

# *Ponderings in the Psalms*

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The following is a Messianic Study on

## *Psalm 22*

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**Brit Chadashah**  
ברית חדשה

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If you don't know Yeshua as your Messiah, we encourage you to search out the Scriptures for yourself. God promised in the book of Jeremiah, "*You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart*" (Jeremiah 29:13). And we hope you will make contact with us so that we can share more about the Messiah, His life and ministry.

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# Pondering Psalm 23

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## Intro

What more can be written on this the most famous Psalm? It is recited at Jewish and often at Christian funerals bringing comfort. It is in popular media such as movies (Pale Rider and Titanic) and parts are quoted in many a songs (“Love Rescue Me” by U2 and “Jah Guide” by Peter Tosh). Composers from Bach and Bernstein to Schubert, and hundreds more have put music to it. Sadly this psalm is mistakenly attributed to the Brit Chadashah (New Testament), it is actually one of the “Psalms of David,” as indicated in its superscription (v. 1).

Leaving behind the often misquoted Psalm from popular culture, we will ponder Biblically what this Psalm is all about. This is Psalm is a song of trust and confidence in God, even though King David and we may go through troubled time, He is with us as our source of strength and confidence as in the past, so in the present to the future.

## Psalm 23

<sup>1</sup> A Psalm of David. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. <sup>2</sup> He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. <sup>3</sup> He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His Name’s sake. <sup>4</sup> Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. <sup>5</sup> You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. <sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

## Psalm 23:1 A Psalm of David. The Lord is my shepherd....

**Psalm - Mizmor** related to striking an instrument, in other words this *musical poem* that is set to notes: by striking the harp. It is meant to be song, as David and the Sons of Korah did in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple, singing it with joy with harps and tambourines. We know that David for a while was the court musician to King Saul, indicating that he had strong musical talents.

**Author:** We know that David and his family were shepherds, (1 Samuel 16) and that David’s early occupation was that of tending his father’s sheep in the hill country of Judah. As such he is well qualified to write on this thought that *the Lord is my shepherd*. Isaiah the prophet uses that same imagery Isaiah 40:10-11

Isaiah 40:10-11 “Behold, the Lord GOD will come with might, With His arm ruling for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him. And His recompense before Him. Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs. And carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.” It is a tender image that helps us understand David’s thought, the Lord is strong and mighty, yet gathering, and gently leading those, even carrying them in his bosom. That is the picture that David too paints for us.

David continues in the Psalm identifying who the Great Shepherd is, it is The LORD, David used the personal name of God, not Adonai, meaning lord, not Elohim meaning God, but the Covenant Name, in most bibles it is LORD in all capital letters. It is the LORD who makes and keeps covenant, it is the LORD who talks with Abraham and with Moses, it is the LORD who inspired David to write this down.

And what does David call the LORD? He is my (note the personal, MY Shepherd - רועי roe'i, He KNOWS the LORD, he is intimately acquainted with the LORD, not some distant God who must be sought through a prophet or a seer, no David knows who He is.

In English we are limited by the translation here of Shepherd, but the Hebrew word here is a little more, it can also mean companion or friend, (Judges 14:20; 2 Samuel 15:37; 16:16, 1 Kings 4:5) And God is not just a shepherd who does not care, but one that wants to become a companion a close friend.

And as a shepherd / friend He makes sure that my needs are met. As believers in the Lord Yeshua we know He took that title and claimed it as His own in John 10:14, and that the new testament writers agreed as reflected in Hebrews 13:20 and 1 Peter 5:4.

*And as a shepherd to a sheep:* God watches over the life and flock. There is that safety and protection, care and devotion.

### **Psalm 23:2 He makes me lie down in green pastures...**

Anybody who has been to the land of the Bible, Israel, will know that green pastures is not the picture that comes to mind, dry, dusty, rocky particular in the Negev. Up north, Galilee does get sufficient rain most of the time, but Judea and below is only green when the Lord send the showers, and leading beside still waters, still is the word menuchah, peaceable, quite, still, but most of the time this word is translated it means rest, restful waters, where we can sit and calm the weary soul. Of the traveling we have done as sheep, we have walked the dusty places and now having come to the green pastures we can pause, rest feed and drink, for a sheep and that is the picture here, it is a feast, we don't quite see that, for us grass and water is just that. But David paints the picture here of the Lord is the shepherd and we are His sheep, now the shepherd has led us to a feast with rest and peaceable circumstance. If sheep could say it, that would have said Hallelujah Praise the Lord.

And we see that thought reflected by John the apostle in **Revelation 7:17** and note the parallels: "for the **Lamb** that is in the midst of the throne **shall be their shepherd**, and **shall guide** them unto **fountains of living waters**: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes." It is a close friend that wipes away the tears from our eye, the friend who is our shepherd who leads or guides us to peaceable waters that give life.

### **Psalm 23:3 He restores my soul...**

(note that some translations have '**right paths**', the metaphors, God is the shepherd, we are the sheep and so it is not a literal straight path, but God as the shepherd leading us in to the "**paths of righteousness**".

The feeding of grass and the drinking of the waters of life have restored my soul, to restore means to revive or quicken it. And in the context of sheep wondering from the south of Israel to the North to Galilee that makes sense, they are tired, David glories that the LORD leads him but also us carefully and without risk or wandering in, straight paths and leading to the right goal, David switched the imagery he said “*He restores my soul*” How does God restore his soul, by leading David and us in straight paths “*Paths of Righteousness*”. We know names of streets, and roads, but David is not given us a GPS location, but a positioning for our heart and mind, to walk in *Righteousness* we must be made right with men God, by having our sins our wrong done to God and to others forgiven.

