

Psalm 119:25-48

Paired with the Torah reading Deuteronomy 10-11

DALET

The dalet is the fourth letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The Talmud tells us that the meaning of dalet is *delet*, a “door.” It also means *dal*, a poor person. Thus the phrase *gomel dalim*: the benefactor who gives to the beneficiary.

When we observe the shape of the dalet, its single leg stretches toward the right — in the direction of the gimmel. This teaches the poor person that he has to make himself available to receive the charity of the benefactor. Similarly, the small extension on the right-hand side of the dalet’s horizontal bar looks like an ear, for the pauper must always be listening for the presence of the wealthy man. However the left side of this bar doesn’t confront the gimmel, the giver, but faces left, toward the letter hei, which represents God. This instructs us that we must give charity discretely and not embarrass the poor person. The pauper must put his faith in God, Who is the ultimate Giver of the universe.

This portion of the psalm is paired with *Deuteronomy 10* in the Torah readings. A key verse calls for kindness and love toward the orphans, widows and strangers - those in need:

- Deuteronomy 10:18-19 - "He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt."

The shape of the dalet is composed of two other letters, a reish and a yud. The yud is the smallest letter, and represents humility.

In the Shema, “Hear O Israel, God is our Lord, God is One” the last word is *echad*, ending in a dalet. If the yud is removed or left off, the dalet becomes a reish, and the phrase becomes "God is other (i.e. “other gods”). i.e. the omission of yud/humility causes us to worship other gods.

Psalm 119:25 - "My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word."

See the Messianic **Psalm 22:15** - "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death."

To "cleave to the dust" is as low as one can be - either in depression or humiliation, or distress of any kind.

Psalm 119:26 - "I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy

statutes."

He is opening his heart to God about either his ways of disobedience through confession or possibly his resolve to follow the ways of righteousness..

Psalm 119:27 - "Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works."

He wants to understand God's "ways" and then to declare them to the world

Psalm 119:28 - "My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word."

Recall the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness.

- **Luke 4:1-2** - "Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered."

When Satan suggested He could turn stones into bread, Jesus said (**Luke 4:4**) "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

- i.e. He could only be strengthened by God's word.

Psalm 119:29 - "Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously."

i.e. lying to others, to God, even lying to myself in self-deception.

"lying" = *sheqer* - deceit, falsehood, lying, guile, dissimulation.

Also, the "way of falsehood" would be to go after false gods, to follow a false way instead of the true path.

"Law" probably in the sense of "doctrine" - the Gospel doctrine of free grace and faith as the way to salvation.

Psalm 119:30 - "I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me." (like a map or guide for the direction of my life)

Psalm 119:31 - "I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame."

Where earlier his soul "cleaved" to the dust, now he sticks fast and cleaves (*dabaq*) to God's testimonies.

Psalm 119:32 - "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart."

"enlarge my heart" - or better - "set my heart at liberty." A prayer for deliverance from

fear, freedom from trouble and anxiety, and from bondage of any kind.

Thus David both owns his duty, and asserts the absolute necessity of divine grace to enable him to perform it. - *Benson Commentary*

The heart is contracted or made narrow by selfishness, pride, vanity, ambition, covetousness; it is made large by charity, love, hope, benevolence. Sin narrows the soul; faith enlarges it. - *adapted from Barnes' Notes*

HE

The fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet is the Hei.

The design of the Hei is comprised of a dalet and a yud. The dalet is composed of one horizontal line (signifying width) and another that is vertical (signifying height), which together represent the physical world. The yud (the detached left leg) represents God, and thus spirituality. Just as the dalet and the yud come together to form the hei, so, too, one has an obligation to imbue and sanctify the physical world with spirituality.

The Talmud informs us that the hei also represents *teshuvah* - repentance. God declares to Cain after he kills his brother Abel, "Sin (*chata*) lies at your door." (**Genesis 4:7**)

The letter He and the eighth letter Ches look similar. Both have a large opening at the bottom. But the He has a small aperture on top. The opening below - he earth - allows sin to enter.

In the Ches there is no escape. But in the He, the small opening at the top leads to repentance and reconnection with heaven.

He is also the final letter in Matzah - the flat bread made without leaven, which is not puffed up, representing humility, which leads to (or results from) repentance. Jesus said the matzah represented His sinless body, broken for us. The Zohar tells us that when Messiah comes, he will cause even the righteous to repent - indicating He is the only truly righteous one.

The word Hei means "Here is..." as in "Here is seed for you" (*hei lachem zera*) in **Genesis 47:23**. "Why is it that Sarai, (שרי) the wife of Abraham, could not beget a child until her name was changed to Sarah (שרה) ending with the letter hei? The reason is that hei is needed for seed.

