

Psalm 23

Psalm 23:1–5

Jehovah the Great Shepherd

Outline of Chapter 23:

	Inscription
vv. 1–3	Jehovah the Shepherd of David
vv. 4–5	The Blessings of God During Persecution
v. 6	Conclusion

Charts, Maps and Graphics:

Introduction	A Classification of David’s Psalms
Introduction	Barnes’ Outline of Psalm XXIII
Introduction	The Organizational Approach of the NIV Study Bible
Introduction	Bullinger’s Approach to Psalm XXIII
Introduction	And Yet One More Approach to Psalm 23
v. 1	Old Testament Names and Titles for Jehovah Elohim
v. 4	The Shepherd with His Club and Staff (graphic)
v. 6	Bullinger Summarizes Psalm 23 with Respect to the Variations on Jehovah’s Name

Doctrines Covered	Doctrines Alluded To

Introduction: Psalm 23 is certainly the most well-known of all the psalms; next to the Lord’s prayer, if anyone can quote several contiguous verses from Scripture this is it. Like Psalm 15, I choose to see this as a psalm which David composed as a teen while out watching his father’s flock under the stars. In fact, because of what we find in v. 5, I would guess that David wrote this one or two nights after the day that Samuel anointed him. The analogies used in this psalm indicate that it is written by a shepherd. Zodhiates suggests that David either wrote this while on the run from Saul or as a young shepherd.¹

Zodhiates writes: The image of Christ as the Shepherd is an intimate personal one. He is not set forth as the distant King or Lord, nor as the impersonal Rock or Shield, but as the Shepherd who takes care of all the needs of His sheep. David’s own faithful care for his father’s sheep may have led him to consider how fully he could trust in the Lord, his heavenly Shepherd. The Shepherd’s ability to provide is never doubted, for David said, “I shall not want” (v. 1)...David realizes that his situation is not just one of the absence of want but one where his “cup overflows” (v. 5). This psalm picturing the wonderful trusting and peaceful relationship one may have with God is a deep reservoir of comfort for many.²

McGee, in agreement with Dr. Frank Morgan, suggests that this is written by David as a king, looking way back to his days as a shepherd, and writing from that perspective. He had the experience to confirm all that was in this psalm.

¹ *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*; Dr. S. Zodhiates; ©1994 AMG Publishers; p. 1413.

² *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*; Dr. S. Zodhiates; ©1994 AMG Publishers; p. 1413.

Barnes: *It is wholly uncertain on what occasion the psalm was composed, as there are in the psalm no historical references, no indications of time, and no allusions to any circumstances in the life of the author. It is impossible even to determine whether it was composed in a time of prosperity or adversity; whether when the author was persecuted, or when he was prosperous and triumphant. The only apparent allusion to any circumstance of the poet's life is in ver. 6, where he says, as the crowning joy which he anticipated, that he would "dwell in the house of the Lord forever,"—from which it has been inferred by some that he was then in exile. But this allusion is of too general a character to justify this inference with certainty. Such a hope might be expressed by anyone in any circumstances, as the highest desire of a pious heart.*³ Then Barnes lists the various theories of his contemporaries and predecessors, none of which agree with me as to the time and place of this psalm. Then Barnes concludes, saying, *If we are to attempt to fix a time, it was at that period of his life—an advanced period—when the recollection of the merciful interposition of God in his behalf so often manifested, would suggest the brightest image of his earlier years, the watchful care which he as a shepherd had extended over his own flock—a care which God had now extended over him in the periods of his own life. Still, all this is no more than conjecture.*⁴

McGee says that this psalm should be taken in context with Psalms 22 and 24, the three of which he groups together as the *shepherd psalms*.⁵ It is pretty rare that McGee is off-base, but he clearly is here. Whereas Psalm 23 is a psalm about our Shepherd-Lord, the other two psalms give us a very different picture. In Psalm 22, we have a picture of our Lord on the cross (several verses were quoted by Jesus while on the cross). Psalm 24 presents Jesus as the King and Creator of our world. All of the psalms in this general vicinity present a different aspect of Jesus Christ, and it is reasonable to study them together to get complete views of Soteriology and Christology. However, there is nothing in Psalm 22 or 24 which suggests an analogy to a shepherd. Thematically, Psalm 22 should be grouped with Isa. 53 and studied when one studies the crucifixion, as both passages give us a more thorough examination of the cross and its implications than is found in any of the four gospels, which are historical accounts, rather than theological treatises. What McGee does say, which is accurate, is that, to the believer today, Psalm 22 is the past (the crucifixion of Jesus); Psalm 23 is the present (the walk of the believer with Jesus); and Psalm 24 tells of the King of Glory Who will return to this earth.

Keil and Delitzsch place the time of the writing of this psalm during the revolt of Absalom.⁶ Let me tell you what I think about that, as well as the previous ideas: David, during the time that he was king, continued to write psalms, and, in the preface, he was very careful to tell us the circumstances which caused him to write the psalm (see the *titles* to Psalms 3 7 18 30 51 52 54). Most of David's psalms were written when nothing in particular was going on, and he would write the psalm and then submit it to the choir director (Psalms 4 5 6 8 53 55). In fact, David mentions that he wrote Psalm 3 when he fled from Absalom; for this reason, and since this is missing from the title of Psalm 23, I seriously doubt that Keil and Delitzsch are correct here.

God, in this psalm, is seen as the Great Shepherd, an analogy clearly established in vv. 1–4. God is then said to *prepare a table before me in the midst of my enemies*. David's future was laid out before him by Samuel in the midst of his brothers, who are, as we will see, clearly antagonistic toward him. Then God, by means of Samuel, *anointed his head with oil*. Again, this was done before his brothers. Personally, I would place the time period of this psalm as having been written by David, under the stars, guarding and guiding his sheep, the night after Samuel anointed him.⁷ David has no idea exactly what will transpire next, but he knows that God clearly is at the helm.

³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 1*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 209.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ J. Vernon McGee, *Psalms Volume 1*; Thru the Bible Books, ©1977, p. 125. On the other hand, in McGee's actual study of Psalm 22, he does not group this with Psalm 23, but presents it accurately as *the Crucifixion of Christ*. J. Vernon McGee, *Psalms Volume 1*; Thru the Bible Books, ©1977, p. 114.

⁶ Keil & Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament; Psalms*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 5, p. 207.

⁷ I am more confident of this time and place for this psalm than of the time and place of the other 3 psalms that we are examining.

I should add one more thing when it comes to placing this psalm in time: similarities between this psalm and others, whether we are talking about similar themes or similar verses, are simply not relevant. Just because David refers to Jesus as a shepherd in this psalm, this does not mean that all the shepherd psalms were written during the same time period (that would be almost as wacky as assuming that all references in Scripture to Jehovah God as a Shepherd were written during the same month). David knows a lot of doctrine and he is going to repeat some themes in later psalms. Some themes in the psalms, such as our Lord on the cross in Psalm 22, have their parallel in prophetic literature written several hundred years later (Isa. 53) and their fulfillment when our Lord was crucified on the cross (Matt. 27; written centuries later). So a repetition of themes or thoughts by David does not indicate that the psalms were written during the same time frame. In fact, a better argument could be made against such them being written during the same time period (why would David bother to repeat a theme which he had just penned an hour ago?).

It may be helpful to examine and classify David's psalms, which classification will help us better place these psalms in time:

A Classification of David's Psalms

Simply titled A Psalm by David	15, 23, 24, 29, 101, 110, 141, 143.
Simply titled by David	25, 26, 27, 28, 32, 35, 37, 103, 138, 144.
A psalm by David for an unnamed choir director.	11, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21, 31, 36 (the word <i>psalm</i> is not in the title), 40, 41, 64, 65 (a psalm, a song), 68 (a psalm, a song), 108 (a song, a psalm), 109, 139, 140.
A psalm by David for an unnamed choir director. Specific musical accompaniment is suggested.	4, 5, 6, 12, 61.
A psalm of David for the choir director and additional but confusing information.	8 (<i>on the Gittith</i> —could this be a musical instrument not mentioned elsewhere in Scripture?), 9 (<i>on the Muthlabben</i> —could this be a musical instrument not mentioned elsewhere in Scripture?), 22 (upon aijeleth hashshahar— <i>dawn breaking on a mountain?</i>), 39 (for Jeduthun), 62 (according to Jeduthun), 69 (According to Shoshannim),
A Maskil of David (for the choir director)	53 (according to mahalath), 55 (on stringed instruments).
A Mikhtam of David for the choir director	58 (Al-tashheth).
A Makhtam of David	16
Praise by David	145
A Song of David (a song of ascents)	122, 124, 131, 133.
A prayer of David	17, 86.
A psalm of David which names a specific incident in his life.	3, 7, 18, 30, 34, 38 (for a memorial), 51, 52, 54 (a Maskil of David on stringed instruments), 56 (a Mikhtam of David), 57 (Mikhtam), 59 (Mikhtam, Al-tashheth), 60 (Mikhtam, according to Shushan Eduth), 63, 70 (for a memorial), 142 (a prayer).

A Classification of David's Psalms

Quite obviously, we can place the 16 psalms during the time of the incident named. I would reasonably suppose that those which are said to be *to the choir director* would have been composed by David while king. There is no indication that Saul had a choir director; and it would may been presumptuous of David to have offered psalms to the choir director while Saul was ruling (although this is a point which could be argued either way).

My reasonable guess is that the 18 psalms entitled *a Psalm of David* or simply *by David* were probably composed prior to his recognition by Israel as their king. The difference between these two sets of psalms might be that some were set to music and the others were simply poetry. There are about a half dozen psalms that have a different title and are not directed to the choir director which would be difficult to place in time.

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to the Chart and Map Index](#)

Before we actually begin exegeting this psalm, Barnes⁸ suggests an entirely different outline:

Barnes' Outline of Psalm XXIII

- I. Introduction: a general statement of the theme of this psalm, which is, the author has complete confidence in God's provisions, and that he would never be in need (v. 1).
- II. The remainder of the psalm supports the hypothesis above (vv. 2–6).
 - A. First, the argument derived from the idea that God is his shepherd (vv. 2–4).
 1. The statement of this fact (vv. 2–3).
 2. The argument, which is, from his experience of God's care in the past, David would not even be afraid to descend into the valley of death (v. 4).
 - B. The argument that God provided for David, even in the midst of his enemies (vv. 5–6).
 1. The statement of this very fact that God had prepared a table for David even in the midst of his enemies (v. 5).
 2. The confident assurance that God would follow David with goodness and mercy all the days of his life, and that his future course would be as if he were to always live in the house of the Lord (v. 6).

