

Keeper
Psalms 119:9-11
Dr. Pierre Cannings, Ph.D.

A. Your Word - v.9

- a. Purity is a result of keeping God's word
 - i. Keeping
 - 1. "to keep according to your word"; so RSV *By guarding it according to thy word*, supplying *it* (that is, his way of the preceding line)
 - 2. Proverbs 4:21
 - ii. Word
 - 1. God's word "word," relates to the communication of Yahweh's covenant will to Israel
 - 2. Its regular use in the singular to refer to a prophetic utterance or even a collection of them (e.g., Hos 1:1)
 - 3. suggests that the psalmist has widened such usage to apply to all the written texts that he calls Torah
- b. Purity- Clean
 - i. **be clear, clean, pure**, always in moral sense
 - ii. **means free from sin, free from fault.**
- c. Way - way, of mode of living, or of character
 - i. The poet affirms the joy afforded by preoccupation with God's moral teachings and declares his desire to set his mind on, and to govern his life by, Yahweh's revealed standards

B. Your Commandments - v.10

- a. The fullness of my heart I will Seek
 - i. *Heart - the inner man*, indef., *soul*, comprehending mind, affections and will, with occasional emphasis of one or the other by means of certain verbs:
 - ii. Proverbs 4:23
 - iii. Matthew 15:18-19
- b. Do let me wander (mentally mislead)
 - i. Go astray, error

C. Your Treasure - v.11

- a. I have hidden
 - i. to **keep**: a teaching close to oneself, to keep in one's heart

- ii. for my own keeping.
 - iii. Hidden of secret purposes
 - iv. Shelter, save and store
- b. That I may not sin against You

Exegetical Outline

Meditate

שח *śh* reflect; considered; be concerned

†שח S^{7878, 7879, 7880} TWOT^{2255, 2255a, 2256a} GK^{8488, 8489, 8490} **vb.denom. muse, complain**, poet. **talk** (of);—**Qal** Impf. 3 ms. שח ψ 119:23; 3 fs. sf. תשיח Pr 6:22; 1 s. שח ψ 119:78 +, etc.; Inv. ms. שח Jb 12:8, mpl. שיח Ju 5:10 +; Inf. cstr. שח ψ 119:148;—**1. complain**: ש 55:18; 77:4 (both || המה), Jb 7:11 (במר נפשי), + ש 6:7 (read prob. אשיחה for אשה). **2. muse**: שח עמל בבי ש 77:7; *c.* ב, *meditate upon, study*, God's עלילות v 13 (|| הנה); 119:15, 78; חקים v 23, 48; נפלאות v 27; אמרה v 148; *c.* acc. דברי נפלאתיך 145:5. **3. a.** *talk* (about), *sing* (of): abs. Ju 5:10 (ode); *c.* ב rei, ש 105:2 = 1 Ch 16:9 (|| שיר, זמר; so SS Gerber, but poss. = **2**, so Dr), ש 69:13 (ב pers. *against*; || נגידות, of mocking words). **b.** *c.* sf. pers. *talk* (with) Pr 6:22 (del. Toy); *c.* ל *speak to* Jb 12:8 (Di 'speak sinnend'; Hi Bu read שרץ; Kau חית (so Bu as altern.), B^{al} sub II. שח). **PUI'el meditate, consider**: Impf. ...

