

# Psalm 99

## Psalm 99:1–9

## Jehovah God, Who Reigns Over All, is Accessible to Us

### Outline of Chapter 99:

Inscription	<b>Psalm 99 Inscription</b>
vv. 1–5	<b>Jehovah God is a Perfect and Righteous God Who Rules over All the Earth</b>
vv. 6–9	<b>Still, God is Accessible to All who Call Upon Him</b>

### Charts, Short Doctrines and Maps:

Introduction	<b>Spurgeon’s Outline of Psalm 99</b>
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Doctrines Covered		Doctrines Alluded To	
ʿidôth			Zion

**Introduction:** Psalm 99 is difficult to place in time. It mentions Zion, which is generally associated with Davidic and post-Davidic writings. We will not cover the **Doctrine of Zion** until Psalm 110. David conquered Zion (2Sam. 5:7), and one might make the argument that all psalms containing the name Zion should not be placed chronologically before this time. I am placing this psalm here, after 1Sam. 7, not because it was written during the time period of Samuel, but simply because it looks back to him, in part in v. 6. However, I may change my mind later and place this after 2Sam. 5 for the reasons stated.

McGee<sup>1</sup> suggests that this psalm properly looks forward to the Millennium, and that the praise to God and His righteousness and justice will be consistent with Millennial life. However, God’s interaction with His saints (vv. 6–8) point to a specific era: the exodus through to the life of Samuel.

Although I am presently happy with my own brief outline, let me suggest another one to you:<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Psalms Chapters 90–150*, ©1991 by J. Vernon McGee; Thomas Nelson, Inc.; p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> From Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 99 introduction.

## Spurgeon's Outline of Psalm 99

Verses	Title of Section
vv. 1–3	<b>God Reigns Over the Earth and is Enthroned in the Heavens</b>
vv. 4–5	<b>God's Strength is His Perfect Justice</b>
vv. 6–9	<b>Even Though God Rules Over the Earth and is Perfect Justice, He Still Hears His People</b>

Keil and Delitzsch also divide up this psalm in this way.<sup>3</sup> They comment: *The first two Sanctuses are two hexastichs; and two hexastichs form the third, according to the very same law by which the third and the sixth days of creation each consists of two creative works.*<sup>4</sup> I don't know that I buy the parallelism to the days of creation; however, 6 often refers to the number of man; and may I suggest that we are speaking of God making Himself accessible to man, even though God reigns over this earth and is perfect justice.

In each case, the section ends speaking of God's holiness. Since vv. 5 and 9 are almost exactly the same, I will keep them as indicators of the end of a section; however, Spurgeon's outline is also valid and easy to classify.

Sometimes, the structure of a psalm can be very specific and very, well, structured. There are other times when an outline helps us to define when the singing should temporarily cease and the instruments take over; or to break down the psalm into smaller portions for easier digestion; or to simply help us recall what is to be found within the psalm.

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Barnes<sup>5</sup> has a unique take on this psalm, which I almost ignored.

## Barnes' Outline of Psalm 99

- I. **Yahweh God rules over the Earth** (v. 1)
- II. **Reasons Why Yahweh God Should be Reverenced and Adored by Mankind** (vv. 2–9)
  - A. Yahweh is a holy and righteous God (**vv. 2–5**).
  - B. Yahweh has done for His people (**vv. 6–9**).

What Barnes gives us here is a very logical approach to studying this psalm. Each half of part II ends with [Exalt Jehovah our God and worship \[Him\]...for He is holy](#) (or words to that effect).

One of the reasons that I prefer my outline is, there is a reference to the kingship/authority of Jesus Christ in every verse of vv. 1–5 (which will be noted in the exegesis of v. 4). However, we will not find this same recurrent theme in the last 4 verses (it will be implied, perhaps, in vv. 6–8 and outright stated in v. 9). Sometimes an outline is obvious; there are times when David's psalms are very highly structures and can properly be organized in only one way. Here, there are several valid ways to divide up this psalm. My point is, sometimes the outline of a psalm is not etched in stone. Think of it as a meal; we do not eat a meal in one bite; we divide it up into smaller, bite-sized portions, everyone with a slightly different approach. The outline simply makes a psalm more manageable. Furthermore, once and awhile, we discover a point of doctrine or a truth in the organization of the psalm—it clarifies the thrust of the psalm sometimes.

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<sup>3</sup> See Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 99 introduction.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 99 introduction.

This psalm appears to be written during a very successful period of Israel's history; although such a statement could be misleading. God's people are known to celebrate in the midst of adversity. However, this psalm does give us an overview of Israel's history, up until Samuel; along with inferences which lead us to the time of David.

David will do several things in this psalm. He will look ahead to the second advent and to the rule of Christ over the earth. But this will irritate some people, as they are godless. They are used to God remaining with the angels. David will point out that God has always had a say in the way things are done on earth.

With the exception of perhaps one word, the vocabulary for this psalm is quite simple; however, the sentence structure is less so. In most writing, a wâw conjunction and always the wâw consecutive breaks up the thoughts into manageable parts. Here, the wâw conjunction do not separate clauses, but combine thoughts.

The fact that the vocabulary of this psalm is fairly simple and straightforward, does not necessarily mean that the content is simple-minded. Jehovah God is introduced as having always had dominion over this earth, even though He is invisible, dwelling with the angels. He is great in Zion (in Jerusalem), and a King of justice and righteousness. We are to worship at His feet. Even though God appears invisible to us, He has heard and answered the prayers of saints in the past; and even though God is righteous, He has forgiven transgressions of others. Therefore, we are to exalt God and worship Him.

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There is no inscription for this psalm in the Massoretic text; however, we do find one in the Septuagint and in the Dead Sea Scrolls. All versions of the Chaldee represent David as the author, but do not carry a title<sup>6</sup> (I don't understand this exactly, as I thought David's authorship would be found *in* the title). In any case, I think that I should include the exegesis of the title from the Septuagint here. I was unable to find any English translations which mention this.

*Additional information from Clarke: The Syriac says it concerns "the slaughter of the Midianites which Moses and the children of Israel had taken captive; and is a prophecy concerning the glory of the kingdom of Christ." But the mention of Samuel shows that it cannot be referred to the time of Moses. Calmet thinks that it was sung at the dedication of the city, or of the second temple, after the return from the Babylonish captivity. Eight of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS. join it to the preceding psalm.<sup>7</sup> Gill tells us: The Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, more rightly attribute it to David.<sup>8</sup> Gill then adds: the inscription of the Syriac version, after saying it is David's, subjoins, "concerning the destruction of the Midianites, whom Moses and the people of Israel led captive;" of which there is not the least mention in it; but it more truly adds, "and a prophecy concerning the glory of the kingdom of the Messiah;" as it undoubtedly is.<sup>9</sup>*

What these many points of view suggest is, the title of the Hebrew has been missing for a long time, if it was even there (the Septuagint translation and most other ancient translations indicate that it was there). Although some translators were freer in their translations than others for the Septuagint, it is highly unlikely that they simply added titles for no reason.

## Psalm 99 Inscription

Slavishly literal:

Moderately literal:

<sup>6</sup> Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 99 introduction.

<sup>7</sup> Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 99 introduction.

<sup>8</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 99 introduction.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

**A Psalm by David:**

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**A Psalm of [or, by] David:**

**A Psalm of David's:**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

**Early translations:**

**The Dead Sea Scrolls**      **Of Davi[d. A Psalm].** The brackets mean a portion of the inscription is missing from the Dead Sea Scrolls.  
**The Peshitta**                      (none)  
**The Septuagint**                      **A Psalm of David.**

**Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

none

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

none

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

none

**What is the gist of this verse?** This is a psalm of David's.

**The Greek Translation of Psalm 99 Inscription**

Greek/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	Strong's Number
psalmos (ψαλμός, οὐ, ό) [pronounced <i>psahl-MOSS</i> ]	<i>psalm, praise, song of praise</i>	masculine singular noun, locative, instrumental or dative case	Strong's #5568
τῷ	<i>in the; by the; by means of the</i>	masculine singular definite article; locative, dative, or instrumental case	no Strong's #
Dauid (Δαυίδ, ό) [pronounced <i>dow-EED</i> ];	transliterated <i>David</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #1138

Also Δαβίδ [pronounced *dah-BEED*] with at least one additional alternative spelling.

**Translation:** **A Psalm of [or, by] David:** There are two things in this psalm which suggest that David wrote it: this inscription, found only in the Greek manuscripts (as far as I know); and the mention of Zion, which David was fond of referring to (this does not preclude another author from mentioning Zion, as many prophets did).

## Jehovah God is a Perfect and Righteous God Who Rules over All the Earth

Slavishly literal:

Y<sup>e</sup>howah has reigned;  
agitated are peoples.  
He remains [inhabits, dwells] [among]  
cherubim;  
suspended [or, *hanging*] is the earth.

Moderately literal:

Y<sup>e</sup>howah reigns  
and the people are agitated [or,  
*disquieted*]. He lives [among] the angels  
and the earth hangs [suspended in space].

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Jehovah becomes king and the people are agitated and disquieted.  
He has been living among the angels while the earth hangs below in space.

I was surprised to find no alternative translations to the final verb in this verse—not even as a footnote. Here is how others have handled the translation of this verse; and you will notice that my translation is significantly different.

### Early translations:

The Dead Sea Scrolls	.
The Peshitta	The LORD reigns; let the people tremble; he sits upon the cherubim; let the earth be moved.
The Septuagint	The Lord reigns; —let the people rage. [It] is [He] that sits upon the cherubs, let the earth be moved.

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Our LORD, you are King! You rule from your throne above the winged creatures, as people tremble and the earth shakes.
The Message	GOD rules. On your toes, everybody! He rules from his angel throne--take notice!
NLT	The LORD is king! Let the nations tremble! He sits on his throne between the cherubim, Let the whole earth quake!

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™	The LORD rules as king. Let the people tremble. He is enthroned over the angels. Let the earth quake.
JPS (Tanakh)	The LORD, enthroned on cherubim, is king, peoples tremble, the earth quakes. [clauses transposed for clarity].