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to the Chart Index](#)

The NIV Study Bible also offers a much different approach to this psalm, in terms of organization. They see this as a psalm with two balanced stanzas of four couplets each (a couplet is one line of Hebrew poetry).⁹

The Organizational Approach of the NIV Study Bible

Stanza One:

vv. 1–2a, 2b–3a, 3b–c, 4a–c (v. 4a–b is metrically a half-couplet).

Stanza Two:

vv. 5a–b, 5c–d, 6a–b, 6c–d

The couplet in the middle (v. 4d–f) is a centering line, which focuses on the Shepherd-King's reassuring presence. It also serves as a transition between the two stanzas, concluding the shepherd-sheep motif of the first and introducing the direct address ("you") of the second, the psalm is framed by the first and last couplets, each of which refers to "the Lord."

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to the Chart and Map Index](#)

⁸ Although I kept the same general outline, I altered Barnes' text significantly. Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 1*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 209.

⁹ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 800. Much of this was quoted directly.

Bullinger¹⁰ has an approach which differs from all of the above:

Bullinger's Approach to Psalm XXIII

- A | **vv. 1–3.** First and *third* persons: *I* and *He*
 B | **v. 4.** First and *second*: *I* and *Thou*
 B | **v. 5.** First and *second*: *I* and *Thou*
 A | **v. 6.** First and *third*: *I* and *His*

All three of these approaches are reasonable, and confirm what great literature Psalm 23 is.

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to the Chart and Map Index](#)

In reading Keil and Delitzsch's commentary, another approach to this psalm occurred to me...

And Yet One More Approach to Psalm 23

- I. David, under the care of **the Good Shepherd** (vv. 1–4)
- II. David, under the care of **the Good Host** (v. 5)
- III. **The result** of the care of the Good Shepherd and the Good Host (v. 6)

This might be one of the best outlines for this psalm. All of the shepherd analogies disappear after v. 4; and there are no analogies in v. 6.

One last point of introduction: I have noticed that many of the exegetes that I study under do not offer much by way of exegesis. Apart from the various outlines (Bullinger provides us with two!), which serve to organize this psalm, the additional commentary is generally the weakest that I have found. It is possible that the Scripture itself is so deceptively simple and yet so powerful, that additional commentary just seems either weaker or just superfluous. If my reading of other exegetes gives me that impression, I wonder if my commentary might have the same effect on whoever reads this.

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to the Chart and Map Index](#)

All the approaches pretty much ignore the inscription, which is simply a title or a by-line.

Slavishly literal:

Moderately literal:

A Psalm to David

Psalm
15 inscription

A Psalm for [or, *Belonging to*] David:

[A Poem of David's]

Here is how others have handled this verse:

CEV	[A psalm by David.]
God's Word™	A psalm by David
NASB	A Psalm of David.
NJB	Psalm Of David
REB	A psalm: for David
TEV	[no title]

¹⁰ Taken directly from *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p 376.

What is the gist of this verse? This title simply attributes this psalm to David.

Psalm 15 inscription			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
miz ^e môwr (מִזְמוֹר) [pronounced <i>mizê-MOHR</i>]	<i>melody, song, poem, psalm</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4210 BDB #274
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced <i>daw-VEED</i>]	<i>beloved and is transliterated David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187

Translation: A Psalm for [or, Belonging to] **David:** As we have discussed in the past, the lâmed preposition found here rather than the bêyth preposition indicates that this psalm was just as much *for* David as it was written by him. David wrote these psalms under great pressure sometimes, and they helped him focus on God's plan and upon divine viewpoint. These psalms, while not dictated by God the Holy Spirit, were certainly inspired by God the Holy Spirit. Therefore, this psalm is more *for* David than *by* David. Because this line is in the original Scripture, and should be carried as an inscription or a title.

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to the Chart and Map Index](#)

Jehovah the Shepherd of David

Slavishly literal:

**Y^ehowah shepherding me;
I am not lacking.**

Psalm
23:1

Moderately literal:

**Y^ehowah shepherds me [or, Y^ehowah (is)
my shepherd];
I do not lack.**

**Jehovah is my shepherd;
I do not lack.**

Here is how others have handled this verse:

The Amplified Bible
CEV
*God's Word*TM

The Lord is my shepherd [to fee, guide and shield me]; I shall not lack.
You, LORD, are my shepherd. I will never be in need.
The LORD is my shepherd.
I am never in need.

JPS (Tanakh)

The LORD is my shepherd;
I lack nothing.

KJV (Scofield)
NAB

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
The LORD is my shepherd;
there is nothing I lack.

NASB

The LORD is my shepherd,
I shall not want. .

NLT

The LORD is my shepherd;

I have everything I need.

The Septuagint

The Lord tends me as a shepherd, and I shall want nothing.

Young's Literal Translation

Jehovah is my shepherd, I do not lack,...

What is the gist of this verse? God sees to David's needs, and protects and guides him. David is lacking nothing.

Psalm 23:1a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAW</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3069 BDB #217
râ'âh (רָעָה) [pronounced <i>raw- GAWH</i>]	<i>shepherding, tending [a flock]; a shepherd, one who tends sheep</i>	Qal active participle with a 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #7462 BDB #944

The Qal active participle can function either as a verb or as a noun. Most translators have interpreted this as a noun and insert the verb *to be* to complete the sentence. The Qal active participle of *râ'âh* is commonly translated *shepherd*.

Translation: *Y^ehowah shepherds me* [or, *Y^ehowah (is) my shepherd*];... It is not clear which translation is correct; however, they essentially mean the same thing. Jesus Christ, known as *Jehovah* in the Old Testament, was David's shepherd, just as David was the shepherd of his father's sheep. David guided the sheep, he made certain that they were fed; he kept them out of danger; he protected them when danger was near. He did for them what they were unable to do for themselves. Jehovah does that for David. God sees to all of David's needs; God guides David through life and protects him from unseen dangers.

Barnes: The comparison of the care which God extends over his people to that of a shepherd for his flock is one that would naturally occur to those accustomed to pastoral life...David, in his advanced years, would naturally remember the occupations of his early life; and the remembrance of the care of God over him would naturally recall the care which he had, in earlier years, extended over his flocks. The idea which the language suggests is that of tender care; protection; particular attention to the young and the feeble; and providing for their wants.¹¹

God is known by a plethora of names and titles in the Old Testament. Here, He is the Great Shepherd. Below will be a listing of the...

Old Testament Names and Titles for Jehovah Elohim

Name or Title	Scripture	Old Testament Notes and New Testament Fulfillment in Christ
Branch	Isa. 4:2 11:1–2 Jer. 23:6 33:15 Zech. 3:8 6:12	It is unclear whether Isa. 4:2 refers to Israel or to Jehovah God. However, the passages in Jeremiah and Zechariah definitely refer to the Messiah.

¹¹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 1*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 210.

Old Testament Names and Titles for Jehovah Elohim		
Name or Title	Scripture	Old Testament Notes and New Testament Fulfillment in Christ
	John 15:5 Rom. 11:16	Although Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophetic passages, He is not called the Branch of David in the New Testament. However, in John, Jesus tells His disciples that He is the vine and they are the branches. In Rom. 11:16, if the root is Christ, then the branches are holy.
Holy One of Israel (or the Holy One of God)	Psalm 16:10 Isa. 41:14 43:14–15	David tells us that the <i>Holy One would not undergo corruption (or decay)</i> , which is later quoted in Acts by Peter.
	Mark 1:24 Luke 1:35 4:34 John 6:69 Acts 2:27 3:14 13:35	In the New Testament, demons recognized that Jesus was the <i>Holy One of God</i> (Luke 4:34). Peter's great confession of faith was that "We have believed and have come to know that You are the <i>Holy One of God.</i> " (John 6:69).
King	Psalm 5:2 22:28 24:8 Jer. 10:6–7 Zech. 9:9	David calls to Jehovah for help, and then says in Psalm 5:5, <i>Heed the sound of my cry for help, my King and my God, for to You I pray.</i> David later identifies the <i>King of Glory</i> as <i>Jehovah</i> (Psalm 24:8). Jeremiah calls Jehovah <i>the King of Nations</i> . He saw Jehovah God as more than just a God and Ruler of Israel (see also Psalm 22:28).
	Matt. 2:2 21:5 Luke 23:2–3, 37–38 John 12:15 19:19 1Tim. 6:15 Rev. 17:14 19:16	The magi from the east asked Herod, "Where is the <i>King of the Jews?</i> " That the King would ride into Jerusalem was prophesied in Zech 9:9 and fulfilled in Matt. 21:5 John 12:15. When Pilate asks Jesus if He is King of the Jews, Jesus answers in the affirmative. The inscription over our Lord's head during the crucifixion read <i>King of the Jews</i> . That being the <i>King</i> was more than simply a ruler is clear from Luke 23:36–37. Finally, Paul calls Jesus <i>the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords</i> (1Tim. 6:15b; see also the passages in Revelation).
Lamb (or, Lamb of God)	Isa. 53:7 John 1:29, 36 Rev. 5:6, 8, 12–13 17:14	When Isaiah likened the Suffering Servant of God likened to a lamb, this must have caused some confusion for legalistic Jewish exegetes. Throughout the Law, the lamb is mentioned over and over again as one of the sacrifices offered to God, even as early as Gen. 22:7–8, where the lamb is a <i>substitutionary</i> offering to God. It was the lamb (actually, many lambs) that was offered in the first Passover in Egypt (Ex. 12). In the Law, the lamb is both a sin and a trespass offering (Lev. 4:32 14:21). The emphasis was always that this be a lamb without spot and without blemish (Ex. 12:5 Lev. 14:10 23:12).
	(compare Acts 8:32 1Peter 1:19)	However, <i>Jehovah God</i> is not actually given the title the <i>Lamb of God</i> in the Old Testament. However, the function of the lamb in the Old Testament make the mention of this New Testament title imperative. John the Baptizer gives Jesus this title when He comes for baptism. Interestingly enough, Jesus is called the <i>Lamb</i> (or the <i>Lamb of God</i>) over 25 times in the book of Revelation.