BDB

Rejoice

שש *śś* rejoice; to rejoice

†שש S⁷⁷⁹⁷ TWOT²²⁴⁶ GK⁸⁴⁶⁴, שש **vb. exult, rejoice** (N^{ZMG} xxxvii (1883), 536 der. ('perhaps') from interj., as ששא (śa' śa') an enticing call, so Gerber²⁰);—**Qal** Pf. 3 ms. שש Dt 28:63 +, 1 s. ששתי ψ 119:14, etc.; Impf. 3 ms. שש Dt 28:63 +, 3 mpl. יששום Is 35:1 (Ges^{B 47 n} Kⁱ.⁵¹⁰, but ם error. Kenn Ol^{B 244 a}, prob. dittogr., so Lo Hi Gr Che^{Hpt}. Marti), etc.; Inv. fs. שש La 4:2, mpl. ששו Is 65:18; 66:10; Inf. abs. שש 61:10; cstr. לשש Dt 30:9;—*exult, display joy*, *c.* על *over*, Dt 28:63⁽⁰²⁾; 30:9⁽⁰²⁾ Je 32:41 Is 62:5 Zp 3:17 (+ בשמחה || גיל), ש 119:162; *c.* ב Is 61:10 (שש אשש), 65:19 ש 35:9 (all || גיל); 40:17; 68:4 (+ בשמחה || על), 70:5 (all || שמח); 119:14 Jb 39:21 (horse), ש 19:6 (sun, as athlete); *c.* כי and cl. La 1:21; abs. Is 35:1; 65:18 (both || גיל), 64:4 (but del. נ שש G Gr Du Che^{Hpt}. Marti), 66:14; La 4:21 (|| שמח), Jb 3:22 (|| גיל יאח), Is 66:10 (acc. cogn.; || גיל, שמח) ...

BDB

Wander

שגה *śgh* err; misleading; make to err

†[שגה S⁷⁶⁸⁶ TWOT²³²⁵ GK⁸⁷⁰⁶] **vb. go astray, error** (Aramaic שגא, שג (śgo) *id.*);—**Qal** Pf. 1 s. שגיתי Jb 6:24; 19:4, etc.; Impf. 3 ms. שגה Pr 5:23, etc.; Inf. cstr. שגות 19:27; Pt. שגה Ez 45:20 Pr 20:1, etc.;—**1. error, stray**, of flock Ez 34:6 (fig.). **2. swerve, meander, reel or roll**, in drunkenness, ב of drink Is 28:7⁽⁰²⁾; = *be intoxicated*, Pr 20:1; so with (ב) love 5:19, 20; שגה Is 28:7. **3. go astray**, morally, 1 S 26:21 Pr 5:23 Jb 6:24; 19:4, + 1

S 14:24 (reading ש'שגגה Th We Dr Now (after G; otherwise Bu HPS); c. מן, of י's commands ψ 119:21, 118, מן of words of knowledge Pr 19:27. **4.** specif. *commit sin of ignorance*, inadvertence Lv 4:13 Nu 15:22 (P) Ez 45:20 (cf. שגג). **Hiph.** *lead astray*: **1.** lit., Pt. משגה Dt 27:18 (בדירה). **2.** מ' mentally = *mislead* Jb 12:16. **3.** morally, Pt. Pr 28:10 (רע בדירה); Impf. 2 ms. sf. משגגי, c. מן of God's commands ψ 119:10; + perhaps Jb 12:23 *leadeth nations astray* (משגגי in Kenn., Field)....

BDB

Treasured

צפן *spn* hid; hide; hidden

צפן S⁶⁸⁴⁵ TWOT¹⁹⁵³ GK⁷⁶²¹ **vb. hide, treasure up** (NH *id.*; TelAm. *šap, nu*; *set*, of sun);—**Qal** Pf. 3 ms. צ' Pr 27:16; 2 ms. צפנת Jb 10:13 +, etc.; Impf. יצפן Jb 21:19 + Pr 2:7 Qr (Kt וצפן), sf. יצפנני ψ 27:5, etc.; Pt. act. pl. sf. צפננה Pr 27:16; pass. צפון Pr. 13:22 +, ψ 17:14 Kt; f. צפונה Ho 13:12, etc.;—**1.** trans. *hide*, c. acc. pers. Ex 2:2 (E), Jos 2:4 (JE), of *hiding* a quarrelsome woman, like *hiding* wind Pr 27:16⁽⁶²⁾ (*si vera l.*; cf. Toy); of י's *hiding* his servants (from evil) ψ 27:5; 31:21: = *treasure up* a thing, Pr 10:14, + אתה with *thyself*, in thine own keeping 2:1 = 7:1, in (ב) the heart Jb 10:13 (subj. י; of secret purposes), ψ 119:11, cf. Jb 23:12; + ל pers. Pr 13:22 Ct 7:14, subj. י Jb 21:19 *reserve* penalty; blessings ψ 31:20 Pr 2:7; + מן Jb 17:4 *thou* [God] *hast treasured up* their heart *away from* understanding, kept it therefrom; pass., of sin Ho 13:12 (abs.; || צרור); read poss. צפון צפון Jb 15:22 *treasured up* for (אל) the sword ...

