

*The
Romance
of the
Hebrew
Alphabet*

G. E. Mansfield

LOGOS

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1 בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ : והארץ
 2 היתה תהו ובהו וחשך על-פני תהום ורוח
 3 אלהים מרחפת על-פני המים : ויאמר אלהים יהי אור ויהי-
 4 אור : וברא אלהים את האור ביום טוב ויהי-
 5 ה האור ובין החשך : ויקרא אלהים ביום הראשון אלהים בין
 6 לילה ויהי-ערב ויהי-בקר יום אחד : ויאמר אלהים יהי
 7 למים : ויעש אלהים את הרקיע בתוך המים ויהי מבדיל בין מים
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 16 עשה-פרי אשר זרעו-בו למינהו וברא אלהים ביום טוב :

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The Beauty of Language

HAVE you ever thought of learning a foreign language? It is not really as difficult as you might imagine. In fact, you have already learnt one: for you were not born with the facility of speech, and had to be taught from the very beginning. This means that by the time you were about 18 months old you had already learned to speak a foreign tongue, called the English language!

Next in importance to your mother-tongue is the language of the Bible: **Hebrew** — one of the most ancient, yet a modern language known and used today in the land of Israel. It is yet to become the only language throughout the earth, for when the Lord Jesus Christ returns, he will turn all people to a “pure language” as is prophesied in Zephaniah 3:9. The Hebrew word *barar*, translated “pure” in that verse, signifies “to brighten, clarify, polish.” How true this will be when in the future age the speech of people will be of value; words will mean so much more than the frivolous utterances of today. The language of the kingdom will help to “brighten” life, and lift the standards of expression and understanding.

Many believe that Hebrew is a difficult language to learn, but that is not so. Moreover the benefits of knowing even a little Hebrew are very great for students of the Bible. At least it helps you to use a Concordance better, and to understand some of the words we frequently use in the reading of the Scriptures: *Yahweh, Elohim, Ruach, Sheol, Eloah*, and so forth.

When opening your Bible to Psalm 119, you will find that it is divided into 22 parts. At the head of each section is a strange sign and a word: **Ⲁ** *Aleph*, **ⲁ** *Beth*, **Ⲃ** *Gimel*, and so on. The signs are the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and the words are the comparable English names of those letters.

Israeli boys and girls do not learn the alphabet as we do: *A, B, C, D*, and so on. They learn the words that are given to the Hebrew letters: *Aleph, Beth, Gimel, Daleth*, etc.

A language is made up of consonants and vowels. Our English language has 26 letters, most of which are consonants, for five only are vowels, as follows: *a, e, i, o, u*. The vowels are busy little fellows, for most words are made up of one or more of them. For example, “hat” is distinguishable from “hit,” “hot,” and “hut” because of the presence of the vowel “a.” Sometimes the vowel in English will seek help from a fellow-vowel, and so we have “heat” (rather than “hat”) and “house” (rather than “hose”).

Originally the Hebrew language was written without any vowel signs, and therefore *all the letters are consonants*, but one consonant was also used for two vowel sounds. The vowels were added shortly after apostolic times, when the Jews were driven from their land. They were added because Hebrew was no longer a spoken language, and those interested in it had to remember how to pronounce the written words.

The Hebrew vowels are not proper letters: they appear only as marks above or below the letters to indicate how the word written should be spoken. The vowel signs are placed in connection with the letter after which they are pronounced; e.g., the Hebrew word *yad* meaning “hand” would have the “a” sign placed under the “y” letter. In early times these vowel points were not used, and the Jews would write the Hebrew equivalent of “ht” (חַת) for “hat.” You might imagine that this is a difficulty, but it is even done in English today. A skilled stenographer never uses vowels in shorthand writing, but only consonants, and yet she can read her work without trouble. After all, if we wrote that we were going “to put our *ht* on our head” you would hardly imagine that we were writing about our “hut,” for you would instinctively know it was our “hat” to which we are referring.

When learning Hebrew, you must understand the difference between it and English. When reciting: A, B, C, D... only the letters come to your mind. You think of the letter A, the letter B, the letter C, and so on. But when the Jewish boy or girl recites *Aleph, Beth, Gimel, Daleth*, etc., they are reciting words, not merely letters. They do that because the letters were originally pictures, and the names describe these pictures.

The first letter, *Aleph*, is in the form of an *oxhead*, the first picture to be seen in the field. *Beth* signifies a *house*, and the letter resembles a house. *Gimel* means *camel*, and the letter outlines its appearance. Thus, Hebrew is a pictorial language, expressing itself in vivid pictures, and invites those using it to imagine the scenes it describes. Significantly every one of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet depicts Jesus Christ in some relationship. He is the “Word made flesh” the “*alpha and omega*” (Rev 1:8), the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Thus he is the *Aleph*, the Ox, or burden bearer; the *Beth*, the House, or spiritual abode, and so on.

There has been a change in the form of the Hebrew letters. Those used in Israel today, and in which the Hebrew Bible is printed, are what is called “square character” writing. This differs from the shape of original Hebrew letters such as were used in the ninth and eighth centuries before Christ. Gradually, a more convenient form of writing was evolved, and by about the third century BC, the square character letters were in general use.

We propose to explain and describe each Hebrew letter, and if you learn to identify them, you will have taken the first step toward both reading and speaking Hebrew. But, more importantly, if you understand the background to the Hebrew alphabet, you will come to appreciate more the glory and wonder of the Inspired Word of God, and become more familiar with the steps that will lead to the development of the “whole man” of the spirit (Ecc. 12:13).

— *Graham E. Mansfield.*

A Vivid Language of Action

We take many words for granted, and use them without perhaps being conscious of their true meaning or why we use them in the way we do. If we take the trouble to seek the derivation of words in a dictionary, we will find our speech and understanding of language greatly enhanced. That is particularly so with Hebrew words, for they are very picturesque in their usage and meanings.

Importance of Words

Each word, in any language, actually represents the seed-germ of an idea. A person who is careful in thought will also be careful in speech, because he will desire to clearly reveal the significance of what he is saying. Unfortunately, many people today are sloppy in speech, caused by the sad decline in education and in the general influence of worldly trends, encouraging idleness and self-expression. Young people do not generally pronounce words correctly, or go to the trouble of ascertaining their exact meaning. Indeed the attraction of slang and modernism in expression seems to become more popular as the quality of language diminishes.

The peculiar charm of eastern languages is their expressiveness. Take, for example, modern Burmese. In that language, "to marry" is to erect a house; a gun is called "the demon of death;" to faint is described as "dying a little death;" a man living on a pension is called "an eater of repose;" and a person of independent means is one who "sits and eats."

The Hebrew language is even more expressive and romantic. It is a direct, vivid native expression of action, and often this vividness is lost in the English translation.

Take, for example, the word "grave" in the Old Testament. It is a translation of the Hebrew *sheol*, and relates to a "covered place," hence, the grave — for "hell," as it is often rendered, describes a place that can be dug (Amos 9:2), such as the pit into which Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were taken (Num. 16:30, 33).

But what does the word actually mean?

The Significant Word "Sheol"

It comes from the root *shael* signifying "to enquire; to demand," hence "to summon all." The word therefore denotes something, or someone, never satisfied, constantly demanding, always calling, with mouth ever open! How significant when aligned with the grave! It is never satisfied; it continues to summon all; it holds all in its grasp! The wise man declared: "There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, It is enough." And the first he lists is the grave, *sheol*.

The name "Saul" (which signifies: *Asked of*) is derived from the same root as

sheol. No wonder Saul of Tarsus preferred to change his name to “Paul”!

It is not hard, therefore, to see why the Hebrew word for “grave” should have as its meaning, *never satisfied; always demanding; summoning all*. The use of the word reminded the Hebrew of what the future inevitably held out for him! This should have exhorted him to apply his mind wisely to that fact. It is clear that this meaning is more expressive than that applied to the English word, “grave.”

The Pleasure of Discovery

Hebrew always conveys inner meanings, and much pleasure and profit can be derived in searching these out. To find the hidden meaning, we have to go to the *root*, that is, the idea from which it was built up. That is not hard to do, even though you might not know Hebrew. In subsequent chapters we will show you how to go about it, and, therefore, get greater pleasure and profit from your Bible.

Examples to Explain

We take one Hebrew word to illustrate what we mean. The Hebrew *sa'ar* is from a root that means *to shudder*, to *make one's hair stand on end*, hence, *to be rough*. Therefore, *se'ar* means the hair of the head; *sa'ir* is a he-goat, because of its shaggy coat; *se'orah* is barley, because of its bearded ears, or hair which grows from each grain, being its chief distinction from wheat.

Take another word. *Da'bbabh* means *to go slowly, or to creep*, so we get *dobh*, a bear which goes slowly, and *dib'bah*, a slanderer such as creeps from house to house.

Dudh is a root meaning *to boil up*, and from that idea comes *dodh*, expressing the warm passion of love; thus, *dudh*, a pot in which things are boiled, whilst *Da'vid*, signifies: *Beloved*, the fulness of feeling. At first sight it might be difficult to see the connection between David and a pot, but the root word reveals the link: *fervour*!

Hebrew, therefore, is a very vivid language of action. Its words are picturesque, descriptive, and poetic.

Conflict in Translation

In Job 4:21 the AV has: “Does not their excellency which is in them go away?” The RV, however, renders it: “Is not their tent-cord plucked up within them?” The word *yether* (translated “excellency” in the AV, or “tent-cord” in the RV) comes from the root *ya'thar* and signifies *to be redundant, to have abundance*, and so *to be excellent*. But it can also mean *something in addition, something trickling over, or hanging down* like a rope, hence a tent-cord which keeps the tent in place. In 2Tim. 4:6, Paul speaks of his approaching death as his *analysis* (Greek), the loosing of the tent-cord.

The root *sus* means *to leap for joy*. So *sus* is the usual word for *horse*, because it portrays the animal prancing up and down along the road. But the same word is used for a swallow which swiftly darts up and down as it flies; whilst *sas* is a moth, that flits and flutters through the air.

“Little children” is a descriptive word to us because of the trusting ways evident in the young. But the Hebrew portrays a more moving picture in the word *taph*, which means *tripping lightly and happily*.

The word *ba'qar* denotes *to cleave, open, plough*. So we get *ba'qar*, the ox used for ploughing, and *bo'quer*, the dawn or breaking of the day. The root word extends into a variety of meanings, expressions and illustrations.

There may not appear to be much in common between the ideas of binding things together and of being a widow, but the word for widow (*al'ma'nah*) is derived from the root *a-lam*, to bind. The word was used for binding the tongue, and so being silent. Hence the Hebrew for “widow” means literally *the silent or solitary one*.

Gen. 32:24 records, “Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.” The word “wrestling” comes from the root *a'bhaq*, which means *dust*, and implies that in the great night of prayer the two men wrestled together so hard that they made a cloud of dust around them as the struggle continued. The Hebrew word can have the meaning of something floating away as into vapour.

By carefully examining such Hebrew words it can be seen that a great deal of pleasure and profit is obtained by searching out the meaning of words in the Bible.

But can we do it ourselves, seeing we do not have an understanding of the Hebrew language? In measure, we can. *Strong's Concordance* will help us. Let us take one word and search it through.

Consider the word “law.” The Psalmist said: “O how love I Thy law, it is my meditation all the day” (Psa. 119:97). *Strong's Concordance* lists the number 8541 against this word. Turn to that number in the Hebrew Dictionary at the back of the concordance, and you will discover that the word *torah* signifies “a precept or statute,” and is derived “from 3384.” Turning to that number reveals that the root word *yara* signifies *to rain, to throw, aim, or shoot* an arrow, and so, *to teach*. What does this mean? It denotes that whatever *torah* is, it is productive of good, as of growth through rain; it is something which aims at an objective; that which is designed to teach. *Torah*, then, means more than merely “law,” as we use the term; it denotes direction, instruction, teaching. To us, law defines restrictions, limitations, regulations; but *torah* goes further, and expresses revelation and education as well. It is like rain, so essential to produce fruit; it is like an arrow, pointing to an objective. Thus the Psalmist could say: “Oh how I love Thy law, it is my meditation all the day.” To him, the *torah* was the revelation of Yahweh, and not merely a code of restrictions and limitations set down for the guidance of man in his relations with God or his fellowmen. Hence the root word for *torah* is translated “teachers” in Pro. 5:13; Isa. 30:20; and “archer” (because his arrow points the way) in 2Chr. 35:23 and elsewhere.

How do we know this?

Again *Strong's Concordance* helps. Note at the conclusion of the explanation of the word *yara* are the words: "archer, cast, direct, inform, instruct, lay, show, shoot, teach, etc." This indicates that the root word *yara* has been translated in those different ways throughout the O.T. in the AV. All you have to do is look up those words, and note where the figure 3384 occurs.

This takes a little time, but the fruits are well worthwhile.

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy Word. — Psalm 119:9

Using a Concordance

The Proverbs declare that “every Word of God is pure” (Pro. 30:5). This statement is both important and significant. Pure food cannot be made more pure by adding something to it, or extracting anything from it. In fact, this would either corrupt or weaken it. God’s Word is like that, and we must accept it as it is. The Psalms harmonise with Proverbs in praising the purity of God’s Word (Psa. 12:6). They liken it to pure honey (Psa. 19:10), which is a most valuable food. It satisfies, soothes and strengthens. It is claimed that honey will impart energy to the body more quickly than any other food. In addition it acts as a purifier expelling poisons, and so assists to impart health. In likening God’s Word to honey, therefore, the Bible recommends it as a source of soothing spiritual strength and health.

Moreover, in stating that “*every word of God is pure,*” it implies that the very words of Scripture are important. And the more one searches out the meaning and significance of such, the more this becomes apparent.

The importance of words is demonstrated by the use that is given them in the scripture. Frequently a teaching is argued on the use of a single word. For example, Christ completely silenced his critics by drawing attention to a single word of the Old Testament: David’s use of the term “Lord” (Mat. 22:45).

The Lord had asked his critics to declare their opinion as to whose Son Christ would be. They answered: “The son of David.” The answer was correct as far as it went, but it was not altogether complete. Christ is more than the son of David; he is also the Son of God. At his first advent, he was the manifestation of Yahweh in the midst of His people.

But the Jewish rabbis rejected the teaching that God could have a Son: they viewed such doctrine as “blasphemy.” The Lord, however, proved it by the use of the single word: “**Lord.**” He drew attention to the statement of Psalm 110:1, “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at My right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”

“How could David call him Lord, if he were only his son?” was the question Jesus asked his critics. They were silenced by his logic. The Law of Moses required that children “honour their father and mother,” and, accordingly, no father would call his son, “Lord.” Yet David does so in the Psalm quoted by the Master, proving that the Messiah was to be more than the son of David; he was also to be the Son of God. Jesus proved this by the use of a single word.

Note that the Bible prints the first “LORD” of Psalm 110:1 differently from the way the second use of the word is printed: “Lord.” Discriminating students will recognise that the first word in the Hebrew is *Yahweh*, whilst the second word is

Adon. The Memorial Name of Deity signifies “He who shall be [revealed, or manifested], whereas *Adon* signifies “Ruler, Governor.” Thus the Lord Jesus correctly interpreted Psalm 110:1, showing that David’s “Ruler” (*Adon*) was commissioned by *Yahweh*, to “sit at His right hand.” Since the *Adon* was also David’s son, according to the flesh, Jesus was able to demonstrate to his detractors that the Psalm predicts that the Messiah would be from the seed of David, and yet also be Son of God.

The astute question of Jesus shows that the significance of the very words of Scripture is most important. Great care needs to be exercised in ascertaining their exact meaning.

Significant Words

Paul also established divine truth on the use of the single word “*all*” in the statement: “Thou hast put *all* things in subjection under his feet” (Heb. 2:8). He argues that this means that Christ must return to bring all things into subjection, and therefore, the conquests of the Lord are, as yet, not at an end.

He draws upon the use of the words “*my brethren*” as found in Psa. 22:22 to demonstrate that Christ, in the days of his flesh, must have possessed a nature common to those he was born to save.

In Heb. 12:27, Paul takes the statement of Haggai the prophet “*once more*” to show that Jerusalem, which was about to be overthrown, will not be totally destroyed, but will be rebuilt in the future after the battle of Armageddon. It will then become “the city of the Great King.”

Many other examples can be given showing that doctrine and teaching can be proved by the use of single words of Scripture. How important, then, to observe the use of these powerful little words, and to discern their full significance.

Examining the Actual Meaning

A word of warning is necessary when using a concordance. Often the *literal* meaning of a word is given without regard to the context, or the idiom of the Hebrew language. The context in which a word is found, or the idiom of the language, will assist in determining its true significance.

Let us illustrate this with a rather drastic example. A French tourist and an Englishman were travelling in a train in England. Excited at the experience, the French tourist had his face out of the window enjoying the scenery. But the Englishman knew that the train was rapidly approaching a narrow tunnel, and urgently called to the Frenchman, “Look out!” The Frenchman, knowing only the literal meaning of the words used, put his head out even further in his excitement in order to “look out.” But the outcome was clear: his head was knocked off by the tunnel!

Figuratively, that is possible also if we apply the literal meaning of words too strongly, without application to their idiomatic, or contextual significance. By idiomatic, we mean what the Englishman thought to convey when he said, “Look

out!" He did not mean to look outside at all, but the very reverse! He meant, "Pull your head in!" By "contextual" we mean the background of a given word. In the case of the Englishman above, it had relation to the approaching tunnel, conveyed by the urgent tone of his voice, when he called "Look out!"

Sometimes it can be difficult to determine the real meaning, and then we have to seek an opinion. We will show some examples of this further on in our exposition.

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee. Blessed art thou, O Yahweh: teach me Thy statutes. — Psalm 119:11-12

Working with Words

So important are the inspired words of Scripture that oftentimes the teaching of the apostles was based upon the significance of a single word. Therefore, a good analytical concordance is invaluable in introducing a student to the meaning of Hebrew and Greek words, even though he might be entirely ignorant of the languages themselves. Let us explain how the reader's knowledge can be enriched, and his understanding of God's Word increased, by the use of a concordance.

To Bless or to Curse?

Consider the word "bless" in the Bible. We probably believe that we understand the significance of such a simple word, and therefore read it wherever it might appear without much thought.

But let us examine it further using *Strong's Concordance*. Against the word "bless" is the number **1288**, which directs us to the *Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary* at the back of the concordance, where the same number will provide the details of the word. It shows that the Hebrew word is *barak*, and that it signifies *to kneel* as an act of adoration, as men do when they worship God; thus *to bless*. But then we read in the same definition that the Hebrew word can also mean *curse!* In the Dictionary we find the following after the meaning of the word has been given; and all the words that follow the punctuation mark are the different renderings of the word in the Authorised Version: ":- x abundantly, x altogether, x at all, blaspheme, bless, congratulate, curse x greatly, x indeed, kneel (down), praise, salute, x still, thank."

