

Psalm 111

"Praise ye the LORD" is actually the title. This is an alphabetical psalm, as is **Psalm 112**, with which it forms a pair. Each line for the most part consists of three Hebrew words.

Rashi - This psalm was based on the alphabet, one letter at the beginning of the verse and one in the middle of it, and so all of them [this psalm's verses are] from "aleph" to "tav," and so too is the second psalm (Psalm 112). The first one speaks in praises of the Holy One, blessed be He, and the second one speaks in praise of a righteous, God-fearing person.

From the time of Augustine this became a Psalm associated with the Passover and thus the Lord's Supper/Afikomen.

Luther said this psalm "looks as though it had been composed for the festival of Easter."

Psalm 111:1 - "Praise ye the LORD."

"I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation."

"assembly" = *cowd* - secret, an intimate council, inward

Targum: "in the secret of the upright, and the congregation"

The "secret council of the upright" would be in the mind and heart of David.

i.e. I will praise inwardly as well as publicly in the congregation.

Unlike the Pharisees, who displayed piety but inwardly were ravaging wolves and full of impurity and self-righteousness.

Integrity is being the same person inside as you are outside. See the "woes" Jesus pronounces on the Pharisees' hypocrisy in **Matthew 23:14-36**.

Psalm 111:2-3 - "The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. His work is honorable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever."

"works" - God's creation, his miracles, but mostly his plan of salvation and redemption in history through Israel and the coming of Messiah.

"sought out" = *darash* - seek, enquire, search out.
A word related to the Arabic *madrasa*, a house of study.

The righteous will get their pleasure from contemplating and searching out and revealing God's hand in human affairs, in nature and creation and in the scriptures, and

knowing it experientially.

His works reflect honor and glory on Himself, and the resulting righteousness will continue "in perpetuity."

Psalm 111:4 - "He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD is gracious and full of compassion."

Rashi - "He made a memorial for His wonders" - He set down for Israel Sabbaths and festivals and commandments, of which was stated (Deut. 5:15): "And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt," because He is gracious and merciful to His children, and He wishes to make them righteous.

This is why the psalm became associated with another Passover memorial, the Lord's Supper, which Jesus commanded believers to observe "in remembrance of me." (**Luke 22:18-20, 1 Corinthians 11:23-25**)

Psalm 111:5 - "He hath given meat (food) unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant."

Referring to God's provision of the manna in the wilderness. and His giving of the Law on Mount Sinai where Israel entered into a covenant with Him, as well as the previous covenant with Abraham.

Psalm 111:6 - "He hath shewed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen."

Rashi - The strength of His works He related to His people: When He gave them the inheritance of the nations, He let them know His strength and His might. And Midrash Tanchuma (Buber, Bereishith 11): He wrote for Israel [about] the Creation to let them know that the earth is His and that it is in His power to settle in it anyone He wishes, and to move these out and settle others, so that the nations will not be able to say to Israel, "You are thieves, for you conquered the land of the seven nations."

Remember, this is a reading for **Deuteronomy 3-4** as Israel prepares to enter the Promised Land. The drowning of Pharaoh's army and the defeat of the Canaanites were two of of God's great "works."

We can now add Christ's resurrection as the greatest of His redemptive works. The "heritage of the heathen" will be completely given over to His people when "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (**Revelation 11:15**).

Psalm 111:7-8 - "The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness."

Truth and Justice - See **Psalm 51:6** - "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom." Aben Ezra understands it as the law implanted in the hearts of men.

- **Jeremiah 31:33** - "But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD. I will put My law in their minds and inscribe it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they will be My people."

Rashi - Steadfast: are His commandments, supported by might, strengthened with punishments and warnings, and the chapters are set one next to the other in sequence and to expound on them. This is what Solomon said (Song 5:15): "His thighs are pillars of marble, etc."

- **Matthew 5:18** - "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

Psalm 111:9 - "He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name."

God redeemed his people from Egypt, He ratified the covenant at Sinai, he brought them back from exile, and finally sent His Son, who "gave His life as a ransom for many" (**Matthew 20:28**).

Psalm 111:10 - "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever."

"beginning" of wisdom = "the chief of wisdom" or the principal part of wisdom

- **Proverbs 9:10** - "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."

- **Job 28:28** - "And He said to man, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.'"

- **1 Chronicles 28:9** - "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever."

"his praise endureth forever" - or, those who fear the Lord will receive eternal praise, rather than the praise of men: it leads to a circumcised heart, "whose praise is not of men, but of God" (**Romans 2:29**).