BDB

Pure - **be clear, clean, pure**, always in moral sense

Heart- *the inner man*, indef., *soul*, comprehending mind, affections and will, with occasional emphasis of one or the other by means of certain verbs: ¹

Wander- **go astray, error**

Treasure - . hide, treasure up

Teach- *learn* something

Statutes - elsewhere of prescriptions of the several codes

Ordinances- special laws of the code are denoted by pl.; + חקות etc. 1 K 2:3 2 K 23:3 = 2 Ch 34:31 (+ חקים etc.), Je 44:23; חקים etc. 1 Ch 29:19; מצות Ne 9:34; pl. of contents of covenant ²

¹ Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A. (2000). *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems.

² Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A. (2000). *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems.

Delight- to gladden, delight; to enjoy oneself,

Way- way, of mode of living, or of character Jb 34:11 (|| פַּעַל) ψ 119:9.³

Commentary Notes

Divine teaching of wisdom (119:9–16). In the *bet* strophe Yahweh is celebrated as the wisdom teacher par excellence (vv 9, 11, 12b); one may compare the relation between a disciple of wisdom and a human teacher in Prov 7:1–3. Straying from wisdom teaching (Prov 19:27) is here applied to the Torah (cf. vv 21, 118). The ethical frustration of v 5 finds a way out in v 9. The compliance in v 9b is elaborated as dedication of heart and lips and eyes (cf. Soll, *Psalms* 119, 92). The poet affirms the joy afforded by preoccupation with God's moral teachings and declares his desire to set his mind on, and to govern his life by, Yahweh's revealed standards. But he confesses in vv 10b and 12b that he cannot cope unaided and prays for God's personal help in this moral endeavor.

An answered question such as v 9a poses is typical of wisdom literature; one may compare Prov 23:29, 30; Pss 25:12; 34:13–15 (12–14). דְּבַר, “word,” relates to the communication of Yahweh's covenant will to Israel: it is used in the plural of the Decalogue in Exod 34:1, 28; Deut 4:13. Its regular use in the singular to refer to a prophetic utterance or even a collection of them (e.g., Hos 1:1) suggests that the psalmist has widened such usage to apply to all the written texts that he calls Torah (cf. Deut 18:15, 18). One may also note that, along with מצוה, “command,” and תורה, “Torah,” it can refer to wisdom teaching (see Prov 13:13–14; cf. Ps 119:99–100). In v 10b שָׁגָה, rendered “stray,” refers to deliberate, not unintended, sin. אָמַרָה, “saying,” in v 11 is a variant of דְּבַר, “word”; it often has the connotation of promise in the psalm. In v 12a the divine בְּרוּךְ, “blessed,” formula in this noncultic setting “stands as an expression of joy and praise within a meditation on God's righteous word” (W. S. Towner, *CBQ* 30 [1968] 393). It implicitly urges Yahweh to comply with the request of v 12b and expresses the psalmist's reason for it; elsewhere a causal construction follows (cf. v 171; Ps 28:6). V 14 broaches the motif of joy that features throughout the psalm (see Kraus, *EvT* 10 [1951] 337–51).⁴

|| parallel, of words (synonymous or contrasted); also of passages; sometimes = ‘see parallel,’ or ‘see also parallel.’

³ Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2000), 73.

