

Jehovah Rohi

“The Lord is my Shepherd”

*“Then [Jacob] blessed Joseph and said, God [Himself], before Whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac lived and walked habitually, God [Himself], **Who has [been my Shepherd and has led and] fed me from the time I came into being until this day,** The redeeming Angel [that is, the Angel the Redeemer—not a created being but the Lord Himself] Who has redeemed me continually from every evil, bless the lads! And let my name be perpetuated in them [may they be worthy of having their names coupled with mine], and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them become a multitude in the midst of the earth.”* Genesis 48:15-16 (AMP)

The first mention of the LORD as the Shepherd of true believers is revealed in this beautiful scene of a grandfather, reunited after many long years with his son, Joseph, whom he thought to be dead. Now on his deathbed, he is blessing his grandsons! The picture is one of relationship. Jacob describes the rich lifelong relationship he has had with his LORD and his Shepherd. His last thoughts are to pray for this same relationship to be perpetuated in his grandsons. He blesses them in the name of Jehovah Rohi, the LORD is my Shepherd. Lambs, sheep and shepherds are mentioned 1,140 times in the Scriptures. When a theme such as this is repeated many times, it is an indication it will be greatly beneficial to spend time meditating on the significance of its message. See also Gen. 49:24

Hannah Whitall Smith, in her book, “God of All Comfort” devoted a chapter to “The Lord Our Shepherd.” She noted with reference to “the LORD is my shepherd” that, “Perhaps no aspect in which the LORD reveals Himself to us is fuller of genuine comfort than the aspect set forth in the Twenty-third Psalm, and its corresponding passage in John 10. ...It is a wonderful thing that the highest and grandest truths of religion are often shut up in the simplest and commonest texts in the Bible...these very texts contain in their simple statements the whole story. ...We all need to get back into the nursery again, and take up our childish verses once more, and while reading them with the intelligence of our grown-up years, to believe them with all our old childish faith. ...in truth, these verses of such wondrous depth of meaning that I very much doubt whether it has ever yet entered into the heart of any mortal man to conceive the things they reveal.”

Characteristics of the Shepherd: The Hebrew word for shepherd, “Rohi,” embodies the true characteristics of the relationship between the Shepherd and His Sheep. The word “Rohi” (Strong’s #7462) is a primitive root that means literally to:

- **To tend a flock:** The meaning of the word “tend” comes from “attend” and is rich with meaning. It means to be attentive to, to direct one’s mind and energies toward, to stretch toward, to wait upon, to take care of, to attend to in order to watch, guard and protect, to accompany as a protector, or as in tending an infant, to hold and take care of every need.
- **To pasture it:** Mideastern shepherds constantly moved from one location to another to find the most nutritious locations to graze and water their flocks. Pastures were carefully chosen for their safety and proximity to clean, healthy water. We are the sheep of Jesus’ pasture and He will provide all we need in rich abundance. Ps. 23, John 10:9; Ps. 79:13; Ezek. 34:14
- **To lead or guide. to rule:** The sheep know and trust their shepherd to lead and guide them in the best way. The meaning conveyed in this definition of shepherd is one who is the owner of the flock. The word “rohe” is sometimes used to mean a leader or ruler of the people. A good

shepherd does not just follow his sheep. He does not allow them to choose their own way. He has authority over the sheep and disciplines the sheep if necessary. He teaches those who are rebellious to follow him alone. Num. 27:17; Ps. 80:1; Isa. 40:11; 42:16

- **To protect:** A good shepherd will literally lay down his life for his sheep! It is well known that sheep are helpless creatures with no natural defenses. They have limited ability to sense danger and are typically ignorant of methods of self-preservation. In the Mideast, there were many dangers. David was forced to engage in hand to hand combat with bear and lion in order to protect his sheep. A skilled shepherd is able to use simple tools with skilled accuracy!