This shows that the Hebrew *barak* is rendered both "bless" and "curse"! We turn back to the concordance proper, and look now under the word "curse," and there, sure enough, is the number **1288** associated with this word! Notice that it is translated "cursed" in Job 1:5; 2:9 and elsewhere. Job 1:5 records the words of faithful Job: "It may be that my sons have sinned, and *cursed* God in their hearts."

This is a most unusual use of the word *barak*, yet the context of the verse demands the rendition of "curse" and not "bless," for Job would hardly have been upset with his sons "blessing" God in their hearts.

Some believe that the word is used in this context because of an idiom of language. They claim that as men blessed their friends on bidding them adieu, the word got the idiomatic meaning of "dismissing" or "renouncing" one. Used in that sense, Job was concerned lest his sons drove God out of their minds, figuratively bidding Him goodbye. Others (among them J. Strong) believe that the expression was used as a mere euphemism (the substitution of a different significance to that of the original meaning of the word) such as when a person

might use the expressions: “*Bless* the foolish man!” “What a *blessed* nuisance!”

Lest this seem a little confusing, please remember that there are English words that have double meanings, and require the context to decide the exact significance. For example, the word “sanguine” can mean hopeful, glowing, or bloodthirsty, depending upon the context. The word “light” can relate to a weight, to that which is easy, or to the flame of a lamp.

Remember, too, that we use idioms of language, and we gave an example of this in our last chapter, in which we described the problem when the Frenchman took literally the warning of the Englishman to “Look out!” and got his head knocked off!

The same Hebrew word *barak* rendered “bless” in many places (see Psa. 5:12; 16:7, etc.) is rendered “curse” in ch. 2:9, where Job’s wife is represented as saying, “*Curse* God and die.” The rendering of the word by “curse” in this context has puzzled commentators who cannot understand any wife speaking in such a blasphemous manner; and especially a wife who remained with her husband throughout his terrible anguish, because only she of the original family, appears in ch. 42, and continues to provide her husband with support and with children. The Revised Version has softened the word without changing the meaning, and has rendered Job 2:9 as “*Renounce* God and die.”

Some have changed the pointing (the indication of vowels) of the word, in order to render it: Humble thyself before God for thou art dying.” The context, however, can permit us rejecting that rendition, for Job would hardly respond to such an appeal as he does in the following verse: “Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh...”

Can we soften the comment of Job’s wife without having to change the word (as those do who vary the pointing or vowels of the Hebrew), and, at the same time, put her comment in a different light? And remember, she was with Job to the last, and shared with him the divine favour that was finally bestowed on him. Therefore, she was not an evil woman; only a misunderstanding one.

Let us, therefore, in Job. 2:9, alter the word “curse” to “bless,” as the Hebrew permits us to do of the word *barak*, and we have a satisfactory explanation of what she said. It can be rendered: “Doest thou still retain your integrity, blessing God and dying?”

Thus, Job’s wife is represented as enquiring of Job as to what benefit does he derive from blessing God, for he is dying anyway. Her question then becomes the very natural reaction of a woman who has suffered much, and cannot understand the purpose of the discipline forced upon her family. She has been bereaved of her children, learned of the destruction of her family fortune, and now observes her husband stricken with a deadly and repulsive disease, and at death’s door. Where is the value of their religion? Though Job has been foremost in bowing the

knee to God, he is dying; and as far as she was concerned, they had been let down by God.

Job's response is in accordance with such a change in the text: "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10)

Searching with the Help of the Concordance: The "Company of the Prophets"

Consider a further example of the value of using *Strong's Concordance*. In 1Sam. 10:5 we read of the "company of prophets" over whom Samuel presided. We are intrigued at the description. What does it mean? We turn to the concordance and look up the word "company."

The first thing we notice is that there are various different Hebrew words all translated "company." This is indicated by different numbers alongside the passages cited: **4264**, **6951**, **736**, and so forth. This is intriguing, even exciting, and we make a note in our notebook to later compare the meanings and usages of these different words.

Returning to the concordance, we next notice that the word "company" in 1Sam. 10:5 has an asterisk * alongside it as well as the number **2256**. The use of the asterisk is to inform us that the Revised Version has rendered the Hebrew word differently from the way in which it appears in the Authorised Version.

Perhaps we have not a Revised Version. Never mind, all such changes are found in the *Comparative Concordance* section in some editions of *Strong's Concordance*, located just before the *Dictionary*. And there we learn that the alternative translation is "bands" instead of "companies." We make a note of this and pursue our investigations.

Turning to the *Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary* at the back of the concordance, it reveals that the Hebrew word is *chebel* (pronounced *khay-bel*), and signifies *a rope*. We are even more mystified. But the *Dictionary* explains that the word can be used for a "measuring line," and therefore can relate to a country, or district, as *measured off* for some purpose as by a measuring line, or a rope. Returning to the *Main Concordance*, we check under the name "country." Here, the number **2256** is given at the quotation from Deu. 3:14, "...Manasseh took all the *country* of Argob."

The use of *chebel* as signifying *rope* in this context means that Manasseh took all the country that had been *measured off* by the "measuring line" for Argob.

Does that mean that the "company of the prophets" was a group of prophets measured off, and separated from other people? That is certainly one sense in which the term can be used. The "company of the prophets" were a separated class within Israel; they stood apart as an example for all others, being appointed to that exclusive community.

Keeping this in mind, we turn back to the *Dictionary*, and learn that in a

figurative sense, the word can relate to a company as *tied together* (hence the significance of “rope”). Here is a further explanation: the “company [*chebel*] of prophets” formed a group measured off, or separated from the people as a whole, and *tied together* with a common objective. The *Dictionary* additionally explains that the word is derived from the root found under word # **2254**.

The root meaning of the word defines its basic significance. From it, all related meanings spring like shoots from a single seed. Word # **2254** is *chabal*, and signifies to *wind* tightly as a rope.

We “think on these things” (Phil. 4:8). What is a piece of rope? It is made up of a large number of individual threads twisted together for added strength. Each strand can be easily snapped if taken from the whole, but entwined together in a thick rope will resist the strain of powerful men who might engage upon a tug-of-war contest.

We go back in thought to the company of prophets under Samuel, and gather together all these related meanings. They comprised a group of people *measured off* from the main concourse of Israel; they were *tied together* with a common objective; and they *closely co-operated* together as individual strands, so that though they were in a minority in Israel, they could effectively resist those who would destroy their influence.

The company of prophets gathered by Samuel were a group of men who had *banded together* (note the R.V. meaning) as the strands of a rope are braided together with a common objective under their leader, Samuel.

The word “prophet” indicates the purpose of their mutual association. A prophet is one who forth-tells the will of Yahweh as well as fore-telling His purpose. The prophets not only proclaimed what the future would reveal; they also fearlessly exhorted the people to listen and obey the Word and Will of Yahweh. Thus “the company (*chebel*) of the prophets” were a group of men joined together to proclaim the will of God at a time when both Government and Priesthood had turned aside from the right way. The “company” realised that in unity there was strength; hence their witness and testimony, so they joined themselves together as strands of twine are twisted together to make rope. Their unity of purpose gave them power, and in the face of such, Saul and others were rendered helpless.

As Samuel had his “company of prophets,” so did the Lord, though we know them as “apostles.” They were joined together as one, and because of their united strength, the Truth was effectively proclaimed and ecclesias everywhere established. Now, faithful ecclesias repeat in these last days the same principle of unity, when they band together to uphold the Truth, and to preserve it from danger and destruction.

The Wonder of Words Standing at the Tabernacle

In introducing these meaningful words, consider the marvel of the Mosaic

tabernacle, and the beauty of the spiritual lessons revealed therein. It stood in the very heart of Israel: its white linen walls presented a graphic contrast to the thousands of black tents occupied by the people, that clustered around it (though separated from it by a short distance).

Yahweh was instructing His people to come before Him circumspectly and with dignity. He separated the tabernacle from them, to show them that He was holy, and apart from flesh, and their worship should be likewise. He placed the tabernacle in the midst of the nation, to teach that His wisdom and glory must be the principal focus of their lives.

To enforce those lessons we learn that the further we proceed within the precincts of the tabernacle, the fewer the people there. Outside the linen walls were thousands of Israelites, all of whom had the opportunity to worship if they so desired. They could come to the entrance of the court, and bring their offerings with them. But they could not go any further. The Levites waited for them there, and they ministered to the priests at the altar. There were fewer priests than Levites, for the priests were exclusively sons of Aaron, while the Levites were the other members of the tribe of Levi. The priests alone could enter the Holy Place after ministering at the altar, and washing at the laver; but that was as far as they could go. It was only the high priest who went beyond the court and the Holy Place into the Most Holy!

What powerful lessons! Many today hear the Truth; few obey it; and fewer still will attain unto life eternal in the Age to come.

That was a basic message of the tabernacle and all its principles.

But where is the wonder of words in the features of the tabernacle?

Well here it is!

The tabernacle was constructed of boards of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Two tenons were at the foot of each board, and fitted into two sockets of silver (Exo. 26:16-19). The tenons taking hold of the sockets enabled the boards to stand upright.

You can imagine how that the Israelites would search for the best of the acacia trees, cutting them down, carefully shaping them as required of Yahweh, and covering them with gold. It is all very instructive, and taught them the principle of separation of such elements for the honour and worship of the Almighty. Similar principles are taught in the construction of the spiritual tabernacle seen in Jesus Christ. God is "taking out of the Gentiles a people for His name" (Acts 15:14). The principle is separation for His glory. Those selected must be "cut down," or humbled. They are then shaped according to the divine pattern, and covered with the gold of faith. Finally they stand upright by their tenons taking hold of the sockets of silver (the metal of redemption). In this way, a parable of our redemption through faith is demonstrated.

When the Hebrew words are closely examined, they become even more

fascinating. The Hebrew word for “sockets” is *edenim*, the plural of *adon*, a word used for God in the sense of a ruler. The word also describes the Lord Jesus Christ as the manifestation of God in that particular aspect (Psa. 110:1), as well as the Redeemed as rulers in the Age to come (Zech. 4:14). The sockets, therefore, were the rulers, who provided strength for the boards, permitting them to stand upright. Each socket was made of a talent of silver and represented 6,000 men (cp. Exo. 38:25-27). Thus each board represented 12,000 men, comprising Jews and Gentiles who embrace Christ (cp. with Rev. 21:16).

Now consider the tenons, from the Hebrew, *yad*, which means “hand” (Exo. 36:24). The tenons took hold of the sockets, and only because they did this, were the boards able to stand upright. The Hebrew for “tenons” is *yadoth*, which signifies “hands.” So the tabernacle presented the picture of two hands taking hold of God, and so enabling the boards to stand upright.

The marvel of these words is not completed at this point.

The Hebrew word for “hand” (singular) is *yad*, and if we were to describe men’s hands (plural) we would use the word *yadim*. But in describing the “tenons” of the tabernacle, the Hebrew is *yadoth*, which is in the feminine gender. So these feminine “hands” are shown as taking hold of the *adonim* (masculine plural for “sockets,” derived from *adon*, lord, master), and so enabling the boards to stand upright, as a dwelling place for Yahweh in the midst of Israel.

The use of the feminine gender is significant, as pointing to the Bride of Yahweh, or of Christ. So, in such use of the words we learn a little more of their wonder.

What did Moses see in the Mount?

Moses had to see that the tabernacle was constructed according to the specifications and measurements given in the mount (Exo. 25:40). He could not attempt to change it or improve on it as he might desire. For example, he could not put windows in the tabernacle, when none were specified, feeling it would have allowed more natural light into the holy place; nor could he replace the gold with copper because of a price-rise in the former! The tabernacle had to be made exactly as it was revealed to him.

But how was it revealed to him?

He was told to construct it “after the pattern” given him.

An analytical concordance will reveal that the Hebrew word for “pattern” is *tabniyth*, and denotes, not a plan on paper such as a blueprint, but an actual structure, a model, a resemblance. Moses evidently saw in vision the tabernacle both constructed and erected, and the vision was so real that he could see it completed; he was able to inspect it and walk through its various parts, as Ezekiel was also able to do in his vision of the future temple (Eze. 40-48).

Moses was told to “*rear up the tabernacle according to the fashion thereof which was shewed thee in the mount*” (Exo. 26:30). He was therefore *shown* how

to erect it. The word “shewed” has been rendered by *The New Old Testament* which sets forth the literal Hebrew in English, as “*thou wast caused to see.*” Moses evidently saw the completed tabernacle in the mount. Hence if any of the Israelites might complain that the work was beyond their ability, Moses could actually point out to them how it was done. For example, it is said that the Lampstand could not possibly have been constructed in the way indicated. One could image that Bezaleel (the skilled craftsman who was given the Spirit to increase his ability) might mention his doubts to Moses that such a remarkable and intricate piece of furniture could be made out of a single piece of gold, and Moses would explain how he had seen it done in the mount.

So by the wonder of words, and with a little research into Scripture, a greater depth of understanding is reached, and great pleasure and profit can accrue. When we prayerfully study the Bible in its depths, its beauty will be revealed to us, and its power will influence us.

I will delight myself in Thy statutes: I will not forget Thy Word.
— Psalm 119:16

The Way of Language

DOU might be interested to know how our English alphabet came about. It was derived from the Greek through the medium of Latin. All philologists are agreed that many of the names of the Greek letters are meaningless. The names of the first and second letters, i.e., of *Alpha* and *Beta*, from which we get our word “alphabet” (*alpha-beta*) have no meaning in the Greek language. For the key we have to go back to the Hebrew language.

The Hebrew letters from which these two Greek words (*alpha beta*) are derived, are called Aleph Beth (see where they appear at the top of the two sections in Psa. 119 — at vv. 1, 9). These two Hebrew letters spell the Hebrew word *AB* (אב or as the Hebrew actually appears, written right to left בא) which means “Father.”

The Important Beginning of the Family of Language

Significantly this word *AB* is the very first word in the Hebrew dictionary, showing how prominent “Fatherhood” is thought of in the Bible. It reveals Yahweh in the very close family relationship as the Father of all things, who is manifested in His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul teaches that the personal aspects of family life find their beginning in Almighty God, and that He is represented in the principle of fatherhood: “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named” (Eph. 3:14). Another translation has this: “I bow before the Father, from whom all fatherhood in heaven and earth derives its name.”

Since every Hebrew letter has a numerical value so the word *AB* (“Father”) has the value of “3” for the word Father (i.e., 1 for *A* and 2 for *B*), so suggesting the principle of *new life* (the number of resurrection).

The dialect form of this word *AB* is seen in Gal. 4:6, “Because ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, *Abba*, Father.” Hebrew children call their fathers *abba* for “daddy,” which is the first word they learn, and which shows how wonderfully intimate is our association with our heavenly Father. The Greek word for “Father” in that verse is *pater*, the term used by an older, mature, child. So that the two words *Abba*, *Father* identify the father to the young child dependent on its parents, and to the older youth who has the independence of maturity.

The fact of the word *AB* being the first word in the Hebrew dictionary with its numerical value “3,” shows how wonderfully God has overruled the very Grammar of Hebrew and has, as it were, superscribed the Hebrew dictionary with this personal word. If it were needed, what a wonderful proof of divine inspiration would be found in this word *AB* itself!

Little do people realise that, when they boast of “Westminster Abbey,” they repeat the Hebrew word *AB*, i.e., father — since an “abbey” of olden times was identified as the head or superior building.

Now Almighty God is “Father” in more ways than by the identification of the first two words of the Hebrew alphabet.

He is known by the name of Yah, or Yahweh. According to Young’s Analytical Concordance the word YAH occurs only once in the Old Testament, in Psa. 68:4, which reads: “Sing unto God, sing praises to His name: extol Him that rideth upon the heavens by His name YAH.” But the marginal references listed against this verse in the AV direct attention to Exo. 15:2; 17:16 with the note: (and in the word *Halleluyah*). But as the marginal reference points out, the name YAH also occurs in the other Scriptures quoted, though it is translated by “LORD,” the same as the word “YAHWEH,” and is well-known from the wonderful expression “Halleluyah.” For example, Rotherham translates Isa. 12:2 as: ‘For my might and melody is Yah’ — an abbreviation of the divine Name found in the word HALLELUYAH (see Psa. 115:18). *Hallel* signifies “Praise,” and *Yah* is generally translated “the LORD.” The admonition in Psa. 68:4 “extol Him... by His name YAH” invites us to carefully consider what is conveyed by the wonderful names of the Almighty. Amongst the Jews there is an old tradition, that the name YAHWEH was never pronounced, and that for this reason it is always translated by “the LORD” (in SMALL CAPITALS) in the A.V.

The Name of Yahweh

The wonderful name YAHWEH is very rich in meaning and instruction and can be interpreted in many ways, but we will limit ourselves here to what we may call the etymological, the numerical and the pictorial interpretation.

By etymological interpretation we refer to the translations of the name in the light of the derivation of the word. Almost every Hebrew word may be traced back to a root idea, i.e., the beginning of the idea in the word.

The name Yahweh is very often called “the holy Tetragram,” i.e., “the four (in Greek *tetra*) letter (in Greek *gramma*) word,” because the word Yahweh is written in Hebrew with only four letters, viz. יהוה, because the vowels were only indicated by points and strokes (not by letters) which some doctors of the Law invented only about 500 years after Christ.

It is generally acknowledged that Yahweh is the correct pronunciation for the memorial name of God proclaimed at the Bush. Philologists and theologians agree that the term Jehovah, frequently used instead of Yahweh, is a spurious form of the word. In *Eureka*, vol. 1, p. 100, Bro. Thomas writes: “Yahweh, or Yah, as a noun, and signifying ‘*He who will be*,’ is then the memorial name the Deity chooses to be known by among His people. It reminds them that *He will be manifested in a multitude*, and that, in that great multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, which shall stand

before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands (Rev. 7:9) — in each and every one of them, ‘He will be the all things in all’ (1Cor. 15:28); or, as it is expressed in Eph. 4:6, ‘there is one Deity and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all’.”

The name “Yahweh” comes from the Hebrew *ehyeh*, which is in the first person, future tense: “I will be.” From this root comes *Yahweh* in the third person, future tense, and signifying: “He will be.” It is from the *hiphil*, the causative form of the verb, and carries not only the meaning “to be,” but also “to cause to become.” Thus it has the idea of constantly creating. Since “Yahweh” is the family name of the Father, it is important to apply this meaning to it: He is desiring to manifest His righteousness and character in those He selects from mankind (Acts 15:14). So wherever you see the word “LORD” in the Bible, you will see it to be a prophecy of the divine purpose: inasmuch that God wills to become revealed in a family of faithful ones.