Psalm 119:33-34 - "Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart."

Where can we get that understanding?

- **1 John 5:20** - "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an

understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

Psalm 119:35 - "Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight."

i.e. keep me from straying, which I am inclined to do. My greatest joy is when I'm in your presence, meditating on your word. But temptations and distractions pull me away.

Again, we are unable to even will ourselves to follow God. God seeks us out:

- **Philippians 2:13** - "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Psalm 119:36-37 - "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way."

"Incline" - "...the inclination of the heart of man is evil from his youth" (**Genesis 8:21**) This is the basis for the Jewish idea of the "evil inclination" - an inborn power in humans that pulls us toward evil and self-seeking.

"Resh Laqish said: Satan, the evil inclination, and the Angel of Death are all one." (Bava Batra 16a)

- **Romans 8:5** - "For they that are after the flesh do mind (*phroneō*) the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit."

"mind" = *phroneō* - be disposed toward, inclined toward

"not to covetousness"

- **James 1:14-15** - "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

Psalm 119:38 - "Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear."

Jewish translation: "that is for Your fear"

Better, "which belongeth unto thy fear." The antecedent is "word" or "promise," and not "servant;" and the prayer is that God will make good to his servant that promise, which lies at the root of all reverence and godly fear (comp. **Psalm 130:4**, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared").

God's firmly established forgiveness and faithfulness toward His people are directly related to our awe and respect for Him.

- **Hebrews 13:9** - "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace..."

Psalm 119:39 - "Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments are good."

Rashi - "reproach" - Forgive me for that sin [with Bath-sheba], and my enemies will no longer be able to disgrace me with it.

The word for fear (*yagor*) is an unusual one, used in **Deuteronomy 9:19**; **Deuteronomy 28:60**, for very strong dread.

Psalm 119:40 - "Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness."

- **Matthew 5:6** - "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

"quicken" = *chayah* - (compare *lechaim* - to life!) to enliven, but also to revive and to bring back from the dead

VAV

Vav (or Waw) is the sixth letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Six represents connection, exemplified by the angels in Ezekiel's vision, whose six wings enabled them to soar to unite and connect with God. The first vav in the Torah is found at the beginning of the sixth word (*v'es*).

The design of the letter vav is a hook, and the word *vav* actually means "hook" - something that holds two things together. The form of the vav can also represent a chute which connects a higher level to a lower level.

A vav at the beginning of any word means "and" connecting one word or clause to the next. Also, a vav attached to a verb converts that verb from either the past to the future tense, or from the future to the past tense.

Since virtually no word begins with vav, the verses in this section are written with an artificial arrangement. For instance, "Let thy mercies come" is literally, "and let thy mercies come"

Psalm 119:41 - "Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, even thy salvation, according to thy word."

- **Isaiah 55:3** - "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." (See also **Acts 13:33-35**)

Psalm 119:42 - "So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word."

There is a lot about reproach and disgrace in this psalm. It prefigures Christ

- **Hebrews 13:12-13** - "And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate, to sanctify the people by His own blood. Therefore let us go to Him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace (reproach) that He bore."

Believers will share in that reproach:

- **Matthew 5:11** - "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake."

- **John 15:20** - "Remember the word that I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you as well; if they kept My word, they will keep yours as well."

Psalm 119:43 - "And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments."

Probably in the sense of, "let me not be deprived of power to bear witness to the truth before my persecutors" who reproach me for my faith.

Psalm 119:44 - "So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever."

i.e. "In this life and the one to come." - as Christ did during His ministry, His death, burial, resurrection and ascension.

Psalm 119:45 - "And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts."

"at liberty" = LXX "in a large place," no longer constrained.

Targum: "in the breadth of the law."

Earlier we hear him talk of being in bonds and under duress. Now, he can be free no matter the circumstances.

- **John 8:36** - "if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

- **James 1:25** - "But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing."

Psalm 119:46 - "I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed."

As Daniel did before Nebuchadnezzar, Christ before Herod and Pilate, and as Paul before Agrippa, Felix and Festus, and even in the Emperor's household.

- **Matthew 10:18** - "And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles."

Psalm 119:47-48 - "And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes."

Or "I will lift my hands in prayer for the power to observe Thy commands," since we are weak and lack the ability.

Even Christ, in His human incarnation:

- **John 5:19** - "So Jesus replied, "Truly, truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing by Himself, unless He sees the Father doing it. For whatever the Father does, the Son also does."