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

MKJV	Jehovah reigns; let the peoples tremble. <i>He sits between</i> the cherubs; let the earth quake.
WEB	Yahweh reigns! Let the peoples tremble. He sits enthroned among the cherubim. Let the earth be moved.
Young's Updated LT	Jehovah has reigned, peoples tremble, The Inhabitant of the cherubs, the earth shakes.

**What is the gist of this verse?** Jehovah reigns over all, and this agitates the people on earth; after all, He was with the angels for so long, with the earth suspended in space below.

## Psalm 99:1a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i> ]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y<sup>e</sup>howah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
mâlak <sup>e</sup> (מָלַךְ) [pronounced <i>maw- LAHK<sup>e</sup></i> ]	<i>to reign, to become king or queen</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #4427 BDB #573

**Translation:** *Y<sup>e</sup>howah reigns...* This is actually a perfect tense. Perfect means that this is a completed action. Jehovah God has always reigned over the earth. Now, for a time, God placed man over the earth, and man chose to put Satan in charge. However, the ultimate authority over everything is God.

There are 3 psalms which begin by saying that Jehovah *reigns* (Psalm 93 97 99); Psalm 93 speaks of His Holy house in the final verse; Psalm 97 speaks of His holy name in the final verse; and Psalm 99 speaks of God being holy in the final verse. There are other pair-wise parallels between these psalms, which I may cover at a later date. Interestingly enough, these three psalms, as well as others, also are missing inscriptions in the Hebrew, but they are there in the Greek; and these are all attributed to David.<sup>10</sup>

## Psalm 99:1b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
râgaz (רָגַז) [pronounced <i>rawg-GAHZ</i> ]	<i>to be agitated, to quiver, to quake, to become excited, perturbed, disquieted</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7264 BDB #919
ʿammîym (עַמִּים) [pronounced <i>gahm- MEEM</i> ]	<i>peoples, nations; tribes [of Israel]; relatives of anyone</i>	masculine plural collective noun	Strong's #5971 BDB #766

**Translation:** *...and the people are agitated [or, disquieted]...* There are a lot of unbelievers and people who want nothing to do with God. Those who are negative will avoid discussing Him, entertaining thoughts about His existence; or, they will go the other way, and make God in their own image. They will begin with characteristics that they possess, wish they possessed, or admire, and will attribute those characteristics to God. When the true God is clearly ruler over all, they will become disquieted, perturbed, agitated. They are like the ants in an anthill which has been stepped on.

Gill comments: *The Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and Arabic versions, render it, "let the people be angry"; or it may be rendered, "they are angry"; or "therefore they are angry"; because he reigns; so the people, both Jews and Gentiles, were angry and raged, when his kingdom was first visibly set up among them (Psalm 2:1—Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?) and so the nations will when he takes to himself his great power, and reigns (Rev. 11:18—The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth").*<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> I am thinking that I would like to compare the inscriptions of the various psalms. I recall one that David wrote on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of the week, which sounded odd, to say the least (this title was missing in the Hebrew).

<sup>11</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 99:1.

### Psalm 99:1c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
yâshab (יָשַׁב) [pronounced yaw-SHAH <sup>b</sup> V]	<i>to remain, to stay, to inhabit, to sit, to dwell</i>	masculine singular, Qal active participle	Strong's #3427 BDB #442
Or, "upon" or "above" the angels, as the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and all the Oriental versions. <sup>12</sup>			
k <sup>o</sup> rûwbîym (כְּרוּבִים) [pronounced k <sup>o</sup> roo <sup>b</sup> -VEEM]	transliterated <i>cherubim</i> ; it means <i>angels</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3742 (and #3743) BDB #500
Some believe that this refers to a particular group of angels. I lean toward the idea that this indicates that we are in an unseen conflict.			

**Translation:** ...He lives [among] the angels... God has remained, for the most part, and for most people, out of sight, among the angels, in the unseen world. This is where man is used to God being. The Qal active participle means that this has been a continued state of affairs. The lack of a preposition may indicate more that the relative physical position of God and the angels cannot really be ascertained by us; therefore, what we need to know is that God and the angels are a part of the unseen world, a reality in which we are enveloped. Now, before you balk at the idea of an unseen world, recognize, if you will, that your mentality, your emotions, your memory, and everything that has to do with your thinking is all unseen. There is no computer anywhere with the capabilities of our brain; and all of that is unseen. Science does not know where this part of our body goes when we die. We know it exists; apparently there is the idea out there that this part of our body weighs 21 grams (I have no idea myself).

There is the thought that this refers to the Shekinah glory of Jesus Christ when He dwells between the two cherubim on top of the Ark in the Holy of Holies. Now, I grant you that this is a possible understanding of this portion of v. 1, the problem is, we do not find the Hebrew word for *between* here. The Ark of the Covenant symbolizes many things; and certainly, the Shekinah glory of our Lord dwelling between the cherubim refers to, among other things, the angelic conflict.

By the way, I should mention that there is a very similar Scripture in Psalm 80:1: [Hear us, Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock, You who sit \[above\] the cherubim, shine forth.](#) This verse lacks a preposition as well.

### Psalm 99:1c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
nuwt̄ (נוּט) [pronounced noof]	<i>to be moved, to shake, to quake; to suspend, to hang, to dangle</i>	Verb	Strong's #5120 BDB #630

<sup>12</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 99:1.



## Psalm 99:1c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿerets (עֲרֶץ) [pronounced EH-rets]	<i>earth (all or a portion thereof), land</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #776 BDB #75

This verb occurs only here, and it has no cognates. Therefore, what was done was, this was given a meaning, possibly, to be in parallel with the first verb in this sentence. However, the Arabic equivalent to nûwṭ means *to hang, to suspend*. An Arabic cognate is used of a *bag hanging down or being suspended*.<sup>13</sup> To David, perhaps, and surely to those who translated this word into the Greek over 2000 years ago had no idea what it means for the earth *to be suspended* or for the earth *to hang* in the air. Therefore, they had to make do with what they could comprehend. We understand the idea of the earth being suspended in space, so we can now give this verb its correct translation.

**Translation: ...and the earth hangs [in space].** I am giving you a translation here, which, insofar as I know, is not found anywhere else. The justification for this is, this is a verb found only here, with no cognates; and the parallel Arabic word does not mean *to quake*, but *to hang, to suspend* (see the Hebrew exegesis above). When this was translated into Greek over 2000 years ago; and when it was translated into English in the 1500's and 1600's, it really did not make a lot of sense for the earth to be just hanging or being suspended. This was difficult for them to comprehend. However, earthquakes are easy to comprehend, and that gives us a parallelism with the second verb. However, this is not the point being made by God the Holy Spirit; God, for thousands of years, has lived in the unseen world, among the angels, above the earth, which hangs suspended in space. However, God has always reigned over this earth and His Word is always final. The fact that the earth seemingly hangs in space is one of the many proofs of His sovereignty.

Since the above phrase has never really been properly translated, the explanations for it are often weird and goofy. What follows should not be taken as gospel truth (however, a couple make good points, even apart from having a good translation to work with).

### For Your Entertainment Only

**Barnes:** *Let the earth be moved* - Margin, "stagger." The word means to move or quake. It occurs nowhere else. Compare the notes at Psalm 18:7. See also Habak. 3:6, 10. Barnes does not deal with this idea here, but refers us to similar passages (which have different words).

**Clarke:** No comment.

**Gill:** *...let the earth be moved: not that itself out of its place, but the inhabitants of it; and these either with a sense of sin and duty, and become subject to Christ their King; or with wrath and indignation at him, or through fear of him, as before; Kimchi says, at the fall of Gog and Magog; it may be particularly understood of the land of Judea, and of the commotion in it, especially in Jerusalem, when the tidings were brought of the birth of the King Messiah, Matt. 2:1, or of the shaking and moving both of the civil and ecclesiastical state of the nation, and of the ruin of it; see Heb. 12:26.*

**Matthew Henry:** *The Lord reigns, let the earth be moved. Those that submit to him shall be established, and not moved (Psalm 96:10); but those that oppose him will be moved. Heaven and earth shall be shaken, and all nations; but the kingdom of Christ is what cannot be moved; the things which cannot be shaken shall remain, Heb. 12:27. In these is continuance, Isa. 64:5.* What Henry says here does have some merit.

<sup>13</sup> *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*; Hendrickson Publishers; ©1996; p. 630.



## For Your Entertainment Only

**Jamieson, Fausset and Brown:** *tremble . . . be moved*--inspired with fear by His judgments on the wicked..

**Keil and Delitzsch:** No comment.

**Charles Spurgeon:** *"Let the earth be moved."* Not merely "the people," but the whole earth should feel a movement of adoring awe when it is known that on the mercy seat God sits as universal monarch. The pomp of heaven surrounds him, and is symbolized by the outstretched wings of waiting cherubs; let not the earth be less moved to adoration, rather let all her tribes bow before his infinite majesty, yea, let the solid earth itself with reverent tremor acknowledge his presence.

These were all taken from E-sword, Psalm 99:1 from these respective authors.

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Now, will there be a time when the earth is shaken? Yes; that we find in several passages, e.g., Isa. 24:19 Rev. 6:14. That period of time will be the Tribulation, which is not at all the topic in this psalm.

**Y<sup>e</sup>howah in Zion [is] great  
and exalted [is] He over all the peoples.**

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**Y<sup>e</sup>howah [is] mighty [or, *immutable*] in Zion  
and He is exalted over all the peoples.**

**Jehovah is mighty and immutable in Zion;  
He stands exalted and in power over all the peoples.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Early translations:

The Septuagint                      The Lord is great in Sion, and is high over all the people.

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV                                      You are praised in Zion, and you control all nations.  
The Message                        GOD looms majestic in Zion, He towers in splendor over all the big name.  
NJB                                        Yahweh is great in Zion.

NLT                                        He is supreme over all nations;...  
The LORD sits in majesty in Jerusalem [Hebrew *Zion*],  
supreme above all the nations.

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

*God's Word*<sup>™</sup>                            The LORD is mighty in Zion. He is high above all people.

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

ESV                                        The LORD is great in Zion; he is exalted over all the peoples.  
LTHB                                        .