⁴ Allen, L. C. (2002). *Psalms 101–150 (Revised)* (Vol. 21, pp. 185–186). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

Whereby shall one keep his path pure?], a question directed to God; cf. the antith. v. 3, 5. An early copyist under the influence of WL. inserted in the text “young man”; but the context has no more to do with young men than with other persons, and this being the only passage in the Ps. applied specifically to young men, the reference is improbable. The path is a pure path || “perfect” v. 1, and is to be kept pure. The EV^s “cleanse” implies a way not already pure but to be made so; which suits admirably the Augustinian doctrine of sin, but does not suit the conception of this poet.—*Within my heart*], v. 11, in antithesis with *my lips* v. 13. Within the heart *that I may not sin against Thee*] as a preventive of sin against God by violating His Law.—*I have stored up Thy Saying*], as a treasure ever to be kept in mind and guarded. In this way, the heart, the mind, the will, the entire inner man is restrained from sin.—The same is accomplished in the outer man by oral recitation: *I told all the Judgments of Thy mouth*], v. 13. Telling them to others impresses them upon the mind of him who tells them; and is a public recognition of their obligation; and therein an effectual restraint from outward sin.—*Blessed be Thou, Yahweh!*], v. 12. An ascription of blessedness to Yahweh, the great Teacher, Himself the sum of the Law.—*Teach me Thy Statutes*] phr. of D, also v. 26, 64, 68, 124, 135, 171. The vb. is also used with Judgments (error for Statutes) v. 108.—*In Thy Testimonies I rejoice*], v. 14, cf. Thy Saying v. 162 || *In Thy Law I delight myself*], v. 16; so in Thy Commands v. 47; cf. also use of noun from same stem: “my delight is Thy” Testimonies v. 24, Law v. 70, 77, 92, 174, and Commands v. 143.—The intermediate *in Thy Precepts I muse*], v. 15, is not simply the musing of meditation and study, which does not suit the || here or in v. 78, or in v. 23, 48 (with Statutes), where this vb. is in the same parallelism with terms of rejoicing. It is the musing of talking or singing to oneself about a joyous theme. And the other passages v. 148 with Saying, and v. 27 with “wonders,” and even the cognate noun of v. 97, 99 favour this general mng. for all the passages of this Ps.—*over above all riches*]. The Law is the most valuable of all things, worth all things else; cf. Jesus’ Parables of the Kingdom Mt. 13:44, 45. This tristich has also the syn. terms *Way* used twice and *Path*, which is the way of the Law, cf. v. 9—*Unto this the pious look*], cf. v. 6 and *they forget*] it not; cf. v. 61, 109, 153 used with Law, v. 83 with Statutes, v. 93, 141 with Precepts, v. 139 with Word, and v. 176 with Commands.—*Let me not err from Thy Commands*], v. 10; so v. 21, cf. v. 118, where the same vb. is used with “Statutes”; cf. also 19:13 and the conception of sin as error in P.⁵

Perhaps the dominant note in this strophe (letter *beth*, verses 9–16) is that of joy, happiness (verses 14, 16), and eagerness to obey completely the law of Yahweh (verses 10, 11, 15). It can be inferred from verse 9a that the psalmist himself was *a young man* (and see verse 100), but this is not necessarily so. The TEV heading may have to be adapted for use in other languages by saying something like “The person who obeys the Lord’s Law will be happy,” or “I will obey the Lord’s Law,” or “I will do what the Lord teaches.”

In verse 9a *way* means conduct, behavior, way of living (see verse 1a); *pure* here means free from sin, free from fault. In verse 9b the form of the Hebrew text seems to be “to keep according to your word”; so RSV *By guarding it according to thy word*, supplying it (that is, his *way* of the preceding line) as the object of the verb. But the Hebrew preposition that

⁵ Briggs, C. A., & Briggs, E. G. (1906–1907). *A critical and exegetical commentary on the book of Psalms* (pp. 420–421). New York: C. Scribner’s Sons.

