

Delightful Precepts

Key Verse: *“Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.”*
—*Psalms 119:73*

Selected Scripture:
Psalms 119:73-80

THE 119TH PSALM IS structured according to the Hebrew alphabet. It is divided into twenty-two sections, one for each Hebrew letter. Each section has sixteen lines in eight verses, with that section’s letter appearing at the start of each alternate line. It is by multiplying eight verses by the twenty-two Hebrew letters of the alphabet that determine

the one hundred seventy-six verses of this psalm.

The ancient Israelites had to learn their alphabet just as we do today. Knowing God’s law was bound together with learning the written Hebrew language. Because a critical aspect of their education was understanding the law of God, we should not be surprised that the Hebrew alphabet serves as an ordering element in this psalm that celebrates God’s law and all the good that comes from keeping it.

The verses of today’s lesson begin with the tenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, “Yad,” which means “hand.” The first line begins with the declaration, “Thy hands have made me and fashioned me.” It should excite reverence, gratitude, and affection towards God when we view him as our Maker, as he put forth the careful skill and power of his hands in our forming and fashioning. Because he created us, God promises particular care over us: “He

will keep you safe, like a bird keeps its babies safe under its wings. Because he keeps his promises, he will keep you safe like a shield and armor.”—Ps. 91:4, *EasyEnglish Bible*

The second part of today’s Key Verse is our response to being created by the hands of God: “Give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.” Proverbs 3:5,6 describe the process of receiving understanding from our Creator: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.” (*New Living Translation*) To this the Apostle James later adds, “If you want to know what God wants you to do, ask him, and he will gladly tell you, for he is always ready to give a bountiful supply of wisdom to all who ask him; he will not resent it.”—James 1:5, *The Living Bible*

The remainder of this tenth portion of Psalm 119, verses 74-80, focuses on personal experience with God’s precepts and its profitable influence upon others. The psalmist is in deep affliction, but he looks to be delivered and made a blessing, while relying on God’s mercy and comfort. Delight in the Word of God is a sure proof that it has taken effect upon the heart. The psalmist says that he meditates on the precepts of Jehovah, even when he is dealt with perversely by others. It was his joy and delight to give his mind and heart to the teaching of God’s Word.

There is often comfort in traditions that have been Jewish custom for centuries. Among practices for those who are on sick or dying beds are the reciting or offering of prayers, playing recorded music or singing, and reciting psalms. Especially beneficial is using the comforting words of Psalm 119 by choosing those eight verse sections which seem to fit best the circumstances of the moment. This is a blessed example of the fact that the letter and spirit of God’s Law are the same. ■