Old Testament Names and Titles for Jehovah Elohim		
Name or Title	Scripture	Old Testament Notes and New Testament Fulfillment in Christ
Lord (also, the Lord of lords)	Psalm 136:1–3	<i>Jehovah</i> (or <i>Y^ehowah</i>) in the Old Testament has been generally replaced in English translations with the word <i>LORD</i> . This is because the Jews, when they read the Scripture, they did not pronounce the name <i>Jehovah</i> , but rather said <i>Adonai</i> (these words have been given their English transliterations). Because of this, we actually do not know how YHWH is to be pronounced, as even the Masorites were unable to provide us with vowel points.
	Matt. 3:3 Mark 12:35–36 22:44–45 23:39 Luke 2:11 4:18–19 Acts 2:21,34–35 4:25–26 Rev. 17:14	In any case, the New Testament simply uses the word κύριος (<i>Kurios</i>). There are hundreds of passages in the Old and New Testaments. Several of the passages to the right are New Testament passages which quote the Old Testament.
M e s s i a h (which is translated Christ in the NT)	1Sam. 2:10, 35 Psalm 132:17 Isa. 45:1 Dan. 9:25–26	In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word <i>māshîyach</i> (מָשִׁיחַ) [pronounced <i>maw--SHEE-ahkh</i>], is transliterated <i>Messiah</i> and translated <i>anointed</i> . The Greek equivalent is <i>christos</i> (χριστός) [pronounced <i>krees-TOSS</i>], transliterated <i>Christ</i> and translated <i>anointed one, Messiah</i> . Strong's #4899 BDB #603. We find the Hebrew word a number of times in the book of Samuel, particularly in reference to David or Saul as God's <i>anointed</i> . Hannah, the mother of Samuel, used this word to describe the coming Messiah in 1Sam. 2:10. V. 35 of that chapter actually has 4 fulfillments (see the exegesis of that chapter). In Psalm 132:17, this word refers both to the line of David and to the Messiah to come.
	Luke 2:11 23:2, 39 1Cor. 10:4	Surprisingly enough, this is actually one of the least used words in the Old Testament, although it is one of the most well-known among Jews and Christians alike. Every time we find the word <i>Christ</i> in the New Testament, it is a fulfillment of these prophecies in the Old.

Old Testament Names and Titles for Jehovah Elohim		
Name or Title	Scripture	Old Testament Notes and New Testament Fulfillment in Christ
Redeemer	Job 19:25 Psalm 19:14 78:35 103:4 Prov. 23:11 Isa. 41:14 43:14 44:6 47:4 48:17 49:7, 26 54:5, 8 59:20 60:16 63:16 Jer. 50:34	<i>Redeemer</i> is a verb and it means <i>to buy, to purchase</i> . It was originally used of the God of Israel who purchased Israel from being enslaved to Egypt (Ex. 6:6 15:13). This word was also used for the person who would attempt to avenge the death of a blood relative in Num. 35 and Deut. 19 (which can be also taken as the sinner taking refuge in Christ and thereby escaping punishment). This same word is used of Boaz, who redeems Ruth in the book of Ruth (also a picture of Christ redeeming His own). This word is reasonably applied to the Messiah to come in Job 19:25, when Job exclaims, “I know my Redeemer lives!” Jehovah is clearly called the <i>my Rock</i> and <i>my Redeemer</i> by David in Psalm 19:14 103:1–4 (compare Isa. 41:14 43:14). Interestingly enough, there are several times in the Old Testament when the only reasonable explanation is the Trinity (e.g., Isa. 44:6 48:16). In the first passage, Jehovah is called <i>His Redeemer</i> , which possessive pronoun refers back to <i>Jehovah</i> in the first portion of that verse. This is obviously Isaiah’s favorite word for the Messiah-to-come.
	None	This term is never exactly applied to Jesus in the New Testament. However, we are <i>redeemed</i> by Him (Luke 1:68 24:21 Gal. 3:13 1Peter 1:18 Rev. 5:9 14:3–4) and we have <i>redemption</i> in Him (or by Him) (Luke 21:28 Rom. 3:24 1Cor. 1:30 Eph. 1:7 Col. 1:14 Heb. 9:12, 15). Therefore, we may reasonably refer to Christ in the New Testament as our <i>Redeemer</i> .
Rock	Deut. 32:4, 15, 18, 30–31 1Sam. 2:2 2Sam. 22:2, 3, 32, 47 23:3 Psalm 18:2, 31, 46 19:14 28:1 31:3 42:9 62:2, 6–7 71:3 78:35 89:26 92:15	The rock which Moses struck on two occasions represented our Lord Jesus Christ and His judgment on the cross. This is why the second time, Moses was severely disciplined for not doing exactly as God had delineated to him (the shadow-image was compromised—Num. 20). However, Moses was not discouraged, and was the first man to refer to God as <i>the Rock</i> (Deut. 32). For those who missed the analogy, Asaph covers it in Psalm 78, speaking first of the striking of the rock and then of God being the rock. That marvelous woman, Hannah, also referred to Jehovah as the <i>Rock</i> (1Sam. 2:2). David also referred to Jehovah as the <i>Rock</i> on several occasions (e.g., 2Sam. 32 Psalm 18 19).
	Matt. 16:18 1Cor. 10:4 1Peter 2:8	Jesus began with a similar analogy, speaking of the wise man who built his house upon a <i>rock</i> rather than upon sand (Matt. 7:24–25 Luke 6:48). However, He also referred to Himself as the <i>Rock</i> in the highly misunderstood passage Matt. 16:18. Paul, in 1Cor. 10:4, in case no one understood Num. 20 and the explanation in Psalm 78, explains that the people of Israel drank from the rock, and that Rock was Christ.

Old Testament Names and Titles for Jehovah Elohim		
Name or Title	Scripture	Old Testament Notes and New Testament Fulfillment in Christ
Savior	2Sam. 22:3 Psalm 106:21 Isa. 43:11 45:15, 21 49:26 60:16 63:8	Israel's early <i>saviors</i> were judges who led Israel from slavery to freedom throughout the book of the Judges. God is first presented as the <i>Savior</i> (or <i>Deliverer</i>) of Israel, in the sense of delivering Israel from her enemies (see Psalm 106). In Isaiah, God says, " There is no Savior besides Me! " Still, in the Old Testament, most of the references are to the deliverance of Israel from this enemy or that. However, the context of some of the passages in Isaiah imply more than just One Who delivers Israel from her enemies (see Isa. 45:21–25 63:8–9).
	Luke 2:11 John 4:42 Acts 5:31 Eph. 5:23 1Tim. 4:10 2Tim. 1:10 Titus 2:13 2Peter 1:11 1John 4:14	Interestingly enough, while pregnant, Mary said to Elizabeth, " My soul exalts the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. " (Luke 1:46b–47). When Jesus is born, an angel says, " Today, in the city of David, there has been born for you a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord. " (Luke 2:11). That Jesus is the Savior of all mankind is made clear in John 4:42 1Tim. 4:10 1John 4:14.
Servant of God	Isa. 42:1 52:13 53:11 Zech. 3:8	This word is a bit more tricky, as Israel is also called God's servant (Isa. 44:21, 26 48:20 49:3). Moses, David, Daniel and even Babylon are also called <i>servants of God</i> . However, it is clear that this word applies to the Messiah in such passages as Isa. 53:11, which tells us My righteous Servant will justify the many.
	Matt. 12:18	Jesus is the fulfillment of Isa. 42:1 in Matt. 12:18.
Shepherd	Psalm 23:1 78:52 80:1 Isa. 40:11 Jer. 31:10 Ezek. 34:11–13	In the psalms, the Shepherd is seen as one who guides, protects and provides for. In the prophets, the Great Shepherd is often seen as the One gathering Israel again from being scattered throughout the nations.
	Matt. 2:6 John 10:11, 14 Heb. 13:20 1Peter 2:25 5:4 Rev. 7:17	Jesus said, " I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. " Peter tells us: For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

Obviously, there are a plethora of Old Testament designations applied both to Jehovah God and to the Messiah to come. We find almost all of these names applied to Jesus in the New Testament (*branch* being the notable exception, as Jesus is our *Redeemer* by simple application).

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to the Chart and Map Index](#)

Because David was first a shepherd and then a righteous king, he is said to shepherd his people Israel in Psalm 78:71–72. We find the same combination found in 2Sam. 5:2 7:7. Because of David being the shepherd-king, kings were occasionally called shepherds throughout the Old Testament (Isa. 44:28 Jer. 3:15 23:1–4¹² Micah 5:4¹³). Furthermore, because David is a shadow of Jesus to come, our Lord is referred to as both Shepherd and King (Matt. 2:6 and the passages previously given in the [Names and Titles of Jehovah](#) above).

¹² The two passages in Jeremiah could simply refer to prophets or to various leaders.

¹³ This obviously refers to Jesus, as King of Israel, Who will *shepherd* His people.

McGee makes an extremely important point here—is God everyone’s shepherd? Absolutely not! God is the shepherd of those who have apprehended his saving grace by faith. God is the shepherd of those who, in Psalm 22, believed in the Lord Who bought them with His blood. In this respect, these psalms clearly go together; you cannot apprehend grace from God apart from the cross. We do not get to simply take this aspect or that aspect of God’s character and think that is all that God is. For this reason, taking all of the psalms in this region together is reasonable, as each presents a different aspect of God’s character or work. In these first 3 verses, it is *He and me* (recall Bullinger’s organization of this psalm?). In vv. 1–3, the *He* is *God the Shepherd* and the *me* refers to *David*, and to we believers by application.

Psalm 23:1b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
lô' (לֹא or לֹא־) [pronounced low]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
châçêr (חָסַר) [pronounced khaw-SEHR]	<i>to lack, to need, to be lacking, to decrease</i>	1 st person singular, Qal imperfect, pausal form	Strong's #2637 BDB #341

Translation: *I do not lack.* It is amazing how two little words in the Hebrew can convey so much. David is simply drawing an analogy here. Because he oversees his father’s sheep, the sheep lack for nothing. They are fed, cared for and protected. Similarly, because God sees to all of David’s needs, David lacks nothing. As David wrote elsewhere: *O fear Jehovah, you His saints, for to those who fear Him, there is no want. The young lions lack and suffer hunger; but those who seek Jehovah will not be in want of any good thing* (Psalm 34:9–10). Paul writes: *And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus* (Philip. 4:19; see also Psalm 107:9).