RSV translates *according to* may be regarded as an emphatic particle (see Anderson), in which case “your word” is taken as the direct object; so TEV “*By obeying your commands*” (see NEB, NAB, BJ, NJB, NIV, SPCL, FRCL). The Masoretic text has the singular “your word”; many Hebrew manuscripts have the plural, which TEV prefers, “*your commands*.” It is important that the translator use the format in the receptor language which will make clear that the psalmist is first asking a question, then answering his own question. In some languages this requires putting the question and reply in a different form from the English; for example, “I ask myself ...” and “I say in reply....”

For verse 10a see verse 2b. Translators should note that RSV *keep* in verse 2b has a different meaning from TEV verse 10b. In the former it means to obey. In the latter “*keep me from*” means “do not let me” or “prevent me from”; therefore “do not let me disobey your commands.” The negative request *let me not wander*, that is, depart from, abandon, disregard, can be expressed in a positive way, “keep me true (or, faithful) to your commandments.”

In verse 11 the psalmist proclaims his determination not to sin against Yahweh, that is, not to disobey any of his commands; so he treasures Yahweh’s *word* in his heart. The verb RSV translates *I have laid up* means “store up, treasure, hide away”; here it may mean to memorize the Law. This meaning seems to be supported by verse 13, which speaks of the recitation of all the laws that Yahweh has given his people (see also verse 15a). The singular *thy word* in verse 11a may mean “your promise” (so NEB; NJV “In my heart I treasure Your promise”). In languages in which it will not be natural to “store things in the heart,” it may be necessary to say, for example, “I have memorized your words” or “I have learned your words and put them in my heart.”

Psalms 119:12–13

For *Blessed be* in verse 12a, see comments on 18:46; 16:7. FRCL translates “Thank you, Lord,” and NIV “Praise be to you.” And for *statutes* in verse 12b, see the same word in verses 5b, 8a.

Verse 13 is a declaration, not a promise. The psalmist states that he likes to recite Yahweh’s laws, *With my lips I declare*. The Hebrew verb may mean to tell or to number (see its use in 9:1b, “I will tell”). See the instruction in Deuteronomy 6:7, “you ... shall talk of them,” that is, of Yahweh’s commandments. In order to make clear that this is not a silent procedure, TEV has “*I will repeat aloud* ...” NEB is good: “I say them over, one by one”—which includes the idea of numeration (see BJ, “I will enumerate them all”).

The literal translation of verse 13b in RSV is not normal English idiom. NJV is “all the rules You proclaimed”; NJB “all the judgments you have given”; NEB “the decrees that thou hast proclaimed.” If the translator follows TEV’s “*all the laws you have given*,” in some languages it will be necessary to specify the receivers and say “given to your people.”

Psalms 119:14–16

In verses 14 and 16 the psalmist describes his great pleasure in doing Yahweh’s will; and in verse 15 he promises to study God’s laws. The literal form of the Hebrew in verse 14b seems to mean *as much as in all riches* (so HOTP; NIV “as one rejoices in great riches”). But this may be a way of saying “*more than* ...,” as TEV, SPCL, BJ, and NJB translate (see verses 72, 127); NEB follows the Syriac, which has “more than.” The Hebrew phrase *all riches* is a way of saying “many riches, great wealth.” Both RSV and TEV contain ellipses,

which in many other languages must be filled out, repeating the verb element in both lines; for example, “more than I delight in having great riches.”

In verse 15 the two lines are parallel and synonymous, which is unusual in this psalm; *thy precepts* in line a is a synonym of *thy ways* in line b. Yahweh’s *ways* are his commands, his rules, for his people to follow. The two verbs are also parallel and synonymous: *meditate* (literally “be concerned with, be occupied with”—see its use in 77:3b, 12a) and *fix my eyes on*, that is “pay attention to” (as in verse 6b; see SPCL). Accordingly, in some languages it may be preferable to reduce the two lines to one.