*Young's Updated LT*                Jehovah in Zion is great, And He is high over all the peoples.

**What is the gist of this verse?** Despite being invisible, God rules over all nations and people.

Psalm 99:2a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i> ]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y<sup>e</sup>howah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
Tsîyyôwn (צִיּוֹן) [pronounced <i>tzee- YOHN</i> ]	<i>dry, parched ground; and is transliterated Zion</i>	proper noun location	Strong's #6726 BDB #851
gâdôwl (גָּדוֹל) [pronounced <i>gaw-DOLE</i> ]	<i>great in quantity, great in magnitude and extent, mighty, vast, unyielding, immutable; great things, significant and astonishing [or mind-blowing] things</i>	adjective often used as a substantive	Strong's #1419 (& #1431) BDB #152

**Translation:** *Y<sup>e</sup>howah [is] mighty [or, immutable] in Zion...* We are dealing with an absolute here. God has always been great; He has always been immutable. God is powerful.

The point here, however, is that God has a special relationship to Zion (Zion is a portion of Jerusalem in Israel). In the Age of Israel, God had a different relationship to Israel than He did with any other nation. There are some similarities to the US. We are not a Christian nation, per se (no such thing exists); however, we are a client nation to God. This is a term coined by R. B. Thieme, Jr., so let's take a few points...

### Client Nation Status

1. A client nation is going to be a national entity with a (relatively) large percentage of believers and, more importantly, a large percentage of mature believers.
2. This nation will send out missionaries to other countries from independent churches.
3. This nation will actively evangelize their own population (the political entity will not necessarily do that, but the churches or other organizations will).
4. This nation will preserve and translate God's Word.
5. God's Word will be taught (otherwise, there would be no mature believers).
6. This nation will also have a favorable policy towards the Jews.
7. Generally speaking, this will often be the most prosperous nation on earth during its client nation status. You can pretty much determine what nation in history is a client nation to God by how prosperous that nation is.

This is mostly taken from R. B. Thieme, Jr., *Freedom through Military Victory*; ©1996 by R. B. Thieme, Jr.; pp. 13, 82.

Now, there is more to it than that. That is, Israel was more than a client nation to God. Israel was chosen by God; actually, formed by God, from Abraham to Moses; and God guided them out of Egypt to the Land of Promise, which He gave to them. God actually formed this people and their nation, and through them, gave the Word of God. God worked specifically through Israel and through the Jews as He has no other nation or people; and God will return to work through them again as well. The Jews are God's people. That will never change.

Psalm 99:2b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
rûwm (רום) [pronounced <i>room</i> ]	<i>to lift up, to rise, to arise, to raise up, to grow; to be exalted, to become high, to become powerful; to be high an lofty; to be remote, to be in the far distance</i>	Qal active participle	Strong's #7311 BDB #926
hûw' (הוא) [pronounced <i>hoo</i> ]	<i>he, it</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
ʿal (על) [pronounced <i>gahl</i> ]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i> ]	with a plural noun, it is rendered <i>all of; any of</i>	masculine singular construct with a masculine plural noun	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
ʿammîym (עַמִּיִּם) [pronounced <i>gahm-MEEM</i> ]	<i>peoples, nations; tribes [of Israel]; relatives of anyone</i>	masculine plural collective noun with the definite article	Strong's #5971 BDB #766

**Translation:** ...and He is exalted over all the peoples. God is over all and above all. He has always reigned over all mankind. This is true, even if God is invisible to us; a spirit.

**They confess [or, celebrate] Your name great and feared; holy [is] He...**

Psalm  
99:3

**They confess [and/or, celebrate] Your great and feared name; it [is] holy [and strong (or, a refuge)].**

**They will confess and celebrate Your great and feared reputation, for You are holy....**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Early translations:

The Peshitta

Let them praise Your great and honored name; for it is holy.

The Septuagint

Let them give thanks to Your great name; for it is fearful and holy.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV Only you are God! And your power alone, so great and fearsome, is worthy of praise.  
 The Message Great and terrible your beauty: let everyone praise you! Holy. Yes, holy.  
 NJB ...let them praise your name, great and awesome;  
 holy is he <sup>4</sup>and mighty. [this includes part of v. 4].  
 NLT Let them praise your great and awesome name.  
 Your name is holy!

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

God's Word™ Let them give thanks to your great and fearful name. He is holy!  
 JPS (Tanakh) They praise Your name as great and awesome;  
 He is holy!

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

The Amplified Bible Let them confess *and* praise Your great name, awesome *and* reverence inspiring!  
 It is holy, *and* holy is He! [Rev. 15:4]  
 MKJV Let them praise Your great and fearful name; it is holy.  
 Young's Updated LT They praise Your name, `Great, and fearful, holy it is.'

**What is the gist of this verse?** Believers from all over are to praise God's name (His reputation). His name is set apart and a refuge (I am including a portion of v. 4 here).

Psalm 99:3a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
yâdâh (יָדָה) [pronounced yaw-AWH]	<i>to profess, to confess; to show or point out [with the hand extended]; to give thanks, to praise, to celebrate</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #3034 BDB #392
shêm (שֵׁם) [pronounced shame]	<i>name, reputation, character</i>	masculine singular noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #8034 BDB #1027
gâdôwl (גָּדוֹל) [pronounced gaw-DOLE]	<i>great in quantity, great in magnitude and extent, mighty, vast, unyielding, immutable; great things, significant and astonishing [or mind-blowing] things</i>	adjective often used as a substantive	Strong's #1419 (& #1431) BDB #152
wâ (or vâ) (וְ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
yârê' (יָרֵא) [pronounced yaw-RAY]	<i>to be feared, to be respected, to be reverence; terrible, dreadful, awesome; venerable, August; stupendous, admirable</i>	feminine plural Niphal participle	Strong's #3372 BDB #431

In most cases, the wâw conjunction would introduce a new portion of this verse (which is how the translators of the Septuagint took it); however, the wâw conjunction here seems to connect two words which describe His name: *great and feared*.

**Translation:** *They confess* [and/or, *celebrate*] *Your great and feared name*;... The people on earth will have different reactions to the coming of Jesus Christ. I am reminded of a recent election here (2004) where George Bush was elected president over John Kerry. On the one hand, there are those who practically hail Bush as the second coming; and there are other celebrated types who have publically denounced the election results and pondered moving out of the United States over this election (such melodrama). There will be a very divided reaction to our Lord taking direct control over the world. Some will confess and celebrate His name; others will tremble.

*Name*, here, as everywhere else, is a reference to our Lord's character. It is great and fearful. God is almighty and He is immutable; His absolute power is to be feared and revered.

### Psalm 99:3b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
qâdôwsh (שׁוֹדֵשׁ) [pronounced kaw-DOWSE]	<i>sacred, holy, set apart, sacrosanct</i>	masculine singular adjective construct	Strong's #6918 BDB #872
hûw' (הוּא) [pronounced hoo]	<i>he, it</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
w <sup>a</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ôz (עֹז) [pronounced gôhz]	<i>strength, might; firmness, defense, refuge, protection; splendor, majesty, glory praise</i>	masculine singular noun; this is listed by Owen as a masculine singular construct	Strong's #5797 BDB #738

There is really no reason to see this as a masculine singular construct here; however, there is also no reason to see this portion of the previous verse as ending here. Only the NJB chose to add this on as part of the thought from the previous verse.

This last two words are actually found in v. 4, but might be better placed here. I will also place them with v. 4 below.

**Translation:** *...it [is] holy [and strong (or, a refuge)]*. This refers back to God's name, which is His reputation and character. It is set apart; it is sacred. What I have done here is to add a little bit of v. 4 to v. 3. God's name (which is His reputation and His character) is set apart from all that man knows, insofar as it is an absolute; yet, even with God's name as being separate from all else, God is a refuge for us—a Person we can go to at any time.

This final phrase could read *He is holy*, which is how many translations rendered this. Besides *...and strong* being a part of the next verse, many translators leave these verses just the way they are because v. 5 ends with *He is holy* and v. 9 ends with *For Jehovah our God is holy*. Actually, this understanding and approach would be more certain *if* vv. 3, 5 and 9 all marked the end of a section. I want you to recall that Spurgeon took this approach in outlining this psalm (see **Spurgeon's Outline of Psalm 99**). My approach depends heavily upon the parallelisms between vv. 5 and 9, and does allow us a complementary parallelism between the other verses. However, I am unable to set up these verses in parallel in such a way as to clearly dispel all doubt as to the outline of this psalm (see **The Parallels of Psalm 99**). This topic will be discussed further in the next verse.

Do you see the way this psalm, with relatively simple languages, sets up things which may seem to be contradictory throughout. God reigns over the earth, yet He is with the cherubim, an invisible realm. He is great

in Zion, yet the earth is suspended below Him. Here, His name (person, reputation) is set apart; but it is a refuge for us.

**...and strong [or, a refuge]!  
A King, justice [He] desires;  
You set up [confirm and maintain] righteous  
decisions  
justice and righteousness in Jacob You [even  
You] do.**

Psalm  
99:4

**...and strong [or, a refuge]—  
the King desires justice.  
You set up [confirm and maintain] righteous  
acts [and/or decisions];  
You make justice and righteousness in Jacob.**

**...and strong [or, a refuge]—  
the King desires justice.  
You establish, confirm and maintain righteous acts and decisions;  
You have accomplished justice and righteousness in Israel.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Early translations:

The Peshitta	The king's might also loves judgment; You establish equity, You execute judgment and righteousness in Jacob.
The Septuagint	And the king's honor loves judgment; You have prepared equities, You have brought about judgment and justice in Jacob.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	You are our mighty King, a lover of fairness, who sees that justice is done everywhere in Israel.
The Message	Strong King, lover of justice, You laid things out fair and square; You set down the foundations in Jacob, Foundation stones of just and right ways.
NJB	...and mighty!
	You are a king who loves justice, you established honesty, justice and uprightness; in Jacob it is you who are active.
NLT	Mighty king, lover of justice, you have established fairness. You have acted with justice and righteousness throughout Israel.
REB	The King in his might loves justice. You have established equity; you have dealt justly and righteously in Jacob.