*Barnes: This is the main idea in the psalm, and this idea is derived from the fact that God is a shepherd. The meaning is, that, as a shepherd, he would make all the needful prevision for His flock, and evince all proper care for it. The words shall not want, as applied to the psalmist, would embrace everything that could be a proper object of desire, whether temporal or spiritual; whether pertaining to the body or the soul; whether having reference to time or to eternity. There is no reason for supposing that David limited this to his temporal necessities, or to the present life, but the idea manifestly is that God would provide all that was needful for him always.*¹⁴

*McGee: When a little sheep says, “I shall not want,” and “I shall never perish” it is because it has a wonderful Shepherd. “I shall not want” looks into the future and gives assurance to the child of God. The security of the believer rests upon the Shepherd. And the believer’s deduction rests upon his declaration.*¹⁵

<p>In pastures of [tender] grass He makes me lie down; upon waters of rest, He leads me.</p>	<p>Psalm 23:2</p>	<p>He causes me to lie down in pastures of tender grass; [and] He leads me besides restful waters.</p>
<p>He causes me to lie town in green pastures and He leads me to quiet and refreshing water.</p>		

¹⁴ Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes, Psalms; Volume 1*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 210.

¹⁵ J. Vernon McGee, *Psalms Volume 1; Thru the Bible Books*, ©1977, p. 127.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

CEV	You let me rest in fields of green grass. You lead me to streams of peaceful water.
JPS (Tanakh)	He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me to water in places of repose [<i>Others "Still waters."</i>];....
KJV (Scofield)	He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters.
NAB	In green pastures you let me graze; to safe waters you lead me;...
NASB	He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters [lit., <i>waters of rest</i>].
NJB	In grassy meadows he lets me lie. By tranquil streams he leads me [to restore my spirit]. [I have included v. 3a (in brackets) for context].
NLT	He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams.
NRSV	He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters [<i>Heb waters of rest</i>];...
REB	He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me to water where I may rest;...
The Septuagint	In a place of green grass, there He has made me dwell; He has nourished me by the water of rest.
TEV	He lets me rest in fields of green grass And leads me to quiet pools of fresh water.
Young's Updated LT	In pastures of tender grass He causes me to lie down, By quiet waters He does lead me.

What is the gist of this verse? God causes David to lie down in safety and security on the soft green grass. God leads David to restful waters.

Psalm 23:2a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<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	Strong's #none BDB #88
nâ`âh (נְאֻחַי) [pronounced naw-AW]	<i>pastures, meadows; obviously a pleasant piece of land</i>	feminine plural construct	Strong's #4999 BDB #627
desheh (דְּשֵׁי) [pronounced DÉH-sheh]	<i>grass; tender grass, tender herb; first sprouts [of the earth]</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1877 BDB #206
râbats (רָבַט) [pronounced raw ^b -VAHTS]	<i>to make to lie down, to cause to to lie down; to lay [down stones]</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect with a 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #7257 BDB #918

Translation: He causes me to lie down in pastures of tender grass;... In California, my parents owned about an acre of land behind our house, and, periodically, as happens in California, that acre would suffer a fire. I personally

always appreciated those fires because, after the next rain, a short and pleasant grass would spring up; the trees would be fine; and the land would be picturesque. New growth of grass is pleasant to look at and pleasant to lie down upon and look into the sky. For the person who lives outdoors, as did David through much of his youth, this would be the most restful and relaxed place to be, is lying upon a carpet of tender fresh green grass. In this verse, David says that God would cause him to lie down in such a meadow.

To lie down refers to rest after one has been satiated as well as resting in security. The sheep who lies down has been fed. They won't lie down if they are hungry.¹⁶ In wild areas, as Israel was, the existence of predators means that most animals rarely enjoy such a rest. They are always on the alert, prepared to dash for cover or safety. David here, analogous to sheep under a shepherd's care, is caused to lie down satiated and in complete safety. We find passages which refer to laying down in safety in Isa. 14:30 17:2 Jer. 33:12 Zep. 2:7 3:13. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life; he that comes to me will never hunger; he that believes on Me will never thirst." (John 6:35).

Psalm 23:2b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
mayim (מַיִם) [pronounced <i>MAH-yim</i>]	<i>water, waters</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #4325 BDB #565
m ^o nûwchâh (מְנוּחָה) [pronounced <i>m^o-noo-KHAH</i>]	<i>rest, resting place, place of rest, quietness</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #4496 BDB #629
nâhal (נָהַל) [pronounced <i>naw-HAHL</i>]	<i>to lead, to guide to a watering place; to guard, to provide for, to sustain</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Piel imperfect with a 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #5095 BDB #624

Translation: ...[and] He leads me besides restful waters. I don't know that we should interpret this as *still* waters, as the cleanest, freshest water comes from moving water. That way, it is not allowed to stagnate. Furthermore, the descriptor, *m^onûwchâh*, does not mean *still* but it means *restful, quiet, relaxing*. One of the things which a person can buy to set next to their bed is a device which sounds like the ocean, or like rain, or like a flowing stream of water. Having been lucky enough to grow up to where I could walk along rivers and go to the ocean and listen to the gentle pounding of the waves, I know how restful and relaxing the water can be. One of the very pleasant memories of even just a few years was visiting my cousin Linda and sleeping on the couch in her living room, the big picture window giving a marvelous view of the ocean; and in the house, you could still hear the oceans' waves blissfully crashing upon the beach; and it is a sound which is peaceful and calming and serene. David was too far from the ocean (and, apparently the ocean off the coast of Israel was not as nice as the California coast); however, he had the opportunity to go from stream to stream, from wadi to wadi, so that he could graze his sheep on new grass and provide them with water. Here, David says that God leads him to serene streams of clean, running water. I also recall from my youth being taken to a cold, running stream of water, which was locally renown for its pleasant, refreshing taste; and I even recall drinking that water to this day and it tasted so cold, fresh and clean. This is God's treatment of David. We have a similar verse in Rev. 7:17: **For the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and He will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes** (see also Psalm 36:8 46:4).

¹⁶ This is not something which I know from experience, but according to J. Vernon McGee, *Psalms Volume 1*; Thru the Bible Books, ©1977, p. 128.

Psalm 23 is poetry, and we should therefore expect for the language to be interpreted beyond its literal meaning. What we have in v. 1 is God meeting the basic needs of David; however, in this verse, God goes further, providing him with refreshing, wonderful rest and with a pleasant, stimulating environment. One of the benefits of physical labor is the sleep which follows. You work your body until you are worn out; but then, when you go to bed, even if your mind is moderately active, you fall asleep easily, sleep well, and wake up refreshed. David, in his youth, had a blue color job and enjoyed this kind of refreshing sleep. His point here is that his life under God's guidance is pleasant and refreshing.

Ezekiel provides us with a similar, but not exactly parallel passage: **For thus says Jehovah God, "Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day. And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land. I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down in good grazing ground, and they will feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I will fee My flock and I will lead them to rest," declares Jehovah God. "I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the sick."** (Ezek. 34:11–16a). Here, Jehovah God, as the Shepherd of Israel, is gathering all of Israel back to their land. In both Psalm 23 and Ezekiel, God is portrayed as a shepherd. In Psalm 23, it is simply a more universal application.

McGee: A friend of mine who moved to Oregon once heard me talk about sheep. He said to me later, "Dr. McGee, you gave me the impression that sheep are nice, sweet little animals. You made them appear so helpless. I want to show you some sheep." He invited me to dinner. He gathered several sheep together, and after dinner we went out to look at them. As we watched them, he told me, "These sheep are stubborn, hardheaded, and pig-headed animals. Besides that, they are dirty and filthy." I said, "That's a picture of the human race."¹⁷

The general picture of these several verses is that of a shepherd leading his sheep. Sheep will follow their shepherd. They know his voice so that when he moves them from point A to point B, they follow him. Jesus made this point (along with several others) when he was in the Temple. **The Jews, therefore, had gathered around Him and were asking Him, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Messiah, then clearly tell us."** Jesus answered them, **"I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these [works] bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give to them eternal life and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, Who has given [them] to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one."** (John 10:24–30). The crowd that Jesus was with were not of His sheep, and therefore tried to stone Him on that occasion for blasphemy. *McGee Sheep will follow their own shepherd. That is the way you can tell whom the sheep belong to.*¹⁸

**My soul He restores
He leads me in [wagon] tracks of
righteousness for the sake of His name.**

Psalm
23:3

**He restores my soul;
He leads me in paths of righteousness for His
name's sake.**

**He revives my soul.
He guides me in ways of righteousness.**

Here is how others have handled this verse:

¹⁷ J. Vernon McGee, *Psalms Volume 1*; Thru the Bible Books, ©1977, pp. 127–128.

¹⁸ This quotation and the general application of this paragraph came from J. Vernon McGee, *Psalms Volume 1*; Thru the Bible Books, ©1977, pp. 128–129. McGee points out that shepherding has changed in the mid east. Sheep are no longer led by their shepherd, but he drives their sheep (i.e., walks in their midst or a little bit behind them).

CEV [You lead me to streams of peaceful waters,
and you refreshed my life.

You are true to your name,
and you lead me along the right paths. [v. 2b was added in brackets for continuity].

The Emphasized Bible <My life> he restoreth,
He guideth me in right paths [more literally “ruts,” “tracks.”] for the sake of his Name.

God’s Word™ He renews my soul.
He guides me along the paths of righteousness for the sake of his name.

JPS (Tanakh) He renews my life;
He guides me in right paths
as befits His name.

NAB ...you restore my strength.
You guide me along the right path
for the sake of your name.

NASB He restores my soul;
He guides me in the paths [lit., *tracks*] of righteousness
For His name’s sake.

NJB [By tranquil streams he leads me]
To restore my spirit.
He guides me in paths of saving justice
as befits his name. [v. 2b is included in brackets for continuity].

NLT He renews my strength.
He guides me along right paths,
Bringing honor to his name.

NRSV he restores my soul [or *life*].
He leads me in right paths [or *paths of righteousness*]
for his name’s sake.

REB ...he revives my spirit;
for his name’s sake he guides me in the right paths.

The Septuagint He has restored my soul; He has guided me into the paths of righteousness, for His name’s sake.

TEV He gives me new strength.
He guides me in the right paths,
As he has promised.

What is the gist of this verse? God both restores David to fellowship, but He guides David to do that which is right.

Psalm 23:3a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
nephesh (נֶפֶשׁ) [pronounced <i>NEH-fesh</i>]	<i>soul, life, living being, desire</i>	feminine singular noun with a 1 st person singular suffix	Strong’s #5315 BDB #659
shûw ^b v (שׁוּב) [pronounced <i>shoo^bv</i>]	<i>to bring back, to convert [to God]; to restore, to refresh; to turn away</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Polel imperfect	Strong’s #7725 BDB #996

Apparently the Polel as per Owen is equivalent to the Pilel of Gesenius (Zodhiates lists this as a Piel imperfect).

