




ZAYIN


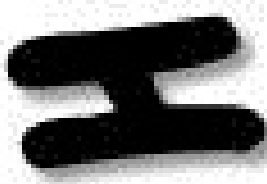


“THE COMFORT OF  
GOD’S WORD

Psalm 119:49–56



# ZAYIN (Psalm 119:49–56)



Letter Name	Early Hebrew	Middle Hebrew	Late Hebrew	Modern Hebrew
ZAYIN				

**Pictograph:**

**Meanings:**

**Sound:**

Mattock / Hoe / Plow

Food, Cut, Nourish

Z

## Psalm 119:49–56

- 49 Remember the word to Your servant, Upon which You have caused me to hope.
- 50 This is my comfort in my affliction, For Your word has given me life.
- 51 The proud have me in great derision, Yet I do not turn aside from Your law.

- 52 I remembered Your judgments of old, O Lord, And  
have comforted myself.
- 53 Indignation has taken hold of me Because of the  
wicked who forsake Your law.
- 54 Your statutes have been my songs In the house of  
my pilgrimage.
- 55 I remember Your name in the night, O Lord, And I  
keep Your law.
- 56 This has become mine, Because I kept Your  
precepts.

# THEME

The Scriptures are the psalmist's comfort; they fill his memory and are his songs. Only one petition is found in these lines (119:49).

After this opening petition, the lines become a personal testimony to the sustaining power of God's Word. These lines are strongly autobiographical.

## Outline

- I. The psalmist prays for God to fulfill His Word because it has provided comfort and hope in the midst of his affliction (49–50).
- II. The psalmist affirms his faithfulness to God's Word, which comforts him, even when he is scorned by the wicked who rebel against it (51–53).
- III. The psalmist explains that the Word of the LORD has filled him with singing and the name of the LORD has inspired his obedience (54–56).

The “Zayin File” begins with a prayer for God’s Word to be fulfilled. The key word is “remember”

THE PETITION 119:49

**Remember the word to Your servant, Upon which You have caused me to hope.**



Remember זָכַר (zakar) This is the root from which we get the name Zechariah. About 30 men are named Zechariah, which means “Yah remembers.”

*“Remember”* is a very important word in the Old Testament.

There are two kinds of memory in the Old Testament.

1. Reflective memory, as in Deuteronomy 5:15. Here God tells Israel, **“You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt. ...”** Psa 137:1 **By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down, yea, we wept When we remembered Zion.**

Simple recall is the idea.

2. Reactive memory. Exodus 2:23–25 is an example. Israel cries out to God in her Egyptian bondage, and we are told “**God remembered His covenant. ...**”

This means God responded to His covenant with an action of deliverance.

- God's remembrance of his covenant results in delivering his people (Ex 2:24) or in preserving them (Lev 26:44-45).

Exo 2:24 So God heard their groaning, and God **remembered** His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

Psa 106:4 **Remember me, O LORD,** with the favor You have toward Your people; Oh, visit me with Your salvation,

- For God not to remember iniquity was to forgive and to withhold further judgment (Ps 79:8–9).

**Oh, do not remember former iniquities against us! Let Your tender mercies come speedily to meet us, For we have been brought very low. <sup>9</sup> Help us, O God of our salvation, For the glory of Your name; And deliver us, and provide atonement for our sins, For Your name's sake!**

**Isa 43:25** "*I, even I, am* He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.

- Remembering Noah was to make the waters to subside (Gen 8:1).
- **Gen 8:1** Then God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the animals that *were* with him in the ark.

Conversely, remembering sin may be tantamount to bringing judgment (Hos 7:2).

They do not consider in their hearts That I remember all their wickedness; Now their own deeds have surrounded them; They are before My face.

Reactive memory is the type in Psalm 119:49. The psalmist is saying, “Remember and act — remember and do something.”

The verb signifies acting on the basis of what was called to mind. It is a prayer for God to fulfill the promises He made to His people, here, specifically the psalmist, who refers to himself as God’s servant.

God often creates circumstances in the lives of His children that drive them to His Word.



**Remember the word דְּבַר (dabar) to Your servant**

The psalmist may be praying for a specific application of the divine promises to protect and bless the covenant people, or perhaps for the fulfillment of some special word of promise.

