




KAPH



Psalm 119:81-88



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Letter Name	Early Hebrew	Middle Hebrew	Late Hebrew	Modern Hebrew
KAPH				

**Pictograph:**

Open Palm

**Meanings:**

Bend, Open, Allow, Tame

**Sound:**

K (stop), Kh (spirant)

81 My soul faints for Your salvation, But I hope in Your word.

82 My eyes fail from searching Your word, Saying, “When will You comfort me?”

83 For I have become like a wineskin in smoke, Yet I do not forget Your statutes.

84 How many are the days of Your servant? When will You execute judgment on those who persecute me?

85 The proud have dug pits for me, Which is not according to Your law.

86 All Your commandments are faithful; They persecute me wrongfully; Help me!

87 They almost made an end of me on earth, But I did not forsake Your precepts.

88 Revive me according to Your lovingkindness, So that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth.

# **“Trusting God in the Most Trying Hours of Life”**

The psalmist admits that his soul fainted away in waiting for God to vindicate him in the eyes of his enemies, but he did not forsake the Word of God (119:81–88).

The suffering of the psalmist is the predominant theme in the Kaph file, a suffering made worse because God seems to have abandoned his servant.

His enemies are more prominent in these lines than anywhere else in Psalm 119. His situation is truly life-threatening, “They almost destroyed me” (v 87).

“When will God deliver me” is constantly on his mind (Psa 119:82, 84). Though he is not questioning whether God *will* come through, he is certainly wondering *when* God will come through.

**Do not abandon hope even if you feel overwhelmed  
waiting for the fulfillment of God's promises (81–83)**

**THE QUESTIONS ASKED IN DESPAIR**

**Psa 119:81-82**



**Psa 119:81 My soul faints for Your salvation,  
But I hope in Your word.**

He begins by saying that his inner strength is failing while he is waiting for God to deliver him from his suffering situation.

Verses 81, 82 and 87 each begin with a verb that means *to be finished, to be at the end, to be spent, to be exhausted*. The writer is at the end of himself; his human resources have dried up, but he still looks to God for deliverance.

It is certainly possible for the believer to have bad days. Paul speaks of being afflicted, but not crushed, of being perplexed, but not despairing (2 Corinthians 4:8). Suffering is not pleasant. It hurts, it saps our strength.

His faith is expressed in terms of hoping for God's Word. He believes in God's Word and all that it promises, but he reveals that he has much turmoil as he waits for the Lord.

**My soul faints** כָּלָה (kalah) accomplish, cease, consume, determine, end, fail, finish. This word occurs three times in the Kaph file. 81, 82, 87. In verse 82 it is translated “fails,” and in verse 87 it is translated “made an end of me.”

This word indicates a process brought to an end – which may be either positive or negative. That is, something may be continually added to until it is full or complete, or something may be taken away from until there is nothing left.

The soul can pine away to the point of fainting (Ps 84:2; 119:81; 143:7). He is saying, “I am almost at my wit’s end.”

**for Your salvation תְּשׁוּעָה (teshu'ah) salvation, deliverance.**

Salvation, in the Old Testament, almost always refers to a physical deliverance from a bad situation. This is not speaking of salvation from the penalty of sin.

When opposition comes, one may retreat to a refuge for safety. God is frequently viewed as this refuge for his people,

**Psa 62:7** In God *is* my salvation and my glory; The rock of my strength, *And* my refuge, *is* in God.

The one who experiences salvation does not need to be tormented by internal anxiety. He will have to endure opposition, but God will ensure that his opponents do not destroy him.

The protective nature of salvation is seen in other concepts:

- “the shield of salvation” (Ps 18:35),
- “a helmet of salvation” (Isa 59:17; Eph 6:17),
- “the garments of salvation” (Isa 61:10).