Translation: [He restores my soul](#);... We could also read this as *causes my life to return*. This is restoration to fellowship. We sin, we get out of line. When we name those sins, God forgives us and brings us back into fellowship. He restores our fellowship with Him. He brings our soul back to Him. He reinvigorates our soul.¹⁹ We have the restoration of one's soul mentioned in Ruth 4:15 Psalm 19:7 Prov. 25:13 Lam 1:16.

Psalm 23:3b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
nâchâh (נָחַח) [pronounced <i>naw-KHAH</i>]	<i>to lead, to guide; to cause to lead, to cause to guide</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect with a 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #5148 BDB #634
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</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	Strong's #none BDB #88
m ^a e ^g âl (מַגָּל) [pronounced <i>mah^g-GAWL</i>]	<i>entrenchment, track, rut [wherein a wheel revolves]; a way, path; a course of action</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #4570 BDB #722
The common word for <i>way</i> or <i>path</i> is <i>ḏrach</i> (דָּרַח) [pronounced <i>OH-rahkh</i>]. Strong's #734 BDB #73. In this psalm, the word which is used refers to the <i>rut</i> or <i>track</i> made by a wheel.			
tsedeq (צֶדֶק) [pronounced <i>TZEH-dehk</i>]	<i>righteousness, rightness, vindication</i>	masculine singular substantive	Strong's #6664 BDB #841

Translation: [He leads me in paths of righteousness](#)... Fellowship is not much good if it is apart from Godly behavior and spiritual growth. Fellowship is not much good if one simply goes out and sins again or does not know what sin is. God, through His Word, guides us in our life, in the way that we should go. As mentioned above, the word used does not simply mean *way* or *path* (there is another Hebrew word which means that); the word means *rut* or *track* (as would be left by a wheel). When your vehicle finds itself in these *ruts*, it will not veer to the right or left; in fact, you can take your hands off the reins, as the wagon (or whatever) will essentially guide itself. What is the point that David is making? When you are in fellowship, all that you do is right. You easily stay in God's path of righteousness. Now, when you sin, that takes you out; but naming your sin or sins to God puts you back in.

This word for righteousness is also associated with prosperity (see Prov. 8:18, 20–21 21:21 Isa. 48:18). There are natural laws which are often violated in American businesses. Some business men believe that, in order for them to prosper, they must take someone else's money that they came by honestly. God's Word often associates right behavior with financial blessings. You do not have to seek after money in order to have financial blessings; often, that comes from seeking after righteousness.

A very good question, and one that I cannot answer as of yet: how was David able to learn God's Word? From whence did he get his doctrine? David obviously from a very young age knew God's Word; but we do not know exactly how. He seemed to have some access even when he was a young shepherd boy, as many of his psalms appear to come from that time period (and we could be speaking of fragrance of memory as well). David did, at

¹⁹ Barnes interprets this differently, seeing this as not a soul that has wandered, but a soul which has become exhausted, wearied, troubled, and/or anxious; and God re-animates that soul. See Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 1*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 211. When we fall out of fellowship, our soul can become exhausted, troubled, and anxious; being brought back into fellowship restores us. Therefore, Barnes is not too far off the mark here.

a fairly young age, have access to the palace of King Saul, and the king was to make for himself a copy of the Law. I suspect that David, during his downtime, was able to go into the king's library and enjoy reading and studying the Word of God. We know that somehow, God did guide David. [O Jehovah, lead me in Your righteousness, because of my enemies. Make Your way straight before me](#) (Psalm 5:8). [For Your name's sake, You will lead me and guide me](#) (Psalm 31:3b; compare Psalm 25:9 73:24 Prov. 4:11 8:20 Isa. 42:6).

Psalm 23:3c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
l ^o ma ^o an (לִּמְאָן) [pronounced l ^o -MAH- gahn]	<i>for the sake of, on account of, to the intent of, to the intent that, to the purpose that, in order that, in view of, to the end that</i>	compound preposition and substantive which acts like a preposition	Strong's #4616 BDB #775
This is the substantive ma ^o an (לִּמְאָן) [pronounced MAH-gahn], which means <i>purpose, intent</i> , combined with the lâmed preposition (which is the only way that it is found in Scripture).			
shêm (שֵׁם) [pronounced shame]	<i>name, reputation, character</i>	masculine singular noun with a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #8034 BDB #1027

Translation: [...for His name's sake](#). Compare Psalm 25:11 31:3 79:9 106:8 109:21 143:11. God's character and reputation on this earth are built upon us. When other people look at us, knowing that we are Christians, do they think to themselves, *he's just another Christian hypocrite!* We are God's representatives here on this earth. If everyone simply sees us as people pursuing their lusts, then what sort of a reputation does God gain from this? If we are seen as people who will do anything for money—we sue and then we lie in court. We chase women and sleep with as many as we can. We are unfaithful to our husbands or wives. There have been several very public Christians who were involved in sexual scandals. Now, compared to the world, what they did was rather innocuous. Some even pilfered funds—however, the amounts were often so small as to be almost negligible. However, they were excoriated for these sins. From the press they received, one would think that they were mass murderers. However, comparatively speaking, what they did was pretty small potatoes. But the world exposes these sins, not on a comparative basis, but rubs their noses in these sins, because these are public clergy, if you will. When a publically-known believer falls, it is news; and it doesn't matter that 90% of those who read that news have done what most would consider greater acts of depravity. We are God's visible representatives on earth; we bear His name, and therefore, His reputation.

When people wish to disparage the Bible, where do they often go? They often bring out the sins of David, which we will study. They ignore one of his worst sins—the numbering of the people—but they certainly talk about David's relationship to Bathsheba and how David indirectly murdered her husband. And they conclude by saying, "And this is [a man after God's own heart?](#)" So, when God guides us on paths of righteousness, it is for the sake of His reputation.

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to the Chart and Map Index](#)

The Blessings of God During Persecution

Furthermore when I go in a valley of deep
darkness
I do not fear evil for You [are] with me.
Your rod and Your staff—they comfort me.

Psalms
23:4

Yea, though I walk through the valley of deep
darkness,
I will not fear evil, for You [are] with me.
Your rod and your staff comfort me.

Even though I walk through the valley of deep darkness,
I will fear no evil, for You are with me.
Your rod and your staff comfort me.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Yes, though I walk through the [deep, sunless] valley of the shadow of death, I will fear <i>or</i> dread no evil; for You are with me; Your rod [to protect] and Your staff [to guide], they comfort me.
CEV	I may walk through valleys as dark as death, but I won't be afraid. You are with me, and your shepherd's rod makes me feel safe.
<i>God's Word™</i>	Even though I walk through the dark valley of death, because you are with me, I fear no harm. Your rod and your staff give me courage.
JPS (Tanakh)	Though I walk through a valley of deepest darkness [Others "the valley of the shadow of death."], I fear no harm, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff—they comfort me.
KJV (Scofield)	Yeah, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou <i>art</i> with me; they rod and thy staff they comfort me.
NASB	Even tough I walk through the valley of the shadow of death [or, <i>valley of deep darkness</i>], I fear no evil [or, <i>harm</i>]; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.
NJB	Even were I to walk in a ravine as dark as death I should fear no danger, for you are at my side. Your staff and your crook are there to soothe me.
NLT	Even when I walk through the dark valley of death, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.
The Septuagint	Yeah, even if I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will not be afraid of evils; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, these have comforted me.
TEV	Even if I go through the deepest darkness, I will not be afraid, LORD, for you are with me. Your shepherd's rod and staff protect me.
<i>Young's Updated LT</i>	Also—when I walk in a valley of death-shade, I fear no evil, for You <i>are</i> with me, Your rod and Your staff—they comfort me.

What is the gist of this verse? Even during David's greatest times of trouble, when he faces death, he does not fear, as God is with him. God's rod and staff guide and discipline him.

Psalm 23:4a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
gam (גַּם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i>]	<i>also, furthermore, in addition to, even, moreover</i>	adverb	Strong's #1571 BDB #168
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
Together, they mean <i>yea, though; yea, when; even when; also [is it] that.</i>			
hâlak ^e (הָלַךְ) [pronounced <i>haw-LAHK^e</i>]	<i>to go, to come, to depart, to walk; to advance</i>	1 st person singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</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	Strong's #none BDB #88
gay ^{eh} (גַּי) [pronounced <i>gah^{eh}ee</i>], which	<i>valley</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1516 BDB #161
tzal ^{eh} mâveth (צַלְמַוֶּת) [pronounced <i>tzal-MAW-veh</i>]	<i>deep darkness, death-shadow, deep shadow</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #6757 BDB #853

Translation: [Yea, though I walk through the valley of deep darkness...](#) David, as a shepherd, faced many a moonless and near moonless night. We are so used to lit streets and late-night stores, that we have no idea how dark it can be apart from the moon and artificial lighting. As we know from 1Sam. 17:34, David fought a lion and a bear that came into his camp and took each one lamb. In the devil's world, we are surrounded by demons. In the devil's world, we are surrounded by dangers. Satan wishes to strike us in any way that he can; in any way that God allows. David, as a shepherd, would be at his most vulnerable at night, when the moon is eclipsed or crescent. A lion's night vision is 50X better than ours.²⁰ Certainly, few of us would step into a lion's cage with any sort of weapon; however, imagine stepping into a lion's cage with a blindfold on. This was David's life night after night. For half of each month, David, for all intents and purposes, was in a lion's cage with a blindfold on. He was walking through a valley of deep darkness.

We find this phrase *deep darkness* or *shadow of darkness* elsewhere in Scripture: Job 3:5 10:21–22 12:22 16:16 24:17 28:3 34:22 38:17 Psalm 44:19 107:10, 14 Jer. 2:6 13:16 Amos 5:8. Barnes: *the idea is that of death casting his gloomy shadow over that valley...Hence, the word is applicable to any path of gloom or sadness; any scene of trouble or sorrow; any dark and dangerous way. Thus understood, it is applicable not merely to death itself—though it embraces that—but to any or all the dark, the dangerous, and the gloomy paths which we tread in life; to ways of sadness, solitude, and sorrow. All along those paths God will be a safe and certain guide.*²¹

²⁰ I forget the actual statistic and I was unable to find it in my World Book Encyclopedia.

²¹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 1*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 211.