The future tense in the name Yahweh is beautifully seen in Gen. 22:14 we read, “Abraham called the name of that place *Yahweh-Yireh* [margin, The Lord will see, or, provide]: as it is said to this day, In the mount of Yahweh it shall be seen.”

The Royal Term

The common English word “Sir” may also be traced back to the Hebrew word *Sar* meaning “prince,” which in its feminine form, is found in the name *Sarah*, which means “princess.” The very letters *s-r*, which spell the Hebrew word *sar* (prince), can be identified in the word ISRAEL, which means “Prince of God.” In his *Biblical Thesaurus* on Gen. 12:15, speaking on the “princes of Pharaoh” (in Hebrew *Sarim*, of Pharaoh), Professor J. Hellmuth shows the connection between the Hebrew word *sar* and the Sanskrit *sur*, the Persian *sar*, and then with the English words *sire*, *sir*, and the Russian word *czar*.

Meaning of Hebrew Future and Perfect

It is interesting to understand what the Hebrew *future* and the Hebrew *perfect* means.

In English the *future* refers to an action which has not yet started and takes place at a future stage, whilst the *perfect* indicates an action which has taken place in the past, the effects of which are still present.

In Hebrew grammar the term *perfect* means that the action is now perfected or completed, whilst the *future* means that the action may or may not just yet be present but it also requires the future action to be completed. This is a very logical and forceful way of expressing truths and hence very illuminating on Scriptural topics. To illustrate this, the word *Y'israel* (“Prince of El”) contemplates one who perhaps already is prevailing as a prince, but the most important thought in that connection is rather, that he will indeed in all the future (and of course that includes the immediate future or very near present) prevail as a prince. That is

certainly the teaching in connection with the change of Jacob's name to Israel. Having wrestled with the angel in fear of his brother Esau, and finding himself at the River Jabbok, his name is changed to *Y'israel*, teaching him that he would now in future prevail with God and with men. This wonderful promise was extended to him and continued on to the greater Jacob, the Lord Jesus Christ, and then to all who, with him, wrestle in prayer with God, and approach Him in the principle of the covenant. This is expressed in the words of the apostle Paul: "As many as walk according to this rule peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the *Israel of God*" (Gal. 6:16).

THE ALPHABET: GOD'S GIFT TO MAN

Let us look for a moment at the first four letters of the English alphabet, and note, as is also true of the Hebrew alphabet, that after the first letter there are three representative consonants.

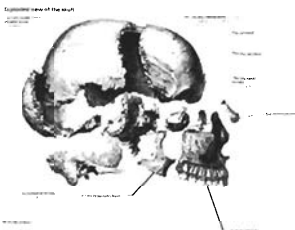
The consonant "**b**," which is a lip letter (that is, a letter pronounced with the lips) and is therefore called by the Latin word "labial." The consonant "**c**," with its hard pronunciation as in the word "camel," is a throat letter, and therefore called a "guttural." The fourth letter of the alphabet is the consonant "**d**," which is pronounced with the teeth, is therefore called a "dental" letter.

This is exactly the order in which a baby produces its first sounds. First it mutters the sounds "ab," "ad," and "abba," which is the very Hebrew word for "father," as explained above (see Gal. 4:6; Mk. 14:36). A baby first actually produces the "b" or "p" sounds, then the "g" or "k" sounds, and later on when the teeth are formed, the "d" or "t" sounds.

This is also true in other languages. For example, whilst in English we have the first four letters: *a-b-c-d*, so in Greek there is *alpha, beta, gamma, delta*, and in the Hebrew: *aleph, beth, gimmel, daleth*. That is, in each case, after the first letter of the alphabet, there are the representations of these three important letter and sound groups.

The Alphabet and the Human Head — In 22 Sections

Some claim that the primitive cave man first knew only a few sounds, and then gradually developed the whole alphabet over countless years. Nothing is further from the truth. In fact, there is a remarkable design and wonder in the creation of the alphabet and of man. The Creator, who formed the head of Adam with exactly 22 bones of the cranium (excluding the six special bones in the ears and one in the lower jaw), has given man this wonderful alphabet of language in His inspired oracles, with an arrangement of 22 letters! The 22 bones of the head comprise eight bones forming the cranium or brain-case, and



fourteen bones forming the face foundation.

The Jewish patriarchs, like Isaac and Jacob and his sons, had evidently retained the divinely-given Hebrew alphabet of 22 letters and preserved it in their very names, e.g., Adam, Noah, Abraham, etc., all of very great antiquity, as evident also in the names of the animals such as Adam named, like the ox (*aleph*). However, all this original knowledge was soon lost as people gave up honouring Almighty God. So it came to pass, that the Egyptians, who boast of a very ancient civilisation, had already sunk into such ignorance away from God, that they actually invented a system of writing which employs many hundreds of so-called ideographs, that is, signs derived from all sorts of objects. In his book, *Egypt's Place in Universal History*, C. J. Bunsen gives a list of about a thousand different hieroglyphics, which is certainly a different compilation from the wonderful, concise 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Similarly in ancient China, a basic knowledge of about 200 signs of Chinese pictorial writing is needed to communicate; which again is no simple system such as is seen in the 22 Hebrew letters.

In addition, of course, as we demonstrate in this volume, every Hebrew letter is so full of spiritual meaning, that anyone wishing to listen to the divine Voice in this, will find great delight and pleasure in searching out the wisdom of the Hebrew alphabet.

THE JOT AND THE TITTLE

On one occasion, the Lord Jesus told his listeners: "***For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled***" (Mat. 5:18). In so saying, it pleased the Lord to draw attention to the **jot**, which is the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet (י), and to the distinguishing **tittle** or hook of *beth* (ב), the second letter of the alphabet.

The word *jot* is actually the tenth letter of the alphabet, *yod* (י), spelt with a soft "d," whereas in the quotation above, the English word is spelt with a "t." This is because the name of the Greek letter *jota* is always spelt with a hard "t," and the New Testament, being written originally in Greek, the hard "t" is carried over to the Hebrew word. The letter *yod* means "a hand," depicted as being held open in a gesture of help.

In the use of this word, however, the Lord was emphasizing that not even the smallest statement of Scripture, not the tiniest utterance of prophecy will be forgotten or ignored, but that every type, shadow, precept and principle of the Scriptures (the Old Testament in his day) would be accomplished in his life. The "heaven and earth" of which he speaks relates to the Jewish heavens and earth that were then in existence. His ministry would achieve every requirement of the Scriptures before the Jewish constitution was removed by the Roman invasion in AD70.

In addition, of course, the Lord's declaration points to the importance of even the smallest letter in God's inspired Word. We ought not to overlook any principle or teaching, however insignificant it might appear to some.

Although *yod* is the smallest letter of the whole alphabet, it pleased God to reveal Himself as *Yahweh*, whose name commences with this small letter! Perhaps that is why so few people can understand His wisdom, majesty and purpose!

Let us now consider the "*tittle*" that the Lord referred to in Mat. 5:18. The second letter of the Hebrew Alphabet is *beth* (ב), which means "house," with a numerical value of 2. It corresponds to the English "B." Now compare the eleventh letter *kaph* (כ), and notice that it has the same shape, except that the letter *beth* has the thick, horizontal bar at the bottom projecting a little to the right. This little projection is called the "*tittle*."

Now the word *beth* means "house" and that is why the shape of the letter is characterised by the *tittle* and "foundation," so that (so to speak), if rain pours down on the building the water will run off the foundation and not swamp the building.

On the other hand, *kaph* represents the curve of the hand between the forefinger and thumb, and means either the palm of the hand or the sole of the foot. Now the sole of the foot undoubtedly suggests activity, as we may see from the beginning of the book of Joshua. After Moses had brought the people of Israel out of Egypt, Joshua was to bring them into the land of Canaan, which required courage and energy. Hence God told Joshua: "Every place that the *sole* of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses." In this verse the word "sole" is exactly this Hebrew word *kaph*, and it obviously required the activity of faith to enter Canaan, just as it does today, in order to "enter into the household of faith." The numerical value of the letter *kaph* is 20, which also seems to hint to man's activity, involving as it were the ten fingers of the hands, and the ten toes.

Therefore, when the Lord accentuated not only the letter *beth*, but its *tittle*, he demonstrated the excellency of the "house" and its superiority over "man's activity," virtually saying, "The Father's house is prepared for you without any works of your own, and it will never pass away" — even though the "heavens and the earth" of man's dominion may!

MAN AND ADAM

When we speak of "man," we generally mean the human being as found in the family of mankind. It is the name given to a class of living creatures, but the English word itself conveys no description of the quality, function or position of man whatsoever. It is very different with the Hebrew word *adam*, which we are accustomed to consider as the proper name of the first human creature in Eden as

he came from the hand of God, but which is simply one of the ordinary Hebrew words for “man.” The name *adam* conveys a great deal of information about the creature so named. Much can be said about it, but we will here refer only to a few features of this word, so that we may appreciate these details before going any further.

In the first place, this Hebrew word has two syllables: “*a*” and “*dam*.” The first syllable “*a*” is spelt with *aleph*, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Actually, this letter is not really a vowel, but a silent consonant that carries a vowel, the vowel in this case being “*a*.” This first letter of the alphabet is used by Jews for the numeral “one,” and therefore indicates the first or beginning of something. It is in many cases a hint to the Supreme Creator: God.

The second syllable “*dam*” is the Hebrew word for “blood.” This word *dam* for blood is often used in the plural (which, in Hebrew, is always indicated by the last letters of “*im*,” such as in *damim*) especially when shed blood is in question as in the first occurrence of the word: “the voice of thy brother’s blood [*notice the margin: bloods*] crieth unto Me from the ground” (Gen. 4:10).

According to a certain rule in Hebrew grammar, the middle letter of a word is doubled to indicate intensification. Accordingly we find this Hebrew word *damim* also spelt *dammim*, i.e., with a medial double “*m*” to show, as it were, the intensification of the blood or blood-shedding. Thus we read: “Now the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle and were gathered together at Shochoh, which belongeth to Judah, and pitched between Shochoh and Azekah, in Ephes-*dammim*” (1Sam. 17:1). The name *Ephes-Dammim* means “shedding of bloods,” because when David, alone and single-handed went forth to slay Goliath, it foreshadowed the important shedding of blood of great David’s greater Son, the Lord Jesus, when all the forces of evil were arrayed against him.

The word *dam* is also seen in the name of the Potter’s field: a field of blood was all that the betrayer’s riches could secure: “Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as the field is called in their proper tongue, *Aceldama*, that is to say, The field of blood” (Acts 1:18-19).

Not only is man a “flesh and blood creation,” but natural man is a “blood-thirsty creature” in many ways. Rom. 3:13-18 gives a very true description of man who does not acknowledge God! It is only when the Truth challenges the natural heart, that we can enjoy the wonderful privilege of being “washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1Cor. 6:11).

Thus, from the interpretation of the Hebrew writing of *A-dam* (one-blood) we learn that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26). Man is God’s masterpiece of creation, the first

and foremost creature, of whom Yahweh declared: “and My delights were with the sons of men” (Pro. 8:31). From the very frequent hint that *aleph* points to the Supreme One, we are also reminded that in man we have a flesh and blood creation from His hand.

But after the fall, God said to Adam: “In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen. 3:19). The word from “ground” out of which Adam was taken, is the Hebrew *adamah*, hence also the name *Adam*. The red colour of the clay, or of the ground, suggests the red corpuscles of the blood.

But there is still far more wisdom buried in the wonderful name that Adam was given. Another form of the word is found in the word *Edom*, the only difference being a change in the vowel sounds. In Hebrew, however, the root meaning of a word is contained in the consonants, and as long as these do not change, a change in the vowels does not alter the root meaning of the word. Hence *Edom* has the same meaning as the word *Adam*. The best-known meaning of the word *Edom* is *Red One*, derived as before, from the word *Adamah*, meaning “ground,” and hence “red.” Now, what is the teaching connected with this word *Edom*, or *Red One*? Here again is a man created by God, but this man *Edom* (or *Esau*, which is the same word) despised his birthright and sold it for a “red” pottage: “*Esau* said to *Jacob*, feed me I pray thee, with that same red pottage [*adom*] for I am faint; therefore was his name called *Edom*.” Therefore, we need to take heed to avoid a similar folly, as Paul reminds us: “Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as *Esau*, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright” (Heb. 12:16). How many men, for a little bit of that red stuff, that little bit of the world’s passing glory or riches, have sold their birthright to the future glory!

Deal bountifully with Thy servant, that I may live, and keep Thy Word.
— Psalm 119:17

The Father of Modern Hebrew

Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, the Jewish writer and lexicographer, who almost unaided revived the Hebrew language, and helped lay the cornerstone for the new state of Israel, was born in the small town of Luzhky, Lithuania, in 1858, and was later educated in Russia and France.

Born Eliezer Yizhak Perelman, his family lived in strict accordance with orthodox Jewish customs. Eliezer proved to be an adept scholar, poring over his books and winning a scholarship to study in Paris.

He adopted the Jewish surname of **Ben-Yehuda**, and became enamoured with the idea of the return of the Jewish nation to its ancestral homeland in Palestine, and believed that the revival of the Hebrew language was an essential element of the Jewish survival. He maintained that the Jewish people, like all other peoples, had a historic land and a historic language.

With very little money and poor health, he set off for Palestine, where he married **Deborah Yonas**, the daughter of one of his benefactors, after making her promise that she would speak only Hebrew to any children whom they might have. Thus, with the birth of their first child, Deborah became “the first Hebrew mother in nearly two thousand years,” and their son, **Ben-Zion Ben-Yehuda**, was the first child to speak modern Hebrew as his mother tongue. Later, following the death of his wife, Deborah, in 1891, Ben-Yehuda married her sister, **Hemdah**, who continued the support and interest of her husband in his chosen ideal.

In 1890, together with some associates, Ben-Yehuda founded the *Va'ad ha-Lashon* over which he presided until his death. This *va'ad* was the forerunner of the *Academy of the Hebrew Language*, which Ben-Yehuda had also suggested in 1920.



Ben-Yehuda, pioneer of modern Hebrew with his second wife, Hemdah, 1912

In Jerusalem, Ben-Yehuda taught school, published a newspaper called *The Deer*, which became a fighting spokesman for Jewish independence, and a testing ground for the words which he was constantly adding to the Hebrew language. Such words were important to identify many modern objects that were unknown when the language was used in ancient times. He also began work on his great Hebrew Dictionary.

He wrote in the preface to his dictionary: "*In those days it was as if the heavens had suddenly opened, and a clear, incandescent light flashed before my eyes, and a mighty inner voice sounded in my ears: the renascence of Israel on its ancestral soil.*"

However, Ben-Yehuda faced antagonism from the Orthodox Jews who sensed that his interest in the Hebrew language was secular rather than religious. But he pressed on, and strengthened his literary output in many books and magazine publications.

Ben-Yehuda died in 1922, his work as yet incomplete. However, most of the material for eleven volumes of his dictionary had been collected, and when finally completed, it ran to sixteen volumes of over 600 pages each. He had seen the nation grow and develop as Jews returned to the Land, and virtually every Jew in the country now has Hebrew as his mother tongue.

It had grown from a dead language unused for two thousand years to a living vibrant tongue: the language of the nation.

The biography of Ben-Yehuda (*Tongue of the Prophets*) is the touching and inspiring story of a frail scholar burning with an inner fire whose fanatical devotion to a single idea triumphed against overwhelming odds. In that regard, his work stands as a monument to a tremendous devotion, and an evidence of the Hand of Providence working amongst the chosen people. It was the strength of the Jews who returned from over seventy different nations with a diversity of tongues, and yet were united together by their use of the single tongue of Hebrew, that played an important part in the victories of the nation against its opponents, and in the ultimate establishment of the State of Israel. Being able to understand each other by the use of a common language, enabled the Jewish forces to support each other, and to follow the instructions necessary to the success of their cause. In this remarkable way, the spirit of Ben-Yehuda continued to play its important part in the restoration of the present days.

My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken Thou me according to Thy Word.
— Psalm 119:25

The Hebrew Alphabet Rhyme

תשרק צפע סנמל כיטה זוהר דנבא

א ב ג ד ה ו ז ח ט י כ ל מ נ ס ע פ צ ק ר ש ת

ALEPH is an **ox**, which will push with its horn;
BETH is the **house**, where we sleep till the dawn.
GIMEL is a **camel**, with such a long chin!
DALETH is the **door**, for the only way in.
HE is the **window**, built into the wall,
WAV is the **tent peg**, important, though small.
ZAIN is the **weapon**, held firm in the hand,
CHET is the **hedge**, that will mark out the land.
TETH is a **serpent**, then let us be wise,
YOD is the **hand**, so lay hold on the prize.
KAPH is the **palm**, put to work through the day,
LAMED the **ox-goad**, to keep in the way.
MEM is the **water**, essential for life,
NUN is for **fish**, in Lake Galilee so rife.
SAMEKH a **prop**, to give help and support,
AYIN is **eye**, we must use as we ought.
PEH is the **mouth**, for the words we should say,
TZADDI is a **fish hook**, that catches the prey.
KOPH is the **profile**, that points out the man,
RESH is our **head**, think kind thoughts as we can.
SHIN is a **tooth**, which is white and so strong,
TAU is a **mark**, to conclude this word song.

The Story of Psalm 119

Although this Psalm is the longest chapter of the Bible, and contains 176 verses, it is undoubtedly one of the most fascinating. It is divided into twenty-two sections — answering to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet — each section contains eight stanzas (lines) in each. In the Hebrew Bible, each sentence begins with the letter that heads the section. In English it would appear like this:

[A]

1. **A**ll-blessed are the perfect in their way,
Who walk in the law of Yahweh.
2. **A**ll-blessed are they who keep His testimonies,
Who seek Him with the whole heart.
3. **A**lso they practise no iniquity:
They walk in His ways.
4. **A**ll Thy precepts hast Thou commanded,
That they may be kept with diligence.
5. **A**h! Yahweh, that my ways were directed
To observe Thy statutes!
6. **A**shamed I shall not then be,
When I have respect unto all Thy commandments.
7. **A**t length will I praise Thee with uprightness of heart,
When I learn Thy righteous judgments.
8. **A**nd I will observe Thy statutes:
O forsake me not utterly.

[B]

9. **B**y what means shall a young man cleanse his path?
By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word.
10. **B**ending my whole heart I have sought Thee:
O let me not err from Thy commandments.
11. **B**eneath the covert of my heart have I hid Thy saying,
That I might not sin against Thee.
12. **B**lessed art Thou, O Yahweh;
Teach me Thy statutes.

13. **B**y my lips have I declared,
 All the judgments of Thy mouth.
14. **B**lessedness I find in the way of Thy testimonies,
 As much as in all riches.
15. **B**efore mine eyes shall be Thy precepts:
 And I will have respect to Thy paths.
16. **B**lessed will I count myself in Thy statutes:
 I will not forget Thy Word.

