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RENEWED FAITHFULNESS

If you're ever feeling a sense of regret that you've been drifting spiritually from a sincere devotion to the Lord and seeking to renew a greater sense of commitment, Psalm 119 is a helpful place to go in the scriptures. It is a wonderful Psalm, and wonderfully unique in its arrangement, comprised of 22 stanzas devoting every letter of the Hebrew alphabet to a complete outpouring of praise, devotion and prayer, revealing the writer's great need for God's Word to keep him in the ways of righteousness.

"Establish my footsteps in Your word, and do not let any iniquity have dominion over me," (Ps. 119:133). "O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day...Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. I have sworn and I will confirm it, that I will keep Your righteous

ordinances," (Ps. 119:97,105-106). It is the final thought at the end of this Psalm which perhaps provides the greatest insight as to the writer's purpose in declaring his need to cling to the Lord's precepts in constant meditation and prayerful yearning. "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant, for I do not forget Your commandments," (Ps. 119:176). The writer confesses he had strayed away from the safe paths of righteousness he was previously walking along. Recognizing the destination was bringing him further and further away from the God he longed to serve, he reveals the great purpose of this spiritual devotional exercise, devoting each Hebrew letter to eight stanzas of adoration for the word of God and its ability to redirect his steps towards a closer and more faithful walk

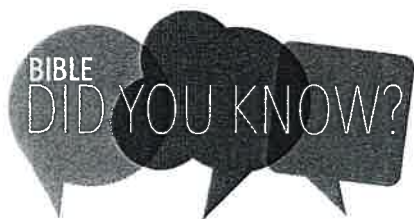
with God. There have been clues strung all throughout the entirety of the Psalm that it is the guilt ridden realization that he has allowed himself to wander away which is the driving motivation for his newfound desire to return and cling to God's law with an even greater intensity. *"Oh that my ways may be established to keep Your statutes! Then I shall not be ashamed when I look upon all Your commandments,"* (Ps. 119:5-6). By the fourth stanza, it is unmistakably apparent with letter Daleth. *"My soul cleaves to the dust; revive me according to Your word. I have told of my ways, and You have answered me; teach me Your statutes. Make me understand the way of Your precepts, so I will meditate on Your wonders. My soul weeps because of grief; strengthen me according to Your word. Remove the false way from me, and graciously grant me Your law. I have chosen the faithful way; I have placed Your ordinances before me. I cling to Your testimonies; O LORD, do not put me to shame! I shall run the way of Your*

commandments, for You will enlarge my heart," (Ps. 119:25-32). Throughout this prayerful devotion to cling to God's testimonies, there is the acknowledgment that his new found devotion has brought him to a greater desire to know and understand God's law like never before. *"The LORD is my portion; I have promised to keep Your words. I sought Your favor with all my heart; be gracious to me according to Your word. I considered my ways and turned my feet to Your testimonies. I hastened and did not delay to keep Your commandments...Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word. You are good and do good; teach me Your statutes...It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes. The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces. Your hands made me and fashioned me; give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments,"* (Ps. 119:57-60,67-68,71-73). In his effort to draw closer to God in the daily study and meditation of His

commandments, the Psalmist also determined to purge from his life all those who did not share his passionate desire and need for God's word. *"I hate those who are double-minded, but I love Your law. You are my hiding place and my shield; I wait for Your word. Depart from me, evildoers, that I may observe the commandments of my God. Sustain me according to Your word, that I may live; and do not let me be ashamed of my hope. Uphold me that I may be safe, that I may have regard for Your statutes continually. You have rejected all those who wander from Your statutes, for their deceitfulness is useless. You have removed all the wicked of the earth like dross; therefore I love Your testimonies. My flesh trembles for fear of You, and I am afraid of Your judgments,"* (Ps. 119:113-120). As a humbled lost sheep, ashamed of how far he had wandered away from the safety of his Shepherd, the writer of this beautiful Psalm seeks the mercy and guidance of God through His testimonies, rekindling a

fervent desire to cling even closer in constant study and prayerful meditation. *"I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant, for I do not forget Your commandments,"* (Ps. 119:176). Are you in need of reestablishing your wandering feet? Is your soul afflicted with the burden of grief and shame as you acknowledge you have drifted so far from where you once were? Let Psalm 119 be a starting point for you to find comfort and reestablished commitment in rededication with a fellow wandering sheep who has found new desire and trust in the word of God as he devotes every letter of the Hebrew alphabet to rekindling zeal for greater faithfulness.

- Daniel Ruegg



"Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise. The terror of a king is like the growling of a lion; he who provokes him to anger forfeits his own life. Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, but any fool will quarrel."
Prov. 20:1-3

People, Places, and Things of the **BIBLE**



Oldest Ever Inscription of 'Jerusalem' On Pillar

A pillar from the Second Temple period bearing a three-line inscription was unveiled at the Israel Museum on Tuesday, the earliest stone inscription of the full modern Hebrew spelling of “Jerusalem.”

“Hananiah son of Dodalos of Yerushalayim [the way the ancient Jewish city is written in Hebrew today]” was discovered during a salvage excavation earlier this year of a large Hasmonean Period Jewish artisans’ village near what is today’s western entrance to the city. In an interview with *The Times of Israel*, Israel Antiquities Authority archaeologist Danit Levi said when her team alerted her to the find, she could not believe that the word “Yerushalayim” could be on an ancient pillar, and that it must be graffiti. When she saw the expertly chiseled Hebrew lettering in the 31.5-inch tall column, she dusted it off and began to read. “My heart started to pound, and I was sure everyone could hear it. My hands were trembling so badly I couldn’t properly take a picture,” she said. Levi believes the column and inscription date back to 100 BCE, and belonged to or was built with money from Hananiah son of Dodalos – Dodalos being a nickname used at the time to refer to artists, based on the Greek myth of Daedalus. Levi said the column was located in a Jewish village, but that it was found in a ceramic construction workshop used by the Tenth Roman Legion – the army that would eventually destroy Jerusalem and exile the Jews – evidently being reused in a plastered wall. Though this is the first inscription of its kind in stone, but the full spelling of Jerusalem has been seen before, including on the Dead Sea Scrolls, written as early as 400 BCE.