Psalm 23:4b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
לֹא (לֹא אוֹ לֹא) [pronounced low]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
יָרֵא (יָרֵא) [pronounced yaw-RAY]	<i>to fear, to fear-respect, to reverence, to have a reverential respect</i>	1 st 3 rd person singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #3372 BDB #431
רָע (רָע) [pronounced rahé]	<i>evil, bad, wicked; evil in appearance, deformed; disagreeable, displeasing; unhappy, unfortunate; sad</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #7451 BDB #948
כִּי (כִּי) [pronounced kee]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
אַתָּה (אַתָּה) [pronounced aht-TAW]	<i>you (often, the verb to be is implied)</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #859 BDB #61
עִמִּי (עִמִּי) [pronounced géem]	<i>with, at, by, near</i>	preposition of nearness and vicinity with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #5973 BDB #767

Translation: ...I will not fear evil, for You [are] with me. Here is David's response to his circumstances: he would not fear the evil which he knew to be all around him.

Barnes associates this with the previous verse: *God will lead and guide me in the path of righteousness, even though that path lies through the darkest and most gloomy vale—through deep and dismal shades—in regions where there is no light, as if death had cast his dark and baleful shadow there. It is still a right path; it is a path of safety; and it will conduct me to bright regions beyond. In that dark and gloomy valley, though I could not guide myself, I will not be alarmed; I will not be afraid of wandering of or being lost; I will not fear any enemies there, —for my Shepherd is there to guide me still...Dark, cheerless, dismal as it seems, I will dread nothing. The true friend of God has nothing to fear in that dark valley. His great Shepherd will accompany him there, and can lead him safely through, however dark it may appear. The true believer has nothing to fear in the most gloomy scenes of life; he has nothing to fear in the valley of death; he has nothing to fear in the grave; he has nothing to fear in the world beyond...The psalmist felt assured that if God was with him he had nothing to dread there. God would be his companion, his comforter, his protector, his guide. How applicable is this to death! The dying man seems to go into the dark valley alone. His friends accompany him as far as they can, and then they must give him the parting hand. They cheer him with their voice until he becomes deaf to all sounds; they cheer him with their looks until his eye becomes dim, and he can see not more; they cheer him with the fond embrace until he becomes insensible to every expression of earthly affection, and then he seems to be alone. But the dying believer is not alone. His Savior God is with him in that valley, and will never leave him. On His arm he can lean, and by His presence he will be comforted, until he emerges from the gloom into the bright world beyond. All that is needful to dissipate the terrors of the valley of death is to be able to say, "You are with me."*²²

²² Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 1*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; pp. 211–212.

We do not realize it, but there are demons poised all around us just hoping for God to give them the go-ahead; just hoping that God will remove His protection. If God removed His protection, even for an instant, there would be millions, if not hundreds of millions of people dead; far more would be left alive to suffer whatever illness or harm that could be inflicted upon them. Most believers have no clue as to how vulnerable they are, and about the wall of fire that God has erected around them. David knew; he was in the valley of deep darkness night after night, and yet he did not fear the evil that was around him, because God was with him. **Jehovah is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear? Jehovah is the defense of my life; whom should I dread?** (Psalm 27:1; compare Psalm 3:6–7 16:8 Isa. 43:2). Logically, if God is on our side, then we have no need to fear.

We know of at least three instances where David placed his full dependence upon God. His sheep were attacked by both a bear and a lion, and David killed both of those animals (1Sam. 17:34–36). David also stood up to Goliath, who frightened all of Israel (1Sam. 17:4–11, 23–51). My point is, what David writes here are more than just words. He believed God and in God's protection, and conducted his life in that way.

Moses encouraged the Israelites in general and Joshua in particular with this same doctrine. **“Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for Jehovah your God is the one Who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you...Jehovah is the One Who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. he will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”** (Deut. 31:6, 8). **“Listen, I am with you always, even to the end of this dispensation.”** (Matt. 28:20b).

Psalm 23:4c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shêbet (שֶׁבֶט) [pronounced SHAY ^B -vet]	<i>rod, staff, club, scepter</i> and figuratively for a <i>tribe, subdivision of a tribe or family</i>	masculine plural noun with a 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7626 BDB #986
w ^B (or v ^B) (ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
mish ^{er} eneth (מִשְׁעַנֶּת) [pronounced mish ^{er} -GEH-neth]	<i>staff; political support, support staff, support and staff</i>	feminine singular noun with a 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #4938 BDB #1044
hêmmâh (הֵמָּה) [pronounced haym-mawh]	<i>they, these</i>	3 rd person masculine plural personal pronoun	Strong's #1992 BDB #241
nâcham (נָחַם) [pronounced naw-KHAHM]	<i>to comfort, to console, to have compassion, to show compassion</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Piel imperfect with a 1 st person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5162 BDB #636

Translation: **Your rod and your staff comfort me.** I was surprised as to how many exegetes missed one particularly important aspect of this (except for Barnes). David, using the analogy of a shepherd and his sheep, and the tools of a shepherd, speaks of the rod and staff that a shepherd would have. Certainly, these tools were used to protect and to guide the sheep; but they were also used to bonk the sheep on the head if they began to stray. God uses His rod and staff to guide, protect and *to discipline* us.

The NIV Study Bible²³ breaks down the use of these tools more specifically. The rod is an instrument of authority used to count, guide, rescue and protect the sheep (and to bonk the sheep as well). Compare Ex. 21:20

²³ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 800.

2Sam. 7:14 Job 9:34 Psalm 2:9 45:6 110:2 Micah 5:1 7:14 Heb. 1:8 (interestingly enough, most of those passages refer to the use of the rod to discipline or to control). The staff is presented as an instrument of support, as found in Ex. 21:19 Judges 6:21 2Kings 4:29 18:21 Zech. 8:4.

The Shepherd with His Club and Staff

Gower²⁴ gives a slightly different view of the rod and staff. First off, the *rod* is simply a club, which was used as a weapon for things that were close (his sling, not mentioned here, would be used for things which are farther away). The staff was much longer and had a curly cue at the end. Although the staff was used to help support the shepherd when he walked, the crook at the end was used to snag sheep which began to wander from the pack. Bullinger summarizes this as *the rod helps the sheep and the club is used to destroy the sheep's enemies.*²⁵

Picture scanned from *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*; Ralph Gower; ©1987 by Moody International; © by Moody Press; p. 137.



[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to the Chart and Map Index](#)

That God provides comfort and reassurance is found throughout Scripture. [For Jehovah has comforted His people; He has redeemed Jerusalem](#) (Isa. 52:9b; see also Psalm 71:21 86:17 119:82 Isa. 12:1–2 40:1 49:13 66:13 Jer. 31:13 Lam. 2:13 Ezek. 14:23).

Keil and Delitzsch introduce this verse: *After the figure of the shepherd fades away in v. 4, that of the host appears. His enemies must look quietly on...without being able to do anything, and see how Jahve provides bountifully for His guest, anoints him with sweet perfumes as at a joyous and magnificent banquet...and fills his cup to excess. What is meant thereby, is not necessarily only blessings of a spiritual kind.*²⁶

**You prepare to my faces a table in front of my
oppressors;
You make fat in the oil my head.
My cup [is] running over.**

Psalm
23:5

**You prepare a table before me in the sight of
my enemies;
You remove ashes [dirt?] [from] my head with
oil.
My cup runs over.**

**You prepare a table of blessing before me in the sight of my enemies;
You use oil to remove the ashes of grieving from my head.
My cup runs over.**

Here is how others have handled this verse:

²⁴ *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*; Ralph Gower; ©1987 by Moody International; © by Moody Press; pp. 135–136.

²⁵ Paraphrased from *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p 603.

²⁶ Keil & Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament; Psalms*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 5, p. 208.

CEV	You treat me to a feast, while my enemies watch. You honor me as your guest, and you fill my cup until it overflows.
God's Word™	You prepare a banquet for me while my enemies watch. You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows.
JPS (Tanakh)	You spread a table for me in full view of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my drink is abundant.
KJV (Scofield)	Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
NASB	Thou dost prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; Thou has anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.
NLT	You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You welcome me as a guest, anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings.
REB	You spread a table for me in the presence of my enemies; you have richly anointed my head with oil, and my cup brims over.
The Septuagint	You have prepared a table before me in presence of them that afflict me; You have thoroughly anointed my head with oil; and Your cup cheers me like the best [wine].
TEV	You prepare a banquet for me, where all my enemies can see me; you welcome me as an honored guest and fill my cup to the brim.
Young's Updated LT	You arrange before me a table, Over-against my adversaries. You have anointed with oil my head, My cup is full!

What is the gist of this verse? God prepares a great banquet for David where all of his enemies could see him and anoints David's head with oil. He says that God fills his cup (his life) to overflowing with blessings.

Psalm 23:5a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿârak ^e (אָרַךְ) [pronounced <i>gaw-RAK</i>]	<i>to prepare, to organize, to set in order, to arrange in order, to set in a row</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6186 BDB #789
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
pânîym (פָּנִים) [pronounced <i>paw-NEEM</i>]	<i>face, faces</i>	masculine plural noun with a 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #6440 BDB #815

Psalm 23:5a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Together, they mean <i>upon the face of, before, before the face of, in the presence of, in the sight of, in front of</i> . When used with God, it can take on the more figurative meaning <i>in the judgment of</i> .			
shûl'chân (שׁוּלְחָן) [pronounced shool'-KHAWN]	<i>a table; a skin or leather mat laid on the ground</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #7979 BDB #1020
neged (נֶגֶד) [pronounced NEH-ged]	<i>what is conspicuous when it is a substantive and, as a preposition, in front of, in the sight of, opposite to, before (in the sense of being in front of)</i>	preposition	Strong's #5048 BDB #617
tsârar (צָרָר) [pronounced tsaw-AHR]	<i>oppressors, enemies, persecutors</i>	masculine plural, Qal active participle with a 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #6887 BDB #865

Translation: You prepare a table before me in the sight of my enemies;... *Preparing a table* is simply preparing a meal, which indicates special provisions are being done for the sustenance of David. We find the same phrase in Psalm 78:19, where that evil exodus generation questioned whether God could *prepare a table* for them in the desert wilderness. The table itself is not what we view as a table, but it is simply a rug which was spread out on the ground before those attending the meal.²⁷

Re: *in the presence [or sight] of my enemies*, Barnes writes: *That is, in spite of them, or so that they could not prevent it. They were compelled to look on and see how God provided for David. It was manifest that this was from God; it was a proof of the Divine favor; it furnished an assurance that He who had done this would never leave him to want. The friends of God are made to triumph in the very presence of their foes. Their enemies are compelled to see how He interposes in their behalf, how He provides for them, and how He defends them. Their final triumph in the day of judgment will be in the very presence of all their assembled enemies, for in their very presence he will pronounce the sentence which will make their eternal happiness certain.*²⁸

As we will find out, David did not get along with his brothers (1Sam. 17:28). It was not something which David seemed to bring on himself (as many do); and my speculation was that Jesse's influence was involved. As a shepherd boy, David's enemies would have been his brothers. God blessed David before his enemies. We do not know when this psalm was written. If it was written prior to the events of 1Sam. 16–17, then it is possible that this portion was written more from principle than from experience. However, if this psalm had been written immediately after his anointing by Samuel, then this line would have come from experience. I wouldn't doubt that David wrote this psalm the night after being anointed in front of his brothers by Samuel. Nothing is yet said about David actually eating from the table; everything is simply put before him; this describes perfectly what happened when Samuel came to visit Jesse's family.