The Good Shepherd also protects His Sheep from storms, thieves, diseases and parasites. He needs to be constantly alert and vigilant to see the dangers that exist ahead and take whatever actions will result in the greatest security and safety for the flock. Ps. 121

- **To associate with as a friend and companion, to keep company with:** A beautiful translation of Rohi is companion or friend. This name gives us the most incredible picture of God's tender, intimate love for us. The Good Shepherd values and cherishes each sheep. This intimacy is formed through the shared life of walking together in daily tasks, as well as facing dangers. In this context, "ro-hi" means to associate with, take pleasure in, cherish as something treasured. When the two words are combined, Jehovah Ro-hi can be translated as "The LORD my Friend." He relishes in His relationship with us and knows everything about us: our strengths, weaknesses and personality. By the same token, the sheep know their shepherd's voice and will not follow any other. Isa. 40: 10-11; Ps. 100:3; Luke 15:1-7
- **Herdman:** A herdman is an expert of animal husbandry. He knows everything there is to know about the care and breeding of sheep. He has a working relationship with his sheep. A good shepherd knows how to increase his flock. Jacob spent years as a shepherd under the service of his father-in-law, Laban. They tend the pregnant ewes and help them to deliver, watch over the well-being of the lambs. The sign of a good herdman is that his flocks grow and flourish. Song of Songs 1:7
- **Pastor:** A pastor is called an "under-shepherd." Pastors are called to assist the LORD in the watchful care of His sheep. God is looking for shepherds according to His own heart filled with knowledge and understanding. The Scriptures provide numerous examples of God's expectations for pastors. Peter, was named Rock and told that upon him the foundation of the Church would be built. Jesus told Peter, "If you love Me, feed my sheep. If you love Me, tend my sheep." John 21:15-17; 2 Sam. 5:2; John 10:11; Jer. 23; 2 Sam. 7:8; Ps. 78:70-72; Cyrus Isa. 44:18; Jer. 3:15

No other name has the tender, intimate touch as does Jehovah Rohi, our Shepherd. It combines not only His compassionate care and protection but also His promise of provision for all of our needs. His tenderness and love as our Shepherd impels Him to provide for every want of body, soul and spirit. Jehovah Rohi's guidance is so perfect that we have no other want if we trust and rest in Him. The qualities of a true shepherd are that he will seek that which is lost, bind that which is broken, strengthen that which is sick, search out the false shepherds and drive them away. Jehovah Rohi is immensely strong and also extremely gentle.

A recent traveler in Palestine observed, "Shepherding does not change much in Palestine where wild beasts may descend still upon unprotected sheep and suddenly destroy them. The Mideastern shepherd lives night and day with his animals. He establishes a degree of intimacy with them which is

touching to observe. He calls them all by their names and they, knowing his voice and hearing his only, heed. He protects the sheep from thieves and preying animals who would devour them in the night, sleeping by the opening of the often makeshift sheepfold and they, sensing his watchfulness, fear 'no evil.' He provides pasture and water even in the wilderness and the presence of enemies and they, casting anxiety on him, are fed. There is a singular communion between the shepherd and his sheep, which, after one has visited Palestine and observed it, makes the symbol of the Good Shepherd peculiarly apt and the Twenty-Third Psalm strangely moving."¹

Characteristics of Sheep: My earliest teaching on the subject of sheep did not make me very glad to be likened to a sheep! Sheep were described as foolish and unintelligent, incapable of making wise decisions. To the natural eye, goats have a lot more to offer. Goats have very engaging dispositions. They are smart, independent and capable of defending themselves against predators. What I did not fully understand is that God loves sheep because they are helpless and need Him. He is pleased when we come to realize our complete and absolute dependence upon Him and place all of our trust in His ability to lead, guide, protect and care for us!

- In the Scripture, Sheep are only compared to the true believer. Sheep and goats are often used for comparison between the righteous and the unrighteous. Those who are unsaved are referred to as goats or wolves. Wolves are usually referred to as false prophets who may disguise themselves as sheep.
- Sheep are not an animal esteemed in the world's eyes. Jacob was a shepherd but when he came to Egypt, Joseph asked him not to reveal this to the Pharaoh because caring for sheep was considered to be an extremely low occupation. This is not how God views His responsibilities as a shepherd or the value He places on His sheep. Shepherds who were watching their flocks by night were honored by being the ones the angels first appeared to announce the coming of the Christ child.
- Sheep belong to the Great Shepherd. We are the sheep of His pasture. This outweighs every negative thing you have ever heard about sheep! Sheep do not belong to the "under shepherds" or "pastors." Pastors are given an incredible sacred trust to watch over and seek the Lord for the welfare of His sheep.
- The Bible describes His precious lambs as innocent, pure, spotless, mild, patient, submissive and gentle. When sheep are sheared, they are turned over on their backs. They quickly quiet under the hand of the shepherd and lie quietly while their wool is clipped from their bodies. Jesus, the Lamb of God, submitted Himself into the hands of the shearers when He was crucified. Acts 8:32-37; Isa. 53:7
- Sheep are helpless. Without the shepherd's protection, sheep are incredibly vulnerable to predators. A whole flock can be laid waste by a single vicious dog. Sheep do not have any weapons of defense in themselves. They have very limited strength, cannot run at high speeds and possess no fighting skills. Sheep do not even have teeth on the top, only gums suitable for biting off grass but not for biting in self-defense. In the spirit realm, believers have mighty enemies and we are completely defenseless against them apart from the protection given to us by our Shepherd. Our enemies are defeated in the name of Jesus and His power and might. Apart from Him we can do nothing.
- Sheep are not capable of providing for themselves. Not only are sheep unable to protect themselves, they require more constant need for supervision and care than any other domestic