Thus salvation is not merely a momentary victory on the battlefield; it is also the safety and security

**But I hope in Your word.** יָחַל (yachal) wait, hope.

Psa 119:43, 49, 74, 81, 114, 147. Expectation

This is closely linked with “faith, trust” The sense of expectation is hoping for good in the future -- it is directed towards the Word of God.

In times of despair, we can have confident expectation:

“Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him, the help of His presence” (Ps 42:5; 42:11; 43:5).

“Though he slay me, I will hope in him...” (Job 13:15).

What is the object of your hope?

Psa 20:7 Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

Psa 130:5 I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, And in His word I do hope.



**Psa 119:82 My eyes fail *from searching* Your word, Saying, "When will You comfort me?"**

The emphasis on his failing strength is repeated in verse 82, now with reference to his eyes:

**my eyes fail** כָּלָה (kalah) fail, to come to an end; to bring a process to completion.

# My eyes fail for Your word.

The meaning would be “I have looked and looked and looked and looked until I am ‘looked out’.”

He is saying “My eyes have failed, looking for your word to be fulfilled, I am waiting for deliverance to come.”

He will repeat this idea in verse 123: My eyes fail *from seeking* Your salvation And Your righteous word.

## My eyes fail for Your word.

The eyes reflect his weariness in watching for a sign of God's answer; he is worn out. He is under a lot of pressures as he is waiting for God's promises to be fulfilled.

He is looking for God's promise to protect and bless His people—he is waiting for God's promises to be fulfilled.

**Psa 73:26** My flesh and my heart fail; *But* God *is* the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

# When will You comfort me?

Here begins a series of questions that express the psalmist's suffering and frustration. The first one asks when God will comfort him. He is tired of waiting.

When God delivers him from his oppressors and revives his life then he will feel comforted. So long as this psalmist is suffering at the hands of the wicked, he will not sense all of God's comfort; when God ends the persecution and sets his servant free, then he will be truly comforted.

## **He Argues His Case: Psa 119:83-88**

**He asks for deliverance because he feels lonely and forgotten Psa 119:83**

**Psa 119:83** For I have become like a wineskin in smoke, Yet I do not forget Your statutes.

**wineskin** נֹד (nō'd) skin, bottle, Jud 4:19; I Sam 16:20; Josh 9:4, 13. A wineskin was a bottle made of leather.

The wineskin was the Old Testament equivalent of a bottle. If they were not in use constantly, they were often hung from the rafters of a room for storage. If they remained there for any length of time, they became shriveled and browned by smoke, unpleasant and practically useless. As such, they represented forgotten objects.

This is the way the psalmist feels. He perceives himself as useless, unattractive, and forgotten. In time of trouble people often feel as if they have been forgotten, that no one cares. They may feel useless and unattractive.

Often this is self-pity, self-absorption, a manifestation, ultimately, of pride. I don't deserve this. Notice what Jeremiah said in Lamentations 3 when he witnessed the destruction of his nation:

<sup>31</sup> For the Lord will not cast off forever. <sup>32</sup> Though He causes grief, Yet He will show compassion According to the multitude of His mercies. <sup>33</sup> For He does not afflict willingly, Nor grieve the children of men.

<sup>38</sup> *Is it* not from the mouth of the Most High That woe and well-being proceed? <sup>39</sup> Why should a living man complain, A man for the punishment of his sins? <sup>40</sup> Let us search out and examine our ways, And turn back to the LORD; <sup>41</sup> Let us lift our hearts and hands To God in heaven.

Though he feels forgotten, he is not forgetful—he keeps focused on the Word of God.

Yet I do not forget Your statutes.

He has not forgotten the statutes of the LORD; He has remembered them, meaning, he has complied with them.

Here is faith persevering in the midst of the persecution that God is permitting.



**Deliver me because I've had enough Psa 119:84**

**Psa 119:84 How many are the days of Your servant? When will You execute judgment on those who persecute me?**

The psalmist asks some rhetorical questions; but his questions are essentially laments.

## **How many are the days of Your servant?**

means “Your servant (the psalmist) has been enduring long enough.”