Again, exceptionally, verse 16 has two synonymous words, *statutes* and *word*. The Masoretic text in line b has the singular *thy word*, but many Hebrew manuscripts and ancient versions have the plural, which TEV prefers (as in verse 9b). For verse 16a see the similar statement in 1:2a. In line b the verb *forget* is better translated “neglect, disregard” (see NJV, NIV).⁶

A second major emphasis in this psalm is this: how we show that we value the Word of God.

Studying it

Firstly, we will study it diligently. God’s purpose in giving his Word was to point us to himself. We are, therefore, to seek him through his Word (v. 2), and this seeking is to be done wholeheartedly (vv. 2–10). We are to ‘look’ into his Word (v. 6) and to learn its judgements (v. 7).

Obedying it

Secondly, we will obey its commands. The duty of obedience is set forth in these verses in several ways: walking in the law of the Lord and in his ways (vv. 1, 3), keeping his testimonies (vv. 2, 129), and taking heed to our ways to make sure they correspond to the teachings of God’s Word (v. 9).

Storing it

Thirdly, we will hide it in our hearts. This means we are to store it in our minds and treasure it in our affections with the confidence that it will fortify us against sin (v. 11). G. Campbell Morgan summarizes this verse in this way: ‘The best book, in the best place, for the best purpose.’

Declaring it

Fourthly, we will declare it to others (v. 13). Studying the Word of God will cause our hearts to burn within us (Luke 24:32) in such a way that we won’t be able to keep it to ourselves. We’ll be anxious to share its message of salvation with those who don’t know Christ and to discuss its teachings with fellow Christians.

Rejoicing over it

Finally, we will constantly rejoice over the Word of God and delight in it (vv. 14–16). We must not miss the connection the psalmist makes in these verses. The rejoicing of verse 14 and the delighting of verse 16 are connected by the meditating of verse 15. As we reflect

⁶ Bratcher, R. G., & Reyburn, W. D. (1991). *A translator’s handbook on the book of Psalms* (pp. 1000–1002). New York: United Bible Societies.

on what the Word of God is and what it does, we will find the rejoicing and delighting to be inescapable.⁷

119:9–16. The psalmist declared that a person cleanses **his way** (conduct) **by** obeying God’s **Word** (v. 9). The psalmist testified that he had internalized and rejoiced in God’s **Word** so that he might be morally pure (vv. 10–14). He continually meditated in the Law (vv. 15–16).⁸

Notes for 119:9

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “young man.” Hebrew wisdom literature often assumes and reflects the male-oriented perspective of ancient Israelite society. The principle of the psalm is certainly applicable to all people, regardless of their gender or age. To facilitate modern application, the gender specific “young man” has been translated with the more neutral “young person.”

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “purify his path.”

¹² **tn** *Heb* “by keeping according to your word.” Many medieval Hebrew MSS as well as the LXX read the plural, “your words.”

Notes for 119:11

¹³ **tn** Or “hide.”

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “your word.” Some medieval Hebrew MSS as well as the LXX read the plural, “your words.”

Notes for 119:12

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “[are] blessed.”

⁷ Ellsworth, R. (2006). *Opening up Psalms* (pp. 25–27). Leominster: Day One Publications.

⁸ Ross, A. P. (1985). Psalms. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 880). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Notes for 119:13

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “of your mouth.”

Notes for 119:14

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “in the way of your rules.”

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “as upon,” meaning “as if” (see 2 Chr 32:19).

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “all wealth.” The phrase refers to all kinds of wealth and riches. See Prov 1:13; 6:31; 24:4; Ezek 27:12, 18.

Notes for 119:15

²⁰ **tn** The cohortative verbal forms in this verse express the psalmist’s resolve.

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “gaze [at].”

²² **tn** *Heb* “ways” (referring figuratively to God’s behavior here).

Notes for 119:16

²³ **tn** The imperfects in this verse emphasize the attitude the psalmist maintains toward God’s law. Another option is to translate with the future tense, “I will find delight...I will not forget.”