¹ Around the Mediterranean with My Bible, pp. 142, 143 (Patterson) Quoted from "The Names of God" by Nathan Stone. 1944

animals. Shepherding is a 24 hour a day, seven day a week job! Left to their own, sheep would not be able to find food, water or shelter for themselves. Goats are known for eating almost anything and being able to survive on almost any form of weed. Sheep are picky eaters and require good nutritious grass in order to stay healthy. Sheep's wool does not "shed" their wool as most animals but must be sheared by the shepherd. An unshorn sheep will eventually die from infection and disease as parasites grow in their wet wool and rotting flesh. Isa. 1:18

- Sheep do not handle stress well. There is a saying amongst farmers who own sheep that a sick sheep is a dead sheep. Sheep attacked and chased by dogs or wolves will often die from shock and stress, not overt wounds. A sheep that gets turned over on its back cannot right itself even though it struggles and flails about. Shepherds and farmers call this being "cast" or "cast down." If the Shepherd is not vigilant to seek out the cast down sheep, the sheep will soon die from its struggles. I will forever remember my deep sadness when finding such a sheep in the "wood" at my grandmother's farm. The sheep had fallen into a position of lying with its feet uphill from its body and could not get up. We ran to get my uncle and he tried in vain to get the sheep to stand up, but it was too weak. He solemnly told us that a sheep that is down is usually a "dead sheep." We tearfully stayed with the otherwise apparently healthy sheep and watched her slip away. David, in calling the LORD his Shepherd knew what it meant to be cast down, persecuted, and hopeless.
- Sheep have a deep instinct to remain together in one group. Under the care of a shepherd this is a positive quality because it speaks of unity, gregariousness and a strong sense of relationship. Without a shepherd, this trait becomes a mob instinct. Sheep will often take their cues from one another and go with the flow no matter where the herd is moving. Like lemmings, sheep are capable of following one another off the edge of a cliff.
- Sheep are amazing creatures of habit. Without the leading of the Shepherd, they will remain in the same area and graze until there is no more grass and the ground becomes barren. This was the cause of the great "sheep wars" between cattlemen and shepherders in great American west. Like sheep, if we are left to our own, we will follow the same habits and paths much to our own detriment.
- A sheep's inherent nature is to be fearful. In the natural, without a shepherd their only means of protecting themselves from danger is to attempt to flee from predators. This fear can be more dangerous than the actual threat the sheep are facing. They often go into a state of panic when they are under attack, causing them to bolt mindlessly or run until they drop dead. The enemy's strategy is to cause us to act out of fear or to be immobilized or not react wisely when his wolves attack. Our shepherd repeatedly tells us to "fear not" because He is with us and He will protect us. Neh. 7:13; Ps. 37:7-8
- Sheep have voracious appetites. They seem to eat night and day. When we are under the Lord's provision, we are called to meditate on His Word night and day. He has given us this appetite so that we will hunger and thirst after Him. But to those who do not know Him and the delightful richness of His Word, any bitter thing will taste sweet. Rev. 27:7
- Sheep need a shepherd to lead them. They do not do well when they are driven, instead they need to be led. In the Middle East, sheep are given names and are able to learn their name when it is on the lips of the shepherd. They follow the voice of their shepherd. Ps. 77:20
- Left to their own devices, sheep a tendency to wander in search of food and get lost. Once they are away from the herd, they have no protection and are unable to find their way back to the herd on their own. Isa. 53:6