The first half of the verse laments his prolonged suffering at the hands of his enemies. The second is concerned with those who are the cause of his condition.

# **When will You execute judgment on those who persecute me?**

People were openly persecuting him, which was the cause of his suffering condition; but if God were to execute justice on them (meaning destroy them for their evil activities) the psalmist would no longer feel that he was fading away. Instead, his life would be renewed.

**judgment** – justice. He wants God to execute justice according to God's word.

David prayed for God to execute justice and to deliver him from Saul who had been pursuing him for years.

1 Sam 24:15 “Therefore let the LORD be judge, and **judge** between you and me, and see and plead my case, and **deliver** me out of your hand.”

**Psa 103:6** The LORD executes righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.

**those who persecute me --**

**Persecute** רָדַף (radap) be behind, follow after, pursue, persecute.

Usually the term refers to a man or group pursuing another for purpose of making war, taking revenge or inflicting harm.

But God, in His mercy rescues His people from pursuit.

In the well-known phrase from Psalm 23, God's goodness and mercy are said to "follow" me all the days of my life. This is not strong enough for the sense of the word. It should be more active. "Surely goodness and mercy shall pursue me" is the concept.

Evil men may pursue me for a time, but God's goodness and mercy will pursue me all the days of my life. In other words, God's provision is always available. And beyond that, I have an eternal destiny: and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever,

**Deliver Me Because I am an Innocent Victim Psa  
119:85-87**

**Psa 119:85 The proud have dug pits for me,  
Which is not according to Your law.**

**The proud זָד (zēd) proud, arrogant.** We have previously seen this word in 21, 51, 69, 78, and it will be found again in 122.

There are several Hebrew words for pride. This is pride which is manifested in three areas: 1) presumption of authority not delegated to him, 2) rebellion against those in authority over him, and 3) willful decisions to harm others without concern for the damage it may cause.



## **The proud have dug pits for me.**

The persecution was taking a vicious turn: they were hunting him down like an animal. The idea of their digging pits signifies laying some sort of trap for him.

Their arrogance is evidenced in the fact that they do nothing in compliance with God's Word. They completely ignore it and have no tolerance for those who seek to live by it.

## **Which is not according to Your law.**

They have no justification in Scripture for their actions. They are, in fact, violating God's laws. Their persecution is unjustified. The psalmist is the object of their sinful behavior. His suffering at their hands is undeserved.

**Psa 119:86 All Your commandments are faithful; They persecute me wrongfully**

**faithful** אֱמוּנָה (*'emunah*). *Firmness, faithfulness, fidelity steadfastness, steadiness*

Basically, the term applies to God Himself (Deut 32:4) to express His total dependability. It is frequently listed among the attributes of God (1 Sam 26:23; Ps 36:5; Ps 40:10; Lam 3:23). It describes His works (Ps 33:4); and His words (Ps 119:86; 143:1).

All the psalmist can do is rely fully on God's commandments which he knows to be *faithful*.

There are commandments that promise that life will be better for those who live according to God's laws. Those commandments are trustworthy.

However, the better life is the state of blessedness that we saw in verses 1 and 2. There is no promise of success, prosperity and health as some false teachers assert.

## They persecute me wrongfully

**Persecute** is the same word as in verse 84.

**Wrongfully** שֶׁקֶר (sheqer) a lie.

The psalmist is disturbed by those who make accusations that have no basis in fact—lies! Reference to these lies is found in Psa 119:29 (translated *lying*), 69 (*lie*), 78 (*falsehood*), 86 (*wrongfully*), 104 (*false*), 118 (*falsehood*), 128 (*false*), and 163 (*lying*).

In contrast to the *truthfulness* of all God has said, the psalmist notes that his enemies persecute him *falsely*. Because they persecute him for no purpose, or with lies, he can only cry for God to do for him that which he cannot do for himself: “

## **Help me!** (cf Psa 119:173, 175)

In the psalms the Lord is seen as the helper of the poor (Psa 72:12) and the fatherless (Psa 10:14).