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™	The king's strength is that he loves justice. You have established fairness. You have done what is fair and right for Jacob.
JPS (Tanakh)	—Mighty king— who loves justice, [Meaning of Hebrew uncertain] it was You who established equity, You who worked righteous judgment in Jacob.

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

ESV	The King in his might loves justice. You have established equity; you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.
-----	---

WEB The King's strength also loves justice. You do establish equity. You execute justice and righteousness in Jacob.

Young's Updated LT And the strength of the king Has loved judgment, You—You have established uprightness; Judgment and righteousness in Jacob, You—You have done.

**What is the gist of this verse?** The King, Jesus Christ, loves justice; God has established what is right—what is correct and righteous is revealed to Israel; these things are clearly established in Israel. .

### Psalm 99:4a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿôz (רֹז) [pronounced gôhz]	<i>strength, might; firmness, defense, refuge, protection; splendor, majesty, glory praise</i>	masculine singular noun; this is listed by Owen as a masculine singular construct	Strong's #5797 BDB #738
There is really no reason to see this as a masculine singular construct here; however, there is also no reason to see this portion of the previous verse as ending here. Only the NJB chose to add this on as part of the thought from the previous verse.			
The Greek here is somewhat different; the Greek word used here is...			
timê (τιμή, ἡς, ἡ) [pronounced tih-MAY or tee-MAY]	<i>price, value; honor, reverence, respect; the respect and honor one enjoys</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #5092
The word found in the Latin Vulgate also means <i>honor</i> . <sup>14</sup> However, bear in mind that Jerome may have followed the lead of the Septuagint at this point.			

**Translation: ...and strong** [or, *a refuge*]... Most translators place this word in this verse entirely and tie it to king; usually, this is rendered as *the righteous [or, strong] King*; or words to that effect. However, in this psalm, over and over again, we do not have clauses properly separated by the wâw conjunction. Therefore, when we encounter the wâw conjunction in this psalm, we should look to hold those elements together. As mentioned, only the NJB chose to go this route; a translation which is not known for being exact or overly literal. However, I believe that to be the proper understanding here. We are referring back to the *name of God*, which is *holy and strong*; or, *holy and a refuge [because of its strength]*.

What first suggested this to me was that translating *and strong* with *the King* just seemed clumsy. Furthermore, the *and* seemed unnecessary.

A problem previously discussed was, where does *...and strong* belong? Are we right to go along with those who originally divided these verses up (which division is generally followed by almost every English translation), or do we properly place *...and strong* with the previous verse? Therefore, below is...

<sup>14</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 99:4.



## The Debate on the Placement of *...and strong*

<i>...and strong</i> is properly placed	<i>...and strong</i> belongs back with v. 3
The NJB is the only English translation which places <i>...and strong</i> with v. 3. Every other English translation places <i>...and strong</i> with v. 4, where it is found in the Hebrew and Greek.	<i>...and strong</i> fits better with the previous verse.
The wâw conjunction is used more often to indicate a new line (vv. 2b, 5b, 7b, 8c and 9b—the second use in v. 6a and its use in v. 6d could be debated).	The wâw conjunction is primarily used to connect things in a psalm rather than to divide them; we have a wâw conjunction here (compare its use in vv. 3a, 4d and 6a). Therefore, this should properly combine <i>holy</i> with <i>strong</i> .
Vv. 3, 5 and 9 all end with <i>holy</i> (more or less); placing <i>...and strong</i> with the previous verse would ruin that parallelism.	Although I will admit, seeing <i>Holy is He</i> in the NASB at the end of vv. 3 and 5 looks good; that is not a good enough reason to place <i>...and strong</i> with v. 4.
Spurgeon's outline does require break between these two verses. See <a href="#">Spurgeon's Outline of Psalm 99</a> .	My outline of Psalm 99 does not require a break between vv. 3 and 4. See the <a href="#">Outline of Psalm 99</a> and the <a href="#">Parallelisms of Psalm 99</a> . Furthermore, if v. 3 marked the end of a section, then v. 4 would not begin with a conjunction—no conjunction in this verse begins a new section.
There is really no parallelism of the descriptors of v. 3a to those of v. 3b; therefore, there is no reason to have two descriptors in v. 3b.	God's name is described by two words, <i>great and fearful</i> , in v. 3a; it would reasonably follow that two words would describe it again in v. 3b ( <i>It [is] holy and a refuge</i> ).
<i>Strong</i> could be used as an adjective here, modifying <i>the King</i> ; or it could be a construct form. The single vowel in this word is what indicates a construct form and the vowels were added a millennium later.	This masculine singular noun <i>strong</i> is not the right form and just does not belong with <i>the King</i> . It is not in the construct or the adjective form. We normally do not throw two nouns together like this unless the first is in the construct.
Not everything in this psalm requires seemingly contradictory statements in each verse.	That <i>the King is strong (or, a refuge)</i> really does not add anything to v. 4; however, with v. 3, we have one of those odd parallelisms—God's name (or God) is both holy and a refuge. It is separate from all else, yet we can go to Him. This kind of parallelism is prevalent in this psalm.
The <i>and</i> of v. 4 simply introduces a new phrase.	When <i>and</i> is used to begin a new phrase, that new phrase is tied to the previous phrase (see vv. 2b, 5b). Here, as the beginning of v. 4, it does not appear to really tie to the previous phrase.
The JPS does not suggest moving <i>...and strong</i> to a different location.	You will note that the JPS indicates that the Hebrew is unclear that way it stands.

As you can see, I have placed these arguments in a point/counter point format. Sometimes reading the right column first is a more logical approach.

Ideally, after stating all of these points, I was hoping that one position would be clearly superior to the other. I obviously lean toward the position of the right column, and believe the reasons there to be sufficient. However, the arguments that *...and strong* is properly placed are also reasonably persuasive.

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I should mention that, I am not under any sort of a time-gun here, so I can take my time and sort out opposing point of views, and even offer both if I cannot come to a clear conclusion. Sometimes these matters may seem rather trivial to you, and sometimes they are. There are other times, e.g., what we find hidden at the end of v. 1, where we find a great reward. It is like an Easter egg. Many DVD's have Easter eggs, which are generally pretty lame; and following the steps out to find the Easter egg is often rather anti-climatic. Taking our time and examining some of the nuances in Scripture is often infinitely more rewarding.

### Psalm 99:4b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
melek <sup>e</sup> (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced MEH-lek]	king, ruler, prince	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4428 BDB #572
mîsh <sup>e</sup> pâṭ (מִשְׁפָּט) [pronounced mish <sup>e</sup> -PAWT]	judgement, justice, a verdict rendered by a judge, a judicial decision, a judicial sentence, a verdict, the judgement of the court; the act of deciding a case, the place where a judgement is rendered	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4941 BDB #1048
ʾâhêb (אָהֵב) [pronounced aw-HAYV <sup>b</sup> ]	to desire, to breathe after; to love; to delight in	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #157 BDB #12

**Translation:** *...— The King desires justice.* The King, a reference back to God—more precisely, Jesus Christ, Who *reigns*, desires, loves, delights in justice. This is God's natural character. He desires things to be right and just. Imagine any overpowering desire that you might have and that is God's attitude toward justice (I am being anthropopathic, of course).

At the very beginning of this psalm, it reads *The Lord reigns*. In v. 2, *He is exalted above the peoples*. In v. 3, we read: *They confess [and/or, celebrate] Your great and feared name*. In this verse, He is called the King; and in the next verse, we are told to *exalt Jehovah and to worship at His footstool*. All of these verses refer to His kingship; all of these verses refer to His authority. In the second half of this psalm, God's authority is implied, but not really the subject of each verse (until the final verse, which is almost a repeat of v. 5).

### Psalm 99:4c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾattâh (אַתָּה) [pronounced aht-TAW]	you (often, the verb to be is implied)	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #859 BDB #61

## Psalm 99:4c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kûwn (כּוּן) [pronounced koon]	<i>to set up, to erect; to confirm, to establish, to maintain; to found [a city, the earth, etc]; to direct [e.g., arrows], metaphorically to turn one's mind [to anything]</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Pilel (Polel) perfect	Strong's #3559 BDB #465
The <b>Polel</b> is not acknowledged in Mansoor's book nor in Zodhates; it comes from Owen's book. However, it is essentially the same as the Piel (intensive) stem with a different conjugation. It appears to be called the Pilel in Gesenius and BDB.			
mêyshârîym (מַיְשָׂרִים) [pronounced may-shaw-REEM]	<i>evenness, uprightness, equity; equities, just acts, righteous decisions</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #4339 BDB #449

Mêyshârîym is found about 20 times in Scripture, and never in the singular.

**Translation:** You set up [confirm and maintain] righteous acts [and/or decisions];... God has given the Law to Israel. The Law is righteous. God's function in this world and after this world is a combination of righteous acts and decisions. God must act this way. This is His character; this is His immutable essence. He cannot behave any differently.

## Psalm 99:4d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
mîsh <sup>e</sup> pâṭ (מִשְׁפָּט) [pronounced mish <sup>e</sup> -PAWT]	<i>judgement, justice, a verdict rendered by a judge, a judicial decision, a judicial sentence, a verdict, the judgement of the court; the act of deciding a case, the place where a judgement is rendered</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4941 BDB #1048
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ts <sup>e</sup> dâqâh (צְדָקָה) [pronounced ts <sup>e</sup> dâw-KAW]	<i>righteousness, executed righteousness and justice, righteous vindication</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6666 BDB #842
b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
ya <sup>c</sup> âqôb (יַעֲקֹב) [pronounced yah-âuh-KOH <sup>BV</sup> ]	<i>supplanter; insidious, deceitful; to circumvent and is transliterated Jacob</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3290 BDB #784

## Psalm 99:4d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾattâh (אַתָּה) [pronounced <i>ah-t-TAW</i> ]	<i>you</i> (often, the verb <i>to be</i> is implied)	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #859 BDB #61
ʿâsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i> ]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793

**Translation:** ...[You make justice and righteousness in Jacob](#). Recall that God renamed Jacob, Israel. God has set up justice and righteousness in Israel. The name Jacob is used to emphasize the more human—or, if you will, the carnal nature—of Jacob. This very much so describes the Jewish people and the Jewish nation. However, even given this—even given their predilection to disobey God—God still set up justice and righteousness in that Land of Promise. However, this reference is more than a reference to the Law; it is a reference to our Lord's satisfying the Law, and then dying for our sins on the cross. Jesus Christ not only established perfect justice on Sinai, but He lived perfect justice here; He fulfilled all the requirements of the Law and then he fulfilled all our requirements for righteousness. Jesus did this in Judah where the people in general were very negative towards Him, and the religious establishment was outright vicious toward Him and eventually violent. This is why the Jews are called Jacob—because they are so negative toward Jesus Christ.