- Sheep are clearly God’s favorite animal of all that He created. He speaks of gathering His sheep to His bosom, of carrying them in His arms. He seeks out the lost sheep. All of heaven rejoices when that one lamb is returned to the flock!
- We can hardly be insulted by the fact that He compares us to sheep. Jesus is not only our Great Shepherd, but also called “the Lamb of God” who takes away the sin of the world. He became one of us in order to save us. He chose to lay down His life for His sheep. John 1:29; Rev. 5:12; Isa. 53:7; John 10; 1 Cor. 6:19-20

Meditation on Psalm 23

This Psalm offers a most intimate look at the LORD as our Shepherd. David was well acquainted with the role of a shepherd and the life and characteristics of sheep. Not only was he a shepherd himself, he was also the son of a shepherd. This Psalm is David’s declaration of perfect and absolute confidence in God as our Shepherd. When this blessed assurance is completely grasped we cannot help but place our trust in God to care for all of our needs. It is no wonder this Psalm is considered to be the most loved passage in the entire Word of God.

There is a danger that in our over familiarity with the passage, we will fail to dig deeply enough to receive fresh revelation. Meditate on the words and phrases used in this Psalm as if you had never read this Psalm in the past! As you meditate on it, ponder the verses not only as they apply to us, but as they may have been prayed by Jesus as He looked to His Father when He faced His death on the cross.

“The LORD.... Jehovah,” the I AM that I AM, whose very heart is that of a shepherd for His people. It is an essential part of His very nature and being. He loves and delights in His flock. Jehovah Rohi cannot change in His commitment to His sheep! Hannah Whitall Smith declares, “The Lord! Oh my friends, what a wonderful announcement! The LORD God of heaven and earth, the Almighty Creator of all things, He who holds the universe in His hand as though it were a very little thing, He is your Shepherd and has charged Himself with the care and keeping of you, as a shepherd is charged with the care and keeping of His sheep....in giving Himself this name, He assumed the duties belonging to that name and really would be, what He declares Himself to be, a “good shepherd who giveth His life for his sheep.”

“Is my Shepherd...” “He is my shepherd and owner! He is not “the Shepherd” but **MY** Shepherd. This speaks of a personal relationship with the Shepherd who cares for me, watches over me, preserves me. We need to completely apprehend this truth and believe that He is our good shepherd. Hannah Whitall Smith invited her readers to search their hearts for faith regarding this truth. Do we think, “the Lord is the sheep and I am the shepherd, I need to keep a tight hold on Him or He will run away!” David expresses absolute confidence in this declaration that the LORD is His shepherd. The Lord wants each sheep to know Him as their personal shepherd. He wants us to be certain of our entitlement to all of the benefits of having a good shepherd who is watching over our life!! Knowing Jesus as our shepherd gives us the ability to place our total trust and absolute confidence in Him. Guard the knowledge of the Lord as our shepherd and cultivate our assurance of His relationship with His sheep. Isa. 1:3; Ps. 79:13; 144:15

“I shall not want...” Jehovah Rohi is able to supply all our needs according to His riches and might. In our beautiful Shepherd, we can be fully satisfied. Jehovah Rohe will provide for our every need whether it is physical, spiritual or emotional. It means far more than that we will not suffer any lack but also of finding absolute contentment and safety in the shepherd’s care. This word is also future tense, meaning we will never fail or decline. Hannah Whitall Smith noted, “I do not wonder that unbelievers are not drawn into the church, when I contemplate the condition of believers. ... no conversions from one year to the next...If I were a poor sheep wandering in the wilderness, and I were to see some poor, wretched

sick-looking sheep peeping out of a fold, and calling me to come in, and I were to look into the fold, and should see it hard, bare and uncomfortable, I do not think I would be much tempted to go into such a fold. ... Ps. 34:9; 84:11; Matt. 6:33; Luke 12:30-32; Rom. 8:32; Heb. 13:5-6; Phil. 4:19

“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures....” In the world, sheep and shepherders were often exiled into the waste places where food was scarce. They did not have the luxury of lying in lush green pastures but were forced to choose stony and often steep narrow pathways on the sides of mountains in order to find the grass needed for survival. Sheep are notorious for grazing a pasture until there is nothing left but bare ground. Those who follow Jesus are not forced to scrounge for food. The LORD may need to lead us through barren wilderness to reach these green pastures. In contrast to Israel who murmured in the wilderness, we need to trust in His ability to lead us to the land of promise. He is an excellent provider and offers us lush, green pastures with grass tall enough we can lie down in it. His Word of truth is always fresh, always rich and never exhausted. He wants us to rest from our own labors and allow Him to provide in pastures offering us rest and peace. Ps. 34:10; Isa. 30:15, 23; 1 Cor. 2:12; Ezek. 34:13,14

The shepherd would make enclosures to keep the sheep safe at night. Often the enclosures were made from the branches of thorny bushes that would form a thicket keeping out all predators. The Shepherd Himself would sleep in the doorway or gate to the fold so that nothing could enter past him. Phillip Keller in his book “A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23” noted that four conditions must be met before a sheep will voluntarily lay down.