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “your word.” Many medieval Hebrew MSS as well as the LXX read the plural here.⁹

⁹ Biblical Studies Press. (2006). *The NET Bible First Edition Notes* (Ps 119:9–16). Biblical Studies Press.

Str. 2. The first quartette is composed of two synth. couplets; the second of lines essentially syn.—**9–16.** *Whereby shall one keep his path pure?*], a question directed to God; cf. the antith. v. 3, 5. An early copyist under the influence of WL. inserted in the text “young man”; but the context has no more to do with young men than with other persons, and this being the only passage in the Ps. applied specifically to young men, the reference is improbable. The path is a pure path || “perfect” v. 1, and is to be kept pure. The EV^s “cleanse” implies a way not already pure but to be made so; which suits admirably the Augustinian doctrine of sin, but does not suit the conception of this poet.—*Within my heart*], v. 11, in antithesis with *my lips* v. 13. Within the heart *that I may not sin against Thee*] as a preventive of sin against God by violating His Law.—*I have stored up Thy Saying*], as a treasure ever to be kept in mind and guarded. In this way, the heart, the mind, the will, the entire inner man is restrained from sin.—The same is accomplished in the outer man by oral recitation: *I told all the Judgments of Thy mouth*]¹⁰

Divine teaching of wisdom (119:9–16). In the *bet* strophe Yahweh is celebrated as the wisdom teacher par excellence (vv 9, 11, 12b); one may compare the relation between a disciple of wisdom and a human teacher in Prov 7:1–3. Straying from wisdom teaching (Prov 19:27) is here applied to the Torah (cf. vv 21, 118). The ethical frustration of v 5 finds a way out in v 9. The compliance in v 9b is elaborated as dedication of heart and lips and eyes (cf. Soll, *Psalms* 119, 92). The poet affirms the joy afforded by preoccupation with God’s moral teachings and declares his desire to set his mind on, and to govern his life by, Yahweh’s revealed standards. But he confesses in vv 10b and 12b that he cannot cope unaided and prays for God’s personal help in this moral endeavor.

An answered question such as v 9a poses is typical of wisdom literature; one may compare Prov 23:29, 30; Pss 25:12; 34:13–15 (12–14). דבר, “word,” relates to the communication of Yahweh’s covenant will to Israel: it is used in the plural of the

Str. strophes.

synth. synthetic.

syn. synonymous.

cf. confer, compare.

antith. anthesis, antithetical.

v. verse.

WL. The Wisdom Literature of the OT.

|| parallel, of words or clauses chiefly synonymous.

v. verse.

EV English Versions.

^s English Versions.

v. verse.

v. verse.

¹⁰ Charles A. Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, [*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*](#), International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1906–1907), 420.

Decalogue in Exod 34:1, 28; Deut 4:13. Its regular use in the singular to refer to a prophetic utterance or even a collection of them (e.g., Hos 1:1) suggests that the psalmist has widened such usage to apply to all the written texts that he calls Torah (cf. Deut 18:15, 18). One may also note that, along with מצוה, “command,” and תורה, “Torah,” it can refer to wisdom teaching (see Prov 13:13–14; cf. Ps 119:99–100). In v 10b שגה, rendered “stray,” refers to deliberate, not unintended, sin. אמרה, “saying,” in v 11 is a variant of דבר, “word”; it often has the connotation of promise in the psalm. In v 12a the divine ברוך, “blessed,” formula in this noncultic setting “stands as an expression of joy and praise within a meditation on God’s righteous word” (W. S. Towner, *CBQ* 30 [1968] 393). It implicitly urges Yahweh to comply with the request of v 12b and expresses the psalmist’s reason for it; elsewhere a causal construction follows (cf. v 171; Ps 28:6). V 14 broaches the motif of joy that features throughout the psalm (see Kraus, *EvT* 10 [1951] 337–51).¹¹