

## THE TEN WORDS OF PSALM 119

The number of the words which are frequently repeated in Psalm 119 has been variously given and enumerated by expositors and commentators. It will be better to give them here on the authority of the *Massorah* (Ap. 30). The *Massorah* is a body of notes on the textual traditions of the Hebrew Old Testament compiled by scribes during the 1st millennium of the Christian era.

The note for Psalm 119:122 is as follows: "Throughout the whole of the Great Alphabet [i.e. the Alphabetic Psalm, 119] there is in every verse one of the following ten expressions" which correspond to the Ten Commandments; except one verse, in which there is none of these: verse 122." (*Massorah*, Ginsburg's Edition, Vol. II.)

**DEREK** = Way

**TORAH** = Law

**'EDUTH** = Testimony

**MISHPAT** = Judgment

**PIKKUDIM** = Precepts

**ZEDEK, ZEDAKAH, ZADDIK** = Righteousness

**MIZVAH** = Commandment

**HOK, HUKKAH** = Statutes

**'IMRAH** = Saying

**DABAR** = Word

The following list includes all the "Ten Words" given above, with every occurrence in the Psalm, together with the first occurrence of each word.

**WAY** (*derek*) is from *darak*, to tread with the feet, and denotes *the act of walking*. Hence it is used of *a going*, or *way*, or *journeying*. The first occurrence is Gen. 3:24. It occurs in this Psalm thirteen times: vv. 1, 3, 5, 14, 26, 27, 29, 30, 32, 33, 37, 59, 168.

**TESTIMONIES** (*'eduth*) is from *'ud*, to turn back again, to go over again, to reiterate, hence, to testify. The first occurrence is Gen. 21:30 (*edah*). It occurs in this Psalm twenty-three times; nine times (*'eduth*), vv. 14, 31, 36, 88, 99, 111, 129, 144, 157; fourteen times (*'edah*, fem. sing.), vv. 2, 22, 24, 46, 59, 79, 95, 119, 125, 138, 146, 152, 167, 168.

**PRECEPTS** (*pikkudim*) is from *pakad*, to take oversight or charge : hence, *mandates enjoined on others*. It occurs only in the Book of Psalms (see 19:8; 103:18; 111:7). In Ps. 119 twenty-one times: vv. 4, 15, 27, 40, 45, 56, 63, 69, 78, 87, 93, 94, 100, 104, 110, 128, 134, 141, 159, 168, 173.

**COMMANDMENTS** (*mizvah*) is from *zavah*, to set up, constitute. Hence, *constitutional commands*. First occurrence Gen. 26:5. In Ps. 119 it occurs twenty-two times: vv. 6, 10, 19, 21, 32, 35, 47, 48, 60, 66, 73, 86, 96 (sing.), 98, 115, 127, 131, 143, 151, 166, 172, 176.

**WORD** (*'imrah*) is from *'amar*, *to bring forth to light*; hence, *to say*. The verb is very regularly followed by the words used; hence *'imrah* means an utterance and the purport of it. Not the same as *dabar* (No. 10 below), which refers to the articulate utterance of it. The first occurrence is in Gen. 4:23, and is rendered "speech". In plural only once, Ps. 12:6 (the only place where the plural is found). In Ps. 119 it occurs nineteen times: vv. 11, 38, 41, 50, 58, 67, 76, 82, 103, 116, 123, 133, 140, 148, 158, 162, 170, 172. With *dabar* the two occur forty-two times.

**LAW** (*torah*) is from *yarah*, *to project, issue*: hence, *to point out, to show* (Prov. 6:13). Then, *to instruct, teach*. The Torah contains Jehovah's *Instructions* to His People, pointing out to them His will. First occurrence is in Gen. 26:5 (pl.). In Ps. 119 it occurs twenty-five times: always in the singular: vv. 1, 18, 29, 34, 44, 51, 55, 61, 70, 72, 77, 85, 92, 97, 109, 113, 126, 136, 142, 150, 153, 163, 165, 174.

**JUDGMENT** (*mishpat*) is from *shaphat*, *to set upright, erect*, hence, *to judge*. *Mishpat* means judgment. Its first occurrence is in Gen. 18:19 (in Jehovah's mouth). In Ps. 119 it occurs twenty-three times (always in plural, except four times): vv. 7, 13, 20, 30, 39, 43, 52, 62, 75, 84, 91 (ordinances), 102, 106, 108, 120, 121, 132 (as thou used to do, see note), 137, 149, 156, 160, 164, 175.

**RIGHTEOUSNESS, RIGHT**, (*zedek*, masc.), is from *zadak*, *to be right, upright, just, righteous*. Hence the noun means *rightness*. By comparing the first occurrence (Lev. 19:15) with the second (Lev. 19:36) we get the idea that the word has special reference to *equal balancing*. *Zedek* (masc.) occurs twelve times, and is rendered "righteousness": vv. 123, 142 (second), 144, 172; "right", v. 7, 62, 106, 138, 160, 164; "justice", v. 121. *Zedakah* (fem.), first occurrence, Gen. 15:6. In Ps. 119, "righteousness", vv. 40, 142 (first). *Zaddik* (adj.), spoken of a king (2Sam. 23:3), once, in v. 137. The three words fifteen in all.

**STATUTE** (*hok* and *hukka*) is from *hakak*, *to hew, cut in, engrave, inscribe*; hence, *to decree, or ordain*. The noun = a decree or ordinance. First occurrence, Gen. 26:5 (*hukkah* fem.). In Ps. 119 it occurs twenty-two times: vv. 5, 8, 12, 16 (*hukkah*, fem.), 23, 26, 33, 48, 54, 64, 68, 71, 80, 83, 112, 117, 118, 124, 135, 145, 155, 171.

**WORD, WORDS** (*dabar*), is from *dabar*, *to arrange in a row*; hence, *to set forth in speech*. It refers to the articulate form of what is said, whether spoken or written (cp. v above); to the mode or manner by which the *ipsissima verba* are imparted. The first occurrence is in Gen. 11:1 ("speech"). In Ps. 119 it occurs twenty-four times, three of them in pl.: vv. 9, 16, 17, 25, 28, 42 (twice), 43, 49, 57 (pl.), 65, 74, 81, 89, 101, 105, 107, 114, 130 (pl.), 139 (pl.), 147, 160, 161, 169.

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