[Y]

169. **Y**ield access into Thy presence. O Yahweh, to my cry.
 Give me understanding, according to Thy Word.
170. **Y**ea, let my supplication come into Thy presence;
 Deliver me according to Thy saying.
171. **Y**et shall my lips pour forth praise;
 For Thou wilt teach me Thy statutes.
172. **Y**ea, my tongue shall speak of Thy saying;
 For all Thy commandments are righteousness.
173. **Y**ield me help with Thy right hand;
 For I have chosen Thy precepts.
174. **Y**eared have I for Thy salvation, O Yahweh;
 And Thy law is my delight.
175. **Y**et to praise Thee, let my soul live;
 And let Thy judgments help me.
176. **Y**ea, when I wander like a lost sheep, seek Thy servant:
 For I do not forget Thy commandments.

In the Hebrew Bible this layout of the acrostic Psalm 119 can be easily seen, for the same letter commences each line within the stanza. The opposite illustration will reveal the initial letter of each stanza in turn.

My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto Thy Word. — Psalm 119:28

26 יְהוָה הַצִּלֹתָהּ נָא : בְּרוּךְ הָבָא בְשֵׁם יְהוָה בְּרַכְנוּכֶם
 27 מִבֵּית יְהוָה : אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה וַיֹּאדָר לָנוּ אֲסוּרוֹתֶיךָ בְּעִבְתֵּימֵינוּ עַד-
 28 קְרֻנוֹת הַמַּזְנוֹבָה : אֵלֵינוּ אֲתָהּ וְאוֹדֶךָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲרוּמָמֶךָ : הוֹדוּ
 א לַיהוָה פִּירְטוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסָדוֹ : קיט אֲשֶׁרֵינוּ
 2 תְּמִימֵי-דָרֶךְ הַהֲלָכִים בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה : אֲשֶׁרֵינוּ נִצְרֵנוּ עֲדָתוֹ
 3 4 בְּכָל-לֵב יִדְרְשׁוּהוּ : אֲנִי לֹא-פָעַלְנוּ עוֹלָה בְּדַרְכֵינוּ הֲלָכּוּ : אֲתָהּ
 ה צִוִּיתָהּ פִּקְדוֹתֶיךָ לְשֹׁמֵר מֵאָדָּם : אֲנִי לֹא יִכְנֹעַ דַּרְכֵינוּ לְשֹׁמֵר חֲקִיךָ :
 6 7 אֲנִי לֹא-אֲבֹשׁ בְּחַבְשֵׁי אֱלֹהִים מִצְוֹתֶיךָ : אֲדָהּ בְּנֶשֶׁךְ לִבִּי
 8 בְּלִמְדוֹתֶיךָ מִשְׁפָּטֵי צְדָקָה : אֲנִי חֲקִיךָ אֲשֶׁמֶר אֱלֹהֵינוּ עַד-
 9 מֵאָדָּם : בָּסֵף וְזָכַר-נָעַר אֶת-אֲרָתוֹ לְשֹׁמֵר בְּדַבְרֶךָ :
 11 בָּסֵף לִבִּי דִרְשָׁתֶיךָ אֲרֵנוּ תִשְׁנֵנוּ מִמִּצְוֹתֶיךָ : בָּלָבִי צָפְנֵנוּ
 12 אֲמַרְתָּהּ לִמְעַן לֹא אֲחַטָּא-לָךְ : בְּרוּךְ אֲתָהּ יְהוָה לְמַדְנֵנוּ
 13 14 חֲקִיךָ : בְּשֹׁפְטֵינוּ סִפְרֵנוּ כֹּל מִשְׁפָּטֵי-כִיךָ : בְּצִדְקָתְךָ עֲדוֹתֶיךָ
 טו שְׁשֵׁנוּ בְּעַל כָּל-הוֹן : בְּסִקּוּדֶיךָ אֲשִׁיחָה וְאֲבִיטָה אֲרָחֶיךָ :
 16 17 בְּחֻקֶיךָ אֲשִׁתְּעַשֶׂעַ לֹא אֲשַׁכַּח דְּבָרֶךָ : גָּמַל עַל-
 18 עֲבָדֶיךָ אֲחִיחָה וְאֲשַׁמְרָה דְּבָרֶךָ : גִּלְעָדֵנוּ וְאֲבִיטָה נִפְלְאוֹת
 19 כ מִתּוֹרַתֶיךָ : גִּזְלוֹנוּ אֲנִי בְּאֶרֶץ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִפְּנֵי מִצְוֹתֶיךָ : גִּזְלוֹנוּ
 20 נִפְשֵׁנוּ לְתַאֲבָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ בְּכָל-עֵת : גִּזְלוֹנוּ וְזִדְמוֹתֵינוּ אֲרוּרִים
 22 23 הַשְׁנִימֵנוּ מִמִּצְוֹתֶיךָ : גִּזְלוֹנוּ מִעַל חֲרָפָה וְגִבוּ כִי עֲדוֹתֶיךָ נִצְרֵנוּ :
 24 גַּם יִשְׁכְּנוּ שָׁרִים כִּי נִדְבְּרוּ עֲבָדֶיךָ וְשִׁיחַ בְּחֻקֶיךָ : גַּם-עֲדוֹתֶיךָ
 כה שֶׁעָשִׂנוּ אֲנִישֵׁנוּ עֲצָנוּ : דְּמָקָה לְעַבְדְּךָ נִפְשֵׁנוּ חֲנִי
 26 27 בְּדַבְרֶךָ : דְּחִבֵנוּ סִפְרֵנוּ וְתַעֲנֵנוּ לְמַדְנֵנוּ חֲקִיךָ : דְּחִבֵנוּ פִּקְדוֹתֶיךָ
 28 הַבִּינֵנוּ וְאֲשִׁיחָה בְּנִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ : דְּמָקָה נִפְשֵׁנוּ מִתּוֹנָה לְחִינֵנוּ
 29 ל בְּדַבְרֶךָ : דְּחִבֵנוּ שֹׁמֵר חֲסֵנוּ וְתוֹרַתֶיךָ חֲנִי : דְּחִבֵנוּ אֲמוֹנָה
 31 בְּחֻרְתֵנוּ מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ שְׁוִיתֵנוּ : דְּמָקָה בְּעֲדוֹתֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ :

Notice that each of the eight stanzas in Psalm 119 commence with the same letter of the alphabet: Thus vv. 1-8 all begin with *aleph* א, the next group with *beth* ב, and so on.

Letters & Vowels

The Hebrew alphabet comprises twenty-two letters, all of which are consonants, and whose shapes in the first instance were similar to the objects which they are considered to have signified.

Every syllable begins with a consonant. *Aleph* and *Ayin* have no sound and are denoted by the symbols shown. These signs are consonants.

The letters B, G, D, K, P, T, have a softer sound denoted by the addition of "H" as shown, BH, GH, etc. There are two T's and two S's: *Teth* and *Samekh*, being emphatic, whereas *Tau* and *Sin* are softer.

If you now look at the panel, you will see the Hebrew letters with some suggestions of pronunciation. To make this easier, follow these hints, and notice a slight change in sound when a dot is applied to a letter:

א [*aleph*] must never be mistaken for the letter "a," since it is always a consonant. It is represented by a "smooth breathing" (*), and is similar in nature to the silent "h" in the word *honour*.

ב [*beth*] is "bh" and is pronounced like a "v," whilst בּ, with a small dot in the centre is a hard "b" as in *bat*.

ג [*gimel*] is translated "gh," and is pronounced with a slight throaty sound; גּ whilst is a hard "g" as in *get*.

ד [*daleth*] is "dh" and is pronounced like the "th" in the word *the*; דּ is a hard "d" as in *day*.

FORM	NAME	PRONUNCIATION	NUMERICAL VALUE
א	Aleph	*	1
ב	Bêth	b, bh	2
ג	Gimel	g, gh	3
ד	Dâleth	d, dh	4
ה	Hê	h	5
ו	Wâv [Wau]	w, u	6
ז	Zâin	z [as a soft "s" in English]	7
ח	Chêt	ḥ, a strong guttural sound	8
ט	Ṭêt	ṭ, emphatic.	9
י	Yôd	y [i]	10
כּ, final	Ḳaph	k, kh	20
ל	Lâmed	l	30
מ, final	Mêm	m	40
נ, final	Nûn	n	50
ס	Sâmekh	ṣ	60
ע	Ayin	· a peculiar guttural	70
פּ, final	Pêh	p, ph	80
צ, final	Tzâddi	ṣ, emphatic "s"	90
ק	Kôph	q, a strong "k," formed at the back of the palate	100
ר	Rêsh	r	200
ש	Schin	s, pronounced "sh"	300
ת	Tâu	t, th	400

ה [*he*] is the letter for "h."

ו [*wav*] represents the letter "w."

ז [*zain*] is the letter "z."

ח [*chet*] is signified by "ḥ:" the dot underneath helping to distinguish it from ה. It is pronounced like the "ch" in the German *ach*, or the Scottish *loch*.

ט [*tet*] is pronounced as a dull "t" by pressing the tongue to the palate of the mouth.

י [*yod*] is the letter "y," the smallest letter in the alphabet.

כּ [*kaph*] is transliterated "kh," and is very similar in sound, though somewhat lighter in tone to the "ch"

sound (ת) above. כ is a hard “k” as in *kept*.

ל [*lamech*] represents “l.”

מ [*mem*] is the letter “m.”

נ [*nun*] is transliterated “n.”

ס [*samekh*] is represented by “s,” to distinguish it from a subsequent letter (ש), and has a dull “s” sound.

ע [*ayin*] is transliterated by the “rough breathing” (◌◌), and is pronounced with a harsh guttural sound from the back of the throat.

פ [*peh*] is “ph,” pronounced like “f”; פ with the dot in the centre of the letter, is a hard “p” as in *peg*.

צ [*tzaddi*] is transliterated “ç,” and has a sharp hissing sound of “s,” like the “ç” in the French word *garçon*.

ק [*koph*] is represented by the letter “q,” and the sound is like a “k” or a “q” pronounced from the back of the throat.

ר [*resh*] is the letter “r.”

ש [*schin*] with the dot over the right hand corner is transliterated “s” and is pronounced “sh;” ש with the dot over the left hand corner is the letter “s.”

ת [*tau*] is the equivalent of “th” as in *these*; ת is a hard “t” sound as in *tin*.

It must be remembered that the sound for *’aleph* amounts to nothing more than the emission of the breath in preparation for pronouncing the word or syllable of which it is the commencing consonant. When it occurs within a word its effect is much the same as if we were to pronounce the word *re-educate* by pausing slightly after the enunciation of the first syllable, and then stressing the second “e” by a fresh emission of the breath.

The sound for *’ayin* is as though one were clearing the throat, without, however, uttering a clear, deep grunt.

One of these sounds is difficult for the Western voice to articulate, and this is rendered more complicated by the fact that we cannot be absolutely certain of the original pronunciation. Furthermore, our Western articulation is different from that in the Middle East, so that each experiences trouble in attempting to pronounce certain words from the other’s language.

Stablish Thy Word unto Thy servant, who is devoted to Thy fear.
— Psalm 119:38

Table of Vowels

The vowel signs are not used in Israel today; neither were they used when Israel was in the Land prior to their dispersion. Whilst the correct pronunciation of the language could be handed down from father to son, there was no problem. However, when the nation was in dispersion the language ceased to be a living tongue, and, in order to preserve the pronunciation, this “complicated yet perfect” system was devised (about the 6th or 7th century) by a group known as the Massorites.

The long-sounding vowels are often accompanied by a specific consonant. This is because that vowel was considered to be of such value [being long, i.e., (as in “please”) is longer than (as in “fit”)], that a consonant was used to indicate the presence of a long-sounding vowel.

Table of Short Vowel Signs			
Vowel	Name	Tran-scribed	Pronounced
ְ	Páthāḥ	ă	As in mat.
ֶ	Ş'ghôl	ě	As in then.
ִ	Hîrêq (short)	ı	As in hit.
ֹ	Qāmêç Ḥaṭûph	õ	As in top.
ֻ	Qîbbûç	ũ	As in shut.

Table of Long Vowel Signs			
Vowel	Name	Tran-scribed	Pronounced
ָ	Qāmêç	ā	As in calm.
ַ	Çêrê	ē	As in obey.
ֵ		ê	
ִ	Hîrêq (long)	ı	As in morphine
ִ	Ḥôlêm	ó	As in tone.
ֵ		õ	
ֹ	Şûrêq	û	As in mute.

Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Yahweh, even Thy salvation, according to Thy Word. — Psalm 119:41

The
Twenty-two
Letters
of the
Hebrew
Alphabet



This first letter signifies an *ox-head*, the letter originally being clearly the outline of an oxhead with its two horns: **Ⲁ**. Try turning our English letter “A” upside down and you will see that it still resembles the animal’s head with horns! The form of the letter originally displayed the rough outline of the horns of the ox as it might first appear to the farmer in the field as he sees the ox approaching. It is appropriately the first letter of the alphabet, describing the beginning of the farmer’s activity.

This letter is called “the princely letter” as it is not only the beginning of the alphabet, but is also in a complete form: with four points to each extremity. It is in the most perfect form, like the “city which lieth foresquare” mentioned in Rev. 21:16.

It is the letter that commences Psalm 119:1-8, and which sets out *The Path of the Burden-Bearer*, drawing attention to the first appearance of the ox-head with the idea of service

and activity. The opening words set the sense of the whole section: “*Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of Yahweh*” (v. 1). Such “carry” the divine law into the field of life, and reveal the great purpose of the spiritual Alphabet: the pathway of the Blessed. The Master declared: “I am among you as one that *serveth*” (Lk. 22:27), for he is the commencement of the divine activity of the faithful.

The plural form of the word, *alephim*, is rendered “oxen” in Isa 30:24 and in Psalm 8:7. A similar word, from the same root, *alluph*, is found in Jer 11:19, and in its plural form, *alluphim*, in Psalm 144:4.

The word *aleph*, is derived from the root *alaph*, which signifies “to associate with,” hence, *to learn*, or *cause to teach*. It is translated “learn” (Pro. 22:25), “teach” (Job 33:33) and “teacheth” (35:11), “utter” (Job 15:5). From the same root is derived the related word *alluwph*, or the short *alluph*, and this is rendered “captain” (Jer. 13:21), “duke” (Gen. 36:15), “chief friend” (Pro. 16:28; 17:9), “governor” Zech. 9:7; 12:5,6), “guide” (Pro. 2:17; Psa. 55:13; Jer. 3:4; Micah 7:5), “ox” (Jer. 11:19). It signifies a familiar friend, to be gentle [i.e., to carry burdens], a bullock as tamed, and so a chieftain.

Now consider this in relation to the Hebrew language. Why is the first letter called *aleph* or ox-head? Because the head of the ox is first seen as it leads in the ploughing. *Aleph* is the chief letter which leads the way for the rest of the Hebrew alphabet to follow. It is an apt symbol for the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the beginning of the spiritual creation of God (Rev. 3:14). He is the “head” who first appears at the front of the herd of the faithful (cp. Col. 1:18; 2:10).

Its Numerical Value

Every Hebrew letter also has a numerical value. Instead of using numbers as we do (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc.), the Jews use the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

The numerical value of *aleph* is **1**, but a single element that can grow into a multitude. When two dots are placed above *aleph* it becomes a thousand instead of one. In that form, the word is sometimes translated “family” (see Num. 1:16; 10:4; Jud. 6:15; “kine” in Deu. 7:13; 28:4, 51).

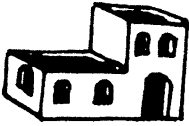
The significance of this letter is that of the beginning: whether the number **1**, or **1,000** which begins the principle of the millennium. The number draws attention to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the first, the “head,” the number “**1**” who becomes a family, developing into a multitudinous seed (Isa. 53:10).

In Heb. 13:11, the Lord is likened to the bullock that was slain for a sacrifice. Thus, in a symbolic sense, *aleph*, the first letter of the divine language of Hebrew is an appropriate symbol for the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the “head of the house.”

The Sound of the Pronunciation

As part of a word this letter *aleph* is pronounced as “a” (as in *are*) + “leph” (as in *left*), but as a letter it is not sounded at all! It is formed by a harsh guttural breathing but without an actual sound (something like the “p” in “pneumatic”). Frequently when a Hebrew word in which *aleph* occurs is translated into English, it is rendered with an “a.” Thus the word for “redeemer” is the Hebrew *ga'al*.

*So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me:
for I trust in Thy Word. — Psalm 119:42*



BETH

The letter above Psalm 119:9-16 commences the second section of the alphabet Psalm, and is the word *Beth*, or *Bet* which means **house**. It commences such words as *Beth-lehem* (meaning, *The House of Bread*).

Actually, *Beth* is a contraction or abbreviation for the Hebrew word *bayith*, meaning house, tent, etc. It is derived from a Hebrew root *banah*, to build — either a house or a family (and that is why sometimes “house” is used to describe “family” such as “the house of David”; see 1Sam.20:16; 2Sam. 3:1, etc.). From the same root is derived the Hebrew word *ben*, a son (such as *Ben-jamin*, “Son of the Right Hand”), *bath*, a daughter (*Bath-sheba*, Daughter of an Oath) and *eban*, a stone. As the stones in a house form the building, so sons and daughters create a family.

This is very applicable to the Lord Jesus Christ, for every one of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet portray his great work in some relationship. As he is *Aleph*: the *Chief*, *Leader* or *Burden Bearer* (the ox-head), so he became the *Beth* or founder of the true house of David (2Sam. 7:11). Paul describes the ecclesia as the “house of God” (1Tim. 3:16) “whose house are we” (Heb. 3:6). The Lord declared that he would ascend into heaven to obtain “abiding places” in that spiritual and eternal house for all of his true family (John 14:2). Jesus Christ is both the foundation stone (Eph. 2:20) and the headstone of this spiritual building (1Pet. 2:4-8, Zech. 4:7); he is both the commencement, and the glorious completion of the spiritual building of God (Eph. 2:21).

In Psalm 119, under the *beth* section (vv. 9-16) emphasis is given to the importance of dwelling within. Having walked along the pathway (vv. 1-8), the Psalmist now seeks to become the “house” of the Word: “Thy word have I hid [*treasured; preserved*] in my heart” (v. 11); it “dwells” therein.

Beth is a complete word used to identify a house, son, daughter, etc., but as a letter it is pronounced as we do the letter B.

Beit (pronounced to rhyme with the word “gate”) is still the present day Arabic word for “house,” Arabic being a living sister language of Hebrew.