**Raise up Y<sup>e</sup>howah our Elohim  
and bow down to a stool of His [two] feet.  
Holy [is] He!**

Psalm  
99:5

**Exalt Y<sup>e</sup>howah our Elohim [with praise]  
and bow down towards His footstool;  
He [is] holy!**

**Exalt and praise Jehovah our God and bow down at His feet, for He is holy!**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Early translations:

The Septuagint                      Exalt the Lord our God, and worship [at] His footstool, for He is holy.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV                                      Our LORD and our God, we praise you and kneel down to worship you, the God of holiness!

The Message                         Honor GOD, our God; worship his rule! Holy. Yes, holy.

NLT                                        Exalt the LORD our God!  
Bow low before his feet, for he is holy!

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

*God's Word*<sup>™</sup>                            Highly honor the LORD our God. Bow down at his footstool. He is holy!

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

MKJV                                    Praise Jehovah our God, and worship at His footstool; He is holy.

*Young's Updated LT*                Exalt Jehovah our God, And bow yourselves at His footstool, He is holy.

**What is the gist of this verse?** The psalmist implores us to exalt (or, *lift up*; or, *praise*) Jehovah and to do obeisance before Him.

Psalm 99:5a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
rûwm (רוּם) [pronounced <i>room</i> ]	<i>to raise, to lift up, to make high; to build a house; to bring up children; to put in safety; to raise up, to exalt</i> [in victory or with praise]	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural, Polel imperative	Strong's #7311 BDB #926
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i> ]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y<sup>e</sup>howah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
ʿĕlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i> ]	<i>gods or God</i> ; transliterated <i>Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix	Strong's #430 BDB #43

**Translation:** [Exalt Y<sup>e</sup>howah our Elohim \[with praise\]...](#) We are ordered to exalt (with praise or with worship) Jehovah our God. Verbally we acknowledge Him; and mentally, we recognize God's sovereignty over our lives. One might make an argument for exalting Jehovah Elohim in our study of His Word, although that is not specifically in view here.

You will note that this reads exactly the same as v. 9a, indicating that we should look to these verses to help us divide up this psalm.

Psalm 99:5b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
shâchah (שָׁחָה) [pronounced <i>shaw-KHAW</i> ]	<i>to bow down, to prostrate oneself, to do obeisance to; to honor [with prayers]; to do homage to, to submit to</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural Hithpael imperative	Strong's #7812 BDB #1005
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>leh</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
hădôm (הֲדוֹם) [pronounced <i>huh-DOHM</i> ]	<i>stool, footstool</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1916 BDB #213
regel (רֶגֶל) [pronounced <i>REH-gehl</i> ]	<i>foot, feet</i>	feminine dual noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7272 BDB #919

**Translation:** ...and bow down towards His footstool;... *The stool of His feet* is found in Psalm 110:1, where Jesus Christ sits down and God the Father places all of His enemies and all of His detractors as a stool for his feet. Again, we recognize God's sovereignty here.

For this reason, we should get a few points on...

## The Footstool of Jesus Christ

1. When David spoke about the Temple to be built, he indicated that it would be the footstool of God. 1Chron. 28:2.
2. The readers of this psalm are to worship at the footstool of Jesus Christ. Psalm 99:5
3. God's enemies would worship at the footstool of Jesus Christ. Psalm 110:1
  - a. This verse is quoted many times in the NT: Luke 20:43 Acts 2:35 Heb. 1:13 10:13.
  - b. The application made in the New Testament varies from passage to passage, and this will all be covered when we exegete Psalm 110:1.
4. The psalmist urges those reading his psalm to go to God's dwelling place and worship at His footstool; the implication is that this is Temple of God. Psalm 132:7 compared with vv. 1, 5 (the Temple isn't actually named, but David's desire to build a place for God is). 1Chron. 28:2 confirms this for us.
5. God said "**Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool**" (Isa. 66:1b). The idea is, God has ultimate dominion over the earth. The remainder of this context speaks of building a place for God to rest (Isa. 66:1c–2). This may confuse some who read on, and recognize the Isaiah postdates David by several centuries. The resting place that God wants is inside of us. It is not a building made with man's hands.
  - a. Jesus Christ essentially quotes this verse in Matt. 5:35: Jesus is speaking of the empty vows made by religious types of that time period. He tells those listening to Him: "**The ancients were told: You will not make false vows, but you will fulfill your vows to the Lord. But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great king.**" (Matt. 5:33–35; Lev. 19:12 Num. 30:2 Deut. 23:21; Isa. 66:1; Psalm 48:2).
  - b. The vows and the oaths of religious types had become empty, and probably a matter of public display.
  - c. Therefore, since the things mentioned by which the Jews vowed were sacred to God, Jesus tells them now to swear by these things.
  - d. Stephen also quoted this verse in Acts 7:49; the context is, essentially, that the religious Jews have missed entirely the message of the Old Testament; they have become legalistic and they distort the Old Testament Scriptures to mean what they do not mean. Isa. 66:1 was one example of this ("**The Most High does not live in houses build by man!**").
6. The use of this word in Lam. 2:1 may help us to further understand the use of this word in Scripture: **How Jehovah has covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in His anger! He has cast the glory of Israel from heaven to earth and He has not remembered His footstool in the day of His anger.**
7. The analogy to today:
  - a. A footstool in the ancient world is like a Barca-lounger today. In fact, that probably dates me. But it is equivalent to the recliner of today.
  - b. Today, many families own one recliner and that recliner is primarily for the man of the house (my mom's is for her....but you get the picture).
  - c. When you go over to a stranger's house, and you all sit down to converse (or to watch football), generally speaking, the man of that house takes the recliner and you take whatever is leftover.
  - d. The recliner is a sign of his home. It is a sign that he lives there, he rests there, and he makes himself at home there.
  - e. The footstool of the ancient world was similar. Their homes were sparsely furnished and there might be a footstool there for the man of the house. It is where he sits down, raises up his feet and rests. To the use of the footstool indicates that the man is at home and at rest in his castle.
  - f. Now, let's apply this to Jesus Christ: a footstool here on earth indicates that He is both in charge and that he is at home and at rest.
  - g. In the previous dispensation, God may have been at home in Israel, in His Temple, or in His Tabernacle. Today, He is at home in our hearts. The footstool indicates both His sovereignty and His

## The Footstool of Jesus Christ

being at home, at ease.

8. Conclusion: The footstool indicates that Jesus Christ is at home and that He is sovereign.

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In this verse, we are to worship at our Lord's feet; in v. 9b, we are to worship at His holy hill.

### Psalm 99:5c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate both insert the explanatory <i>for</i> here. <sup>15</sup> However, it is not necessary and it matches v. 3b precisely as is.			
qâdôwsh (קָדוֹשׁ) [pronounced kaw-DOWSE]	<i>sacred, holy, set apart, sacrosanct</i>	masculine singular adjective construct	Strong's #6918 BDB #872
hûw' (הוּא) [pronounced hoo]	<i>he, it</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #1931 BDB #214

**Translation:** ...He [is] holy! We have a repeat of v. 3b here; and this is very similar to v. 9c as well. God is set apart from all of His creation.

We have an interesting parallel in the book of Isaiah where the angels worship God in a vision that Isaiah has: [In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each one had six wings. With two he covered his face. With two he covered his feet. With two he flew. One called to another, and said, "Holy, holy, holy, is Yahweh of Hosts! The whole earth is full of his glory!" \(Isa. 6:1–3\).](#)

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### Still, God is Accessible to All who Call Upon Him

**Moses and Aaron in His priests;  
and Samuel in those callers of His name—  
those calling unto Y<sup>e</sup>howah  
and He answers them.**

Psalm  
99:6

**Moses and Aaron [are] among His  
priests—Samuel also—among those who call  
His name;  
those who called unto Y<sup>e</sup>howah  
and He answered them.**

**Moses and Aaron are among His priests—Samuel as well—  
they are among those who call upon His name;  
and Y<sup>e</sup>howah answers those who call upon Him.**

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Bryant Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible*; ©1971 by Kregel Publications; p. 580.



Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Early translations:

The Septuagint                    Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon His name; they called upon the Lord and He heard them.

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV                                    Moses and Aaron were two of your priests. Samuel was also one of those who prayed in your name, and you, our LORD, answered their prayers.

The Message                    Moses and Aaron were his priests, Samuel among those who prayed to him. They prayed to GOD and he answered them;...

NLT                                    Moses and Aaron were among his priests,  
   Samuel also called on his name.  
   They cried to the LORD for help, and he answered them.

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™                    Moses and Aaron were among his priests. Samuel was among those who prayed to him. They called to the LORD, and he answered them.

JPS (Tanakh)                    Moses and Aaron among His priests,  
   Samuel, among those who call on His name—  
   He answered them.

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Updated Emphasized Bible    ||Moses and Aaron|| [were] among His priests,  
   And ||Samuel|| [was] among them who were calling upon His Name,  
   Who were calling upon Yahweh, and ||He|| used to answer them:...

LTHB  
MKJV                                    .  
   Moses and Aaron were among His priests, and Samuel among those who called on His name; they called on Jehovah, and He answered them.

WEB                                    Moses and Aaron were among his priests, Samuel among those who call on his name; They called on Yahweh, and he answered them.

Young's Updated LT            Moses and Aaron among His priests, And Samuel among those proclaiming His name. They are calling unto Jehovah, And He answers them.

**What is the gist of this verse?** Moses, Aaron, and Samuel are representative of three kinds of priests; they all called upon God and God answered them.

