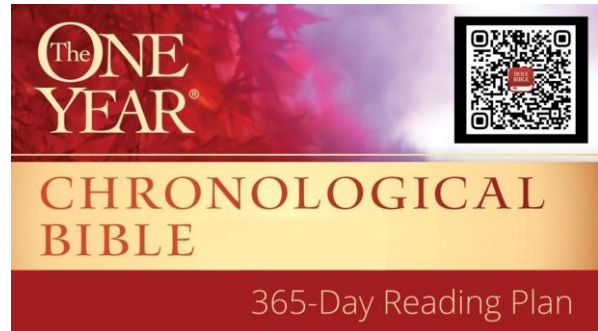


The Definition of Dependable

Psalm 119:113-120



Do you feel dependable? In preparing for today, I asked Office 365 *CoPilot* to create a picture of “dependability” but it just “gave me the gears”! We might feel less than dependable in various ways. It may even be in the area of Bible engagement. Last week we launched the **One Year Chronological Bible** reading plan. Be encouraged...do not worry if you miss a day...just keep pressing on!



We have resumed our study of Psalm 119, “**All In: Living with loyalty to the way of the Lord**”. As we read in Psalm 119:1, “*Blessed are those...who walk according to the law of the Lord.*” Our focus is on being fully invested and engaged in direction that God has prescribed for us in His Word. As an **alphabetical acrostic**, Psalm 119 has twenty-two strophes of eight verses, each beginning with the same letter. Our text for today is under the alphabet title **samekh**.

The text we examined highlighted craving the Word of God – God’s **mitzvah** or “commandment”. Consider a “Bar Mitzvah” which literally means “son of commandment”. This is an important ritual in the life of young Jewish boys and girls, when they come into a place of moral responsibility. Are we children of God’s **mitzvah**? Today our focus is on the term **huqqim** which is translated “decree” or “statutes”.

Torah	zayin vv. 49-56	Law, instruction from revelation of God
Dabar	daleth vv. 25-32	Word , matter, thing, speech, command
Mishpat	tsadhe vv. 137-144	Judgement, justice, law , ordinance, right
Edot	gimel vv. 17-24	Witness, testimony , ordinance
Mitsvah	vav vv. 41-48	Commandment
Huqqim	samekh vv. 113-120	Statute, decree , law, ordinance
Piqqud	mem vv. 97-104	Precept , statute, commandment
Imrah	resh vv. 153-160	Word, saying, command, promise

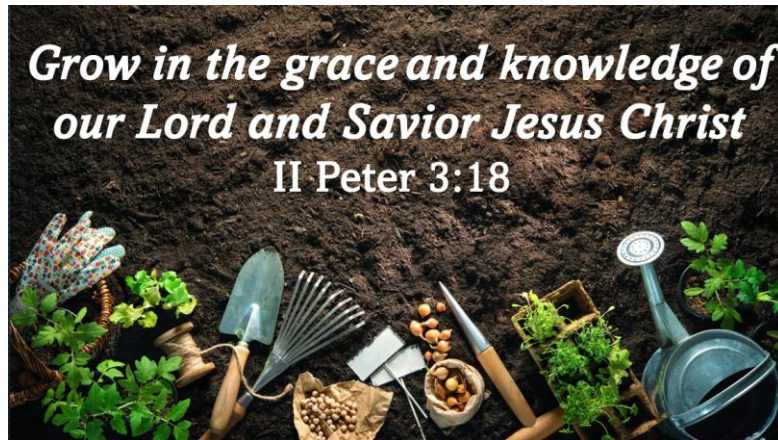
In English, there is an overtone of “legalese”. But Derek Kidner explains that God’s **huqqim** “*speak of the binding force and permanence of Scripture, as of laws ‘engraved’ or inscribed, ‘for the time to come as a witness for ever’ (cf. Is. 30:8).*” (**TOTC: Psalms**, IVP, 1973, 418) God’s **huqqim** are **dependable** and **reliable**. Have you used the phrase, “the definition of _____”? Today we explore the **definition of dependable**. Why is it essential that we engage with God’s dependable decrees? It is because as flawed humans, we are not dependable. Here are three ways we can engage in God’s decrees.

1. A cultivated life – vv. 113-115

What is “the cultivated life”? Susan Phillips wrote a book with this title (IVP, 2015). It is a helpful image; the believer’s life cannot just be **planted**...it must also be **tended**! Christians must grow in faith!