What come to mind: **Psalm 85:10-11** “Mercy and truth are met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other (11) Truth springs out of the earth; And righteousness has looked down from heaven.” These are qualities we ought to pursue, and some are bestowed upon us. Particular Righteousness that is something from above, but we must pursue mercy and truth, Righteousness and peace.

David wrote that the LORD is leading us, not because we are so good and great, but *for His Name’s sake*, most Christians do not hear the Jewish reflection here, His Name is a common Jewish expression – *HaShem*, the Name, John in 3 John 1:7 “*because that for the sake of the Name they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.*” David and John meant the Lord’s Name. And for His Name sake we are lead into the paths of righteousness : not our strength not our self-worth, not we, look what I have done, not He leads us because He loves us, and wants to guide us to these paths.

That thought lines us with Psalms 79:8-9 “Remember not against us the iniquities of our forefathers: Let Your tender mercies speedily meet us; For we are brought very low. (9) Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your Name; And deliver us, and forgive our sins, for Your Name’s sake.”

Righteousness being bestowed upon us, because God forgives us from our iniquities and our sins, giving us tender mercies, for His Name sake.

In these verses we see already three of the blessings the great shepherd bestows on us.

- 1) Rest
- 2) Nourishment
- 3) Guidance

### **Psalms 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow ...**

If the Great Shepherd leads us, even though it’s the valley of the shadow of death I have no fear.

Let’s pause there, and immediately we think: *hang on*, you normally do not lead sheep through the valley of death, and when we hear that phrase we think of Death Valley USA, wide open salt plains. But the Biblical picture is different. Remember the story of King Saul when he pursued David into a cave and David cut the hem of his garment? 1 Samuel 24, after Saul leaves the cave he and his men travel for some time, and reach the other side of the valley, which is not wide but is very deep. It is then that David speaks to Saul and waive the corner of the garment, they are close enough for Saul to see that it was his corner of the garment, yet he had having travelled through one of deep valleys in Ein Gedi, where there are

valleys where the sun never reaches the bottom and so he is unable to pursue David. It would have taken ½ day or a day to travel back to David.

It is one of those valleys where the sun does not reach the bottom, always in the shadows with scorpions and snakes, flash-flooding. That is the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and David writes EVEN, if I walk in that valley I fear no evil, why? For You are with me! Just as sheep need a guiding hand so to your staff guides me and therefore are my comfort.

But what about the rod, the rod is a stick, a bat, to ward off attacking animals. That is used for the protection of the sheep. It is very much the kind of protection that the Father talked about to Israel in Deuteronomy 31:6-8 and Yeshua talked about in Matthew 28:20, *I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*".

After the figure of the shepherd fades away in Psalm 23:4, that of the host appears.

### **Psalm 23:5 You prepare a table before me ...**

Those that despised me because of my trust in you, they now watch on, as God himself the Host prepares a table, the sense of loss must be massive for them, can you picture this? The men who despised David see that David gets to sit in a best seat at the banquet.

It is God who anoints my head with oil, the Hebrew

Not a waste of wine (over flowing) but a fullness of the best wine.

The table evokes images of the Messianic Banquet, where God provides the best. Where according to Psalm 22:26 *"The poor shall eat and be satisfied; and they shall praise the Lord that seek him: their heart shall live for ever."* We would say even the poor? For us, that sound negative, the poor who are they? But the poor in the Bible when used symbolically is used of the faithful remnant, they always have and shall declare the Praise the Lord. And what is this cup? Psalm 116:13 *"I will take the cup of salvation, And call upon the Name of the LORD."* For in God David has confidence, in His Salvation, not his own works and strength, David might be the king, but he is also amongst the poor, the faithful remnant. That connects with Yeshua in Luke 6:20 *"And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed are you the poor: for yours is the kingdom of God"*.

The common theme is the banquet with the Lord as Host, and we the poor, who can contribute nothing are welcome he even thoroughly anointed my head with oil; not a little dap. In ancient Israel Kings Priest Prophets were anointed, with lots of oil symbolising the anointing of the Holy Spirit, guest at banquets get a little oil, but God grants us a full anointing in His Spirit. What a blessing. My cup runneth over is the King James, that would indicate spillage or waste, perhaps a better way to read it is as the Septuagint has it: Your cup cheers me like the best wine. God provides Food, Wine and Oil.

When you sum it up what you have is declared in Psalm 104:15 *"And wine that makes glad the heart of man, And oil to make his face to shine, And bread that strengthen man's heart."*

### **Psalm 23:6 Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me ....**

Here David remembers that his enemies once pursuit him, now only goodness and loving kindness or Mercy, the Hebrew is Chesed, kindness, grace, covenant faithfulness will follow him all the days of His life. Why to dwell in the House of the Lord, as he says in Psalm 27:4 *"One thing have I asked of LORD, that will I seek after; That I may dwell in the house of LORD all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of LORD, And to inquire in his temple."*

Just as David chased after the Lord, so we too must chase after the Lord's anointed. For then we will live with Messiah all the Days of our Life.

He is our Temple as we know from Revelation 21:22 where John write: "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof." David did not go after the program in the Temple or the physical building, he pursuit the Lord, so to we must pursue the Lord Yeshua, for He is the source of all the Blessings in live.

*Selah*

*Blessings in Messiah*

*Paul & Sue*