- 1) Freedom from all fear. Sheep are timid and their only response in times of danger is to flee. So a sheep will not lay down unless they can rest in the assurance of safety.
- 2) Sheep will not lie down unless they are free from friction with others of their kind.
- 3) Sheep will not lie down if they are tormented by flies or parasites.
- 4) Sheep will not lie down if they are in need of finding food. They must be free from hunger.

In sum, for the sheep to truly rest, they need to be free from fear, tension, aggravation and hunger. Only the shepherd can meet these needs so they can be quiet and content. The presence of their protector in their midst assures the sheep they are safe and may lay down and truly rest.

“He leads me beside the still waters...” Sheep require fresh, clean drinking water. Still waters are peaceful waters. This phrase can be literally translated “waters of quietness or waters of rest.” These are safe waters where one can drink deeply far from the raging waves of humanity’s tumults and roaring. Still waters are said to run deep, clean and pure. They represent the golden place where the Holy Spirit meets the souls of the saints to bring refreshing. Only the Shepherd knows where the water is pure, still, quiet, deep and clean. We must listen to His “still small voice” and follow Him in order to drink of this water for He leads His sheep, He never drives them. 1 Kings 19:11-12; Ps. 41:17,18; 46:4; 49:10 Isa. 48:21; 55:1-3; 58:11; John 4:10-14; 7:37-38; Rev. 21:1, 6, 17 (Amp); 22:117

“He restores my soul.” Jehovah Rohi diligently watches over His sheep to bring them complete healing and wholeness from all of their afflictions. David was acquainted with the feelings of helplessness and loss of his own strength, but he would declare that his Good Shepherd restores his soul. The word restore in the Hebrew is “shuwb” (Strong’s 7725) is the same word that we often find translated “repent” or “repentance.” In this context, the word means to ‘return, deliver, recover, fetch home again, refresh, and relieve.’ The Good Shepherd is vigilant to seek out the lost and restore it before it is too late! When the soul is in sorrow, He revives it. When it is sinful, He sanctifies it, when we are weak, He gives us strength. He does not prevent the trials and tragedies that we face in life, but He heals and helps us grow through our trials. Ps.19:7; 51:10,12, 119:176; Ezek. 34:16

“He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His Name’s sake....” The Lord gently draws us to follow Him through His love and example. The Lord is righteous and we are also called to be righteous. He never drives us or condemns us. Apart from Him the call to righteousness would be impossible. The pathway is often very steep and very narrow, it is not well traveled. We are compelled to righteousness through the obedience of love. He leads us on these paths and as we faithfully follow Him, He transforms us. He becomes our righteousness. When we become a part of the Great Shepherd’s flock, He will show us His path and make His footsteps into our pathway.” Mark 8:34 (Amp); John 10:1-18, 27-29 (Amp); 14:6; Ps. 85:13; Prov. 4:11; 8:20;

“Ye though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...” The shadow of death is a time of darkness, shadows and twilight, foreshadowing the grave. This passage has surely been comfort to more believers as they approached death than any other in the Word. To know that our Lord and Shepherd is with us to keep us, lead us and carry us into His Kingdom is comfort beyond all else. Death is called a shadow. For believers, death has no substance. It has lost all of its sting. We are never alone in valley of the shadow of death because our tender shepherd is with us! “Bodily death is a door or entering into life, a friend, a gentle guide... leading us to immortality, not to sorrow or pain for Thou Art With Me.” (Homily against Fear of Death, 1547) It is a mere shadow that obscures the light for a moment. The sheep who has placed its confidence in the shepherd is not afraid of danger or even death itself. We can place all of our trust in the LORD, even in times of great adversity and potential death because He has promised He will never leave us or fail us or forsake us. Heb. 13:5-6; Isa. 43:2, Luke 1:79; 1 Cor. 15:55-57