Whilst *beth* means “house,” “B” alone put in front of any Hebrew word means “in”; i.e., it gives the Hebrew word, so to speak, the “house idea” — to go inside the building. If we add to this “B” the feminine ending of *ah*, we get *bah*, which means “in her.” Thus, Isa. 62:4 declares that God will call His people “Hephzi-bah” — i.e., *Hephzi* with the “i” at the end for “my” delight, and *bah*, “in her.”

If, instead of a long *-ah* for the feminine, we add to “b” the long “o” vowel, making the word *bo*, we get “in him.” This is beautifully seen in the name *Boaz*, the redeemer of Ruth (Ruth 2:20), and in the name of the pillar in Solomon’s temple: “he set up the left pillar, and called the name thereof Boaz” (1Kgs. 7:21; see margin: “In it is strength.”).

Further, it is remarkable that the Bible actually commences with the letter “B”; *bereshith*, signifying “in the beginning.” Since the Hebrew letter “b” is prefixed to the Hebrew word, it shows that the Old Testament actually begins with the letter that describes “inside the house,” the “house” representing God’s purpose to fill this earth with His glory (see Heb. 3:4).

Its Numerical Value

This letter doubles up the value of *aleph*, for *beth* is used to define the plural **2**. In this way it strengthens the first! The “head” becomes a “house,” and therefore reveals the number of multiplication, and of manifestation.

*This is my comfort in my affliction:
for Thy Word hath quickened me. — Psalm 119:50*



GIMEL 3

This strange-looking letter is pronounced like our “g” but reads as a word “*gimel*.” The letter is shaped in such a way as to roughly display the neck and head of a camel. Its name means *camel*, and its figure on the Phoenician monuments, and on the coins of the Maccabees, bears a resemblance to the neck of a camel.

The Hebrew word *gimel* comes from the root word *gamal*, signifying to recompense, reward, deal bountifully, do good. According to Gesenius, its form in Arabic signifies “to carry.” Thus it has the idea of a helper, a burden bearer. How appropriate it is to the Lord Jesus who “bore men’s sorrows,” and “went about doing good.”

The camel is a desert carrier, bearing the burden placed upon him in spite of the sandy paths he is called upon to traverse; making best use of the water of the oases which he carefully stores for times when it is hard to obtain.

Every line in the Hebrew of Psalm 119:17-24 begins with a word which commences with the letter *gimel*. The word “bountifully” in v. 17 is from the Hebrew *gamal*, the root from whence *gimel* is derived. The Psalmist says that Yahweh is his helper, and the Lord Jesus is the divine representative to that end.

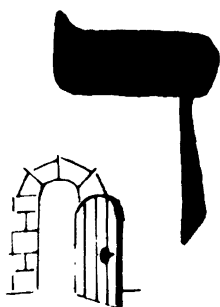
As the camel was considered unclean under the Law (Lev. 11:4), it may be wondered how the letter could have any application to Christ. But consider the Lord’s humanity. He was born with the same unclean nature we all possess, and it is by virtue of his conquest of that nature, and his perfect obedience in spite of it, that he is able to help us now. Isaiah could write of him as the bearer of the sins of his people in his own nature, “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows” (Isa. 53:4). Peter taught: “His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed” (1Pet. 2:24). Here again, Christ is likened to the camel: unclean in nature, but perfect in character, and bearing the burden of humanity that they may be freed therefrom.

Its Numerical Value

Gimel has the value of 3, the number of the *resurrection* and of *redemption*. Thus, out of the sparseness and impotence of the desert, the camel represents life and strength, and depicts in a figure the resurrection to life out of the sterility of the grave.

So, not only does the oxhead [1] lead to the house [2], but it continues on to the new life [3] of revival.

Thou art my portion, O Yahweh: I have said that I would keep Thy Words.
— Psalm 119:50



This word signifies *door*, pronounced as “d.” Notice that in shape it appears as the upright and lintel of a door. But, you may remark, one upright is missing! That is true, because *daleth* does not signify a door slammed shut and unable to be opened; but rather a swinging door; one that will open at the touch. And the letter depicts that.

The word is rendered “door” in Exo. 21:6; and is used of the two-leaved doors of the temple, both in the past (1Kgs. 6:34) and the future (Eze. 41:24).

In the section of Psa. 119:25-32 which is headed *Daleth*, the Psalmist gives expression to the “open door” of his mind, as opened to receive instruction from Yahweh. He refers constantly to the “way of Thy precepts,” “the way of Thy commandments” (vv. 29, 30, 32), which, of course, leads to the door of entrance into the kingdom.



Christ likened himself to the door of the fold through which his sheep must enter to be safe (John 10:7). Similar expressions are found in Acts 14:27; 1Cor. 16:9; 2Cor. 2:12;

Rev. 3:8, 20, which all have application to the Lord. These verses point out that the Master opens a door of utterance for the preaching of the gospel; he opens the door of the heart; and reveals the entrance to positions of power and privilege of authority in the Age to come. Finally, he declared: “I have the keys of hell and of death” (Rev. 1:18). How privileged we are to be associated with Christ our door, and to realise that door is ready to swing open to receive us.

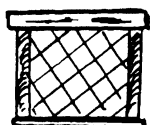
Its Numerical Value

This letter *daleth* has the value of **4**, the number of *Israel*, emphasised in the four-square encampment of the tribes, by the four horns of the altar which stood in its midst, and the four corner towers of the temple of Ezekiel’s prophecy. Hence it has relation to Israel in their spiritual worship of Yahweh.

The beginning [1], and the house [2], leading to new life [3] will result in obtaining the way into the [4] commonwealth of Israel (Eph. 2:12-13).

It was on the fourth day of creation that the heavenly bodies were brought into correct relationship to the earth; and in the fourth millennium of human history, the Word made flesh was revealed in the personage of the Lord Jesus Christ. So there are four gospels which depict the four aspects of his mission, and the Israelitish nature of the great hope the Master presented to mankind.

Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant, O Yahweh, according unto Thy Word.
— Psalm 119:50



This is the fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and is pronounced “hey.” It is shaped like a window, and comes from a Hebrew root signifying “*lo! see!*” and thus figuratively relates to a window, or a lattice; something that reveals a new vista, or introduces light into a house. So the letter takes the alphabet of grace a further stage, for after entering a house through the open door, there is a window provided.

The window is the means of greater light, and allows the fresh air of the atmosphere to permeate the house. In that regard, the letter represents Christ, as the means of illumination. He declared: “I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). He is like the window in the house of God, the ecclesia (Heb. 3:6), giving access to the atmosphere of Truth, and the sweet breath of refreshing (cp. Acts 3:19).

As the fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, it is the number of grace. When God changed Abram’s name to Abraham, and Sarai’s name to Sarah. He add a single letter; the fifth letter *he* ה to both names. It revealed an act of grace, and therefore it was appropriate that the fifth letter should be used. It changed Abram’s name from *Exalted Father* to *Father of a Multitude*, and Sarai’s name from *My Princess* (as exclusive to Abraham) to *Princess* (a name widened to embrace the multitude of the faithful of which Abraham is the father). It opened Abraham’s *vista* to a wider vision; a vista that takes in the Lord Jesus Christ, and his seed.

Its Numerical Value

This letter *he* has the value of **5**, and thus depicts the principle of *grace* which is added to the foregoing values of 1-4. This number has a considerable significance in the Scriptures. David selected five smooth stones from the brook of Elah (1Sam. 17:41); there are five books of the Law (Genesis to Deuteronomy). Such principles bring victory over the enemy of flesh, and strengthen faith through the wisdom of the Word. It is “by grace” that we are saved (Eph. 2:5, 8), and this element lifts us above the mundane things of life, revealing the wonderful principle of God manifestation in His people.

Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy Word
— Psalm 119:67



This curious little letter looks like a hook or a nail. *Wav* is pronounced by some as a “v,” and by others as a “w.” It is copulative, joining ideas together, and so is often used as the English word “and,” and as forming part of other words. It is a very common letter, occurring over 15,000 times in the Old Testament. One figure of speech used to describe the Lord Jesus is that of a hook (“nail” as in Isa. 22:23). He is the support of those who believe in him; he will hold them up when they put their trust in him. The golden hooks of the tabernacle speak of faith, which is the sustaining power of a spiritual life.

Its plural form *wavim* is used to describe the hooks of the tabernacle (Exo. 26:32, 37; 27:10, 11, 17, etc.). These hooks of gold were used to hold the dividing veil between the holy and the most holy place, and there were also hooks of silver for the hanging of the curtains. These hooks are called *wavim* in the plural, and *wav* singular. The hooks of the tabernacle would have to be bent at both ends to be of service to God in His building of worship. They represent those who are prepared to “bend” themselves to become part of the divine glory.

The *wavim*, or hooks which carried the hanging of the court of the tabernacle were of silver, indicating redemption, and without being redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, we can never act as hooks, or be of use in his service. It is also important to remember that the hooks which carried the dividing curtain between the holy place and the most holy, were made of gold, so that only a man of perfect faith could fill such a position. It was the curtain through which the Lord moved when he passed from mortality into immortality. Significantly, therefore, when he offered the perfect sacrifice required of the Son of God, and “when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the spirit. And behold the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks were rent” (Mat. 27:50).

Its Numerical Value

This letter *Wav* has the value of **6**, a number used to define the *flesh*, and in this case demonstrates that the flesh needs to seek the Truth as the means of restoration. The Lord Jesus came as “the Word made flesh” (Jn. 1:14), for he identified with his brethren, being encompassed with “the feeling of our infirmity” (Heb. 4:15). Such a weakness requires some support (7), a strengthening, to overcome the condition of mortality. We find that support in the Master, who, coming in the likeness of sin’s flesh, was able by the power of the Father in him, to overcome and to lead the way for his brethren to obtain the glory (Heb. 2:10).



The letter *zain* represents a weapon, a sword, as a weapon of attack. The principle is seen in the Word of God as a sharp two-edged sword, living and active, penetrating to the motives of the heart, dividing asunder that which is soulish and spiritual, and being a critic of its thoughts and intentions (Heb. 4:12).

Moreover the Word of God, which is the “sword of the spirit” (Eph. 6:17) is a title of the Lord Jesus Christ, the weapon that Yahweh used to destroy the *diabolos*, the sin-bias in our nature (Heb. 2:14). He will yet use the Sword of the Spirit to bring all mankind into subjection to Himself.

This principle teaches the importance of acting as a “good soldier of Christ” in the warfare against Sin. It is the evidence of the enmity (Gen. 3:15) that exists between Righteousness and Wickedness — and in this contest the man and woman of God will wage a continuous battle.

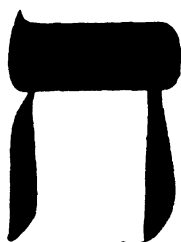
The Victory that comes by the power of the Spirit-Word opens up the covenant of faith in which those of a spiritual mind will rejoice.

Its Numerical Value

This letter *zain* has the value of 7, the number of the *covenant*, and thus demonstrates that the divine covenant is established upon the basis of the divine warfare against sin. The knife was used to cut an animal in parts (Gen. 15:10), so that the contracting parties could meet in the midst of the divided animal. The covenant was declared between them, and it was acknowledged that the fate of the covenant victim would rest upon the party who might pervert the terms of the covenant. Thus it is appropriate that the letter *zain* should depict the knife of the covenant. It is the Word, the “sharp two-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12), which establishes the terms of the divine covenant between Yahweh and His people.

Additionally, the seven days of creation brought to a completion the original design of the Almighty. Therein was seen the perfection (represented in the number 7) of His plan and purpose, and it will be after the end of the seventh millennium that true and lasting harmony and unity will be achieved: when sin and death are completely removed and perfection in character and nature will be revealed.

*They that fear thee will be glad when they see me;
because I have hoped in Thy Word — Psalm 119:74*



This letter looks like a fence, or a hedge around a paddock, with one part open as an entrance. *Chet* means a *fence* or *hedge*, and the word is derived from a root signifying *to surround; to gird*. Such a hedge or fence marks off the garden or private plot for the pleasure of its owner, and thus appropriately suggests a closeness, or intimacy with the property. This is also illustrated in the name of the place called Hebron which is actually *Chebrown* in the Hebrew (Gen. 13:18), and means “fellowship,” or “communion.” The *ch* is a strengthened “he.”

The word beautifully illustrates the shepherd feature of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose ministry has established a safe abode for those who are his flock. He came to redeem Israel, who were suffering from attacks by spiritual wolves, and hirelings who cared little for the flock of God. In addition he stated: “Other sheep I have, which are not of this *fold*, them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (John 10:16).

A fold is an enclosure. Therefore, as part of the Alphabet of Grace, *chet* points to the Lord Jesus as the protective fence or enclosure behind which the flock must shelter to be safe from attack. The apostle Paul saw the developing danger of enemy animals in his day. To the ecclesia at Ephesus, he declared: “After my departing, shall grievous wolves enter in, not sparing the flock...” (Acts 20:29).

Chet is pronounced **kh** like a guttural noise from the back of the throat. Many English-speaking people, when they see anglicized Hebrew words commencing with *chet* wrongly pronounce it “ch.” For example, the word “cherubim” should more correctly be pronounced as “kerubim.” Similarly, the name of Israel’s first president, *Chaim* Weizman, is really pronounced like a hard **kh**. *Chaim* means “life.”

Its Numerical Value

Chet has the value of **8**, and relates to the *fulness* of things, the new world order beyond the work of bringing mankind to the divine covenant as seen in the number **7**. The Lord Jesus rose on the eighth day (which was also the “first day of the week,” having triumphed over sin and death in himself (Heb. 2:14), and revealed the glory that will grace this earth in the eighth millennium. Indeed, the eighth millennium (called by the apostle Paul “the third heaven” in 2Cor. 12:2) will see the conclusion of the present purpose of Deity with this earth, when sin and death are removed, and the flock of Yahweh will all have been redeemed.

**My tongue shall speak of Thy Word: for all Thy commandments are
righteousness — Psalm 119:172**



Tet is a *serpent*. Note its curious shape, curled up like a serpent on a rock! It is significant that it forms part of the divine alphabet, and therefore relates to the Lord Jesus Christ. In the purpose of Yahweh, His Son inherited the serpent-nature common to us all, derived because of the transgression of Adam in the beginning, which is the cause of sin and death (Rom. 6:23; Heb. 2:14). The Lord Jesus was involved in the misfortune that has come upon all mankind, for God “made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin” (2Cor. 5:21), that he might identify with his brethren, and become the means of their redemption from the condemnation common to all mankind.



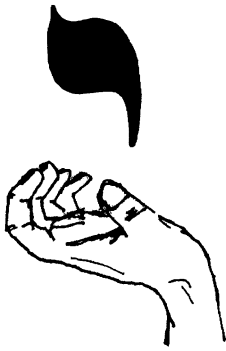
The word *tet* is pronounced like a “t.” In the section of Psalm 119 which is headed by this Hebrew consonant (vv. 65-72), the inherent goodness of God is emphasised in contrast to the evil of human nature. When a young man approached the Lord Jesus, and addressed him as “Good Master,” the Lord replied: “Why callest thou me good? there is none good but One, that is, God” (Mat. 19:17). The Lord was “good” as far as his character is concerned, but his nature was the same as that of all others. He gained the victory over the flesh through the strength he derived from his heavenly Father (Rom. 8:3).

Its Numerical Value

The numerical value of *tet* is **9**. In Bible numerics (the symbolical application of numbers) *tet* is the number of *Judgment* (one less than the number **10** representing *salvation*); very significant in view of its meaning, for the serpent power must come under divine judgment!

In his death, the Lord Jesus destroyed “him that had the power of death, that is the *diabolos*” (Heb. 2:14), the serpent power of the flesh. Having destroyed it in himself, he provides the means by which those “in him” can similarly be redeemed from the flesh. In so doing we uphold the divine judgment against the “sin which doth so easily beset us” (Heb. 12:1).

*Let my cry come near before Thee, O Yahweh:
give me understanding according to thy word — Psalm 119:169*



Yod is a small letter, rather like an inverted comma. It is often seen but not heard; for generally, it is not even pronounced! The word signifies an *open hand* — that is, a hand indicative of action, and therefore representative of power, or the means of direction. The word *yod*, must be distinguished from the next letter: *kaph*, which signifies the closed hand (Psa. 119:145-152).

Yod appears in Psalm 119 at the top of verse 73. Its meaning is demonstrated in the first verse of this section: “Thy hands [*yod*] have made me and fashioned me: Give me understanding, that I may learn Thy commandments.”

Notice that in this verse the hands provide the idea of creative power and purpose. And again, the meaning of the letter points forward to the Lord Jesus, as expressed in Isa 53:10, “Yet it pleased Yahweh to bruise him; he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Yahweh shall prosper *in his hand*.” The word for “hand” is *yod*, which is frequently so translated in the Bible. Following his atoning sacrifice, all power was delivered into the hands of the Master, in order for him to become “our great high priest,” and to control the destiny of his people (see Mat. 28:18).



Its Numerical Value

The numerical value of *yod* is **10**, the number of *salvation*. As **10** is the completion of the digital arrangement of mathematics, and the number **11** commences the new series, so the number **10** reveals the result of the work of God to redeem His creation from the experiences of the past.

It is also a number signifying the hands (ten fingers) or feet (ten toes), that speak of the “work of salvation.”

The number “ten” is often used of a complete, indefinite number, such as “David has slain his ten thousands...” signifying a large, indefinite number. Similarly, the “*hand*” of the Master will bestow power and authority upon the “ten thousand times ten thousands” of his saints when they are brought to perfection in the Kingdom Age.

*Let, I pray Thee, Thy merciful kindness be for my comfort,
according to Thy Word unto Thy servant — Psalm 119:76*



Look at the letter *kaph*, then make the shape of it with your thumb and forefinger. You will notice that your hand is bent over, and curved. That is what *kaph* means: the *bent hand* or palm of the hand. The word is derived from *kaphaph* signifying *to curve*, and relates to the hollow of the curved hand.

Consider now: when do you curve your hand? Obviously when you catch hold of something. For example, when you make ready to open a door you stretch out your hand and you begin to curve it to grasp the handle by which the door may be opened! *Kaph*, the curved hand, therefore represents the hand ready to take hold of something to help. How appropriate to the Lord Jesus, whom all the letters of the Hebrew alphabet foreshadow in some way or other! We read of him that: “verily, he *took* not on him the nature of angels; but he *took* on him the seed of Abraham” (Heb. 2:16). The Greek word translated “took” implies, to take by the hand so as to help. Jesus Christ did not help angels to

salvation, since there was no need for that (the words in italics in Heb. 2:16 should be eliminated; they are merely the translators’ indication that there are no comparable words in the original text), but the Lord has extended his hand to help us mortals to find salvation.

A similar expression is found in Heb. 8:9, “I *took them* by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt.”

