

Veterans Day





MEM

Psalm 119:97 – 104



MEM
(Psa. 119:97–104)



Letter Name	Early Hebrew	Middle Hebrew	Late Hebrew	Modern Hebrew
MEM				

Pictograph:

Water

Meanings:

Chaos, Mighty, Blood

Sound:

M

Intense enthusiasm for the Word of God

Psalm 119:97-104

97 Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.

98 You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; For they are ever with me.

99 I have more understanding than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation.

100 I understand more than the ancients, Because I keep Your precepts.

101 I have restrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Your word.

102 I have not departed from Your judgments, For You Yourself have taught me.

103 How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth!

104 Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.

The psalmist meditates on the sweet Word of God that brings him more understanding than the sages of the world and the aged (Psa 119:97–104).

We have a change in the Mem file: there are no petitions, only the psalmist's statements concerning his love for the Word and the discernment he has gained from divine revelation.

These statements are partly wisdom and partly confessions. At first glance they might sound presumptuous, but taken in context they affirm what everyone who is spiritual should be able to affirm.

There are exclamation points in this section of verses (Psa 119:97, 103).

None of these is a prayer, but are all enthusiastic words of praise for the Word of God – thus the theme: Intense enthusiasm for the Word of God.

The main theme unfolds in the first few verses. The psalmist exclaims how he loves divine instruction, a love that speaks of devotion and commitment (see Ps. 119:113, 163).

This love for God's law prompts him to meditate in it all day long (see Psa 1:2), meaning that he reads it, studies it, and then applies it to his life.

Those who are spiritually oriented love the Word because it brings them more wisdom and understanding than the world could ever offer (Psa 119:97–100).

The primary benefit of study in God's Word is that it brings a wisdom that is superior to any earthly knowledge. He begins by stating that God's commands make him wiser than his enemies.

This wisdom is characterized by righteousness and justice and begins with the fear of the LORD.

It opens up a way of living skillfully in a fallen world, helping people to avoid the dangers and pitfalls of life.

Living by God's command has made the psalmist wiser than his enemies, for by rejecting the law of God they have proven to be fools.

The psalmist is never without the instructions of God—they are his everlasting possession.

Psalm 119:97 Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.

The word “how” is an exclamatory word and introduces the tone of these eight lines.

love אָהַב ('aheb) The verb love has a wide range of usage. It is used of God's love for His children and is thus immeasurable. On the other hand, it may express the love of a glutton for food.

People may love things concrete or abstract. Isaac “loved” savory meat (Gen 27:4); others are said to “love” silver (Eccl 5:9), and gifts (Isa 1:23).

The psalmist “loved” God’s commandments (Ps 119:47), law (v. 97), testimonies (v. 119), and precepts (v. 159).

Men can “love” evil (Ps 32:3),
death (Prov 8:36),
vanity (Ps 4:2),
cursing (Ps 109:17),
a false oath (Zech 8:17).

Or they can “love” good (Amos 5:15),
truth and peace (Zech 8:19),
salvation (Ps 40:16),
and wisdom (Prov 29:3).

The psalmist's love for God's Word is a theme that runs throughout the psalm. It is found in Psa 119:47, 97, 119, 159.

These lines begin with an expression of love for God's Word and end with an affirmation of hatred for every evil way.

Where there is true love for God will also be a genuine hatred for evil.

Psalm 119:97 Oh, how I love Your law! It *is* my meditation all the day.

meditation שִׁיחָה (sikhah) meditation, prayer.

It is used of silent reflection on God's works (Ps 77:8; 9:12), and God's Word (Ps 119:15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 148).

It is also used of rehearsing aloud God's works (I Chr 16:9 [talk]; Ps 105:2; 145:5).

If the subject, however, is painful, it is translated “to complain” (Ps 55:17; Job 7:11). One can “talk disparagingly” (Ps 69:12).

It is possible to “meditate” on the wrong things. That is why David prays in Psalm 19:14: “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.”

It *is* my meditation all the day.

His meditation goes on all the day. The Word of God was part of his daily routine—not just “in my Bible study” or “during my quiet time” but all day.

