

September 15, 2021 | Wednesday Night Live | Psalm 119: Learning the Letters of Scripture

Week 17 | Psalm 119:121-128 | Ayin

Today, we move on to the sixteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, Ayin. <Insert Picture>

Tonight, the theme is repetition. More than any other stanza, the Ayin stanza repeats ideas and topics that appear throughout the stanza. In a way, it is a condensed version of the whole chapter. If one were to add water to these 8 verses, they'd expand to 176! As such, it seems the Psalmist's purpose may have been review. He wanted to remind the reader about some of the more critical aspects of the psalm as he approaches the end.

READ: Psalm 119:121-128 (ESV)

Ayin

¹²¹ I have done what is just and right; do not leave me to my oppressors.

¹²² Give your servant a pledge of good; let not the insolent oppress me.

¹²³ My eyes long for your salvation and for the fulfillment of your righteous promise.

¹²⁴ Deal with your servant according to your steadfast love, and teach me your statutes.

¹²⁵ I am your servant; give me understanding, that I may know your testimonies!

¹²⁶ It is time for the Lord to act, for your law has been broken.

¹²⁷ Therefore I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold.

¹²⁸ Therefore I consider all your precepts to be right; I hate every false way.

What are the principles the Psalmist is trying to instill in this sixteenth stanza?

Vs. 121 The two pillars upon which God's kingdom rest is "righteousness and justice" (Psa. 89:14). We're told that part of the reason why God told Abraham that He was about to destroy Sodom was that He wanted him and his descendants to understand "righteousness and justice" (cf. Gen. 18:16-21). In Proverbs 21:3, we learn that "righteousness and justice" are far more pleasing to God than even sacrifices. And here, the Psalmist has admitted that he has sought to do only what is "just and right." In other words, he has aligned his ethics with God's. Rather than seek to tweak or redefine what is right and wrong, our sojourner has allowed God to define it for him. He has lived a "just and right" life. But, as we know, he has suffered greatly for his

loyalty to God's morality (cf. vs. 61, 84, 86, 95, 110, etc.). His "oppressors" have been relentless in their persecutions. Understandably, he doesn't want to be left alone with these combatants, and so he pleads with God by saying, "...do not leave me." After all, our singer/songwriter knows that he would not fare well if left to the mercy of his enemies. The Psalmist has given God every indication that he has remained faithful. There should be no reason that he should be abandoned to these ravenous wolves.

- Vs. 122 Both words "pledge" and "oppress" have financial connotations (*aw-rav* - 2 Ki. 18:23; Neh. 5:3; Prov. 11:15; 17:18; *aw-shak* - Lev. 19:13; Deut. 24:14; 1 Sam. 12:3-4).¹ Thus, the Psalmist is pleading with God for two things: he wants a financial blessing, and he wants his financial oppressors ("insolent") to be restrained. Admittedly, these requests are bold. It is not often we come across such materialistic requests in Scripture. Yet who among us has not prayed a similar prayer? While financial requests ought not to make up the majority of our petitions, there is no wrong in praying for our needs to be met (cf. Mat. 6:11). We all desire good in our lives, and we all want evil to be detained as much as possible. No one wants to be extorted, be it financial or otherwise, and so why not ask for help from the One who owns "the cattle on a thousand hills" (Ps. 50:10-11)? How many blessings have gone unclaimed simply because we haven't thought to ask (cf. Matt. 7:7; Ja. 4:2).
- Vs. 123 Here, the Psalmist takes phrases that have been used before and combines them into one verse (cf. vs. 81-82). However, the main difference between the two passages is that the soul and the eyes were both longing for something earlier, whereas, here, only the "eyes" are longing. And, specifically, they are not only yearning for deliverance ("salvation"), but they are also eager for the completion ("fulfillment") of God's "promise." As was mentioned in vs. 81-82, this longing is indicative of a wary watchfulness. Literally, it seems, our Psalmist's eyes have become bloodshot in looking for ratification; they have been open for far too long.
- Vs. 124 The Lord's *khesēd* ("steadfast love") has been mentioned numerous times throughout this psalm (cf. vs. 41, 64, 76, 88). It is that loyal love that secures

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Goldingay, John, *Psalms*, Volume 3: Psalms 90-150, The Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 3:427.

the heart of the Psalmist from worry and anxiety. Our wanderer views himself as nothing more than a lowly “servant;” and, as with such a relationship, he expects his master to remain faithful to their bond. Though he may fail, he knows that God’s love for him will never fail. Thus, our sojourner wants the Lord to “deal” with him not according to merit but love. And, indeed, God does business with him based solely on His love for our wanderer than what the Psalmist can bring to the table. But what does the Psalmist want? Rather than request money, as might seem obvious by verse 121, our Psalmist wants nothing more than to be taught the Scriptures (“statues”). He does not want his wallet to be enlarged, but his mind (cf. vs. 32). Again, the value of God’s word over riches is a common theme woven throughout this psalm (cf. vs. 14, 72, 103). This is why the Psalmist ends this same stanza by making this point yet again.

- Vs. 125 As far back as verse 12, the Psalmist implied that authentic instruction comes from God alone. From there, time and time again, we're told that to be "taught" by God is the highest form of education (cf. vs. 26, 29, 33, 64, 66, 68, 108). And, time and time again, we're told only God can make us "understand" (cf. vs. 27, 34, 73). Meaning, only when God teaches mankind that mankind will understand how to obey ("know"). Ever the student, our Psalmist looks to his master to guide his learning. To look anywhere else leads to ignorance only.
- Vs. 126 Echoes reappear once again as we talk about God’s timing (cf. 82, 84). But not only does the Psalmist address the divine timetable again, but he also reminds us about the impending judgment of all who oppose God (cf. 118-119). Exasperated and worn out, the Psalmist says, "The waiting game is over. It is time for the Lord to act!" If there is one thing that has been made abundantly clear throughout this chapter, it is this: our wanderer has no more patience. He is ready for the faithful to be vindicated and the unfaithful to be incriminated (cf. Pro. 11:21). What other reason should the Lord need to finally act, other than to know that His righteous laws have been “broken”?
- Vs. 127 This verse begins with the term “therefore.” Thus, it must be connecting its contents with what has preceded it. But how exactly that connection is made is not clear. His point is that "gold," even "fine gold," cannot be

compared to the "commandments" of God. This sounds very familiar as he's said before that the Scriptures have more value than "thousands of gold and silvers pieces" (vs. 72). It appears that it is precisely because God's word is so valuable that He is so upset. God's promises and precepts, which possess an incalculable value, have been broken. Imagine someone desecrating the tomb of a soldier; we begin to feel something akin to our wanderer. Everywhere he looks, he sees his brothers and sisters trampling on God's very word. His "love" for the Scriptures not only fuels adoration but outrage.

Vs. 128 A stanza that revolves around repetition ends on a note of repetition as the Psalmist says, again, "therefore." This term connects this verse with the previous various, which links to the one before it! It is because the Psalmist considers the commandments ("precepts") of God to be "right" that he has the love he spoke of for them in verse 127. And if he should love the truth, it should come as no surprise that he hates "every false way;" a point he has made on more than one occasion (cf. 104, 113, 163).

"What's your takeaway?"

My takeaway this evening is this: as any musician will tell you, repetition makes mastery. The more you review and practice, the better you get. Here, the Psalmist repeated himself in every line for the simple purpose of highlighting some key components. Rather than switch off when we find an idea repeated in Scripture, we ought to focus our minds to not miss an important principle.

VIDEO DESCRIPTION

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TITLE: Ayin

TEXT: Psalm 119:121-28

Pastor's manuscript can be found here: