

119:1 *Blessed* are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD. **2** *Blessed* are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. **3** They *also* do no iniquity: they walk in his ways. **4** *You* have commanded us to keep your precepts diligently.

119:5 *O that* my ways were directed to keep your statutes!

119:6 *Then* shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all your commandments. **7** *I will praise you* with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned your righteous judgments. **8** I will keep *your statutes*: O forsake me not utterly.

a humble start

The first few verses of Psalm 119 are general statements about the good life, but when the Psalmist finally mentioned himself in verse five, he wished that he were more steadfast so that he might keep the Lord's statutes, admitting thereby that he was naturally unstable.

This wishful thinking was somewhat like that of the young Hebrew slave girl in Second Kings 5:3 who wishing that her master, Naaman, were in Samaria with Elisha while knowing that he was not there.

2 Kings 5:3 And she said unto her mistress, *O that* my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would heal him of his leprosy. *(Compare this verse with 119:5.)*

an unselfish focus

If the psalmist were self-centered, he could have begun all eight verses in the Aleph section with the first person pronoun "I" because of how the pronoun and verbs are usually written in Hebrew. Yet, he only did so in one verse (7). Even then, he simply said, "I will praise You." thus lifting up the Lord rather than himself. Instead of speaking much about himself the psalmist began verse four with an emphatic reference to the Lord (*You*).



What is the Aleph stanza (#1) like?

It is like approaching the beginning of the Appalachian Trail in Georgia (above) and being greatly impressed with the significance of the trail but feeling inadequate and unprepared. Yet, at the same time, the desire to hike the trail is present as well. Many hikers are overconfident at first, but the psalmist was not. (Neither was Jeremiah. See Jer. 1:6.)

The last three verses show that the psalmist would nevertheless still try to live biblically and serve the Lord. He hoped that he would not be put to shame because of personal sin (6), and at the end of the section he asked the Lord to not totally forsake him (8). In this, he acknowledged his sinfulness while making a humble request.

Therefore?

Above all, the Aleph stanza is about serving God and approaching his word with humility. Thankfully, the psalmist was not so discouraged by his lack of stability (5) that he gave up. True humility does not lead to quitting.