Whatever the specific reference, it is a word of promise in which the psalmist has put his hope

*Upon which You have caused me to **hope**.* יָחַל  
(*yachal*) -- to wait, hope, expect, which for the believer is closely linked with faith or trust and results in patient waiting. It is expectation for good in the future.

He may also be confident about God's faithful covenant love, e.g. "Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who hope for his loving kindness (ḥesed, Ps 33:18).

## THE OPPOSITION: 119:50–51

**This is my comfort in my affliction, For Your word has given me life. <sup>51</sup>The proud have me in great derision, Yet I do not turn aside from Your law.**

First is an affirmation, “This is my comfort in my affliction.”

The second verse declares that God’s promises keep him going, as it were.

**Comfort** נְחָמָה (nechamah) “to breathe deeply”

It was used of a physical display of pain or of relief, as when we say, “I breathed a sigh of relief.”

This noun is rare, (only here and in Job 6:10) but the meaning of consolation and relief is clear from the use of the verb and related words (Ps. 119:76).

God comforts his children as seen throughout the Old Testament (Isaiah 40:1; Psa 23:4; 71:21; 86:17).

The Word of God brought relief to the psalmist.

**Affliction** -- עָנִי (‘oni) affliction misery, oppressed situation.

God drove the psalmist to His Word through affliction.

The verb means *to inflict pain upon* and should be understood as related to God’s faithfulness (119:75).

The affliction he has been experiencing came from God, even though it was through arrogant oppressors.

The principle is seen in the experience of Israel in the wilderness: God tested them to see if they would obey or not (Deut 8:16).

Ultimately it is God's plan to exalt the righteous and destroy the wicked, but in His wisdom He often humbles the righteous before exalting them.

**For Your word has given me life.**

**Word** (ʿimrâ) Word, utterance, speech, saying, discourse, matter, promise, plan, purpose, decree, command, and appointment.

In the midst of his affliction the psalmist's comfort comes from the promises that God renews life. This does not simply mean preserving his life, but a revival of the inner man with renewed courage to remain faithful.

The promises God made to His people bring comfort and courage—it is the nature of the Word to revive the spiritual life (Ps. 19:7ff).

Only if you know God's promises will they be able to comfort you.



## has given me life

The words “given me life” may be found in several contexts. It may mean—

- To recover from discouragement, as in Genesis 45:27.
- To recover from physical pain, as in Joshua 5:8 and Judges 15:19.

Believers are to remain faithful to God's comforting word even when they are scorned by those who rebel against God's word (v. 51–53)

**51 The proud have me in great derision, *Yet* I do not turn aside from Your law.**

**The proud** זָדַן (*zed*) proud, arrogant, to act in a proud manner. (See 119:21, 51, 69, 78, 85, 122).

The basic idea is a sense of self-importance, which often is exaggerated to include defiance and even rebelliousness, e.g., in Prov 11:2, the “proud” person is set over against the humble.

A similar use is found in Jer 49:16; 50:31–32; Ezek 7:10, with the added implication that God is strongly opposed to such pride.

**have me in great derision** לִיץ (*lits*) *scorn*. to make fun of, mock, taunt. The verb “derision” is related to the word “scorners” in Psalm 1:1.

**Pro 3:34** *Surely He scorns the scornful, But gives grace to the humble.*

The scorner himself may be described as proud and haughty (Prov 21:24), resistant to all reproof (Prov 9:8; 15:12), and hating any rebuke (Prov 13:1).

Wisdom easily eludes him (Prov 14:6).

**A proud and haughty man– “Scoffer” is his name;  
He acts with arrogant pride. (Proverbs 21:24)**

The scoffer, the scorner thinks and acts contrary to God’s revealed truth. He mocks the Word and those who trust in the Word and live by the Word.

# The scoffer, the scornful:

- So despicable is the scorner that he is labeled as an abomination (disgusting thing) to men (Prov 24:9).
- He must be avoided by all who would live godly lives. (Ps 1:1)
- Further, he should be punished by beating so that the easily persuaded naive fool may benefit from the lesson (Prov 19:25; 21:11).