## Psalm 99:6a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Mosheh (מֹשֶׁה) [pronounced moh-SHEH],	to draw out [of the water] and is transliterated Moses	masculine proper noun	Strong's #4872 BDB #602
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced weh]	and	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251

## Psalm 99:6a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾahărôn (אֲהָרֹן) [pronounced <i>ah-huh-ROHN</i> ],	transliterated <i>Aaron</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #175 BDB #14
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
kôhên (כֹּהֵן) [pronounced <i>koh-HANE</i> ]	<i>priest</i>	masculine plural noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3548 BDB #463
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB
Sh <sup>e</sup> mûw <sup>êl</sup> (שִׁמְעוֹן) [pronounced <i>sh<sup>e</sup>-moo-ALE</i> ]	which means <i>heard of El</i> ; it is transliterated <i>Samuel</i>	proper masculine noun	Strong's #8050 BDB #1028

**Translation:** *Moses and Aaron [are] among His priests—Samuel also—...* A priest is one who represents man to God. Even though the Levitical priesthood (almost a misnomer) actually began with Aaron, Moses also represented the people before God; therefore, both of them are called priests.

Samuel, as we have studied, is both a priest and a prophet. He is actually the last of the judges and the first of a line of prophets (Acts 3:24). That he is not actually in the line of Aaron makes him representative of Jesus Christ.

## Psalm 99:6b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
qârâ <sup>ʾ</sup> (קָרָא) [pronounced <i>kaw-RAW</i> ]	<i>to call, to proclaim, to read, to call to, to call out to, to assemble, to summon</i>	masculine plural construct, Qal active participle	Strong's #7121 BDB #894
This is a homonym; the other qârâ <sup>ʾ</sup> means <i>to encounter, to befall, to meet, to assemble</i> .			
shêm (שֵׁם) [pronounced <i>shame</i> ]	<i>name, reputation, character</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #8034 BDB #1027

**Translation:** *...among those who call His name;...* Of course, not just priests called upon the name of God. Many called upon the name of God. However, the emphasis here is upon a specific group—those who are priests. Moses was a priest in his function; Aaron was called upon by God to be a priest and he was the first in the line of

all the Levitical priests (more properly, *Aaronic* priests). Samuel was one of the few high priests who was not a descendant of Aaron (as you may recall from our study of the first few chapters of 1 Samuel).

Psalm 99:6c			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
qârâ' (קָרָא) [pronounced kaw-RAW]	<i>to call, to proclaim, to read, to call to, to call out to, to assemble, to summon</i>	masculine plural noun, Qal active participle	Strong's #7121 BDB #894
'el (אֶל) [pronounced e]	<i>unto, in, into, toward, to, regarding, against</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly yohh-WAH]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y<sup>e</sup>howah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

**Translation:** ...those who called unto Y<sup>e</sup>howah... These three men, who are priests in different ways, all called upon Jehovah. In fact, they are among those who called upon God.

The other way of understanding this is dividing this verse at *and Samuel; Moses and Aaron [were] among His priests; and Samuel [was] among those calling His name*. This is the way the most translations divide this verse, and the Hebrew supports such a division. There is the parallel *in the priests* and *in those calling His name*. Although the meaning is affected to some degree, either form appears to be reasonable and neither form violates this or that doctrine. Even with this division, I do not believe Moses and Aaron are being separated from those who called upon God's name; nor do I believe that Samuel is being excluded from the priesthood. And even allowing this understanding of this verse, which is probably valid, we still have *They call upon Jehovah and He answered them*. In my own opinion, I think the division was more a matter of rhythm and conforming to the music. Since I am not constrained by music, I have decided to stay with the rendering above (however, in the ultra-literal version, I do properly split the lines of the stanza as they should be).

The question which does occur to me, which I cannot really answer, is: *why are these three men chosen? Are these just three old Bible guys chosen at random?* Furthermore, why Aaron? He is one of the most pathetic believers in the Pentateuch, who seems to be there only by virtue of being Moses' brother. Why is he chosen to be listed here? Now, there are commentators who are outright silly at this point—Matthew Henry writes: *No kingdom had men that honoured God as these three men of the kingdom of Israel did.*<sup>16</sup> Spurgeon writes: *Moses, Aaron, and Samuel special and personal charges were committed, and they were all true to their trust, for they stood in awe of the Lord their God, and worshipped him with their whole souls.*<sup>17</sup> But that is all baloney. Sure, Moses and Samuel were great men, but Aaron? Most of what we have recorded about Aaron is failure after failure after failure. So, I ask myself, *what is Aaron doing in this list?*

Psalm 99:6d			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251

<sup>16</sup> *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of E-sword, Psalm 99:7.

<sup>17</sup> Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 99:6–9.

## Psalm 99:6d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
hûw' (הוּא) [pronounced hoo]	he, it	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
'ânâh (עָנָה) [pronounced gaw-NAWH]	to answer, to respond; to speak loudly, to speak up [in a public forum]; to testify; to sing, to chant, to sing responsively	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #6030 BDB #772

**Translation:** ...and He answered them. When these men called upon God, God answered them. This is interesting, as we know that both Moses and Samuel called upon God and were answered; however, we don't actually have an instance of this occurring with Aaron. An instance is not actually required, as the plural suffix can be applied to Samuel and Moses. However, Aaron is mentioned here; therefore, we should reasonably include him.

I should mention that, even though we do not have a single instance of Aaron calling upon God, God did talk to Aaron. Aaron and Miriam decided that they didn't like Moses hooking up with the Cushite woman, and they maligned Moses because of it. God straightened them out, both verbally and actually (Num. 12:1–15).

**Application:** This is rather simple: if you call upon God, He will answer. Now, there is no reason to expect him to shoot flames from the sky every time He answers you. God is not going to strike people dead at your whim. However, God is glorified by His answering our prayers.

**Application:** Earlier, I asked the question, *why these three men?* And, more importantly, *why is Aaron mentioned here?* Here's the deal: you and I, as just average believers, look at something to do with Moses and Samuel, and think, *no way could we measure up to them.* Certainly God hears them and answers them. We would expect that. But Aaron, that screw up? God hears him and answers him? That gives us hope. I can relate to Aaron. I can certainly nitpick at Moses and Samuel and mention this or that minor mistake that they make—realizing I am not one-tenth the person either one of them is. But Aaron—well, I can meet the Aaron standard. I can be superfluous. I can make big mistakes. I can be disobedient. When I lead, I am able to lead people in the wrong direction. I can bend under pressure. When everyone around me pressures me to lead them in the wrong direction—well, I'm up for that. So, I can relate to Aaron. Aaron managed to be a screw-up for almost all of his life—right up to the end. That God hears a relative loser and failure like Aaron and answers him, that's comforting; that is meaningful to me. Aaron is thrown into this mix, so that we do not feel as though God has left us out of his plan because we are perpetual screw-ups.

In a pillar of a cloud, He speaks unto them;  
they kept His testimonies and statutes [that]  
He gave to them.

Psalm  
99:7

From [lit., in] a pillar of cloud, He guides [lit.,  
speaks to] them;  
they keep [and guard] His Words [lit.,  
testimonies] and statutes that He has given to  
them.

He guides them from a pillar of clouds;  
they guard and protect His words; they keep that statutes that He has given them.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

**Early translations:**

The Septuagint He spoke to them in a pillar of cloud; they kept his testimonies and the ordinances which He gave them.

**Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

CEV You spoke to them from a thick cloud, and they obeyed your laws.  
 NAB From the pillar of cloud God spoke to them; they kept the decrees, the law they received.  
 NLT He spoke to them from the pillar of cloud, and they followed the decrees and principles he gave them.

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

God's Word™ He spoke to them from a column of smoke. They obeyed his written instructions and the laws that he gave them.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

ESV In the pillar of the cloud he spoke to them; they kept his testimonies and the statute that he gave them.  
 WEB He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud. They kept his testimonies, The statute that he gave them.  
 Young's Updated LT In a pillar of cloud He speaks to them, They have kept His testimonies, And the statute He has given to them.

**What is the gist of this verse?** God guided the Israelites through the desert using a cloud pillar. He spoke to Moses and Moses recorded what God said, and the Jews preserved this.

Psalm 99:7a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
ʿammûwd (עַמּוּד) [pronounced ʿahm-MOOD]	<i>pillar, column; platform, scaffold</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5982 BDB #765
ʿânân (עָנָן) [pronounced ʿaw-NAWN]	<i>cloud (as a veiling over or covering of heaven)</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #6051 BDB #777
dâbar (דָּבַר) [pronounced daw <sup>b</sup> -VAHR]	<i>to speak, to talk [and back with action], to give an opinion, to expound, to make a formal speech, to speak out, to promise, to propose, to speak kindly of, to declare, to proclaim, to announce</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Piel imperfect	Strong's #1696 BDB #180

### Psalm 99:7a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
עַל (אֶל) [pronounced e]l]	<i>unto, in, into, toward, to, regarding, against</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied); with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #413 BDB #39

**Translation:** From [lit., *in*] a pillar of cloud, He guides [lit., *speaks to*] them;... God originally guided the Israelites in the desert by a pillar of cloud (see Ex. 33:9, 21–22 14:19 19:9 Num. 12:5). We do not know exactly what this means; however, we may reasonably suppose that this was a cloud which appeared as a column or a pillar. It may have looked similar to a whirlwind or a funnel cloud. Apparently, if a funnel cloud, it would be far enough away as to not cause the Israelites problems. However, to make myself clear here, we do not know exactly what this looked like nor do we know the exact natural phenomena that this was, or whether God's guidance in the desert was supernatural (believers with a mystical bend like to see supernatural apparitions everywhere).

Now, God did not speak to those prophets who followed Moses from a cloud pillar; he spoke to them in a number of ways, so we do not precisely apply the cloud pillar to Samuel. However, the pillar of cloud is God's shekinah glory—this is a manifestation of God that people can see and/or hear. In that way, the shekinah glory did speak to Samuel (see, for instance, 1Sam. 3). Furthermore, God spoke to more than just Moses, Aaron and Samuel. God manifest Himself to many Old Testament saints (although, compared to the population of those times, a minute percentage of people were involved).

