

SUBJECT Psalm 119:97 'HOW I LOVE THY LAW' - MEM מ

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This 119th Psalm is structured upon the 22 letters of the Hebrew Alphabet

י	ט	ח	ז	ו	ה	ד	ג	ב	א
Yod (Y)	Tet (T)	Chet (Ch)	Zayin (Z)	Vav (V)	He (H)	Dalet (D)	Gimel (G)	Bet (B/V)	Alef (silent)
ע	ס	נ	נ	מ	מ	ל	ך	כ	
Ayin (silent)	Samech (S)	Nun (N)	Nun (N)	Mem (M)	Mem (M)	Lamed (L)	Khaf (Kh)	Kaf (K/Kh)	
ת	ש	ר	ק	ץ	צ	ף	פ		
Tav (T)	Shin (Sh/S)	Resh (R)	Qof (Q)	Tsadeh (Ts)	Tsadeh (Ts)	Feh (F)	Peh (P/F)		

Hebrew is read from right to left as compared with English which is read from left to right. The psalm is composed of 22 stanzas of eight verses, each verse starts with a word beginning with the appropriate letter with the exception of verse 3; 37; 90 and each verse contains one of eight synonyms (representative words with a different shade of meaning. These eight words are

- 1) Torah = Divine Law, instruction.
- 2) Dabar = word, thing, matter
- 3) Edoth = testimony, covenant terms
- 4) Mitsvot = commandment, authoritative
- 5) Chuqqim = Statutes, decrees
- 6) Piqudim = Precepts, directives, appointments
- 7) Imrah = spoken word, promise
- 8) Mishpatim = judgement, legal or moral ruling decision.

The psalm makes no reference to sacrifice or ceremonies in the temple, even where he refers to sin, forgiveness or cleansing; he is looking beyond the

representative to the moral realities of sin and forgiveness and the development and outworking of an obedient life. Clearly the psalmist's experience is so similar to our own, and other faithful men as Peter, James and John, and particularly the apostle Paul who confesses his own struggle with the nature that we bear. "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (Rom 7:21-24)

In the portion of this Psalm chosen for our study, we find joy and happiness, it is the sunniest in the whole psalm.

⁹⁷ MEM. O how love I thy law! it *is* my meditation all the day.

⁹⁸ Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.

⁹⁹ I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies *are* my meditation.

¹⁰⁰ I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.

¹⁰¹ I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.

¹⁰² I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.

¹⁰³ How sweet are thy words unto my taste! *yea, sweeter* than honey to my mouth!

¹⁰⁴ Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. (Psa. 119:97-104)

In this portion of the Psalm there are no complaints, rather an outpouring of thanksgiving and happiness for the enlightenment received, from the understanding of the mind of Yahweh expressed in His Law, his Torah. Understanding the Word of God is not only a matter of reading and understanding, it is the basis of meditation, continued or extended thought; contemplation upon the application of the instruction received. As we read in Proverbs 4:26 "Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established". Isaiah instructed Israel in the power of God's word to achieve this happiness and satisfaction if they complied with His Law putting it into practice:-

"Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and your health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rearward (watching your back)... And the LORD shall guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and make fat your bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not ... Then shalt you delight yourself in the LORD; and I will cause you to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed you

with the heritage of Jacob your father: for the mouth of the YAHWEH hath spoken it. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me." What wisdom did his enemies have?

Paul instructed the Corinthians regarding natural human behaviour, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, **I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where *is* the wise? where *is* the scribe? where *is* the disputer of this world?** Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. (1Co 1:17-24)

Remarkably the psalmist rejoices because practically and experimentally he finds that he has more understanding than his teachers. This is illustrated clearly when the Jesus was a boy, he was found in the temple courtyard sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. (Luke 2:46-47). Throughout his life Jesus the Lord Jesus continued to amaze the authorities by his understanding of the Word of God. Matthew describes how Jesus confounded both Pharisees and Sadducees (22:34-46) But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, *which was a lawyer*, asked *him a question*, tempting him, and saying, "Master, which *is* the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them saying, "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?" They say unto him, "*The Son* of David." He said to them, 'How then does David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then calls him Lord, how is he his son?' And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any *man* from that day forth ask him any more questions. Because he was continually meditating, thinking about the meaning

of His Father's Words, considering their application, their timely use, what they required and how they could be put into practice, and what they were designed to achieve; when the circumstances required the Lord Jesus was fully equipped and ready as Isaiah relates :-

He "said unto me, You are my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. YAHWEH has called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. And he has made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand has he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me; (Isa 49:1-3 KJV)

Through his continual reading and application of his memory Jesus became the living Word, the living Torah. In this psalm we are reminded that it is not merely a matter of remembrance of scripture that is important, but the application of the scriptures from day to day. The Lord Jesus v.102 never departed from his Fathers judgments. We may have a good memory and find it easy to quote scripture, but it becomes more of an indictment when, though we know what the word of God requires, we do not put it into practice and live accordingly, as the apostle James makes clear "to him that knows to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin". (Jam 4:17) In the next stanza the psalmist acknowledges that he has entered into an oath, (See verses. 106 -7) and has sworn to keep all of Yahweh's judgments faithfully, but this very intent he finds is against the nature he consists of and he find he is afflicted, and the apostle Paul found the same experience as he describes himself, "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." (Rom 7:22-25)