“...I will fear no evil for You are with me...” His protection is perfect and complete. We need to have no fear of evil or darkness when our trust is in our Almighty Shepherd. Ps. 27:1 declares, “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the defense of my life, Whom shall I dread?” Ps. 91; Ps. 37; Ps. 34; Ps. 3:6; 27:1-4; 46:1-3; 112:7, 8; 118:6; 138:7; Dan. 3:8-18; 6:16-23; Isa. 8:11-14; 26:1-4; 41:10; Prov. 1:33 NASB; Matt. 10:28; Josh. 1:9; Luke 21:9-19; Heb. 13:6

“Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.” The LORD is a mighty warrior who is faithful and strong. Sheep need to have no fear of danger when He undertakes to keep them safe!!

The equipment of a shepherd consists of a rod which is basically a club about 30 inches in length, usually with a knob on the larger end. This end is formed from the bulb at the root of the little tree from which it is made. This knob was often studded with heavy-headed iron nails or even with flint, thus making it a formidable weapon. A hole is made in the smaller handle end, through which a cord is drawn so the rod can be hung from the shepherd’s wrist or fastened to his belt. Shepherds carry these rods for the express purpose of protecting their sheep (and themselves) from marauding animals or assaulting humans - thieves and robbers John 10:8; Zech. 11:7

A second standard piece of equipment for the Shepherd is his staff. A staff is a kind of walking stick, about 6 feet in length, usually plain and straight but sometimes with a fork or crook at one end. It is used to aid the shepherd in walking over the rough terrain, climbing hills or clambering over rocks. The word itself signifies a stay or support. It is also used to guide the sheep or even to punish them. Shepherd to lift a sheep or lamb from a crevice between the dangerous rocks uses a staff with a crook on the end. It is also used as a means of counting and inspecting the sheep as they pass under it while entering the fold at the close of the day. As the sheep pass under the rod, they are counted to make sure none are missing, they are inspected for wounds or illness and guided into the “fold” where they can sleep safely at night. Ps. 80:1-3; Lev. 27:32

His ability to protect us is a great comfort to our hearts. The word “comfort” means to console and extend compassion. The word contains the idea of a comforter who sighs as one who grieves and who

breathes intensely because of deep emotion. Thus we see in our Shepherd, One who comforts us not from casual sympathy but from deep empathy. He weeps with those who weep and sighs with those who sigh. His comfort is never superficial but a deep comfort that brings true peace.

“He prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies...” Like sheep, we are surrounded by enemies who seek to devour us. The LORD promises to care for us even in times of our greatest trials, persecutions and danger. He is able to prepare a banquet before us though we are surrounded by hatred and persecution in this world. In times of battle, soldiers often have little time to eat and must exist on mere bites of food taken hastily. The LORD does not give us just enough to subsist, He provides a lavish banquet for His sheep and sets it up in the very presence of our enemies. The Last Supper was a banquet prepared for the disciples on the very night Jesus was betrayed. While plans were made for His death, Jesus sat at the table with His disciples for a precious last meal. When next we eat at the banqueting table with Jesus all of our enemies will be defeated. 1 Cor. 11:23

“You anoint my head with oil...” There are at least four types of anointing oil. The first is the priestly anointing, perfumed oil pour on a guest in hospitality, a healing oil containing balm for the healing of wounds and finally an oil consisting of myrrh for the preparation of a dead body. It is believed the oil referred to in this passage is an ointment for healing. Hoards of insects can make the life of a sheep unbearable. Not only are these parasites the cause of unbearable suffering, they also pose great danger to the life and health of the sheep if they burrow into their ears, noses or under their thick wool. In the Mideast oil was poured on the sheep to protect them from pests. It was also particularly poured on the heads of the sheep who were wounded by the large thorns and brambles that often obstructed the best tufts of grass. An open wound, if untended, would be immediately attacked by insects seeking to lay eggs in the sheep’s flesh. The Good Shepherd faithfully tends every wound to prevent it from becoming infected or allowed to fester. It is our responsibility as His sheep to submit ourselves to His careful inspection and allow Him to pour out His healing oil on all of our wounds.