²⁷ *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*; Ralph Gower; ©1987 by Moody International; © by Moody Press; p. 54.

²⁸ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 1*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 213. Slightly edited.

Psalm 23:5b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
dâshên (דָּשֵׁן) [pronounced daw-SHANE]	<i>to make [bones (or anything)] fat; to be [or become] prosperous; to turn to ashes; to remove ashes, to clear from ashes</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Piel perfect	Strong's #1878 BDB #206
This is the only place where this Hebrew word is translated <i>to anoint</i> . Compare to Ex. 27:3 Num. 4:13 Deut. 31:20 Psalm 20:3 Prov. 11:25 13:4 15:30 28:25 Isa. 34:6–7. Since the word is used in a different way in all of these passages, that would call into question its most common translation (<i>to anoint</i>) for this verse.			
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<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	Strong's #none BDB #88
shemen (שֶׁמֶן) [pronounced SHEH-men]	<i>fat, oil</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #8081 BDB #1032
rô`sh (רֹאשׁ) [pronounced rohsh]	<i>head, top, chief, front, choicest</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #7218 BDB #910

Translation: ...You remove ashes [dirt?] [from] my head with oil. The primary use of the verb in this portion of v. 5 is *to remove ashes* (Ex. 27:3 Num. 4:13). It also means *to become prosperous* (Deut. 31:30 Prov. 11:25 28:25 Isa. 34:7) and *to make [bones] fat* (that is, it adds meat to our bones; in the ancient world, the prosperous were heavier, as they could eat more and enjoy more leisure). The idea here is that the oil used to anoint David also took away from his face the ashes. Throughout Scripture, *ashes* are used to symbolize mourning. David appeared to be given the least of his brothers, and to be considered the least. When Samuel anointed David with oil, the ashes of mourning were removed from his head. It is also reasonable that the application of oil removed the dirt from David's head and face. If I have my time frame right, David was brought in from watching the sheep. Being outside with the sheep, he is going to be dirty and possibly dry. The oil would moisturize and clean his skin.

Let me see if I can put this in another way. I occasionally work on rental property, and when I am finished, I am dirty, I have cuts, I have paint splatters, and I am wearing clothes which are designed to get dirty. Most people who would see me after working on a house would not immediately think that I was a person with several college degrees. David is out with the sheep, and when he is called in by his father Jesse, he is dirty and dusty, and he does not appear to look like a future king. However, when Samuel applies the oil to his face, removing the dust and moisturizing it, David takes on the sheen, if you will, of a king. There is a transformation which takes place, not unlike when a blue collar worker showers and puts on a suit and tie after a hard days work. The transformation in the case of David is less marked, but it is enough.

The oil used in the ancient world was often scented, and similar to our modern moisturizing creams. However, the use of oil often symbolized the Holy Spirit, which is a reasonable use here, as in 1Sam. 16:13, the Holy Spirit is said to come upon David after he is anointed by Samuel. The use of oil on David, therefore, has three meanings: (1) the oil changes David's appearance; his face and forehead are moisturized, and the dust is removed, which gives David a glow and an altered appearance; (2) the oil, because it is applied by Samuel, a direct representative of God, bestows upon David great honor and indicates recognition by God of his great future; and (3) the oil symbolizes the Holy Spirit, Whom God gives to David.

Psalm 23:5c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kôwç (כּוֹס) [pronounced <i>kohs</i>]	<i>cup</i>	masculine singular noun with a 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #3563 BDB #468
r ^e vâyâh (רַוְיָהּ) [pronounced <i>r^evaw-YAW</i>]	<i>saturated, running over, an abundance [of drink]; a drinking of one's fill</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #7310 BDB #924

Translation: *My cup runs over.* Suddenly, all that his cup is filled with all it can hold. This indicates multifarious blessings from God. Thieme used to refer to this as *super grace*; as you moved to another stage of spiritual growth, you simply held out your cup and God poured and poured blessing into your cup.

McGee: *This [portion of v. 5] is symbolic of joy. We need to be undergirded with joy today. The Lord says, "I have come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10). The Lord wants our joy to be full.*²⁹

The NIV Study Bible tells us that Near East covenants were often concluded with a meal (Gen. 31:54 Psalm 41:9 Obad. 7), which expressed the bonds of alliance and/or friendship. In the case of vassal treaties, the vassal would be present at a meal as the guest of the overlord (Ex. 24:8–12). The oil was often applied to the head and/or face of the honored guest at a banquet (2Sam. 12:20 Eccles. 9:8 Dan. 10:3 Luke 7:46). The cup represents whatever the host offers to the guest (which could be blessing, salvation, or, in this case, the kingdom of Israel).³⁰ If David writes this the night that Samuel anoints him king of Israel, then Samuel, a representative of God, is the host of this banquet. An alliance between God and David is solidified by Samuel's insistence that David be his honored guest at this sacrifice (1Sam. 16:11) and by Samuel's anointing of David. Furthermore, God offers a cup of blessing and power to David.³¹

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to the Chart and Map Index](#)

Conclusion

**Surely goodness and grace pursue me all days
of my living;
and my dwelling [is] in a house of Y^ehowah to
length of days.**

Psalm
23:6

**Surely prosperity and grace will pursue me all
the days of my life;
and my dwelling [will be] in the house of
Y^ehowah for as long as I live.**

**Certainly, prosperity and grace will pursue all the days of my life
and I will live in the house of Jehovah all of my life.**

Here is how others have handled this verse:

²⁹ J. Vernon McGee, *Psalms Volume 1*; Thru the Bible Books, ©1977, p. 130.

³⁰ Taken from *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 801.

³¹ Whether this psalm is written on the night of David's anointing, or whether it was written years later looking back upon this anointing, is unimportant. However, you will note how easily all the elements of this psalm find a reasonable and logical origin in Samuel's first sacrificial meal with David.

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Surely <i>or</i> only goodness, mercy <i>and</i> unfailing love shall follow me all the days of my life; and through the length of days in the house of the Lord [and His presence] shall be my dwelling place.
CEV	Your kindness and love will always be with me each day of my life, and I will live forever in your house, LORD.
<i>God's Word™</i>	Certainly, goodness and mercy will stay close to me all the days of my life, and I will remain in the LORD's house for days without end.
JPS (Tanakh)	Only goodness and steadfast love shall pursue me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for many long years.
KJV (Scofield)	Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.
NASB	Surely [or, <i>Only</i>] goodness and kindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in [Another reading is, <i>return to</i>] the house of the LORD forever.
NJB	Kindness and faithful love pursue me every day of my life. I make my home in the house of Yahweh for all time to come.
NKJV	Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell [so with LXX, Syriac, (Aramaic) Targum, and Vulgate; Masoretic text <i>return</i>] in the house of the LORD Forever [or, <i>To the end of my days</i> , lit. <i>For length of days</i>].
The Septuagint	Your mercy will also follow me all the days of my life; and my dwelling [will be] in the house of the Lord for a very long time.
TEV	I know that your goodness and love will be with me all my life; and your house will be my home as long as I live.
Thieme	Surely prosperity and grace will pursue me all the days of my life, And I will live in the house of the LORD forever.
<i>Young's Updated LT</i>	Only—goodness and kindness pursue me, All the days of my life, And my dwelling <i>is</i> in the house of Jehovah, For a length of days!

What is the gist of this verse? David concludes by noting that grace will pursue him throughout his entire life and that he would enjoy fellowship with God for the remainder of his life.

Psalm 23:6a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
אֶחָד (אָ חָ א) [pronounced <i>ahk^o</i>]	<i>surely, certainly, no doubt, only, only this once</i>	adverb of restriction, contrast, time, limitation, and exception. Also used as an affirmative particle	Strong's #389 BDB #36
טוֹבִים (בּוּ טוּ ב) [pronounced <i>too^bv</i>]	<i>good things, goodness, prosperity, well-being, beauty</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2898 BDB #375

Psalm 23:6a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
cheçed (חֶסֶד) [pronounced <i>KHĒH-sed</i>]	<i>grace, benevolence, mercy, kindness</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2617 BDB #338
râdaph (רָדַף) [pronounced <i>raw-DAHF</i>]	<i>to pursue, to follow after, to chase with hostile intent</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #7291 BDB #922
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
yôwm (יוֹם) [pronounced <i>yohm</i>]	<i>day, today</i> (with a definite article)	masculine plural construct	Strong's #3117 BDB #398
chayyîym (חַיִּים) [pronounced <i>khay-YEEM</i>]	<i>being alive, being vigorous, having life, sustaining life, living prosperously—it is life as opposed to death</i>	Masculine substantive plural abstract	Strong's #2416 BDB #313

There are actually at least three different words assigned the same Strong's number (#2416). This is properly what we have here.

Translation: Surely prosperity and grace will pursue me all the days of my life;... Here, *grace and prosperity* are personified—they are the subjects of the verb *pursue*. Actually, these things do not pursue David, per se, but, quite obviously, God pursues David with these things. However, such a personification is common in the psalms (compare Psalm 25:21 43:3 79:8 89:14).³²

Barnes: *This is the result of what is stated in the previous verses. The effect of God's merciful dealings with him had been to lead his mind to the assurance that God would always be his shepherd and friend; that he would never leave him to want.*³³

Application: David, in his youth, did not pursue personal vindication. He didn't run around to his brothers and his father and explain himself or justify himself. I hear about this all the time—believers and unbelievers running around to other people justifying their actions (whether they were right or wrong). Sometimes, of course, they have to put a spin on their deeds to make them appear better. Face it—some times you are going to screw up and you will do something wrong which will put you in a bad light. You might need to apologize to someone or to a whole host of people, but do not run around, put a spin on what you did, in order to make you seem not as creepy as you are. People will see right through this, and their respect for you will decrease. If you did wrong, apologize if need be, and then move on with your life. Just as often, you did what was right, but it may not have appeared that way to certain parties. You do not need to locate these people and let them know what your actions were justified, even if they were. Now, sure, some real friends may ask you for an explanation, and most of the time, you simply give them one. But you do not need to track these people down so that they don't think you're a jerk. David was an outcast in his own family. He was the proverbial black sheep of the family. I knew one girl who her sister referred

³² This came from *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 801.