There is no help but God (Psa 22:12; 107:12).

God helps when oppressed by enemies (Psa 28:7; 54:4).

God helps in time of personal distress (Psa 86:17).

God's hand (Psa 119:173) and His laws (Psa 119:175) were sources of help to the psalmist.

The righteous can anticipate God's help (Psa 37:40).

Why do we pray, “Help me!” ?

**Psa 79:9** Help us, O God of our salvation,  
For the glory of Your name

**Psa 119:87 They almost made an end of me on earth, But I did not forsake Your precepts.**

**They almost made an end of me on earth,**

כָּלָה (kalah) full end. The basic idea of this root is “to bring a process to completion.”

To conclude his description of his plight he returns to the key word of verses 81 and 82, only now he uses the intensive form of the verb: “they have almost made an end of me,” meaning that he is almost dead—finished, on this earth.

However, he affirms his faith to the very end, if need be:



**I did not forsake your precepts עֲזַב ('āzab)  
*leave, forsake, loose***

Forsaking is sometimes apostasy, departing from the truth of God. Or it can mean the abandonment of God's ways.

He has raised the question of the timing of God's deliverance. It seems to him that it is time for God to act against the ungodly, but He has not yet done so. This might lead one to conclude that he is questioning the faithfulness of God to His Word. But this is not the case, for *all Your commandments are faithful* (verse 86).

Therefore, even though he cries out for divine intervention, help me!, and wonders how long he will have to endure the persecution, he is steadfastly clinging to the Word of God.

## **Psa 119:88 Revive me according to Your lovingkindness, So that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth**

Finally, the afflicted psalmist prays for God to renew his life. The verb *to revive* could mean “restore me (my life)” or “preserve me (my life)” or “revive me.”

**Revive** חַיָּה (chayah) live, have life, remain alive, sustain life, live prosperously. Also be quickened, revive from sickness, discouragement, or even death.

In this passage it is more than a prayer for preservation or survival; he wants to come out of this persecution victoriously so he can enjoy all aspects of living. The idea here is: “renew my life.”

**according to Your lovingkindness** חֶסֶד (chesed)  
kindness, loving-kindness, mercy.

The basis for this petition is God's loyal love. It is an appeal to God to act in His faithful covenant-love on behalf of His people.

The purpose of the petition is likewise connected to the covenant: "that I may keep the testimony of your mouth."

# So that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth

The *testimony* refers to all of God's instructions, the whole covenant law, which came by direct revelation from God. The psalmist wants to be revived, so that he would be able to keep the covenant fully, without weakness, suffering and distractions due to constant persecution.

**Keep** שָׁמַר (shamar) keep, guard, observe, give heed.

This is the word we have seen many times already. To keep the commandments is to obey.

**the testimony of Your mouth.** עֵדוּת (‘edut)

testimony. Testimony is something declared to be truth by a witness.

The plural form of this noun refers to the laws given by God (thirteen times in this psalm). Here it is in the singular and refers to the whole covenant law, which came by direct revelation from God.

The psalmist wants to be revived, so that he would be able to keep the covenant without weakness, suffering and distractions due to constant persecution.

We may think that if we are not suffering that we will serve God better. Possibly, but not necessarily.

God and the soldier we adore  
In time of trouble, not before.  
When the danger's passed and all things righted,  
God is forgotten and the soldier slighted.

~Francis Quarles, 17<sup>th</sup> century English poet.



When we are in trouble, or when we see trouble in others' lives, or in our nation, or in the world, it causes us to bow before the sovereign Lord and to acknowledge our total dependence on Him.

We want peace and prosperity and health, and many other things. Of course we do. Everyone does. But our orientation must be on fulfilling the purpose for which God has put us in the world at this time and in this place.

As the psalmist said in Psa 119:17: Deal bountifully with your servant, that I may live and keep your Word.