“...my cup runneth over...” Our Shepherd is the source of living waters that are given freely and in abundance. The LORD is lavish in His provision for our needs. The statement describes our Shepherd’s generous provisions, not only of living water, but of blessings, salvation and joy. Not only will we never thirst when we partake of His living waters, we will have more than we need! God’s generosity towards His sheep is without limits. Jesus in describing Himself as the Good Shepherd says, “I have come that they might have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” This word abundantly [perissos Strong’s #4053] means superabundance, excessive, overflowing, surplus, over and above, more than enough, profuse, extraordinary, above the ordinary, more than sufficient. A pessimist sees his cup as half empty, an optimist sees his cup as half full, but the LORD’s sheep see their cup as running over! Ps. 16:5; 36:8-9; 84:11; John 4:15; 6:35; 7:37-38; 10:10; Eph. 1:3; 3:20; Rev. 22:16; Isa. 44:3; 49:10; 55:1; 2 Pet. 1:11; Ps. 37:11,16; Phil. 4:19

“Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life...” My daughter has always pictured “goodness” and “mercy” as two sheepdogs who faithfully followed the shepherd and assisted in the care of the sheep! In a very real way goodness and mercy are two characteristics that consistently follow those who follow this great shepherd of the sheep!

The word “surely” used in this passage is one that declares the absolute certainty of the statement being made. It means to be set and sealed, without shadow of a doubt, it can be translated “truly” or is “totally true.” The word itself carries an extremely strong assertive force and can be translated in this passage to read, “ONLY goodness and mercy will follow me...”

“goodness” The Hebrew word for “goodness” is *tuwb* (Strong’s #2896). This word is in essence the absence of all evil and darkness, but it means more than that, it is the embodiment of true happiness,

joy, great welfare, bounty, grace, joy, lovingkindness, love, pleasure to appealing and pleasant to the senses. Hebrew Honey refers to this goodness as that providing one with a continual feast. It describes all that is precious and valued in the greatness of God's goodness to His sheep! Ps. 136 is a catalog of God's great goodness and lovingkindness to Israel. The word is used 26x in this chapter. See also Deut. 7:9, Ps. 34:8

"mercy" Christians are often taught that God's mercy is that we do not get the punishment that we deserve. While this may be an aspect of God's great love for us, the word mercy means far more than just a withholding of punishment. The closest meaning is found in the New Testament word 'grace.' John 1:16,17 The Hebrew word for "mercy" is "chesed" and is often translated "lovingkindness" (Strong's 2617.) It takes many words to describe the features of His character that are found in "chesed" -- Kindness, mercy, goodness, truth, steadfastness, faithfulness, justice, righteousness. Hebrew Honey defines this word as "to feel and practice kindness and love toward one." This kindness is the epitome of all true elegance and beauty found in our lives. The source of all goodness flows from the heart of God. Chesed is the word testifying to unfailingly steadfast covenant of God's love!

Goodness supplies all of our needs and mercy blots out all of our sins because of God's incredible lovingkindness! Imagine the freedom we would have from worry, cares and concerns if we had this confidence in God's incredible goodness and lovingkindness!!

"will follow me all the days of my life..." We never need to fear what the next day will bring. God's goodness and mercy is as certain today as it was yesterday. The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD, if we are not aware of it, we have not looked for it! We look forward to tomorrow because we know His goodness and lovingkindness is waiting for us! Ps. 33:5; 119:64; Matt. 28:20

Goodness and mercy follows us in bright days and black days,
Days of fasting and days of feasting,
Dreary days of winter and bright days of sunshine

"I will dwell in the presence (house) of the LORD forever..." This precious relationship with the LORD and all of His sweet benefits will continue not just in this life but in the eternal Kingdom where we will dwell forever. God's promises are eternal! He will not cast us out or forsake Him if we put our trust and faith in Him. "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Revelation 7:15-17 (KJV); Ps. 27:4-6; Ps. 26:8; 65:4; 84:10; 2 Cor. 5:1

Jesus is the Great Shepherd of the sheep. He is the fulfillment and embodiment of every aspect of Jehovah Rohi. Meditate on the scriptures that provide additional insight into our LORD as our Shepherd. As you go through these verses, write down the qualities of the true shepherd in one column and the qualities of the false shepherds in another. John 10:1-18, 25-30; Isa. 40:11; Ezek. 34 (entire chapter); Jer. 23:1-8; Heb. 13:20-21; Acts 20:29; Matt. 7:15; 1 Peter 2:25; 5:4; Jer. 3:15

FOR FURTHER STUDY: See Portions for the Journey study, "Lord, I need Your Guidance" (1180)