# The scoffer, the scornful:

- To remove contention from a group you must eject the scoffer, and then “strife and reproach will cease” (Prov 22:10).
- A prepared judgment awaits all such scorers (Prov 19:29).
- Their trademark of life has been “to delight” in their scorning (Prov 1:22).
- They shall be brought to nothing and consumed (Isa 29:20; Mal 4:1).

***Yet I do not turn aside from Your law.***

The psalmist and his faith were treated with derision by arrogant unbelievers.

There have always been mockers, and they continue with us today. The psalmist demonstrates how true believers respond: even though this happens he does not turn away from God's laws.



**THE RESPONSE: 119:52–53**

**52 I remembered Your judgments of old, O Lord,  
And have comforted myself.**

**53 Indignation has taken hold of me  
Because of the wicked, who forsake Your law.**

RESPONSE WITH REGARD TO HIMSELF: 119:52

**52 I remembered Your judgments of old, O Lord,  
And have comforted myself.**

He acted on the basis of previously learned truth.

Affliction often leaves no time to go to the Word and learn its truth. Affliction often demands immediate response; therefore, if the Word is not in one's memory through previous learning, it may be too late to learn it.

The order was: preparation, affliction, response.

It was not: affliction, preparation, response.

The psalmist held an absolute view of truth. That which sustained him was “of old.”

“If it’s new it’s not true. If it’s true, it’s not new.”

I remembered זָכַר (zakar)

The psalmist's faithfulness is expressed with the verb "remember" referring to his meditation on and obedience to the word of God.

If people want God to "remember" (i.e., fulfill) His Word, they must "remember" (i.e., obey) His Word.

## Your judgments of old מִשְׁפָּט (mishpat)

What he remembers are the laws and decisions of God, which are here described as “ancient” or of old - עוֹלָם (olam).

**Psa 119:160** The entirety of Your word *is* truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments *endures* forever. עוֹלָם (olam).

**Isa 40:8** The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.“ (olam)

**Ecc 3:11** He has put eternity in their hearts. (olam)

Psa 119:89 Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.

They have stood the test of time through all the conflicts and pains of life. God's Word is eternal—always reliable and never changing.

In this the psalmist takes comfort

**And have comforted myself נַחַם nachham)**

The origin of the root seems to reflect the idea of “breathing deeply,” as with a sigh, so meaning the physical display of one’s feelings, usually sorrow, compassion, or comfort.

This is the love, concern, and comfort extended to someone in time of need; words or actions that relieve grief, sorrow and pain.

“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people” (Isa 40:1).

“Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me” (Psa 23:4)

Being comforted for the dead (2 Sam 10:2; 1 Chr 19:2; Isa 61:2; Jer 16:7; 31:15), consoled for a death of an infant child (2 Sam 12:24), a teen-age son (Gen 37:35), a mother (Gen 24:67), a wife (Gen 38:12) et al. A mother might comfort her child (Isa 66:13),

But it is God who comforts His people (Ps 71:21; 86:17; 119:82; Isa 12:1; 49:13; 52:9).



Here the psalmist comforts himself by going to the Word of God, remembering the promises of God which are eternally written in the Bible.

RESPONSE WITH REGARD TO HIS ENEMIES: 119:53

**53 Indignation has taken hold of me Because of the wicked, who forsake Your law.**

Even though the Word brought comfort, there was also a burning indignation

**Indignation** זַלְעָפָה (*zal'apah*) raging heat. This is a rare word (Ps. 11:6; Lam. 5:10); it can mean a burning, or the effects of the burning (anger).

When the psalmist considers his affliction at the hands of the arrogant, he is more angered that they have no regard for the Word of God than for his own situation.

Those who remember the Word of God naturally have a moral outrage over the ungodly who forsake God's laws.

In the psalms, the believer often identifies with God in a protective manner. It is a “you hate the Lord and I hate you for hating Him” kind of thinking.

**Psa 139:21** Do I not hate them, O LORD, who hate You? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You?

The psalmist is more provoked at the rebellion of men against God than at the trouble they bring to him.

**has taken hold of me -- אָחַז ('achaz) siezed**  
**Because of the wicked רָשָׁע (rasha')**

Wicked people are described as violent, oppressive, greedy, engaged in plotting exploiting poor people, willing to murder to gain their ends; dishonest in business and in the courtroom. See Ex 2:13; Num 35:31; 2 Sam 4:11.

