



# Psalm 119

In this psalm there are eight basic words used to describe the Scriptures, God's written revelation to us:

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- **Law** (torah, used 25 times in Psalm 119): "Its parent verb means 'teach' or 'direct'; therefore coming from God it means both 'law' and 'revelation.' It can be used of a single command or of a whole body of law." (Derek Kidner)
- **Word** (dabar, used 24 times): The idea is of the spoken word, God's revealed word to man. "Proceeding from his mouth and revealed by him to us..." (Matthew Poole)
- **Judgments** (mispatim, used 23 times): "...from shaphat, to judge, determine, regulate, order, and discern, because they judge concerning our words and works; show the rules by which they should be regulated; and cause us to discern what is right and wrong, and decide accordingly." (Adam Clarke)
- **Testimonies** (edut/edot, used 23 times): This word is related to the word for witness. To obey His testimonies "...signifies loyalty to the terms of the covenant made between the Lord and Israel." (Willem VanGemenen)
- **Commandments** (miswah/miswot, used 22 times): "This word emphasizes the straight authority of what is said...the right to give orders." (Derek Kidner)
- **Statutes** (huqqim, used 21 times): The noun is derived from the root verb "engrave" or "inscribe"; the idea is the written word of God and the authority of His written word: "...declaring his authority and power of giving us laws." (Matthew Poole)
- **Precepts** (piqqudim, used 21 times): "This is a word drawn from the sphere of an officer or overseer, a man who is responsible to look closely into a situation and take action.... So the word points to the particular instructions of the Lord, as of one who cares about detail." (Derek Kidner)
- **Word** (imrah, used 19 times): Imrah is similar in meaning to dabar, yet a different term. "The 'word' may denote anything God has spoken, commanded, or promised." (Willem VanGemenen)

### Psalm 119: 1-8 - Aleph

The blessedness of those who walk in God's word and the longing to do so.

### Psalm 119:8-16 - Beth

Purity of life and meditation on God's word.

Each line of this second section of Psalm 119 begins with the Hebrew letter Beth, which also means "a house." Some have suggested that this section tells us how to make our heart a home for the word of God.

### Psalm 119:17-24 - Gimel

The word of God and the trials of life.

### Psalm 119:25-32 - Daleth

Revived from the dust.

### Psalm 119:33-40 - He

A plea for guidance and life.

He is the fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and it is used at the beginning of verbs to make them causative. Therefore, the prayers in this section have the meaning, "Cause me to learn," "Cause me to understand," "Cause me to walk" and so forth.

### Psalm 119:41-48 - Waw

Liberty comes from loving God's word.

"This commences a new portion of the Psalm, in which each verse begins with the letter Vau, or v. There are almost no words in Hebrew that begin with this letter, which is properly a conjunction, and hence in each of the verses in this section the beginning of the verse is in the original a conjunction - vau." (Barnes, cited in Spurgeon)

### Psalm 119:49-56 - Zayin

The power of God's word to comfort and strengthen.

### Psalm 119:57-64 - Heth

Hurrying to God with all my heart.

### Psalm 119:65-7 - Teth

God's word brings benefit from a time of affliction.

### Psalm 119:73-80 - Yod

Confidence in the Creator and His Word.

The yod stanza represents the small Hebrew letter Jesus referred to as a "jot" in Matthew 5:18: Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

### Psalm 119:81-88 - Kaph

Fainting from affliction, revived by God's word.

"Some writers...pointed out that for the ancients there was often significance in the shape of the Hebrew letters. Such is the case here. This is the kaph stanza. Kaph is a curved letter, similar to a half circle, and it was often thought of as a hand held out to receive some gift or blessing.... He holds out his hand toward God as a suppliant." (Boice)

### Psalm 119: 89-96 - Lamed

Saved by the word settled in heaven.

### Psalm 119:97-104 - Mem

Loving the sweetness of God's word.

"This is a pure song of praise. It contains no single petition, but is just one glad outpouring of the heart." (Morgan)

### Psalm 119:105-112 ~ Nun

Never-ending confidence in God's word.

### Psalm 119:113-120 ~ Samek

Held up and supported by the word of God.

The fifteenth letter, Samek, denotes a prop or pillar, and this agrees well with the subject matter of the strophe, in which God is twice implored to uphold his servant (119:116-117). (Neal and Littledale, cited in Spurgeon)

### Psalm 119:121-128 ~ Ayin

The servant seeks the word.

### Psalm 119:129-136 ~ Pe

Steps directed by God's wonderful word.

### Psalm 119:137-144 ~ Tsadde

The purity and truth of God's word.

"The initial letter with which every verse commences sounds like the Hebrew word for righteousness: our keynote is righteousness." (Spurgeon)

### Psalm 119:145-152 ~ Qoph

Praying to the God of the Bible.

### Psalm 119:153-160 ~ Resh

Revival according to the word of God.

### Psalm 119:161-168 ~ Shin

In awe of God's word.

"The qoph stanza was almost entirely a prayer. In these stanzas the petitions tend to drop away – stanza twenty-one (the sin/shin stanza) has no explicit prayers at all – and in their place comes a quiet, obedient waiting for God." (Boice)

### Psalm 119:169-176 ~ Tau

Sought by God and His Word.

"The psalmist is approaching the end of the Psalm, and his petitions gather force and fervency; he seems to break into the inner circle of divine fellowship, and to come even to the feet of the great God whose help he is imploring. This nearness creates the most lowly view of himself, and leads him to close the Psalm upon his face in deepest self-humiliation, begging to be sought out like a lost sheep." (Spurgeon)