

Your Torah Is In My Guts

The psalmist David¹ declares in Psalm 40:8(9) NASB, “I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart.” Although most English translations translate the Hebrew word מַעֲי, *mei’ah*, as heart, it more properly means innards. Had the psalmist meant to say heart, he would have used the word לֵב, *lev*.

To more fully understand the word מַעֲי, *mei’ah*, other instantiations include the following.

Job 30:27 מַעֲי רִתְחוּ וְלֹא־דָמוּ קִדְמָי יִמִּי־עֲנִי:

My bowels well up, and rest not; days of affliction have confronted me. (Darby)

The churning inside me never stops; days of suffering confront me. (NIV)

My insides are in turmoil; they can’t find rest; days of misery confront me. (CJB)

Isaiah 16:11 עַל־כֵּן מַעֲי לְמוֹאָב כְּכִנּוֹר יִהְיוּ וְקִרְבֵי לְקִיר חָרָשׁ:

Therefore my bowels sound like a harp for Moab, and mine inward parts for Kirheres. (Darby)

מַעֲי מַעֲי אוֹחִילָה קִירוֹת לִבִּי הִמָּה־לִּי לִבִּי לֹא אֶחְרִישׁ כִּי קוֹל

שׁוֹפָר שָׁמַעַתְּ נִפְשִׁי תִרְוַעַת מִלְחָמָה: Jeremiah 4:19

My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. (KJV)

My guts! My guts! I’m writhing in pain! My heart! It beats wildly—I can’t stay still! —because I have heard the shofar sound; it’s the call to war. (CJB)

רְאֵה יְהוָה כִּי־צָר־לִי מַעֲי חָמַרְמָרוּ נִהְפָּךְ לִבִּי בְקִרְבֵי כִי מָרוּ

מְרִיתִי מִחוּץ שְׂכָלָה־חָרָב בְּבַיִת כְּמוֹת: Lamentations 1:20

Behold, O LORD; for I am in distress: my bowels are troubled; mine heart is turned within me; for I have grievously rebelled: abroad the sword bereaveth, at home there is as death. (KJV)
See, ADONAI, how distressed I am! Everything in me is churning! My heart turns over inside me, because I have been so rebellious. Outside, the sword brings bereavement; inside, it is like death. (CJB)

Note in these two passages a clear distinction between מַעֲי, *mei’ah*, and לֵב, *lev*, reinforcing the fact that if the psalmist had meant to say heart, he would have used the word לֵב, *lev*, in Psalm 40:8(9).

Why all my fuss about the definition of the word מַעֲי, *mei’ah*? Because the proper translation of the psalmist’s declaration:

Doing your will, my God, is my joy; your Torah is in my guts, my innards, my inmost being, everything in me.

says so much more than “in my heart.” By this interpretation, when we are doing God’s will, His Torah pervades us, occupies our being, our actions, our feelings. In short, we are consumed by His Torah.

1. a man after God’s own heart. 1 Samuel 13:14, Acts 13:22

Further on Psalm 40:8(9), לַעֲשׂוֹת־רְצוֹנְךָ אֱלֹהֵי הַפְּצֹתִי וְתוֹרָתְךָ בְּתוֹךְ מִעֵי, does not say “Your Law is in . . .” but rather, “Your Torah is in . . .” Remember that Hebrew prefixes and suffixes may change the spelling of the base word, so תורה, Torah, becomes וְתוֹרָתְךָ by adding the prefix וְ to indicate “and” and by adding the ךְ to indicate “your,” which changes the final ה to ת.

Torah is better translated as instructions than law. The Christian church has in general resented and resisted the “laws” of Torah, not realizing that (1) no society can exist without laws, (2) humans like to know where the boundaries are, and (3) Torah is God’s way of telling us how we should best live, to be happy and successful, as a father tells his children. Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe, Who has spoken His Torah into our insides, our very guts, as a constant companion and guide.

Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe, Who has spoken His Torah into our insides, our very guts, as a constant companion and guide.

May it ever be so!