2 Chron 19:2 notes that these people hate the Lord. Malachi 3:18 says that the wicked refuse to serve the Lord.

**The wicked who forsake Your law עֲזַב (*azab*)**  
to depart, to abandon, forsake, and to loose.

Pro 2:13 ... those who leave the paths of  
uprightness To walk in the ways of darkness;

## THE VICTORY: 119:54-55

54 Your statutes have been my songs In the house of my pilgrimage.

**my songs** זְמִירָה (*zamir*) song. “Psalm” comes from the same root.

The focus of this word is on praising the Lord. The people of Israel lift their voices to praise their God as long as they live (Ps 104:33; 146:2).

Often this praise is directed toward the “name” of the Lord, for the “name” stands for God Himself (Ps 18:49; 66:4; 68:4; 18:49; 92:1; 135:3).

According to Ps 119:54 God’s statutes are the theme of his song: Your statutes have been my songs. ....



The ridicule he endured never obscured the song that he had in his heart. God's Word was like a pleasant melody as he experienced the vicissitudes of life. As full of affliction as life may be, God's Word can make the suffering sing, even in the night!

The last part of this stanza provides the explanation. He first states that God's Word brings him joy: "your statutes have been my songs" (cf., Ps. 33:2-4).

Either he sings God's word, or God's Word inspires him to sing. Either way, singing can be an effective way to comfort the troubled soul and renew hope and confidence if those songs are based on the Word of God.

## In the house of my pilgrimage

**my pilgrimage** (or sojourn) refers to the course of his earthly life. The songs were sung during his earthly life and take on a “here and now” tone.

The choice of the word “pilgrimage” reiterates his earlier emphasis that he is a stranger in the earth, a passing guest (v. 19). The words that he sings are filled with hope that goes beyond the sorrows of this world.

**55 I remember Your name in the night, O Lord,  
And I keep Your law.**

This is the third time the word “remember” is used in this file. Here it is reflective, but it gives him hope and joy.

Remembering God’s name in the night means it is forever on his mind, and especially in dark times.

His “name” is a reference to all that God is, His infinite perfections, His infinite character.

# **I remember Your name**

The statement includes at least his meditation on the name of the LORD (see Ps. 20:7) where the verb “remember” is used with the “name of the LORD” to indicate meditation on and confidence in the person and works of the LORD, even in perilous times.

**Psa 30:4 Sing praise to the LORD, You saints of His, And give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name. <sup>5</sup> For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning.**

**And I keep Your law.**

The word of the LORD may fill him with comfort, hope and joy, but it is the name of the LORD that inspires his faithfulness.

After all, the Word reveals the LORD to him. He remembers the name of the LORD.

When he does this, he is inspired to live in obedience to the law. It should be so for all believers that the focus of their meditation should be on the Lord himself.

## THE SUMMARY 119:56

**This has become mine, Because I kept Your precepts.**

The last verse is the sum of the matter. (Literally, “**this** was to / for me.”)

The word “**this**” could refer to God’s blessings as a reward for obedience: “because I have kept your precepts.” Or it could refer to the remembrance of God’s name in the last verse.

The more you keep the precepts of God, the more you **remember** His name.

Comfort, hope and joy come from the LORD through His Word, in spite of the wickedness around us.

The faithful who endure the scorn of the world pray for the fulfillment of God's Word because God is the motivation of their obedience and His Word is the source of their comfort and joy.

All believers sooner or later have to deal with the opposition from the world, as well as the awareness of how the world continues to transgress God's laws openly and shamelessly.



We pray for God to end the trouble by fulfilling His promises; but in the meantime, we must focus our attention on His Word and live out our faith with joy in the midst of evil.

The New Testament confirms that the word of God is eternal (Matt. 24:35) and that it will be fulfilled.

In the meantime, we who believe find comfort in the **“God (who) comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God”** (2 Cor. 1:4).

## SUMMARY:

The psalmist prays for the fulfillment of God's word because it is his comfort and hope in affliction, affirming his faithfulness even when scorned, explaining that God's Word fills him with joy and that God's name inspires his obedience (119:49–56).