In the introduction to Phillip's book, Eugene Peterson notes that the cultivated Christian journey produces a harvest. In contrast, the world offers a **circus**, which is...

the mindless absorption in entertainment and business that has infiltrated our daily lives, but almost entirely as spectators. In an age of self-absorption, cultivation is a metaphor that can keep us aware that we are not merely individuals defined by what we consume or possess or do but by our relationships, our values and our faith, all of which require our attentiveness." (10)



Our text speaks about intentionally cultivating one's life in the Word. This is progressive and productive.

- **Verse 113** – growing distaste for double mindedness (the only occurrence of this term in the OT). In I Kings 18:21 Elijah taunts the followers of Baal, *"How long will you waver between two opinions?"* A cultivated life results in an increasing affection for God's **instruction (torah)**
- **Verse 114** – growing sense of security in God who is our refuge and shield (see Psalm 46:1-2). This sense of safety in God deepens the more we attend to His **word (dabar)**.
- **Verse 115** – growing disassociation from the evil. David wrote, *"away from me, all you who do evil"* (Psalm 6:8). Moving away from evildoers, we respond obediently to God's **commands (mitzvah)**,

Conformity to Scripture requires cultivation. *"Desire and discipline go hand in hand in soul cultivation."* (Phillips,17) II Peter 3:17-18 warns, *"be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless...but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."*

2. A sustained life – vv. 116-119

In this section of the psalm we find two prayers which **request** God to sustain and support. This is followed by two affirmations which **recognize** the way God cares for His own, those who are "all in."

- **Verse 116** – prayer for a worthy and shame free life, because of God's **promises (imrah)**
- **Verse 117** – prayer for safety and hope, because of God's **decrees (huqqim)**

What is the significance of these two prayers? For believers who wish to be "all in" to God and His way there will be wrestling with the seeming success of the sinful. We see this in Psalm 37:1-4,17,24. God's sustaining power enables us to remain engaged in His decrees and also recognize two things.

- **Verse 118** – the discipline from God of those who stray (v.21) from His **decrees (huqqim)**
- **Verse 119** – the punishment of God for "dross" or evil, motivating love His **testimonies (edot)**

In I Peter 2:2 is a picture of an infant, hungering for milk. This typifies the longing we must have for the Word of God. But Peter notes that such hunger for Scripture involves a corollary – it should follow that sin be sorted! *“Rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander.”* (v.1)

3. An engaged life – v. 120

What was the movie like? Did you enjoy the concert? How was the sermon? The answer to these questions depends upon the degree to which you were engaged. When we are **fully engaged** in the **law (mishpat)** of God, we will experience it powerfully. *First*, there will be a sense of fearful awe. When was the last time you were reduced to tears when reading the word of God? This was the case for the people of Israel – see Ezra 10:1-4. This is a fear that inspires worship and reverence, not distance!



Otto von Habsburg, the last crown prince of the Austro-Hungarian empire before its dissolution in 1918, was laid to rest on July 16, 2016 in a colorful ceremony that evoked the glories of the 640-year Habsburg dynasty....When the funeral procession arrived at the floor of the Capuchin monastery, the master of ceremonies announced his arrival, using his imperial and other royal titles. The Capuchin friars refused entry, saying: “We do not know him.” Again, the master of ceremonies pounded on the door, this time reading off the academic and political achievements of the deceased. The Capuchins inside gave the same reply. Finally, when the friars answered a third knock on the door by asking who wanted entry, the reply was: “A poor sinner named Otto,” and the heavy doors swung open to admit his coffin. ([SOURCE](#))

Second, God’s Word can cause **trembling (samar)** – like goosebumps! *“I shiver in awe before you; your decisions leave me speechless with reverence.”* (MESSAGE) When tickled, stressed, or emotional, bumps at the base of body hairs raise in reaction. Trembling at God’s Word should be not unusual! After all, it is *“alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”* (Hebrews 4:12)

Conclusion

Even more remarkable than the dependability of God’s decrees, is the ultimate expression of them. In the incarnation of Christ, we have God’s **huqqim** in flesh and blood. Christina Rossetti (1830-94) was captivated by Christ’s condescension – she is an example of loving God’s decrees by loving Jesus and developing what her brother described as *“the spirit of self-postponement.”* [READ MORE](#)

Rossetti penned the beautiful carol, *“In the Bleak Midwinter”* which wrestles with the eternally **dependable** Word of God, in humble human form.

*Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain
Heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign:
In the bleak mid-winter, a stable-place sufficed, the Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.
What can I give Him, poor as I am? If I were a Shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part, — Yet what I can I give Him, give my heart.*