Zechariah predicts that the Jewish people will accept the Lord Jesus as Messiah, after they have viewed the wounds in his hands as he extends them for inspection (Zech. 12:10; 13:6). They will look at that curved hand, ready to help Israel in its extremity, to redeem them from the oppression of Gentile powers, and therefore will come to see in the wounds of his hands the very means by which their national salvation was achieved.

The plural form *kapoth* is rendered “branches of palm trees” in Lev. 23:40. Israelites sheltered under the shade of these lovely trees, as they bent the boughs to cover them; and we, too, can shelter under the protection that the Lord Jesus affords us. The palm branches were among the boughs used in the Feast of Tabernacles that pointed forward to the future millennium. Thus, the glorious company of the Redeemed are pictured as rejoicing before the great King, clothed with white robes, and “palms in their hands” (Rev. 7:9). Each one of that glorious company would have taken hold of the curved hand of the Lord to help in their days of probation, and who now stand before him in order that his salvation might be revealed in them.

The use of both *yod*, and *kaph* are exhibited together in Exo. 4:4. Moses is

told to put forth his *hand*, and take the serpent by the tail. He did so, “and it became a rod in his *hand*.” The first word rendered “hand” is *yod*; the second word is *kaph*. Picture the scene. Moses put forth his arm, and guided his open hand [*yod*] towards the serpent, and then grasped the serpent firmly, so that his hand [*kaph*] curved around the tail of the animal and it became a rod to be used by him in the contest against Pharaoh. The difference is not apparent in the English version which uses the same word, but is evident in the Hebrew with the combined use of *yod* and *kaph*.

Again, *kaph* is used in Exo. 33:22-23 when describing how the angel of Yahweh covered Moses in the cleft of the rock, with His hand so that he would not look directly upon the divine glory manifested. The glory was too brilliant for mortal man, and Moses was taught that principle in this little episode. Obviously, the hand of the angel would *curve* around the eyes of Moses, and therefore the word *kaph* was used, and not *yod*. Try it for yourself. Place your open hand straight over your eyes. It does not blot out the light; you can look to the left or to the right and see light. But curve your hand around your eyes, and all light is blotted out. Exo. 33:22-23 could be rendered, “I will cover thee with My curved hand...”

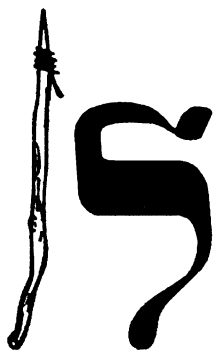
Again, 2Chr. 30:6 speaks of Israelites “that escaped out of the *hand* of the kings of Assyria.” The word is also *kaph*, and signifies the curved hand. In this case, the “hand” of Assyria had caught hold of the prisoners and refused to let them go, but a remnant had escaped from their grasp. In this case, therefore, *kaph* symbolises power, the hand in action, and not merely the guiding hand as in the case with *yod*.

You can have great pleasure going through the Bible with an Analytical Concordance, and discerning the difference in the use of these two associated words *yod* and *kaph*.

One final item with this interesting little letter! When it appears at the end of a word, it changes its shape, and becomes, like this: ך. It is not known why this is, but originally, all the Hebrew words were joined together, so perhaps the last letter was changed to distinguish one word from another. However, this does not always apply, and not all letters change if used at the end of a word. Another suggestion is in the meaning of the letter, that when a curved hand has completed its work, it changes shape. But, again, this seems to be a rather simplistic solution.

Its Numerical Value

After having identified the simple digits from **1-10**, the numerical value of the following letters of Hebrew alphabet increases by ten. This letter *kaph* has the value of **20**. It is composed of 2 x 10: the number of division multiplied by the number of completeness. Thus it emphasises the development of the work of the Truth in calling out a people for the Name of Yahweh, and perfecting that work.



This letter, called *lamed*, represents an ox-goad, and actually the old Hebrew form of the letter looks more like an ox-goad (a stick with a hook or prick) than does the present one. The word means “to goad,” and by implication, to “teach,” the rod being used in ancient times as an incentive for learning and discipline, to develop the student in his skills.

The goad was also part of the shepherd’s rod, which had a pointed end as well as a curved hook. With the curved hook the shepherd would lift up an animal caught in a crevasse, or pull it back onto the path if it strayed into danger. But with the pointed end he could prod a stubborn animal, and direct it along the correct path.



The word is rendered “expert” in Song 3:8. The associates of King Solomon (who, in this book of the Bible, types the Lord Jesus Christ) were all “expert in war,” because they had been disciplined and trained to know what they had to do. Of course, the warfare in which the associates of the Lord Jesus are particularly skilled, is the warfare of faith, to which Paul alludes in Eph. 6:10-17, by which principles we are able to direct our lives along the correct pathway and to avoid the contamination of an evil world.

Again the word *lamed* is translated “instruct” in Song 8:2, where the Bride, representing the Bride of Christ (Rev. 19:8), declares that her “mother would *instruct*” her; she would be *prodded* by the teaching of her mother. Who is the “mother” of the Bride of Christ? Paul declares that “Jerusalem which is above [i.e., the covenants of promise, creating faith, and portraying the Truth] is the mother of us all” (Gal. 4:26). These covenants of faith and the example of diligent men and women associated therewith, are as *goads*, teaching us and prodding us into action.

The word has been translated frequently “teach” as in Psa 25:4-5, “Shew me Thy ways, O Yahweh; *teach* me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth, and *teach* me: for Thou art the God of my salvation; on Thee do I wait all the day.” See also Psa. 119:12, 33.

Judges 3:31 records that Shamgar slew six hundred Philistines with an ox-goad and so “delivered Israel.” In this verse the word “goad” is from the Hebrew *malmad*, which is directly derived from *lamed*, and indicates the way in which the discipline of the courageous Shamgar brought salvation to the nation.

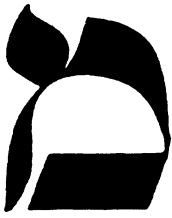
As Saul of Tarsus pursued his course of persecution against the believers in the days of the apostles, he was on the road to Damascus when he was halted by a brilliant light, and heard a heavenly voice: “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks” (Acts 26:14). The RV more

accurately renders the word “pricks” as “goads,” for the record significantly states: “saying in the Hebrew tongue.” Therefore Saul (later to be known as the apostle Paul) would have heard the voice declaring “it is hard for thee to kick against the *lamedim*, goads.” Saul had been pursuing a course that brought him only concern and constant anguish. The circumstances of his life were pursuing him with as much diligence as he pursued the christian believers, and causing him much frustration. Only when he recognised the influence of the *lamed* of Jesus Christ, the great shepherd, was he able to pursue the true and faithful course of life.

The Word of the Master is the *goad* that urges us along the path towards the kingdom of God. Paul learned that lesson, and came to appreciate that the events of his life, with all their pin-pricking frustrations, were as the jabbing of an ox-goad urging him along the true course that he should take.

Its Numerical Value

The letter *lamed* has the value of **30**. This number depicts the sum of 3×10 , and demonstrates the multiplication of the principle of resurrection: the new life developed in a community. It is remarkable that the sons of Kohath were to be numbered “from thirty years old and upward” for the service of the tabernacle, being “goaded” into divine activity on behalf of the nation (Num. 4:3). Appropriately, the Lord Jesus commenced his public ministry when he “began to be about thirty years of age” (Luke 3:23). He was numbered and singled out for the most wonderful service ever rendered by a person at any time, a work that began at his baptism in Jordan, and concluded in his atoning sacrifice on the stake of Golgotha.



The thirteenth letter of the Hebrew Alphabet is *mem*, which signifies “water,” however, the scriptures only use the plural form of the word, *mayim*. If you exercise your imagination a little, you can see the waves shaped in the letter *mem*. In fact, the letter “m” in our language developed from the *mem* of Hebrew, and again, with imagination you can see the waves of the sea in the form of our “m.”



This letter has an extremely important spiritual significance, and again the Hebrew alphabet demonstrates a fundamental principle of the path to salvation. When God separated the waters in the very beginning of creation (Gen. 1:6), He taught the need to separate from earthly matters and seek the higher principles of His way (Isa. 55:9). It is through water, in baptism, that we become joined to the Lord Jesus, and he covers us (Gal. 3:26-28); it is through the refreshing, life-giving Truth we receive through him, that we are sustained in our walk toward the kingdom of God.

The singular form of *mem* never occurs in scripture, except as part of a proper noun, but the plural form *mayim* does frequently. There are also related words. For example, *matar* signifies “to rain.”

Consequently *mem* is used in relation to many things; some to sustain, and some to rebuke. God *rained* fire, brimstone, and hail; and to sustain, He *rained* dew and manna on the earth. Similarly, Christ can be a saviour, or a destroyer. Paul wrote: “We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish. To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life” (2Cor. 2:15-16).

Consider God’s use of rain. The waters of the heaven above and the depths beneath destroyed life upon the earth in the days of Noah, but those very same waters bore up the ark to save him and his family (1Pet. 3:20). Similarly, the waters of baptism destroy the power of King Sin, and assist to life eternal. It puts us into covenant relationship with God in hope of the divine nature (2Pet. 1:4).

In Psalm 1:3, the righteous person is likened to a tree planted by “the rivers of water” [*mayim*] that “bringeth forth fruit.” The Lord declared “Except a man be born of *water* and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). Further, “Whosoever drinketh of the *water* that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the *water* that I shall give him shall be in him a *well of water* springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14). “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of *living water*” (John 7:38). Truly the Lord Jesus is as the well of living water, by whose refreshing truths we find sustenance through the deserts of life.

Israel was saved from the wrath of Pharaoh by the waters of the Red Sea. On the other side of the turbulent waters, the people, led by their redeemer, Moses, sang the Song of Deliverance (Exo. 15). Miriam, Moses' sister, led the women of Israel in their rejoicing before Yahweh, and in singing the refrain of Moses' song, so that all the company joined in the grand chorus of release (vv. 20-21).

Miriam's name is significant. Some say it means *bitterness* or *rebellion*, but others derive it from *mar*, "a drop" (as in Isa. 40:15), and *yam*, "the sea." As such she represents those saved from the Red Sea, and those taken out of the sea of nations (Isa. 57:20; cp Acts 15:14). As she led the refrain of the women of Israel on the other side of the sea, she represents the Bride of Christ, symbolised as a cloud (Rev. 1:7) and as a rainbow (Rev. 4:3). In the Age to come, that cloud of witnesses (Heb. 12:1) will "drop down rain" in dispensing the teachings of Christ (Deu. 32:2) and in doing so, will "come down as rain upon the mown grass" (Psa. 72:6), reviving the nations after Armageddon (Isa. 2:2-4).

Its Numerical Value

The numerical value of *mem* is **40**, the number of probation. Noah waited in the ark for forty days before opening the window of the ark (Gen. 8:6). Moses waited for the "words of the covenant" for forty days and nights (Exo. 34:28) and lived for 120 years (3 divisions of 40 years each). Israel struggled through the wilderness for 40 years, condemned to wander because of their unfaithfulness at Kadesh Barnea (Num. 14:33). The Lord Jesus was led of the Spirit into the wilderness of temptation for forty days (Mk. 1:13).

The number is significant, as it depicts the time of dependency upon the power of Yahweh, and represents the trial of the saints as they await the day of ultimate glory and redemption.

*Mine eyes fail for Thy Word, saying, When wilt Thou comfort me?
— Psalm 119:82*



The next letter of the Hebrew alphabet appropriately follows *mem*, and illustrates the vastness of the waters. This one is *nun*, and signifies the *fish* that dwell in the seas. The original form of the letter suggested the shape of a fish; and even the modern letter recalls the appearance of a fish with its tail bent inward.

In Scripture the fish is noted for its ability to propagate, and the root meaning of *nun* is to re-sprout; to propagate; to be perpetual, emphasising the principle of continuance. *Non*, or *Nuwn* was the name of Joshua's father (1Chr. 7:27). The word is used in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ, for in Psa. 72:17 David declared of his glorious Son, "His name shall be *continued* as long as the sun." Here, the word "continued" is *nuwn*.

Pro. 29:21 refers to a servant who is carefully trained from childhood to ultimately become a son. The word for son is *not ben*, as normally used, but *manuwn*, derived from *nuwn*, or, *nun*, signifying "continuator." Thus, the servant becomes a son to continue on the name of the father of the household, in a prolific seed. Both the ideas of the prolific harvest of fish, and the continuing of a dynasty are contained in this principle. It illustrates David's comment in relation to Christ, found in Psa. 72:17 quoted above. It also relates to the prophecy of Isaiah 53:10-11 concerning the suffering servant, who was elevated to become the Son of Yahweh's right hand: "He shall see his seed, he shall *prolong* his days, and the pleasure of Yahweh shall *prosper* in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a *portion* with the great, and he shall divide the *spoil* with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death."

The fish is not only noted for being prolific, but also for its determination and strength in battling against the stream. A dead fish will float with the current, but a living fish will strive against it, and develop itself in so doing. How like the Lord Jesus Christ, in his striving against sin! He endured Golgotha, and despised the shame; he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, and encourages others to do likewise. He refused to conform to the ways about him, and revealed a courageous example as he "set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). Although it was typically swimming against the stream, he was strengthened by so doing, and provided the means for others to follow his standard.

In all those ways, as well as in his ability to propagate the seed of the righteous, the Lord manifested the qualities of the tenacious fish.

In the first century the *fish* was commonly used as a symbol of Christ and his believers, probably because the birth to the new life is through baptism, but also because the Greek word for “fish,” *ichthus*, is an acrostic of the initials of the five words *Iesous Christos Theos Huios Soter*, “Jesus Christ Son of God, Saviour.”

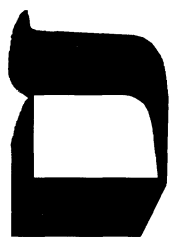
Therefore in a remarkable manner, the Hebrew alphabet sets forth a hidden prophecy of things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

The letter *nun* is found on top of the section commencing Psalm 119:105. In that stanza the Psalmist, foreshadowing Christ, declares: “The wicked have laid a snare for me; Yet I erred not from Thy precepts” (v. 110). The word “snare” is the Hebrew *pac* from *pacach*, to spread a net, and therefore is appropriate to the letter *nun* (which signifies *fish*) that, in the Hebrew, commences every line of this section of the Psalm. The net is the means of gathering together the fish of its haul. The fulfilment of this verse is found in the Lord Jesus Christ, and those “fish” that the gospel net has drawn unto him (see Mat. 13:47-48; Jn. 21:11).

Its Numerical Value

This letter *nun* has the numerical value of **50**, made up of 5 x 10; thus the number of grace [5] extended to a multitude, for 10 signifies a large, undisclosed number of the saved, a “great multitude which no man could number” (Rev. 7:9). It suggests the swarming fish in the sea of life, and points forward to those who will experience the grace of Yahweh through the ministrations of His Servant-Son, in passing through the waters of baptism. The significance of the Hebrew letter illustrates this very point.

The letter *nun* also suggests the Jubilee law: the 50th year of Release and Liberty (Lev. 25:10). The Jubilee points forward to the glorious liberty found in Christ Jesus (Gal. 5:1), and beyond, to the millennial joy when liberty from sin and death will be the happy lot of those who have remained within the net of the Lord’s spiritual harvest.



Samekh is pronounced as we would pronounce “c” in “cymbal;” something like an “s” but a little sharper and crisper.

The Hebrew has another letter called *schin* which is pronounced either “sh” or “s” depending on where a dot is placed above the letter. The distinction between *samekh* and its companion letter *schin* is evident in the incident recorded in Judges 12:6. The Ephraimites had attacked Jephthah and were defeated. They endeavoured to escape capture by claiming that they were not Ephraimites. But the men of Gilead put them to the test. They called upon those whom they captured to say “*shibboleth*,” but instead, because of their accent, the men of Ephraim pronounced it “*sibboleth*,” and instantly the Gileadites knew that they were of Ephraim. *Shibboleth* is spelt with a *schin* ש, whereas *sibboleth* is spelt with *samekh* ס. In this instance, *samekh* was no help to the liars of Ephraim, but it was a guide and support to the men of Jephthah!

You will find the letter *samekh* above Psalm 119:113. Each line of vv. 113-120 in the Hebrew commences with different words, yet all begin with this letter. *Samekh* means to “prop, support or rest.” It appears in v. 116 as “uphold;” thus: “*Uphold* me with Thy Word.” In Exo. 29 it is rendered “put” in describing the manner in which the priests identified themselves with a sacrifice by *putting* their hands upon it (vv. 10, 15, 19). In Psa. 37:17 it is rendered “upholdeth,” “Yahweh *upholdeth* the righteous” (cp. also v. 24 and Psa. 54:4). In Isa. 63:5 it is identified with the work of Christ: “I looked, and there was none to *uphold*.” Other places where it is used significantly include Psa. 71:6; Isa. 48:2; Song 2:5; Isa. 26:3.

The letter depicts the work of the Lord Jesus as a prop, a support, and a stay for those who approach the Father through him. Believers rest upon him, and see in him the One who provides the foundation upon whom we can rest or lean with every confidence. Concerning the problems he faced, the apostle Paul wrote: “I can do all things through Christ, which *strengtheneth me*” (Phil. 4:13).

Its Numerical Value

The significant numerical value of this letter is **60**. In Bible numerics 6 is the number of flesh, and 10 is the number of a large undisclosed multitude. Therefore, the number of flesh, shown in a great multitude, is reflected in this word, which means *support*. There is no true support unless it be seen in the Lord Jesus. Apart from him, flesh is grass (Isa. 40:6), and faces “vanity and vexation of spirit:” seen in the emptiness of life without the Truth (Ecc. 1:14; 2:11, 17, 26, etc.). All this points forward to those who will be redeemed from amongst mankind, and constitute a “great multitude, which no man could number, out of

all nations and kindreds, and people and tongues” (Rev. 7:9). They are represented as praising the Lamb because of the help and support they received from him (cp vv. 14-17).

*I have refrained my feet from every evil way,
that I might keep Thy Word — Psalm 119:101*



The sixteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet is called *ayin*. It is an interesting letter which can mean either *eye*, or, *spring*. In either case it points to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, whose eyes are constantly upon his followers, and who provides a fountain of living water for their eternal refreshment.

The letter *ayin* appears above verse 121 of Psa. 119. In verse 123, the Psalmist declares: "Mine *eyes* fail for Thy salvation." The Hebrew word for "eyes" is the plural form of *ayin*. Note that the letter takes the form of two eyes, connected together as though portraying the face. What the eyes see is conveyed to the brain, and frequently dictates the words spoken by the mouth. It is certainly significant that the next letter in the Hebrew alphabet actually signifies the *mouth*.