No matter how demanding the circumstances of your life may be, if the Word of God is part of your thinking, it makes life simple. The Word informs your thinking and your speaking.

WISDOM OF GOD'S WORD Psa 119:98-102

A Wisdom Superior to His Enemies Psa 119:98

Psalm 119:98 You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; For they *are* ever with me.

What is the reason for the presence of enemies?
The psalmist has enemies because of a conflict in beliefs. His values and norms are determined by the Word of God, and he is not afraid to say so.

His enemies hated his scriptural orientation. It is impossible to assert the truth of God's Word without creating hostile enemies in the world ...

The wisdom that made the Old Testament unique was based on special revelation from the one true God. The Old Testament revealed God to be personal and practical, not philosophical and abstract.

Moses told the nation of Israel that obedience to God's Word would be their wisdom in the presence of other nations.

“So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people’”
(Deuteronomy 4:6).

You ... make me wiser חָכָם (khakam) be wise, act wisely. This is related to *chokma*, wisdom.

The essential idea of this word indicates a manner of thinking and attitude concerning life's experiences, including matters of general interest and basic morality. These concerns relate to prudence in secular affairs, skills in the arts, moral sensitivity, and experience in the ways of the Lord.

The wisdom of the Bible is distinct from other ancient world views. Bible wisdom is the teaching of a personal God who is holy and just and who expects those who know Him to exhibit His character in the affairs of life.

This is distinct from the speculative wisdom of the Greeks. The ethical dynamic of Greek philosophy lay in the intellect; if a person had perfect knowledge, he could live the good life (Plato).

You, **through Your commandments**, make me wiser than my enemies.

This wisdom was not theoretical and speculative. It was practical, based on revealed principles of right and wrong to be lived out in daily life. Biblical wisdom emphasizes ethical and spiritual conduct.

The one who hears (Prov 8:33; 23:19; 27:11), will be industrious, will know how to talk, and his decisions will be in line with God's thinking. This wins divine approbation.

For they *are* ever with me.

God's commandments are always with him because he meditates on them. He isn't simply carrying them around in a Bible.

They are part of his thinking. This requires learning and memorizing Scripture.

A Wisdom Superior to His teachers Psa 119:99

Psalm 119:99: I have more understanding than all my teachers, For Your testimonies *are* my meditation.

understanding שָׂכַל (*sakal*) *wise(ly)*,
understand, prosper. The verb *understanding* refers to the ability to think through a complex array of thoughts and come to a common sense, practical conclusion. The end result of this kind of insight is success.

The word is used in Isaiah 52:13 of the work of the Messiah saying, “My servant will deal prudently ...” (same as the word *insight* in Psa 119:99).

I have more understanding than all my teachers

Who are his teachers? It makes no sense to think they are those who have taught him the Word of God. Is he saying he knows the Word of God better than those who teach him the Word of God?

It is better to understand his teachers to be those who were merely students of human opinion who did not have the Word. The student who knows the Scriptures is wiser than those who know only the philosophy of man.

Any instruction in ethical matters or the basic issues of life which is not based on God's law is inferior. He is rightly acknowledging that God is the great teacher, and that His law is superior to all other sources of wisdom and knowledge.

It is not arrogance for him to claim insight superior to his teachers. Why?

For Your testimonies *are* my meditation.

Same word as in verse 97.

He is not claiming superior intellect but learned insight. His insight was due to the objective nature of the Word of God. Wisdom was not his by birth but by grace from God through His Word.

The psalmist is not claiming to have more insight than every teacher but that the true source of wisdom and spiritual insight is from God.

A Wisdom Superior to His Elders Psa 119:100

Psalm 119:100 I understand more than the ancients, Because I keep Your precepts.

understand בִּין (bîn) understand, consider, perceive, to have insight, to discern. This includes the concept of making distinctions that leads to understanding. This is knowledge which is superior to the mere gathering of data. It is necessary to know how to use knowledge you possess.

more than the ancients זָקֵן (zaqen) old.

Usually, in the Old Testament, this would be those who are older than 60.

