁷How I love your law! It is my meditation all day long.
⁹⁸Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies,
for it is always with me.
⁹⁹I have more understanding than all my teachers,
for your decrees are my meditation.
¹⁰⁰I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts.
¹⁰¹I keep my steps from every evil way, in order to follow your word.
¹⁰²I do not turn away from your judgments*, for you have taught me.
¹⁰³How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!
¹⁰⁴Through your precepts I get understanding;
therefore I hate every false way.

Stanza Fourteen. [ד] [Wednesday Week 3 Prayer during the Day]
& Sunday Evening Prayer 1 week 2

- ¹⁰⁵Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.
¹⁰⁶I have sworn an oath and confirmed it,
to observe your righteous* judgments*.
¹⁰⁷I am severely afflicted; give me life, YHWH, according to your word.
¹⁰⁸Accept my offerings of praise, YHWH,
and teach me your judgments*.
¹⁰⁹My life is continually at risk, but I do not forget your law.
¹¹⁰The wicked have laid a snare for me,
but I do not stray from your precepts.
¹¹¹Your decrees are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart*.
¹¹²I incline my heart* to perform your statutes forever, to the end.

Stanza Fifteen. [ה] [Thursday Week 3 Prayer during the Day]

- ¹¹³I hate the deceitful, but I love your law.
¹¹⁴You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word.
¹¹⁵Go away from me, you evildoers,
that I may keep the commandments of my God.
¹¹⁶Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live,
and let me not fail to attain that for which I wait.
¹¹⁷Hold me up, that I may be safe
and have regard for your statutes continually.
¹¹⁸You spurn all who go astray from your statutes;
for their cunning is in vain.
¹¹⁹All the wicked of the earth you count as dross;
therefore I love your decrees.
¹²⁰My flesh* trembles for fear* of you,
and I am in awe of your judgments*.

Stanza Sixteen. [ו] [Saturday Week 3 Prayer during the Day]

- ¹²¹I have acted according to right judgment* and justice*;
do not leave me to my oppressors.
¹²²Guarantee your servant's well-being;
do not let the godless oppress me.
¹²³My eyes fail from watching for your salvation*,
and for the fulfilment of your righteous* promise.
¹²⁴Deal with your servant according to your kindness*,
and teach me your statutes.
¹²⁵I am your servant; give me understanding,
so that I may know your decrees.
¹²⁶It is time for YHWH to act, for your law has been broken.
¹²⁷Truly I love your commandments more than gold, more than fine gold.
¹²⁸Truly I direct my steps by all your precepts; I hate every false way.

Stanza Seventeen. [ד] [Monday Week 4 Prayer during the Day]

- ¹²⁹Your decrees are wonderful; therefore I* keep them.
¹³⁰The unfolding of your word gives light;
it imparts understanding to the immature.
¹³¹With open mouth I sigh, because I long for your commandments.
¹³²Turn to me and be gracious* to me,
according to your judgment* toward those who love your name.
¹³³Keep my steps steady according to your promise,
and never let guilty* deeds have dominion over me.
¹³⁴Redeem me from human oppression, that I may keep your precepts.
¹³⁵Make your face shine upon your servant, and teach me your statutes.
¹³⁶My eyes stream with tears because your law is not kept.

Stanza Eighteen. [ז] [Tuesday Week 4 Prayer during the Day]

- ¹³⁷You are righteous*, YHWH, and your judgments* are right*.
¹³⁸You have established your decrees in righteousness
and in all faithfulness.
¹³⁹Zeal consumes me because my foes forget your word.
¹⁴⁰Your promise is well tested, and your servant loves it.
¹⁴¹I am small and despised, yet I do not forget your precepts.
¹⁴²Your righteousness* is an everlasting righteousness*,
and your law* is true.
¹⁴³Trouble and anguish have come upon me,
but your commandments are my delight.
¹⁴⁴Your decrees are righteous* forever;
give me understanding that I may live.

Stanza Nineteen. [ח]

[Saturday Week 1&3 Morning; Wednesday Week 4 Prayer during the Day]

- ¹⁴⁵With my whole heart* I cry: answer me, YHWH.
I will keep your statutes.
¹⁴⁶I cry to you; save* me, that I may observe your decrees.
¹⁴⁷I rise before dawn and cry for help*; I put my hope* in your word.
¹⁴⁸My eyes are awake before each watch of the night,
that I may meditate on your promise.
¹⁴⁹In your kindness* hear my voice;
YHWH, in your justice* preserve my life.
¹⁵⁰Those who pursue me with evil intent draw near;
they are far from your law.
¹⁵¹Yet you are near, YHWH, and all your commandments are true.
¹⁵²Long ago I learned about your decrees
that you have established them forever.

Stanza Twenty. [7] [Thursday Week 4 Prayer during the Day]

¹⁵³Look on my oppression* and rescue me, for I do not forget your law.
¹⁵⁴Plead my cause and redeem me;
 give me life according to your promise.
¹⁵⁵Salvation* is far from the wicked, for they do not seek your statutes.
¹⁵⁶Great is your tender compassion*, YHWH;
 give me life according to your just judgment*.
¹⁵⁷Many are my persecutors and my adversaries,
 yet I do not swerve from your decrees.
¹⁵⁸I look at the faithless with disgust,
 because they do not keep your commands.
¹⁵⁹Consider how I love your precepts;
 preserve my life according to your kindness*.
¹⁶⁰The sum of your word is truth;
 and every one of your righteous* judgments* endures forever.

Stanza Twenty-one. [7] [Friday Week 4 Prayer during the Day]

¹⁶¹Princes persecute me without cause,
 but my heart* stands in awe of your word.
¹⁶²I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil.
¹⁶³I hate and abhor falsehood, but I love your law.
¹⁶⁴Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous* judgments*.

Note the 7 hours of the Office

¹⁶⁵Great peace they have who love your law;
 nothing can make them stumble.
¹⁶⁶I hope for your salvation*, YHWH, and I fulfil your commandments.
¹⁶⁷I* keep your decrees; I love them exceedingly.
¹⁶⁸I keep your precepts and decrees, for all my ways are before you.

Stanza Twenty-two. [7] [Saturday Week 4 Prayer during the Day]

¹⁶⁹Let my cry come before you, YHWH;
 give me understanding according to your word.
¹⁷⁰Let my supplication come before you;
 rescue me according to your promise.
¹⁷¹My lips pour forth praise, because you teach me your statutes.
¹⁷²My tongue sings of your promise,
 for all your commandments are just*.
¹⁷³Let your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen your precepts.
¹⁷⁴I long for your salvation*, YHWH, and your law* is my delight.
¹⁷⁵Let me live that I may praise you, and let your judgments* help me.
¹⁷⁶I have gone astray like a lost sheep;
 seek out your servant, for I do not forget your commandments.