How is the letter *ayin* pronounced? It is not, or at least, most people do not pronounce it! In fact, it is a very difficult letter to pronounce for people who are not Jewish. In his concordance, J. Strong states: "The letter *ayin*, owing to the difficulty experienced by Occidentals [*i.e.*, *Europeans*] in pronouncing it accurately [*it is a deep guttural sound, like that made in gargling*], is generally neglected [*i.e.*, *passed over silently*], in reading..." This is significant, for it suggests that this letter, meaning *eyes*, is hidden away in words, so that, unless you are a member of the covenant nation, you pass it over unnoticed! Is it not the same with the eyes of Yahweh, or the water of the Christ-well? Do not Gentiles ignore the existence of such divine things, or are totally oblivious of them? Only those who clearly recognise the existence of God realize that His eyes are ever upon on them; only those who have been drawn close to the Lord Jesus Christ, can hear the bubbling of the water of the hidden well found only in him (Jn. 4:14).

It is remarkable that the word *ayin* can mean either *eye* or *fountain*. It might seem strange that one Hebrew word should do duty for both, until we think it over. What does one obtain from a fountain? Water, naturally! What do the eyes do under deep emotional stress? They water, of course! So the eyes are the fountains of the body, while wells are the fountains of the earth.

From the appearance of the eye, one can tell much of the character of a person, while fountain springs, bubbling up from deep in the earth, determine the quality and character of the land. The eyes can sparkle, like the waters of a fountain; the eyes can reveal depth of character, like the deep waters of a well. The eyes can reflect the image upon which they gaze, as does the water of a fountain to those who look therein.

An example of this is found in Gen. 16:7 where the word "fountain" is *ayin*.

The angel found Hagar in the desert by a “*fountain* of water.” The fountain became Hagar’s means of sustenance as she wandered homeless in the desert; it was the place at which the angel discovered her plight, and urged upon her to return and submit to her mistress. This symbolizes the power of Yahweh’s Truth.

A further example is found in Deu. 33:28, where Moses refers to “the *fountain* of Jacob upon a land of corn and wine.” Jacob dug a fountain, or well, and was sustained by it. The Lord found refreshment by that well (John 4) which continues to supply water to people even today. This underground spring of water remained hidden, until it was brought to light by Jacob, and in the Age to come that fact will be revealed to all people. The water of Jacob’s well symbolizes the gospel which Christ preached, as he testified to the woman at the well (Jn. 4:14).

In Num. 33:9, the “twelve fountains of water” in *Elim* (which means “Strong Ones”), and represented the hope of Israel, are given this name of *ayin*.

Ayin suggests also the strength that comes only when eyes are open to the Truth and the Fountain of living waters is available to sustain. A fortress is useless unless the eyes of the watchman are open to all about him, and unless the people within have adequate water to sustain them in time of siege. That is the importance of the letter before us.

Whenever we see *ayin* displayed in Psalm 119, it reminds us of the silent eyes of Yahweh upon us, and of the hidden fountain of living waters that can sustain us whatever distresses the desert of life might bring.

Its Numerical Value

The numerical value of the letter is **70**. This too, is a significant number, for **7** is the number of a *covenant*, and **10** is the number of a large undisclosed multitude, expressing the idea of *completeness*. Therefore, **70** can represent that “great multitude which no man could number, out of all nations, kindreds, people, and tongues,” who shall “stand before the Lamb” in the future (Rev. 7:9).

What has *ayin* to do with this great company? Everything! They are the people upon whom the “eyes of Yahweh” have been focussed from the very beginning of time (2Chr. 16:9), and who have drunk deeply from the well of living water, provided by the Lord (Jn. 4:14). In Revelation 7 these are the “sealed of God;” therefore His *eyes* are upon them, and they continue to drink from the “living fountains of *waters*” (v. 17). In consequence, “God shall wipe away all *tears* from their eyes.”



How appropriate it is that the letter *peh* should follow the previous letter *ayin* in the Hebrew alphabet, for *peh* signifies mouth whereas *ayin* signifies eye; and both are closely related in nature.

In spiritual matters they are even more closely connected. The Lord declared: “Out of the abundance of the heart, the *mouth* speaketh” (Mat. 12:34). Therefore, what a persons “sees” — i.e., physically or mentally comprehends — he will speak about. And this letter describes a *speaking mouth*, not one closed and silent.

Observe its shape. It roughly represents an open mouth showing the tongue. When the tongue is active the mouth speaks. This word, rendered “mouth” appears in Psalm 119:131, three verses under the letter heading that section. Notice, too, that the mouth is open: “*I opened my mouth and panted.*”

The word is frequently used throughout the Old Testament, including the following places: Job 23:4, 12; Psa. 8:2; 37:30; 63:5, and so on. In Gen. 29:2, 3,10 reference is made to the well’s *mouth*. Imagine the wide open mouth of the well with its life-giving, refreshing water, as indicative of an open mouth with its tongue speaking words of life!

The word is also rendered “edge” when used in relation to the *edge* of a sword as in Gen. 34:26; Deu. 13:15, etc. This suggests the wide mouth of the sword and its activity in operation. Heb. 4:12 declares: “The Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword...” Figuratively the sword has a mouth that speaks.

The most active part of the body is the tongue. It is constantly wagging — but mostly to the discredit of its possessor. James makes the point that the tongue is capable of great good and great evil. Unfortunately the tendency of the flesh is to use it for the latter more than the former (cp. Jas. 3:8-12). Therefore James concludes: “Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom” (v. 13).

Originally the serpent had a mouth that spoke, but because it was used to discredit God and to cause transgression against His law by the first human pair, the ability of speech was taken from the animal. We now need to exercise care as to how we use our mouths, for this could govern our eternal future. Christ warned: “every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Mat. 12:36-37).

It is interesting to examine Hebrew words, and build up a story around the letters used. For example, the word *Joppa*, which is the name of the seaside

harbour from whence Jonah sought to sail, and to this place the apostle Peter ventured. The name *Joppa* is formed of three Hebrew letters, with *peh* פ in the centre. The letters are *yod* י, *peh* פ, and *waw* ו. The first represents the pointing hand; the second, the speaking mouth; the third, the hook as the means of support. The word itself signifies *Beautiful* and this is significant, for from Joppa there sounded forth to the Gentiles the “beautiful” doctrine of grace by Peter. He “pointed to” the way of salvation to be found in the risen Christ, “speaking forth” the message of the Kingdom, by which was given to the Gentile Cornelius the “hook” upon which he was able to draw himself out of his previously hopeless state.

Its Numerical Value

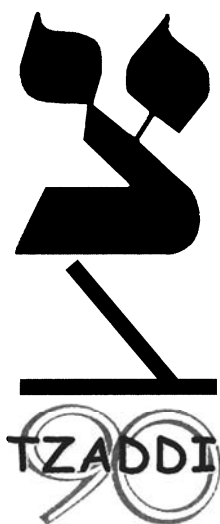
The numerical value of the letter *peh* is **80**. This is most significant as eighty is made up of **8** and **10**. In Bible numerics **8** is the number of *perfection*, whilst **10** stands for a large *undisclosed* number. It was on the eighth day that the rite of circumcision was performed, teaching the Israelite that there should be a striving for perfection by denying the flesh. It will be in the eighth millennium that the purpose of God will be brought to completion and perfection by the entire removal of every element in relation to the age of sin and death. Then the “undisclosed number” of the Redeemed, known only to the Deity, will be revealed to all mankind in the joyful state of perfection.

Thus, when 8 and 10 are joined as with an open mouth in which the tongue can be seen protruding, it suggests the great multitude, brought to perfection by the gospel, busily engaged in the work of proclaiming it by example and expression!

The word *peh* is emphasised in Isaiah 59:21, “As for Me, this is My covenant with them, saith Yahweh: My spirit that is upon thee, and my words that I have put in thy *mouth*, shall not depart out of thy *mouth*, nor out of the *mouth* of thy seed, nor out of the *mouth* of thy seed’s seed, saith Yahweh, from henceforth and for ever.”

Paul sought the prayers of his brethren “that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my *mouth* boldly; to make known the mystery of the gospel” (Eph. 6:19). Thus, the mouth must always be used to express the divine alphabet in the words of Truth that come from the Deity.

I am afflicted very much: quicken me. O Yahweh, according unto Thy Word
— Psalm 119:107



The eighteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet is given the name of *tsade* or *tzaddi* as found in the heading of the section in Psalm 119:137-144. When the letter occurs at the end of a word, its shape is changed, and it appears like this, with its tail straightened: ז. Davidson's Hebrew Grammar suggests (with a question mark!) that *tzaddi* signifies "fish-hook," perhaps identifying the word with the root *tsuwd*: "to lie in wait, to catch." Those who adopt this suggestion, see in the shape of the letter the form of a fish-hook, aligning this interpretation with its appearance.

Others, however, draw its meaning from the root *tzadaq*, "to make right, to justify." The Hebrew *tsaddiyq*, translated "righteous," is derived from this root. Significantly, this word commences the stanza in Psalm 119:137, under the heading of this letter, which gives preference for identifying it with the principle of "righteousness," rather than "fish-hook."

In any case both meanings apply to Christ, the "Word of God made flesh." He is represented as a fisher of men (Mark 1:17), drawing out of the sea of nations a "people for His name" (Acts 15:14). On the other hand, he is given the title of *Yahweh Tzidkenu*: "Yahweh our Righteousness" (Jer. 23:6). Paul states: "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1Cor. 1:30).

These are the four essential steps to salvation. First comes "wisdom," for we must *learn* the Truth. Second comes "righteousness," for we must be *justified* by the forgiveness of sins through baptism. Third comes "sanctification," the manifestation of *separateness* from sin in action through following the ways of Christ. Finally there comes "redemption," the change to *immortality* at the return of Christ.

Comparison with Other Languages

The Hebrew term *tsadaq* which many identify with the letter we are considering, denotes that which is perfectly straight, a straight line drawn from one point to another. Its equivalent in cultural Greek is δίκη *dike*, and in legal Latin is *jus*. Both speak of the principle of righteousness, but from different viewpoints; neither is as profound or expressive as the Hebrew root word. The Greek *dike* signifies "to divide equally, apportioning to each one his due." It therefore accounts what is right and just to the recipient. The Latin *jus* is from *judeo* and means that which is commanded; a response to a demand. However the Hebrew *tsadaq* signifies that which is direct, straight, uninterrupted; the quickest route to the desired end.

The ancient Latins were a warlike people, and their idea of righteousness was giving strict obedience to orders. The Greeks were a cultural people, and their idea of righteousness was to give everyone what was appropriate. But to the Hebrew, righteousness was a firmly established divine principle, the eternal distinction between right and wrong, as represented by the straight line of God's commandments and teaching. It was a straight connection to Yahweh, aiming at complete identification with Him; and the shortest route to eternal life!

On the other hand, the usual Hebrew word for "sin," in contrast to *tzaddi* is *chata*, which not only signifies "missing the mark," as an incorrect aiming of the arrow (see the use of this word translated "not miss" in Jdg. 20:16), but also swerving from this straight line, and thereby making the sinner's journey towards the goal and aim of his existence so much longer.

The root word conveying the Hebrew idea of righteousness is therefore much more expressive and deeper in meaning than in those other languages. Mere obedience to commands, or convenience concerning right and wrong, as expressed by these Gentile languages, is contrasted with straight access to God manifestation set forth in the Hebrew. To the Jew, of course, the attainment of righteousness was dependent on forgiveness of sins. To seek righteousness in the absence of justification will never lead us to God!

Another Suggested Meaning of the Letter

Some have traced the meaning of this eighteenth letter **צ** to the Hebrew word *tzad*. This word signifies "the side," and particularly the side of the mother where she carries her children. Speaking to Jerusalem, the prophet Isaiah visualised the time when "thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side" (Isa. 60:4; see also 66:12). Those who relate the letter to this root see the shape of the letter **צ** as indicating the *side* with the arms extended to help and carry. They point out that the Hebrew word for "hosts" is *tzavaoth*, indicating "hosts for assistance." Paul quotes the words of Isa. 1:9, "Except Yahweh of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma and been made like unto Gomorra" (Rom. 9:29). Through His hosts (see Josh. 5:14-15), Yahweh has frequently moved to the *side* of His people to help them. He has further done so in providing a greater Commander in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ (Isa. 55:4).

Select any one of these meanings for the letter *tsade* and it takes us to **Christ our Righteousness**, the *Fisherman* who has drawn us out of Gentile darkness, the *Redeemer* who has hastened to our side to sustain us in our helplessness, as well as providing the direct *Route* to divine acceptance. Thus, again, the Hebrew alphabet wonderfully focuses attention on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Its Numerical Value

As we have learned previously, the Hebrew consonants are also used as numerals and the numerical value of *tzaddi* is **90**.



The nineteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet is given the name of *koph*, and appears at the head of Psalm 119:145-152. The *Oxford Gesenius* gives the meaning as “to go around.” It forms the root of such words as *nakaph* which occurs in Lev. 19:27, “Ye shall not *round* the corners of your heads,” which Gesenius renders as “Ye shall not go in *circle* (in shaving) the outer part of your head.” It is rendered “round” in Josh. 6:3, and “compass” in 2Kgs. 11:8; 2Chr. 23:7; Psa. 17:9; 2Kgs. 6:14.

In his Lexicon, Davidson gives the meaning of this letter as “the eye of a needle,” or “the back of the head.” You can see how the shape of the letter does suggest the back of the head, the occiput or cranium, which encases the emotional part of the brain.

Certainly this letter is appropriate to the Lord Jesus, the “Word made flesh,” for he constitutes the “brain” of the Multitudinous Christ. Hence Paul wrote: “Let this *mind* be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phi. 2:5). He told

the Ephesians that Christ should be their head (Eph. 4:15), and warned the Colossians that they were committing spiritual suicide when they were “not holding the head” (Col. 2:19), by acting inconsistently with the “mind of Christ”. Because this was the spiritual state of the ecclesia in Colossae, they walked disjointedly, without proper balance, and without the *mind* that would provide them with proper spiritual equilibrium. Their *koph* was not operating properly!

In contrast, Christ has a perfect mind, able to completely absorb the things of Yahweh during his first advent; he was in full accord with the mind of his Father, and perfectly manifested His wisdom. Of this the Lord declared: “I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things” (Jn. 8:28). In this way he was able to say that “I and my Father are one” (Jn. 10:30). Again, “all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you” (Jn. 15:15). Unfortunately, our minds are not quite as “balanced” as was his, and therefore we lack quality and control of thought such as he was able to manifest.

The Most Marvellous Act of Creation: A Man with a Mind!

In the beginning, God made man in His “image and likeness,” far superior to the animal creation, amongst whom Adam found not a “help to his face” (Gen. 2:20) for which compatibility he sought. “Image” relates to *shape*; but “likeness” reflects *capacity*, the ability to understand and to mentally consider matters brought to attention. Unlike the beasts of the earth, Adam possessed a brain capable of absorbing divine ideas, and of reflecting them in action.

Of all the works of creation, the human brain is the most marvellous; and perhaps the least understood. It consists of a mass of nerve material which not

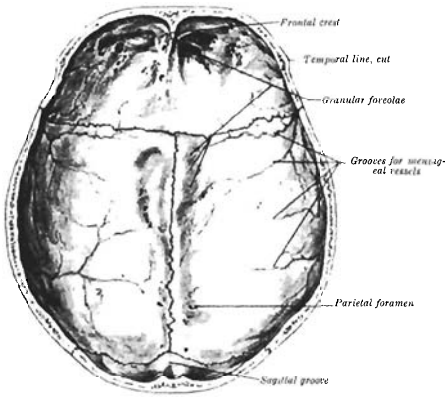
only works with great skill in regulating the various movements of the body, but determines those things which are called “the conscious personality,” including all thoughts, feelings, desires and hopes.

Though man knows much about the human body, there are aspects of the brain that completely elude him. Specialists are still unable to completely understand how it actually works, and what results from the exercise of its capacity.

However, three distinct parts, each having particular work to perform, can be recognised. The large portion occupying all the upper and front two-thirds of the cranium, is called the *cerebrum*. Here, the will, thoughts, and feelings have their origin. Toward the back of the head, and below the *cerebrum* is the smaller section of the brain called the *cerebellum*, the duty of which is to control what are called “reflex actions.” An illustration of these is seen in the ability to balance oneself when walking. This is done unconsciously, for one may be deep in thought about something else whilst walking along, and the cerebellum continues to monitor the path of the body correctly.

The third distinct portion of the brain is situated lower, more centrally, at the

end of that great bundle of nerves called the spinal cord, which passes up through the body to the brain. This part is called the “bulb” or *medulla oblongata*, and its work consists of regulating the organs of the body which act as automatic operators working day and night without conscious effort by the person, even while asleep. The constant beating of the heart, the breathing of the lungs, the digesting of the stomach, and workings of the body of this kind, continue whether we are



conscious or not. Spiritually, the “brain” of the Body of Christ continues to work notwithstanding whether the Body is active or “asleep;” thus the Lord declared: “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (Jn. 5:17). The mind of Christ maintains the functions of the Brotherhood continuously.

The back of the head also contains the visual centre of the brain, for the eyes are the only means whereby sight enters the body. Their images are forwarded to the brain, and are there interpreted, so that the correct picture is portrayed. This again is important, for what is seen by the spiritual “eyes” of each member of the Christ-Body will be imaged into the “brain” (the Lord Jesus), and determine the direction of life, for good or ill. So, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven” (Mat. 10:32).

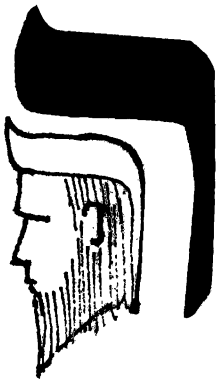
How important is the *back of the head*! How vital the letter *koph* ק when applied to Christ in relationship to believers! He will give them proper balance; he will cause their spiritual reflexes to act consistently and properly along the pathway of life; he will give true vision and a correct perspective.

This is why Paul emphatically and urgently exclaimed: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5).

Its Numerical Value

This letter *koph* has the value of **100**, and thus brings to a conclusion the primal numerical system (refer to comments on *yod*, and the number **10**). It represents the “century” of mankind’s dominion; the control of the cranium, but also looks forward to the advent of a new Age: when all the redeemed will enjoy the “mind of Christ” (Phil. 2:5) in immortality.

Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in Thy Word — Psalm 119:114



The letter *resh* is found at the head of the twentieth stanza of Psalm 119, above v. 153. It is the name given to the twentieth letter of the Hebrew alphabet. With a little imagination we can see the shape of the back of a head in the form of the letter.

It is appropriate therefore, that *resh* signifies *head, chief,* or the *sum* [completion] of a matter. The word occurs frequently in the Bible, used both as a common and a proper noun. It is found in Eze. 38:2, where it is rendered as an adjective: “*chief prince.*” Hebraists state that in this place, the grammatical construction of the verses strongly favours its use as a proper noun, and therefore should be rendered *prince of Rosh, or, Russia.*

The word has been translated “head” in Psa. 68:21; Hab. 3:13-14, and is there related to the “head of the wicked,” the “serpent power” of the northern confederacy that is to be crushed by the stone power of Nebuchadnezzar’s image (Dan. 2:44). It has also been translated “poison” (Job 20:16), “venom” (Deu. 32:33), and “gall” (Deu. 29:18; 32:32). It may appear strange that one word should do duty for all these various meanings, but a little thought will show that they are related.