Wisdom should come with age. But this assumes that many years have been spent in learning and meditating on the Word of God. Age should bring wisdom; but, unfortunately, for most, it only brings wrinkles and grey hair.

The reference here is probably not to the qualified, godly elders of the community, but simply to “old men.” They base their decisions on lifelong experiences, but true prudence comes from using the Word of the LORD in all decisions.

Here, too, the point is that obedience to the law of the Lord is better than the knowledge of the world. Proverbs tells us that the beginning of knowledge is the fear of the LORD (Prov 1:7).

The psalmist claims to be wiser than his enemies, have more insight than his teachers, and understand more than the old men. The repeated reason for this is his meditation on and obedience to the law of the LORD. He is never without it. It is an integral part of his thinking

Those who are spiritual avoid the evil ways of the world because God has taught them by His Word (Psa 119:101–102)

Psalm 119:101 I have restrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Your word.

I have restrained my feet from every evil way כָּלֵא
(kala') withhold, shut up, keep back, refrain, forbid.

The basic meaning of this root is to restrict the flow or movement of a thing or person. It indicates the interruption of something that is in progress or would naturally be in progress.

Wisdom is not intellectual but moral. From the perspective of the Word of God, no man is wise who is not also good.

The words of James 3:13 are in complete agreement, asking us, “*Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.*”

The result of this meditation in God's word, and the evidence of his wisdom and understanding, is an obedient life. By God's Word he has learned to avoid evil. He states that he has refrained his feet from every evil way, that is, he has kept himself from entering into actions that are evil.

Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You! Ps 119:11

That I may keep Your word.

The word *that* is used to introduce purpose and intent. He refrains from evil for the very purpose of keeping God's Word.

James 1:21 says, *“Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.”*

Psalm 119:102 I have not departed from Your judgments, For You Yourself have taught me.

I have not departed שׁוּר (sur) to turn aside, abandon, retreat. He is not claiming to be sinless, but that he holds to God's judgments as his standard.

For You Yourself have taught me.

The reason that he stays on the right path and chooses to do the right things is that God has taught him to do so.

“You have taught me” is related to the Hebrew word for “law”. His instruction comes from God through His Word.

It is not trite to say, “Sin keeps us from the Word, or the Word keeps us from sin.” Faithfulness to the Word has a direct connection to being taught the Word.

Those who are spiritual find God's Word pleasing because it brings them understanding to avoid false ways (Psa 119:103–104)

Psalm 119:103 How sweet are Your words to my taste, *Sweeter* than honey to my mouth!

Once again, the word “how” is exclamatory. Sweetness is a metaphor for pleasure. The psalmist has a sanctified sweet tooth. What a joy! Eat all the sweets you want!

Sweet מַלֵּץ (malats) be smooth, slippery, with the idea of something pleasant

to my taste כֶּהךְ (khek) **palate, mouth.**

Like honey in my mouth

This image was first introduced in Psalm 19:10; it describes the Word of the LORD as desirable and enjoyable—what honey was to his palate, God’s words were to his heart.

Psalm 119:104 Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.

I get understanding; בִּין (bîn) understand, consider, perceive, be prudent. As in v 99.

By meditating on the Word, he gains true understanding; he can see the world as it really is. He can understand why people do the things that they do, and he can see the ultimate consequences of a person's actions.

Therefore I hate every false way.

Hate שִׂנְאָה (sane') hate

It expresses an emotional attitude toward persons and things which are detested and despised and with which one wishes to have no contact or relationship. It is, therefore, the opposite of love.

Love draws and unites, hate separates and keeps distant. The hated things or persons are considered foes or enemies.

The pleasure derived from meditation in God's word brought about spiritual understanding that caused him to hate every false way.

By *false* he means any course of action that is wrong or unprofitable. Every path that leads away from the will of God is false.

Similarly, Proverbs reminds us that one of the results of fearing the LORD is to hate evil (Prov 8:13).

Orientation to the Word of God produces hatred. He does not say he disagrees with the false way—he says he hates it.

If you have understanding of the Word of God, you will hate the false way.

No matter what the pressure, the psalmist never lost his ability to focus on the Word (Psa 119:22, 42, 51, 61, 69, 78, 83, 87).