

Meditation – Psalm 119, verses 105-112 – NUN - 12th October 2021

When I was preparing my meditation for September, I had returned to the Book of Psalms, looking for some suitable verses to include in that meditation, but nothing leapt out at me for that reflection.

However, my eye was caught by Psalm 119, verses 105 – 112 which are headed **NUN**.

Psalm 119 is the longest psalm in the collection of psalms and indeed the longest chapter in the Bible. It was written as an acrostic poem - that is, each stanza of eight verses begins with a particular letter from the Hebrew alphabet, which contains 22 letters in comparison to our alphabet of 26 letters. The stanza **NUN** is the 14th stanza out of 22 stanzas, the letter “NUN” corresponds to our letter “N”. The whole psalm is a prayer of praise describing the delights of living by God’s sacred law (the Torah).

This meditation uses mostly the stanza **NUN** - 8 beautiful verses which, according to one commentary contain “...praise of the Torah interwoven with complaint motifs. It is God’s torch for a dark path and...the complaint motifs are introduced only to enhance the psalmist’s devotion: come wind, come weather, his determination is all the stronger.”

I have found these verses inspiring and comforting and I have especially loved verse 105,

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

I was first drawn to the **NUN** verses because I trap moths (humanely), identify and photograph them and then release them. Since 2015 I have trapped moths in the grounds at Shepherds Dene, in my back garden in Riding Mill, in St James’s old churchyard and, especially with my grandchildren whilst on holiday, in various parts of the country.

Moths appear at discrete times of the year, called *flight seasons*, and one of the moths caught in large numbers in the early part of the year, from about March onwards, is one named **Hebrew Character!** The moth bears on its wings on each side of its body a black mark exactly in the shape of **NUN!**



Moths are magical creatures, drawn to fly, usually at night, to light - some say to the light of the moon or street or house lights or a moth trapper’s special strong lamp!

For me there was a resonance between being drawn as a moth to light and being drawn and held in the loving light of God.

Other coincidences continued to occur as I studied those Psalm 119 verses. The very next day after being attracted to these **NUN** verses, Gwyn, our Lay Reader led Morning Prayer and the readings for the day included Psalm 119.

We then went to stay with an old friend who has a beautiful voice and sings with others in a choir. During Lockdown choir singing was suspended, but the friend of 15 singers, asked that they might prepare a recording to be played at his daughter's wedding. In their own homes, including that of our friend, recordings were made of a motet, **Beati Quorum Via** by Charles Villiers Stanford. The 15 recordings were then "stitched" together by a professional sound engineer. The motet uses the first verse of Psalm 119!

Finally, in telling some Riding Mill friends of the coincidences which have led me to meditate on the **NUN** stanza, one of the friends said when at Grammar School one of the punishments, for misdemeanours, handed out by the teacher, was to be told simply - **119!** In other words, the punishment was to write out the whole of Psalm 119 – the hope being that one might learn to obey the rules?

I continue to read these wonderful verses from Psalm 119, rejoicing especially in Verses 1 and 105.

I hope you may derive some joy and comfort from these words.

Blessed are they whose road is straight, who walk in the law of the Lord.

Motet - *Beati quorum via* by Charles Villiers Stanford

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9zgg5qrNGw>

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