The psalmist uses the verb *to speak* here rather than to guide; the idea is, this is a physical manifestation of God and God guided Israel through this physical manifestation. He also guided Israel through His words. The guiding of the Israelites was both metaphorical and actual. God did guide the Israelites through the desert; He did see to it that they had enough food and water to live on, even through the death of one generation. But, God's metaphorical guidance is what He said to Moses—God's words to Moses guided the Israelites and they guide us today. This was the important guidance that God gave.

### Psalm 99:7b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
שָׁמַר (שָׁמַר) [pronounced shaw-MAR]	<i>to keep, to guard, to watch, to preserve</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #8104 BDB #1036
עֲדוֹת (עֲדוֹת) [pronounced ġih-DOHTH]	<i>testimonies, divine testimonies, charges [from God], words of God, the words of Scripture</i>	feminine plural noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5713 BDB #730
Always found with a suffix and/or a definite article. One might takes this to mean the very words uttered by God, preserved in Scripture.			
וְ (or וּ) (וְ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251

## Psalm 99:7b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
chôq (חֹק) [pronounced <i>khoke</i> ]	<i>decree, that which is decreed; statute; boundary, defined limit; an appointed portion of labor, a task</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2706 BDB #349
nâthan (נָתַן) [pronounced <i>naw-THAHN</i> ]	<i>to give, to grant, to place, to put, to set</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #5414 BDB #678
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to</i>	directional preposition with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510

**Translation:** ...they keep [and guard] His Words [lit., testimonies] and statutes that He has given to them. At this point in time, *them* no longer refers to Moses, Aaron and Samuel, as these men in particular were not the only ones to preserve God's Word.<sup>18</sup> Although there is reasonable evidence that Moses and Samuel may have acted to preserve God's Word (no telling about Aaron), we are really speaking more of the nation Israel here. Israel was chosen by God to write and then to preserve His Word. Understanding this will better explain the next verse.

You will note that, even though the KJV (and several other English translations) rendered *idôth testimonies*, I have rendered it *Words*. I should therefore explain. In order to acquire a full appreciation of this verse, we need to examine the **Doctrine of 'idôth**, in order to get a handle on the meaning of this Hebrew word.

Moses wrote down God's words and he presented them to the Israelites as God's words; however, it was the Jews who preserved God's Word generation after generation. They copied God's words generation after generation. Somehow, they seemed to know what to save and what to discard. This is not a reference to the Jews following and obeying God's words; this is the act of preserving them generation after generation.

**Y<sup>e</sup>howah our Elohim, You [even] You answered them—  
a God bearing You were to them—  
and taking vengeance on their deeds.**

Psalm  
99:8

**You, Y<sup>e</sup>howah our Elohim, [even] You answered them—  
You were to them a God Who bore them—  
but taking vengeance against their wanton acts.**

**You, Jehovah God, answered them—You constantly carried them—  
but You punished them for their misdeeds.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Early translations:

The Peshitta                      You answered them, O LORD our God; You were an avenger for them. O God, reward them according to their works.

The Septuagint                    O Lord our God, You heard them; O God, You became propitious to them, though You took vengeance on all their devices.

<sup>18</sup> This is also the position of Keil and Delitzsch: *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 99:6–9.



**Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

CEV	Our LORD and our God, you answered their prayers and forgave their sins, but when they did wrong, you punished them.
The Message	And then GOD, our God, answered them (But you were never soft on their sins).
NLT	O LORD our God, you answered them. You were a forgiving God, but you punished them when they went wrong.
REB	O LORD our God, you answered them; you were a God who forgave them, yet you called them to account for their misdeeds.

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

God's Word™	O LORD, our God, you answered them. You showed them that you are a forgiving God and that you are a God who punishes their sinful deeds.
JPS (Tanakh)	O LORD our God, You answered them, You were a forgiving God for them, but You exacted retribution for their misdeeds.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	You answered them, O Lord our God. You were a forgiving Go to them, although avenging their evil-doings <i>and</i> practices.
MKJV	You answered them, O Jehovah our God; You were a God who forgave them, though You take vengeance for their deeds.
<i>Young's Updated LT</i>	O Jehovah, our God, You have afflicted them, A God forgiving You have been to them, And taking vengeance on their actions.

**What is the gist of this verse?** God answers Israel; God forgives them for their sins, yet exacts retribution for their wrongs.

What is *not* in view here are the several times that Moses stood between God and Israel and pleaded for Israel's deliverance (e.g., Deut. 5:5). Furthermore, we are *not* looking at Moses, Aaron and Samuel in particular either.

**Psalm 99:8a**

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i> ]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y<sup>e</sup>howah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
ʾēlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i> ]	<i>gods</i> or <i>God</i> ; transliterated <i>Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix	Strong's #430 BDB #43
ʾattâh (אַתָּה) [pronounced <i>ahT-TAW</i> ]	<i>you</i> (often, the verb <i>to be</i> is implied)	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #859 BDB #61

## Psalm 99:8a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿânâh (עָנָה) [pronounced <i>gaw-NAWH</i> ]	<i>to answer, to respond; to speak loudly, to speak up [in a public forum]; to testify; to sing, to chant, to sing responsively</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #6030 BDB #772

**Translation:** *You, Y<sup>ehowah</sup> our Elohim, [even] You answered them—...* Primarily, this refers to the many times when Israel called out to God for deliverance, and He delivered them—that is, He answered their cries to Him. Originally, we were dealing with Moses, Aaron and Samuel, and it would be easy to find instances of Moses and Samuel calling upon God and God answering hem. However, recall in the final two portions of the previous verse, we are really speaking of Israel now. The book of Judges is a prime example of that. Israel would sin against God, God would punish them, they would find themselves oppressed by some godless nation, they would call to God, and God would answer them. This portion of v. 8 refers to the final two events.

## Psalm 99:8b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿêl (אֵל) [pronounced <i>ALE</i> ]	<i>God, God, mighty one, strong, hero</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #410 BDB #42
nâsâʿ (נָשָׂא) [pronounced <i>naw-SAW</i> ]	<i>to lift up, to bear, to carry</i>	Qal active participle	Strong's #5375 (and #4984) BDB #669

Nâsâʿ actually has a variety of Qal meanings: It means ❶ *to take up, to lift up, to bear up*; ❷ *to lift up someone's head* (this is used in a favorable way; i.e., it is mused to mean *to make one cheerful or merry*); ❸ *to lift up one's own countenance, i.e., to be cheerful, full of confidence*, ❹ *to bear, to carry*, ❺ *to lift up in a balance, i.e., to weigh carefully*; ❻ *to bear one's sin or punishment*, ❼ *to lift up the voice* (this can be used in the sense of bewailing, crying, crying out, rejoicing, *to lift up any with the voice* (a song, an instrument); ❽ *to lift up the soul* (i.e., *to wish for, to desire*); ❾ *to have the heart lifted up* (i.e., they are ready and willing to do something); ❿ *to bear one's sin* (in such a way to expiate the sin, to make atonement for the sin, to pardon the sin). This list does not exhaust the various connotations for nâsâʿ.

hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i> ]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional preposition with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510

**Translation:** *...You were to them a God Who bore them—...* You will notice that I gave an extended definition for the participial verb here. Nâsâʿ is one of those words that the KJV gives about 90 different translations to. Its primary meaning is *to lift, to bear, to carry*. However, it can mean *to bear one's sin*, which is, in part, one way that it may be understood here. Throughout all of Israel's troubles, God carried Israel; most of these troubles were self-inflicted—that is, they sinned and received the results of their sin onto themselves. However, God is a forgiving God and He forgave them their sins. However, the word *forgive* is not found here. This is not like God just said, "Oh, hell, it's alright; you're only human. I'm going to let it slide this time." God does not just arbitrarily, willy nilly,

forgive anyone for their misdeeds. Perfect justice and perfect righteousness cannot forgive sin on a whim. God cannot look at you and say, “Oh, Charley Brown? He’s not such a bad guy. I’m going to ignore his sins. They weren’t that big of a deal anyway.” When a person sins against God, then God bears their sin. Early translators may not have been able to figure out exactly how to understand this; however, we understand now that Jesus Christ bore all of our sins on His body on the tree. Everyone one of our sins, along with the sins of the entire human race, which sins may seem an infinite amount to us, were condensed into three hours of time and poured out on Jesus Christ while He hung upon the cross. God bore their sins, just as He bears our sins.

### Psalm 99:8c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
w <sup>ə</sup> (or v <sup>ə</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong’s # BDB #251
nâqam (נָקַם) [pronounced <i>naw-KAHM</i> ]	<i>to avenge, to take vengeance</i>	Qal active participle	Strong’s #5358 BDB #667
‘al (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i> ]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong’s #5921 BDB #752
‘ălîylâh (עֲלֵי־לַוָּי) [pronounced <i>al-ee-LAW</i> ]	<i>actions, deeds; wanton acts</i>	feminine plural noun with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	Strong’s #5949 BDB #760

**Translation:** ...but taking vengeance against their wanton acts. Straightening out just who we are speaking of here makes things much easier to understand. Several authors argue whether we are speaking of Korah, Dathan and Abiram here; or whether this should apply to Moses and Aaron and Samuel.<sup>19</sup> We are not speaking of specific individuals here, named or unnamed, but of Israel in general. Israel often fell into idolatry; they worshipped other gods and God punished them for their sins. This would lead to the cycle previously mentioned: Israel would sin, God would punish them, they would find themselves being oppressed by a godless nation, they would call out to God, God would hear them, God would bear their sins, and God would deliver them. This is, in fact, the book of the Judges, in a nutshell.

Again, for context’s sake, we are speaking of God, and God as reigning over the earth. We are speaking of God as involved with His creation here on earth. We are speaking of a God Who hears and responds to us; we are speaking of a God of perfect justice; we are speaking of a God Who is willing to forgive us; we are speaking of God Who also will punish those who do wrong. Whether we see a physical manifestation of God or not, God is actively in charge of this world.