³³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 1*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 213.

to as the black sheep of the family, and we are talking about a family of 4! David was clearly the greatest person in his family; he did not have to chase after his brothers or his dad and explain why, or justify himself. God chose to vindicate David by the anointing by Samuel. This was a sign that prosperity and grace would pursue David.

Application: There are many sayings today along the lines of, *if you don't look out for #1, no one else will*. That is human viewpoint and it is wrong. It is, in fact, anti-Biblical and anti-God. David did not have to look out for #1. He did not decide one day that, *hell, I can do as good of a job as Saul is doing; I ought to be king*. And then he leads a revolutionary group against Saul to take his throne. David didn't do that. Even when it was made clear to him and everyone else that he was the crown prince, he did not disturb God's elect (Saul). **God** anointed David; **God** brought David to the palace of Saul; **God** put David in front of Goliath; **God** gave David tremendous victories over the Philistines and other malicious groups. David did not have to go after prosperity; he did not have to chase after grace. David did not live by the slogan, *if you don't take care of yourself, no one else will*. God took care of David. God pursued David with prosperity and grace. Jesus said, **"Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you."** (Matt. 6:33). Think about it—if you had to choose between God providing for you and you providing for you, whom would you chose? If I want this or that, then I am going to look to God to provide it. Now, this does not mean that you find a park bench somewhere, sit down, and spend your life there waiting for God to drop down blessings on you. There is a principle of work ethic, which is clearly taught in the Old and New Testaments. So you don't drop out of school; you don't quit your job; you don't get a bed sheet and stand on some hill somewhere. But, you do not have to vigorously pursue your lusts or desires. God will provide. You need to pursue God's Word; you need to learn Bible doctrine.

One of the things which I recalled as a young believer was Thieme teaching about the prosperity test. He talked about how God tested us in several ways; and sometimes it was with prosperity. So, I thought to myself, *hey, I'm up for that; how about a prosperity test?* About 20 years later, I thought about that, and looked around and I lived in a very expensive neighborhood, near the lake, off a golf course, in a very nice house. Furthermore, my finances were taken care of for a long time into the future. God took care of these things. I did not decide one day that I was going to get this stuff; I didn't think that I would work and work and work and earn these things. I had even seen my house being built and saw the finished product, and thought *what an incredible house; I sure wish I lived there*. However, I didn't decide that I needed to suddenly make that dream come true. God brought the house to me. I did not pursue it. God brought prosperity to me. There was no master plan. What I did in the interim was I placed doctrine first. Each and every day, no matter what, I set aside an hour to study God's Word. I began with Thieme, whom I studied under for about 20 years, and then decided that I needed to do this apart from Thieme; and I increased my study time to 2–3 hours a day. I had a great many responsibilities, but my #1 priority, no matter what, was that time set aside to study God's Word. God took care of the rest.

God vindicated David by the sacrificial meal at which David was the honored guest of Samuel. This portion of v. 6 (and the portion to follow) do not appear to be David looking back on his life and drawing conclusions from what his life had been, but this appears to be more of a look forward into what would come to pass. Again, the words of this psalm fit perfectly with the idea that David sat down under the stars with his sheep on the night of his anointing and wrote this psalm. Vv. 1–4 draw an analogy between God's treatment of David and the gracious treatment of a good shepherd and his sheep; in v. 5, we have the sacrificial meal given by Samuel, where David was called as his honored guest. Finally, in v. 6, David looks forward in his life, knowing what was to come, because he could trust God to guide his future.

Psalm 23:6b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (l) [pronounced weh]	and	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251

Psalm 23:6b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shûw ^b v (שׁוּב) [pronounced <i>shoo^bv</i>]	<i>to return, to turn, to turn back, to reminisce, to restore something, to bring back something, to revive, to recover something, to make restitution</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #7725 BDB #996
Or, the other possible reading is...			
shebeth (שֶׁבֶת) [pronounced <i>SHE^B-veth</i>]	<i>seat, dwelling place; same place</i>	feminine singular noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #7674 & #7675 BDB #443
According to my NKJV, <i>shûw^bv</i> (<i>to return</i>) is the reading of the Masoretic text and <i>shebeth</i> (<i>to dwell</i>) is the reading of the Septuagint, Aramaic Targum, the Syriac and the Vulgate. ³⁴ Although you may want to side with the latter reading because there is so much agreement, bear in mind that it is not that simple. If the translators of the Septuagint were unable to make sense of the Masoretic text, they may have taken it upon themselves to give a <i>more easily understood</i> translation. The other translations could have simply followed their lead. That being said, I also believe that the word here is <i>my dwelling</i> .			
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</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	Strong's #none BDB #88
bayith (בַּיִת) [pronounced <i>BAH-yith</i>] ³⁵	<i>house, household, habitation as well as inward</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1004 BDB #108
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAW</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3069 BDB #217
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l^e</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʾôrek ^e (אֶרֶךְ) [pronounced <i>OH-reck</i>]	<i>length; forbearance, self-restraint</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #753 BDB #73
yôm ^m (יּוֹם) [pronounced <i>yohm</i>]	<i>day, today</i> (with a definite article)	masculine plural noun	Strong's #3117 BDB #398

Together, these mean *length of days*; i.e., longevity, *so long as I live*. This is not a reference to eternity. The same phrase occurs in Job 12:12, where it is clearly a reference to a man's life on this earth.

Translation: ...and my dwelling [will be] in the house of Y^ehowah for as long as I live. Recall that we do not know whether the Tent of God was up and functioning. Furthermore, it was not a place that you could take a sleeping bag to, and tell the High Priest that you were going to camp out in the sanctuary (the main tent). That wasn't done. However, what David says here has a very temporal connotation. He is not speaking of eternity, but he is speaking

³⁴ New King James Version; Thomas Nelson Publishers; ©1994; p 483.

³⁵ Why not BAH-yeeth?

of all the days of his life; all the time that he is alive (the same phrase is found in Job 12:12, where there is clearly no reference to eternity but to *long life*). We should therefore interpret the *house of Jehovah* in a metaphorical sense. The idea is that David dwells before God, as if God had built him a house and placed him in there. The meaning is fellowship; that is the key idea here. When you go into someone’s house, it is to visit with them, to have a meal with them, to watch a movie with them. Fellowship; and David desires to have fellowship with God all the days of his life. We find similar phrasing in Psalm 26:8 27:4 84:1, 4, 10. Given that the first two passages were written by David when there was no Temple of God, the idea is that these passages refer to fellowship. The latter half of this verse does not mean that David is speaking of fellowship in the afterlife, but he is speaking of fellowship here, on earth, during one’s tenure on this earth.

Application: So, what is your goal? What would you like to do, given a choice of anything? Would you like to live in a large house (with a lot of servants)? Would you like a boat, an expensive car, your own private jet? Or would you ask that you have fellowship with God throughout the remainder of your life? That is what David asked for. This is why God called David *a man after My own heart* (1Kings 11:4 14:8 15:3 Acts 13:22). This is why God blessed David with incredible riches and power. When given the choice, David chose fellowship with God.

When I study a psalm like this, I must admit that I very much want to add even more commentary, but I cannot find any additional things to write, other than stuff that may seem trite by comparison and take from this psalm rather than add to. This is arguably the mark of great literature—you want to talk about it in detail afterwards, but the additional words do not seem to add to its beauty or its meaning. Even with all of the commentary which I have included in this examination, this psalm is still most powerful, effective and elegant when it is simply read.

Jehovah God is presented in many ways in the Old Testament. One cannot get a reasonable understanding of God in one name, a verse or even a chapter of Scripture. Therefore, He is called by several variations of Jehovah to more fully convey to us His character and person.³⁶

Bullinger Summarizes Psalm 23 with Respect to the Variations on Jehovah’s Name		
Verse	Corresponding Name of Jehovah	Notes
1	Jehovah-Jireh (Gen. 22:14)	<i>Jehovah will provide.</i> The psalmist says, “I cannot lack.”
2	Jehovah-Shalom (Judges 6:24)	<i>Jehovah [gives] peace.</i> Jehovah causes the sheep to lay down, fully satiated in green pastures and brings them to soothing waters.
3a	Jehovah-Rophecha (Ex. 15:26).	<i>Jehovah [is] your healer.</i> He restores my soul.
3b	Jehovah-Tzidkenu (Jer. 23:6)	<i>Jehovah [is] my righteousness.</i> The context is a prophecy of the Lord to come, the Righteous Branch...and this is His name by which He will be called: Jehovah Our Righteousness. As Paul has expressed many times: our righteousness is in Christ, not in ourselves (see Rom. 4:6 5:9, 11, 15, 18–19 10:3 1Cor. 1:30 2Cor. 5:21 Gal. 3:6). V. 3b: He leads me in wheel ruts of righteousness.
4	Jehovah-Shammah (Ezek. 48:35)	<i>Jehovah is there.</i> The gates of the New Jerusalem is the immediate context. For You are with me.

³⁶ This was taken from *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p 737 and slightly expanded upon.

Bullinger Summarizes Psalm 23 with Respect to the Variations on Jehovah's Name

Verse	Corresponding Name of Jehovah	Notes
5a	Jehovah-Nissi (Ex. 17:15)	<i>Jehovah [is] my banner.</i> The altar was built after Joshua defeated the enemies of Israel. <i>You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.</i>
5b	Jehovah-Mekaddeshem (Ex. 31:13)	<i>Jehovah sanctifies me.</i> <i>You anoint my head with oil.</i>
6	Jehovah-Rohi (Psalm 23:1)	<i>Jehovah [is] my shepherd.</i> He leads me through even the darkest shadow to His glorious kingdom. <i>Surely goodness and prosperity will pursue me all the days of my life and I will live in the house of Jehovah forever.</i>

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to the Chart and Map Index](#)