

The Piel Verb “Rathaph: God Loves Those Who Pursue Righteousness while Driving Out Wickedness, Prov 15:9; the Double-Column Advance

35. This word is used 143 times in the Old Testament. Its literal and figurative applications in Scripture and its occurrence in the Piel stem in our verse give us insight into the importance wheel-tracks of righteousness play in the life of the advancing believer:

Botterweck, G. Johannes, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry (eds.). *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Translated by David E. Green. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 13:342-45; 348:

רָתַף *rathaph*. *Old Testament*. The verb occurs 143 times in the Old Testament. It appears primarily in the qal stem (131 times). The distribution displays a concentration in the books of Joshua through 2 Samuel, where, as befits their theme, accounts of military pursuit are concentrated. There are altogether 8 occurrences of the piel [including] (**Proverbs 15:9**). (p. 342)

Military Contexts. Most occurrences of *rathaph* involve military terminology. In military contexts the verb denotes the active pursuit of one or more persons, with hostile intent. (p. 343)

The goal of this pursuit by the victors is to overtake the fugitives, then totally to destroy, liquidate, or drive out the enemy. (p. 344)

Since *rathaph* often results in the final defeat or annihilation of the enemy, an implication that is present even when the verb is used by itself, the image of pursuit is well suited to express extreme tribulation, affliction, or overwhelming power. This usage probably accounts for its frequent occurrence (7 times) in the blessing and curse section of Leviticus 26. Verse 7 promises “deadly superiority” in pursuit; in verse 8 a later hand has magnified the promise in a numerical chiasm: “Pursue will five of you a hundred, and a hundred of you ten thousand will pursue.” (345)

Figurative Usage. In four texts righteousness is the object of pursuit: **Proverbs 15:9** (piel) and 21:21 (qal), both with **שֶׁתְּהַחֲזִיק** *sethaqah* [righteousness]; Isaiah 51:1 and Deuteronomy 16:20 (qal), with **שֶׁתְּהַחֲזִיק** *setheq* [justice]. (p. 348)

36. Proverbs 15:9 ends with the word “righteousness”: **שֶׁתְּהַחֲזִיק** *sethaqah*. This word refers to the objective of spiritual growth which is to acquire experiential sanctification.
37. This concept refers to the spiritual objective of the believer following salvation which can only be fulfilled by the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit, the inculcation of Bible doctrine, and the acquisition and application of the ten problem-solving devices.
38. Exercising these spiritual skills in the consistent pursuit of truth results in (1) experiential sanctification: knowledge that can be used effectively by the Holy Spirit for the fulfillment of His will, and (2) spiritual righteousness: capacity for blessing from an the inventory of divine thought that gives the believer the wisdom, discernment, and integrity to remain loyal to doctrine under pressure and with this probity to make decisions that are honorable.
39. From this analysis we can now present an expanded translation and paraphrase of our verse:

Proverbs 15:9 - [Expanded translation] The wheel-tracks [דֶּרֶךְ *derek*: character traits, behavior patterns, and lifestyle] of the wicked [רָשָׁע *rasha'*], which are in opposition to God, are an abomination [תּוֹעֵבָה *to'evah*] to the Lord who abhors their manifestations, but He personally loves [אָהַב *'ahav*] the advancing believer who intensively pursues [רָדַף *rathaph*] a continuing campaign to attain the righteousness [צֶדִיקָה *sethaqah*] that expresses the divine standard in his behavior, character, conduct, and lifestyle.

Proverbs 15:9 - [Paraphrase] The character traits, behavior patterns, and lifestyle of those who are in opposition to God are abhorred by Him, but He personally loves the advancing believer who intensively pursues a continuing campaign to attain the righteousness that expresses the divine standard in his behavior, character, conduct, and lifestyle.

40. The Piel stem of the verb *rathaph*, to pursue, intensifies the action of the verb. The believer that God can love personally while blessing exceedingly abundantly is the one who aggressively pursues truth in order to make the immutable standards of divine righteousness his own.
41. The word *rathaph*'s military connotation is illustrated by the double-column advance. The left column is advanced by acquiring *epignōsis* knowledge of the Word of God.
42. This in turn results in the increase of reciprocal love that provides motivation necessary for the right column to advance toward the objective. The objective is *πλήρωμα, plērōma*: "to fill up a vessel." The "vessel" in our application is the *kardia* of the soul and the things that fill it are divine principles and doctrines.
43. The flanks of the advance are protected by this double-column: the increase of knowledge by the left column protects the flank of the right column by providing the consistent spiritual growth that increases the believer's reciprocal love.
44. This increasing reciprocal love by the right column protects the flank of the left column by providing consistent motivation to stay with doctrine in order to acquire more knowledge.
45. Both the knowledge of doctrine in the left column and the motivation developed by reciprocal love in the right column result in the attainment of one's personal sense of destiny which further intensifies the pursuit of truth through the sophisticated spiritual life.
46. The momentum of the double-column advance is facilitated by the development of cognitive self-confidence that reflects spiritual self-esteem. The pursuit is intensified by personal love for God and unconditional love for mankind as the major problem-solving devices.
47. The momentum is facilitated further by the development of cognitive independence that reflects spiritual autonomy. The pursuit is intensified by sharing the happiness of God as the major problem-solving device.
48. The momentum is facilitated even further by the development of cognitive invincibility that reflects spiritual maturity. The pursuit is intensified by one's occupation with Christ as the major problem-solving device.

49. Proverbs 15:9 is an excellent example of the book's many contrasts between wheel-tracks of wickedness, which God abhors, and wheel-tracks of righteousness, which God loves.
50. The word that is translated "wicked" is רָשָׁע *rasha'*. It and its derivatives are used 343 times in the Old Testament. An analysis of this word is important and for more details we again consult the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*.
51. As we do keep in mind that the definitions of the word for "wicked" clearly describe such individuals as the unbeliever and the reversionistic believer.
52. In addition, the underlying beliefs and doctrines of Islam are derived from the machinations of wicked minds, beginning with the pederast Muhammad and continuing to the present day in the form of the Qu'ran and those who carry forward its mandates.