First consider Job 20:16, “He shall suck the *poison* of asps.” The word *rosh* is rendered *poison* in that relation because it was considered that the tongue of the snake or viper is poisonous, and therefore comes from the head, and is a direct result of the brain directing the body accordingly.

Deu. 29:18 refers to “a root bearing *gall*” [*rosh*]. Gall is a poisonous drug, probably derived from the poppy with its prominent flower-head from which is obtained opium. In this regard, the word is used in relation to heads of wickedness.

But, as we have seen, the words of the Hebrew alphabet point forward to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, and therefore he must be associated with sin and wickedness in some way. Being born of humankind he inherited the condition of nature that he shares with his fellows, a condition described as “sin’s flesh” (Rom. 8:3), by which he was able to “bare our griefs, and carry our sorrows” so that “with his stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53:3-5).

He is represented as the “head” of the multitudinous Body of Christ, (see 1Cor. 11:3; Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18, 2:19), and is thereby associated with those members who constitute his “Body.” In a healthy body, the head controls the different parts, so that all continue in balance. So it should be in the ecclesia of Christ. Paul exhorted the brethren at Philippi: “Let this *mind* be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phi. 2:5). He urged upon them to allow Christ to do

their thinking for them, and to react to his instructions, as the natural body does to the directions it receives from the brain. How can we do that? Only by allowing Christ to “dwell in our hearts by faith” (Eph. 3:17). We might further ask, How can we do that? The answer is, “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17). To the extent that we allow the Word of God to dominate our minds, Christ will become the ruling influence of our lives.

Christ as the *Head* is predicted in Psalm 118:22: “The stone which the builders refused is become the *head [resh]* of the corner.” The Hebrew *resh* is also found in Psalm 18:43 where Christ the King (cp. v. 50) is represented as saying, “Thou hast made me the *head* of the nations.”

The Letter in Psalm 119

Resh is found in the stanza of Psalm 119:160 in the statement: “Thy Word is true from the *beginning*.” The word “beginning” is *resh*, and in the Hebrew it appears at the commencement of the line, not at its end. Hence the R.V. has translated the line: “*The sum* of Thy Word is truth.”

The Psalmist, having summed up the experiences of life, and all the influences of Scripture, found that the grand total balanced all that the Word revealed; so that it is nothing but absolute Truth. That is why the Lord Jesus, as the “head of the body, the ecclesia” (Col. 1:18), declared: “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). We must view him as our head; therefore let our actions be governed by his teaching, and his mind will become ours, to our eternal salvation.

Its Numerical Value

This letter *resh* has the value of **200**, a combination of *development* (**2**) and *completion* (**100**) — thus the principle of the “house” (*beth*, with the numerical value of **2**), filled with the glorified redeemed. This will reveal the finality of the Davidic covenant of 2Samuel 7, and the grand promise that Yahweh will “build David an house” (v. 7), and thereby grant him an everlasting inheritance.

***Uphold me according unto Thy Word, that I may live:
and let me not be ashamed of my hope — Psalm 119:116***



The twenty-first letter of the Hebrew alphabet is a quaint-looking character called *sin* or *schin*. From its appearance one might imagine that it is shaped to represent a harp. But no! *Shin* actually represents a *tooth*! It has the shape of a molar. Although that which it supposedly represents can twang like a harp, as when one has a toothache!



It can be pronounced either as “s” or “sh,” depending upon where a small dot is placed above the left hand side or the right hand side of the letter (as ש or שׁ). If you look up words that commence with this letter in Strong’s Concordance, you will find that sometimes the dot is at the left of the letter (see No. 7795), when it is pronounced “s,” and sometimes at the right of the letter (see No. 7798), when it should be read as “sh.”



The name of the letter signifies “tooth,” and you can observe three teeth-like forms in the letter itself. This suggests two significant meanings: [1] the serpent’s bite, or

[2] the purity and durability of ivory, from the tusks of the elephant, and from which objects of great value were fashioned (cp. 1Kgs. 10:18). Both meanings are applicable to Christ. He came in human nature, formed because of the “bite” of the serpent in Eden, and experienced that bite in submitting to death; but he also manifested perfect obedience, and so attained unto great authority in immortality and rulership (cp. Song 5:14; 7:4).

The singular form of the word is *schin* (tooth), and the plural, denoting teeth, is *shenim* (in Hebrew, the letters *im* at the end of a word indicates the plural form). The word is derived from a Hebrew root *shanan* meaning “sharp-pointed.” Metaphorically, the word signifies either to sharpen the tongue, i.e., to use insulting words, or to teach diligently as in Deu. 6:7. The plural word *shenabiym* is derived from *shen*, and is rendered “ivory” (1Kgs. 10:18, 22; 22:39), a term prophetically applied to Christ in Psa. 45:8; Song 5:14; whilst *shen* is rendered “teeth” and applied to the Christ-Bride in Song 4:2; 6:6.

The term is used metaphorically of the serpent’s bite in Mic. 3:5 and Zech. 9:7. Consider its use also in Psa. 35:16; 37:12; 57:4, and note how sharp and deadly is the serpent’s bite there expressed.

But the serpent’s bite will not always prevail. The time is coming when it will be said of the Lord: “Thou hast broken the *teeth* of the ungodly” (Psa. 3:7; 58:6).

The letter appears at the head of the twenty-first stanza of Psa. 119:161-168, where every line of the stanza commences with a word beginning with this letter.

The first verse of this stanza reads:

Princes have persecuted me without a cause;

But my heart standeth in awe of Thy Word.

How remarkably fitting is this verse, as illustrative of the twofold significance of the letter. The first line suggests the bitter bite of the serpent (teeth); the second line sets forth the basis of immortality (ivory). Combined, the lines speak of the conquest of sin by the Lord Jesus in himself, upon which the rest of the stanza discourses (vv. 162-168). Whichever way we look at it, therefore, this letter points forward to Christ. If we treat it as the biting *tooth*, and apply it to the serpent's bite, we know that the Lord was related to such as bearer of sin's flesh (Rom. 8:3), the condemnation that has come upon us because of Adamic transgression. On the other hand, if we take it to signify the beauty of *ivory*, it depicts the symbol of righteousness and immortality, seen fulfilled in the Lord. In fact, one idea develops from the other. By his conquest over the serpent's influence (Gen. 3:15), he became the redeemer of his people, and will yet sit as king on the millennial throne of power and authority (Rev. 3:21).

Its Numerical Value

The numerical value of this letter is **300**. The combination of **3x100**, draws attention to the multiplication of the *resurrection* (the number **3**), resulting in a *company* which "no man can number," all of them having come out of the "grave" of flesh, and having been redeemed, will stand forth in glory.

Order my steps in Thy Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me
— Psalm 119:133



The last letter of the Hebrew alphabet places Yahweh's *sign* or *mark* of ownership on the whole of His revelation. It fittingly draws attention to the completion of the Lord's work in a remarkable manner.

This final letter appears in Psa. 119:169. The left upright has a firm foundation, and is joined to the right part of the letter by a crossbar. Gesenius states that it denotes "a sign in the form of a cross branded on the thigh or neck of horses and camels, whence the name of the letter *tau*, which is Phoenician, and on the coins of the Maccabees, has the form of a cross. From the Phoenicians, the Greeks and the Romans took both the name and form of the letter."



Again he writes concerning the secondary meaning of the word: "sign, mark subscribed instead of a name to a bill of complaint: hence *subscription* (Job 31:35). It is stated that at the synod of Chalcedon and other synods principally in the East, even some of the bishops being unable to write, put the sign of a cross instead of their names, which is still often done by common people in legal proceedings. Thus in the infancy of the art of writing this could not fail of being the case, so as for the expression to be received into the usage of the language."

The idea of the word is to apply a *mark* or *brand* to an animal so as to distinguish the ownership; the animal bears the insignia of its master. Under the stanza headed *Tau* (Psa. 119:169-176) occur the following lines "*I have gone astray like a lost sheep: seek thy servant; For I do not forget Thy commandments.*" Hence the Psalmist speaks of himself as having wandered away from the flock, and as having been considered "lost." But as he has scrupulously kept the commandments, he prays that the Shepherd of Israel would seek him and identify, or mark him, as His own.

In the days of his flesh, the Lord Jesus Christ was considered as one who was lost, for the people failed to perceive the divine mark, sign or *tau* upon him. The prophet Isaiah declared: "he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him" (Isa. 53:2). The people of Israel could not identify the *mark* upon him, for they failed to recognise the divine characteristics he manifested. Therefore, he called upon his disciples to spiritually discern it, declaring: "Labour not for the meat which perisheth but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you: *for him hath God the Father sealed*" (Jn. 6:27). The stamp of divine authority was manifested by the Lord in his words, works, and character. They all demonstrated his divine origin, and therefore those in him are also sealed (2Cor. 1:22; Rev. 7:2-4). The glorious revelation of the future is of the Redeemed

surrounding the Lamb on Mt. Zion, and identified by the mystical number of 144,000, with the Father's name *inscribed* in their foreheads. That will constitute the "mark," "sign," or *tau* of their identification with the Father and the Son. It is appropriately the final word, as the appearance of the divine qualities in His people will constitute the final work in His people.

The word *tau* is rendered "mark" in Eze. 9:4-6, "Yahweh said unto him. Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a *mark* upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof... Slay utterly old and young... but come not near any man upon whom is the *mark*..."

The *mark* was the note of absolute identification of the righteous in this time of national judgment, as the "*seal* of the Living God" inscribed upon the foreheads of the righteous in the future day of judgment, which will save them also.

In Job 31:35, the word is rendered desire: "Oh that one would hear me; Behold my *desire* is that the Almighty would answer me, And that mine adversary had written a book." Job's attitude of mind was his *mark* or *token*. Hence the R.V. renders this in parenthesis: "Here is my signature, let the Almighty answer me!"

The Cross: The Final Mark of Service

Significantly the Hebrew alphabet concludes with a word that can be identified with the stake of Golgotha, because it was the Lord's submission to the "death of the cross" that identifies him as the Redeemer of mankind, the One who, in consequence, has been "highly exalted" and "given a name which is above every name" (Phi. 2:5-9). This *marked* him off for the high destiny to which he is called.

Controversy has ensued concerning the shape of the cross, or stake, as some prefer to call it. Some light has been thrown on this by the discovery in 1968, of the first material evidence of a crucifixion in an ancient cemetery at Giv'at Ha-Mivtar, close to Jerusalem. A detailed anatomical study of the skeleton of a man crucified about the same time as Christ, showed that the victim was nailed to the cross in a sitting position, both his legs slung sideways, with the nail penetrating the sides of both feet just below the heel. The "difficult and unnatural posture" that the victim was forced to endure would increase the agony.

Whether the Lord was crucified in that way we do not know. However philological and literary evidence seems to point to a cross in the shape of a capital **T**, and archaeology gives some support to this. In any case, the stake upon which the Lord was suspended on Golgotha's hill, bore a superscription on its cross-member: "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (Jn. 19:19).

Summary

The remarkable and outstanding Hebrew alphabet terminates with a letter that

implies the supreme sacrifice of the Lord, and the divine sealing which demonstrates his true identity, revealing him to be the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, of Yahweh's divine purpose, and the Alphabet of Grace.

Its Numerical Value

Tau has the numerical value of **400**. The basis of this number is in the Israelitish covenant (number **4**) multiplied by **100**. Thus it represents the final aspects of the "Hope of Israel" to be revealed in the Kingdom Age, when all mankind will be brought into unity with Almighty God, and the joy of Abraham will be fulfilled (John 8:56).

It is appropriately the numerical value of the final letter in the Hebrew alphabet.

The Alphabet of Praise to the Word of Yahweh in Psalm 119

General Theme and the Construction and Setting of the Psalm

It expresses praise for Yahweh's Law; outlines its benefits, and proclaims the determination of the writer to walk in its paths.

The Ten Commandments of the Law are described as the “*ten words*” of the Decalogue (Deu. 5:22), and significantly, this Psalm, the Alphabet of Grace is built around ten words, each of which expresses an element of the Word of Yahweh, and one of which is found in every verse of this Psalm, except in vv. 122 and 132. Therefore the “ten words” of Psa. 119 really reflect the spirit of the Law of Moses, and demonstrate the way in which the Law should have been revealed in those who were under its covenant.

The ten words are: **Saying, Word, Testimony, Way, Judgment, Precept, Commandment, Law, Statute, Righteousness:**

1. **SAYING:** Heb. *amar*: the expression of the divine will and promise to man. The Hebrew word occurs in v. 82 and in v. 57 (as “said”), whilst a cognate word *imrah* (translated “word”) occurs 19 times.
2. **WORD:** Heb. *dabhar*: See v. 9. This is represented in the New Testament Greek as *logos*, that is, the outward expression of inner thought and meaning. It occurs 22 times.
3. **TESTIMONY:** Heb. *edoth*: See v. 2. The idea of the word is that of an attestation, or formal affirmation — thus, a solemn declaration of God’s will on matters, especially of moral or religious duty, or a protest against human propensity to deviate from it. It is rendered “testimonies.” See Deu. 4:45; 6:17, 20, etc. Occurs 23 times.
4. **WAY:** Heb. *derek*: See Deu. 5:33. The course of conduct marked out by God’s Law. Occurs 13 times.
5. **JUDGMENT:** Heb. *mishpat*: A verdict establishing a precedent; thus a divine commandment. Occurs 22 times.
6. **PRECEPTS:** Heb. *piqqudim*: Appointments or mandates, precepts or requests. Occurs 21 times.
7. **COMMANDMENTS:** Heb. *mitsvahim*: Definite, specific requirements

imposed authoritatively. Sometimes rendered “judgments.” Occurs 23 times.

8. **LAW:** Heb. *torah*: denoting directions or instructions; a body of teaching, a system of law. Occurs 25 times.
9. **STATUTES:** Heb. *chuqqim*: an enactment, an appointment that must be kept. Occurs 21 times.
10. **RIGHTEOUSNESS:** Heb. *tsedaqah* or *tsedeq*: denoting righteousness, rectitude, justice, virtue. Thus, the fulfilment and keeping of the Law. It occurs 12 times.

Who Wrote the Psalm?

No author is given. But, obviously, it is an amplification of two Psalms: Psalm 1 (cp. v. 1 with 119:1) and Psalm 19 (cp. vv. 7-11), and therefore the expressions are Davidic. However, some suggest that this wonderful acrostic psalm is the work of a “ready scribe,” in the personage of Ezra.

General Theme, Construction and Setting

It expresses praise for Yahweh’s Law, and therefore for the inspired Word. It lists some of its benefits, and the determination of the writer to keep it. The ten synonyms for the Law are expressive of the diversified requirements and aspects of God’s Word.

After an introduction stating the blessedness that accrues from keeping the Law (vv. 1-3), the Psalmist addresses himself in prayer to Yahweh in such personal expressions as to imply a specific individual and personal experience and circumstance (see vv. 10, 19, 23, 46, 51, 62, 161, etc.).

The Psalm is divided into 22 sections (answering to each letter of the Hebrew alphabet) each of eight stanzas or lines. Eight is the number of perfection through circumcision (the denial of the flesh). The aim of the Psalmist is to seek the help of Yahweh in putting away the flesh by the sacrificial dedication of himself. Eight, an octave, expresses perfect harmony. True circumcision (Rom. 2:29) creates harmony and unity between God and men.

The Psalm is an acrostic (i.e., an alphabetical) psalm, each letter of which introduces an aspect of the Lord’s life and ministry, as “the Word made flesh” (John 1:14).

The setting of the Psalm is significant. It is preceded by a group of Psalms (the second portion of the Passover *Hallel* — Psalms 115-118) that prophetically foretold the completeness of the Lord’s witness in life, death and resurrection, the universal proclamation of the gospel (Psa. 117), and the universal glory of his coming Kingdom (see Psa. 115:1; 116:3-4; 117; 118:22-24).

It is followed by the Songs of Degrees (Psalms 120-134) that commemorate the strivings of Hezekiah (typical of the saints) to render unto Yahweh that which is due to His holy Name.

It is appropriate that between these two groups of psalms this one should

appear, for it is suggestive of the cooperation of the SON with his Father in effecting the victory over sin and death (John 16:32; Heb. 5:7-10).

In Gethsemane, a prayer was uttered with such feeling that “his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground” (Luke 22:44) after an angel had been sent to “strengthen him” (v. 43). These Psalms could have relation thereto. Particularly Psalm 119 which outlines the whole of his life and ministry, and is expressive of the Lord’s complete dedication to his Father’s will.

Dominant Words in the Psalm

Note the following:

Quicken (Heb. *chayah*) — Revive, give new life (vv. 17, 25, 40, 88, 107, 149, 154, 156, 159).

Affliction (Heb. *anah*) — Depression, misery, afflicted (vv. 71, 75, 107, 153, 167) or

Only (from *anah*) — humbled (vv. 50, 92).

Teach (Heb. *lamad*) — To goad, teach by the rod (vv. 12, 26, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135).

Not Forget (Heb. *shakach*) — To mislay, be oblivious of, through want of memory or attention (vv. 11, 83, 93, 109, 141, 153, 176).

Delight (Heb. *sha'a*) — To look upon with pleasure, to fondle (vv. 16, 47, 70) (*sha'shua*) — enjoyment (vv. 25, 77, 92, 143, 174).

Keep (Heb. *shamar*) — To hedge, guard, observe (vv. 4, 5, 8, 17, 44, 57, 60, 63, 88, 101, 106, 134, 146). [*natsar*] — to guard, maintain, obey (vv. 2, 33, 34, 69, 100, 115, 129, 145).

Mercy: Heb. *chasid*, Lovingkindness, piety (vv. 41, 64, 76, 124). The same word has been translated from the Heb. *racham*, which signifies compassion, and is related to the womb, thus indicating the warmth and care of a mother (vv. 77, 156). Another word, *chanan*, signifies to bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior, to favour, bestow (rendered “merciful” in vv. 58, 132).

The Dominant Prayer of the Psalm

“Teach me, O Yahweh, the way of Thy statutes.” It is a prayer for spiritual enlightenment (James 1:5) and occurs eight times (vv. 12, 26, 33, 64, 68, 108, 124, 135).

*My tongue shall speak of Thy Word: for all Thy commandments are
righteousness — Psalm 119:172*

Then will I turn
to the people a
pure language,
that they may all
call upon the
name of Yahweh,
to serve Him
with one consent

— Zephaniah 3:9

