

## THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

### Psalms: God's Nurture Of The Inner Man In The Life Of Faith

#### XXIII. David's Psalm Of His Great Shepherd, The Lord

##### (Psalm 23:1-6)

### I. Introduction

- A. The Twenty-Third Psalm, likely David's most beautiful psalm, describes his relationship with the Lord.
- B. We view that psalm in its great wealth from the Hebrew text and ancient culture for insight and application:

### II. David's Psalm Of His Great Shepherd, The Lord, Psalm 23:1-6.

- A. Part of verse one in this psalm comprises the introductory notes in the English Bible (Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 993), so we stay with the numbering system in the English Bible.
- B. We thus translate the Twenty-Third Psalm as follows:
  - 1. "Jahweh (Covenant-keeping Lord) is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want (*hasar*, B. D. B., A Heb.-Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 341)," Psalm 23:1.
  - 2. "He causes me to lie down for repose (*rabas*, Ibid., p. 981; Hiphil = causative stem) in pastures of fresh, spring, tender grass (*deshe'*, Ibid., p. 206); beside still, quiet (*menuhot*, Ibid., p. 628-629) water He guides-me-to-a-watering-place-and-causes-me-to-rest-there (all in the verb *nahal*, Ibid., p. 624-625)," Psalm 23:2.
  - 3. "He restores my mental, emotional, spiritual and physical life principle (*nepesh*, Ibid., Kittel; Robert B. Girdlestone, Syns. of the O. T., 1973, p. 56-59); He guides (*nahah*, Ibid., B. D. B., p. 634-635) me in the well-worn, obvious [wagon] tracks (*ma'ggal*, Ibid., p. 722-723) of righteousness for the sake of (*lema'an*, Ibid., Kittel; Ibid., B. D. B., p. 775) His Name (reputation as God, Z. P. E. B., v. Four, p. 364)," Psa. 23:3.
  - 4. "Even though I walk through the valley of death-shadow, deep-darkness (*salmawet*, Ibid., B. D. B., p. 853) I will not fear evil, calamity (*ra'*, Ibid., Kittel; Ibid., B. D. B., p. 948-949) because You (emph. pron.) are with me; Your shepherd's club used for killing predators (*shebet*, Ibid., p. 986-987) and Your shepherd's staff used for rescuing sheep from their own wayward missteps (*mish'enet*, Ibid., p. 1044), they (emph. pron.) comfort, console (*naham*, Ibid., p. 636-637) me," Psalm 23:4.
  - 5. "You spread a table before me in the presence of my enemies (to certify via cultural signal protection from those enemies, Ibid., Z. P. E. B., v. Three, p. 214); You anoint my head with oil [as the honored guest at the table, Ibid., v. One, p. 171]; my cup [fig. of prosperity and blessing, Ibid., v. One, p. 1044] is saturation (fig. of well-filled; *dewayah*, Ibid., B. D. B., p. 924)," Psalm 23:5.
  - 6. "Surely wholesome goodness (*tob*, Ibid., Kittel, p. 994; H. A. W., Theol. Wrdbk. of the O. T., 1980, v. I, p. 345-346) and loyal love (*hesed*, Ibid., Kittel; Ibid., H. A. W., p. 305-307) will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of Jahweh for length of days," Psalm 23:6.
- C. Some key lessons appear in the psalm as made apparent by David's first millennial Hebrew culture as follows:
  - 1. The comprehensive way God fulfills His human follower's needs is seen both in the descriptions of His care of the sheep (v. 1-2) and in David's claim of God's restoring his entire life principle (*nepesh*), v. 3a.
  - 2. Shepherds today report that sheep are terrified of moving water, even if it is a three-inch-wide stream that is flowing through a pasture, and they will not go near it. God's guidance to get the sheep to drink from quality and yet still waters demonstrates His understanding and sensitivity to our human limitations.
  - 3. God's guidance is through time-honored, obvious paths (*ma'ggal*), and one can be sure that God both can and will lead this way as He stakes His reputation as God based upon providing such guidance, v. 3b.
  - 4. Life's crises lead one to risk being harmed by evil or calamity either from others or from one's self: both realms are met by God who uses His *shebet* (omnipotence) to handle our foes and His *mish'enet*, the shepherd staff (grace), to rescue His sheep from predicaments created by their own waywardness, v. 4.
  - 5. God's spreading a table before one's foes in an obvious signal of personal protection from those enemies, and there also making one the honored guest at the meal and saturating his cup of blessing and prosperity, shows the highly protective capacity and will of God in relating to His followers.

**Lesson:** David, himself once a shepherd (1 Samuel 16:11-13), found the Lord to be his All-Sufficient Shepherd.

**Application:** (1) May we trust in Christ and come under the care of the Great Shepherd (Hebrews 13:20), the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4) and the Good Shepherd (John 10:11) of the sheep. (2) If we lack in any physical, mental, emotional or spiritual realm of life, may we rely on the Lord to provide the solution we need. (3) May we trust God to know all about and fully to deal with our weaknesses and fears while meeting our needs as His followers.