**Lift up Y<sup>e</sup>howah our Elohim  
and bow down to a hill of His holiness,  
for holy [is] Y<sup>e</sup>howah our Elohim.**

Psalm  
99:9

**Exalt Y<sup>e</sup>howah our Elohim  
and bow down towards His holy mountain  
for Y<sup>e</sup>howah our Elohim [is] Holy.**

**Exalt Jehovah our God  
and bow down at His holy mountain,  
for Jehovah our God is holy.**

The culmination of this psalm is almost a repeat of v. 5, except there is the mention of God’s holy mountain (or, holy hill). Here is how others have translated this verse:

<sup>19</sup> See Dr. John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 99:8; also Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 99:6–9.

**Early translations:**

The Septuagint Exalt the Lord our God and worship at His holy mountain, for the Lord our God is holy.

**Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

CEV We praise you, LORD God, and we worship you at your sacred mountain. Only you are God!

The Message Lift high GOD, our God; worship at his holy mountain. Holy. Yes, holy is GOD our God.

NLT Exalt the LORD our God  
and worship at his holy mountain in Jerusalem,  
for the LORD our God is holy!

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

God's Word™ Highly honor the LORD our God. Bow at his holy mountain. The LORD our God is holy!

JPS (Tanakh) Exalt the LORD our God,  
and bow toward His holy hill,  
for the LORD our God is holy.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

MKJV Praise Jehovah our God, and worship at His holy hill; for Jehovah our God is holy.

Young's Updated LT Exalt Jehovah our God, And bow yourselves at His holy hill, For holy is Jehovah our God!

**What is the gist of this verse?** The psalmist exhorts us to exalt Jehovah God and to prostrate before His holy mount (which, is, presumably, the Tabernacle in Zion). This psalm ends with us being told that Jehovah our God is set apart.

Psalm 99:9a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
rûwm (רום) [pronounced room]	<i>to raise, to lift up, to make high; to build a house; to bring up children; to put in safety; to raise up, to exalt [in victory or with praise]</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural, Polel imperative	Strong's #7311 BDB #926
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly yoh-WAH]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y<sup>e</sup>howah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
ʾēlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	<i>gods or God; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix	Strong's #430 BDB #43

**Translation:** [Exalt Y<sup>e</sup>howah our Elohim...](#) This might be seen as the refrain of this psalm. We found it in v. 5 and we have a parallel between v. 5a and 9a; 5c and 9c, which would lead us to believe there will be a clear parallel between v. 5b and 9b (you don't need to look back and forth, as I will have a chart below). .

Psalm 99:9b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
shâchah (שָׁחָה) [pronounced <i>shaw-KHAW</i> ]	<i>to bow down, to prostrate oneself, to do obeisance to; to honor [with prayers]; to do homage to, to submit to</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural Hithpael imperative	Strong's #7812 BDB #1005
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
har (רָהַר) [pronounced <i>har</i> ]	<i>hill, mountain, hill-country</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #2042 (and #2022) BDB #249
qôdesh (קֹדֶשׁ) [pronounced <i>koh-DESH</i> ]	<i>holiness, sacredness, apartness, that which is holy, holy things</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #6944 BDB #871

**Translation:** [...and bow down towards His holy mountain...](#) Most importantly, this is not to be taken as some sort of a mandate for all believers everywhere to find out the direction of God's holy mountain and then bow in that direction. First of all, it would make little sense because it is not related to the gospel in anyway; that is, there are no parallels one could draw between Jesus dying on the cross and praying in a particular direction. Furthermore, we have no such commandments in the Pentateuch. All of the laws in the Pentateuch are designed to reveal Jesus Christ to us.

Therefore, we are left with the question, what is meant here? If this is not the Christian equivalent of praying to Mecca, then what is meant here? God did require that all sacrificing a worship be centrally located in Israel. There were not to be two Temples or two Tabernacles. God did not manifest Himself, during the time of Israel, to other nations in such a way as to establish a separate Temple elsewhere. God had to make it clear that there is but One God, and that we cannot have a series of national gods with a variety of national customs. Even though Israel often became corrupt; still, the Law made clear what was right and what was not. Once God's character was well-established; once the Holy Scriptures (the Old Testament) were well-established; and once the Jews rejected their Messiah, God approached man in a different way. Now, since God has come to this earth as a man, we are also struck by His uniqueness and by the fact that He is the only way. There are no other gods; all true and false prophets who have come before and after cannot be compared to Him. The Tabernacle, and later, the Temple, are unique, and filled with items which point people in that era toward Jesus Christ.

## Psalm 99:9c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i> ]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
qâdôwsh (קָדוֹשׁ) [pronounced <i>kaw-DOWSE</i> ]	<i>sacred, holy, set apart, sacrosanct</i>	masculine singular adjective	Strong's #6918 BDB #872
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i> ]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y<sup>e</sup>howah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
ʿĕlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i> ]	<i>gods or God; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix	Strong's #430 BDB #43

**Translation:** ...for Y<sup>e</sup>howah our Elohim [is] Holy. Jehovah God is set apart from all that we know (*holy* means *set apart*). Since God is perfect righteousness and perfect justice, we can only begin to imagine what God is like.

That parallel between vv. 5 and 9 is unmistakable. The writer clearly meant for them to both complete their stanzas and to clearly mark the end of each stanza. In fact, this will allow us to divide up this psalm, and to see even other parallels which may not have been as obvious at first.

## The Parallel Chorus of Psalm 99

Psalm 99:5	Psalm 99:9	Explanation
Exalt Y <sup>e</sup> howah our Elohim [with praise]...	Exalt Y <sup>e</sup> howah our Elohim...	God is to be seen as above all others and given respect and devotion. This lines are identical.
...and bow down towards His footstool;...	...and bow down towards His holy mountain,...	Bowing down before God indicates our obeisance to Him. In v. 5, we cannot literally bow before Jesus Christ in the throne room of God (as far as we know). This would suggest, by this being a parallel line, that v. 9b is not literal either. However, in both verses, we are submitting to God and His authority.
...He [is] holy!	...Y <sup>e</sup> howah our Elohim [is] Holy.	God is set apart and God is different from all else; He cannot be compared to anything else.

This logically leads us to the next chart.

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That there is a parallel between vv. 5 and 9 is unmistakable. This should make us ask, does the author want us to find parallels throughout this psalm? That is, can we similarly match up vv. 1–4 with vv. 6–8?

I should point out that, I begin this chart and this assumption before I know the answer to this question. As an exegete, I often begin with an hypothesis, and then follow it to see if it works. I have read a great many other authors who, for one reason or another, try to set up a parallel, or they make an hypothesis, and then the result is often weak. My guess is, computers were more difficult to come by in the 19<sup>th</sup> and previous centuries, so, once you committed something to writing, you were sort of stuck with it. For me, if the results here are not what I expect, it is not a problem...I can simply delete this portion of my exegesis if my hypothesis proves fruitless.

Let me also add, the first few verses present God as immutable and as, to some degree, separate from man. In the last half of this psalm, it is clear that God interacts with man. In both approaches, God is still over all and still should be exalted, as He is holy.

### The Parallels of Psalm 99

Verses	Psalm 99:1–5	Psalm 99:6–9	Incident
v. 1a v. 6	Y <sup>e</sup> howah reigns and the people are agitated [or, <i>disquieted</i> ].	Moses and Aaron [are] among His priests—Samuel also—among those who call His name; those who called unto Y <sup>e</sup> howah and He answered them.	God reigns over all; there are those who are agitated and there are those who call upon His name.
v. 1b v. 7a	He lives [among] the angels and the earth hangs [suspended in space].	From [lit., <i>in</i> ] a pillar of cloud, He guides [lit., <i>speaks to</i> ] them;...	God does not reside on earth, but above it in the heavens; yet, even though He live among the angels, He still speaks to man.
vv. 3–4a v. 7b	Y <sup>e</sup> howah of Zion [is] mighty [or, <i>immutable</i> ] and He is exalted over all the peoples. They confess [and/or, <i>celebrate</i> ] Your great and feared name; it [is] holy and strong [or, a <i>refuge</i> ]— the King desires justice.	...they keep [and guard] His Words [lit., <i>testimonies</i> ] and statutes that He has given to them.	God being exalted over all the people; God's name (i.e., His reputation) being great and feared; and that He is holy, strong and a refuge for those who seek Him—all of this is found in the testimonies and statutes which He has left to us.
v. 4b v. 8	You set up [confirm and maintain] righteous acts [and/or decisions]; You make justice and righteousness in Jacob.	You, Y <sup>e</sup> howah our Elohim, [even] You answered them— You were to them a God Who bore them— but taking vengeance against their wanton acts.	Note the psalmist speaks to God in the second person here. God is a righteous God, even if He must discipline those who are His own.
v. 5 v. 9	Exalt Y <sup>e</sup> howah our Elohim [with praise] and bow down towards His footstool; He [is] holy!	Exalt Y <sup>e</sup> howah our Elohim and bow down towards His holy mountain for Y <sup>e</sup> howah our Elohim [is] Holy.	These verses are almost identical and have been already discussed.

Now, although we do not find an exact parallel throughout this psalm, what we do find are sets of verses which are reasonably complementary and play off one another.



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Now, let us summarize this psalm:

### A Summary of Psalm 99

1. God has reigned over the earth from the beginning of time. Since God created the earth and all that is in it, we would expect that.
2. God does not reign over the earth as a public official would. A public official appears accessible and is a very public persona (e.g., the US president). God appears to be more detached from the world, invisible, dwelling with the angels. The earth is suspended below Him.
3. God is great and He is exalted above all mankind (Jews and Gentiles alike).
4. God is holy and yet a refuge for us.
5. God is justice and righteousness and establishes the same over this earth.
6. God has specifically set up laws to exemplify this perfect justice and righteousness in Israel.
7. God had specific relationships with men of this earth—men could call upon God and He would answer them.
8. God actually spoke to man (primarily to Moses, as the Jews did not want to hear His voice); and the Jews did record, duplicate and preserve His Word.
9. God both forgives sin and punishes wrongdoing. For some, this may seem contradictory; however, the key is Jesus Christ. God judged all of our sins in Him.
10. Finally, we are exalted twice in this psalm to exalt Jehovah God and to worship Him, as He is holy.

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