

# YAHSHUA, My Shepherd

(Palm 23; John 10)



When we read Psalm twenty-three we see the beautiful love the Shepherd has for His sheep. In the course of the sheep's life, He makes sure that they are well provided, protected and cared for. He makes sure that the life of His sheep is provided all the way into eternity. This is what a true sheep says about her Shepherd: The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not lack. He is to His sheep their Living Bread, the **Manna** that came from heaven. Although Israel ate manna in the desert, they died. But the Manna that our Shepherd offers, produces life that is everlasting. YAHSHUA assured Israel that Moses did not give them the Bread from heaven, but it is His Father Who gives the true heavenly Bread; for the Bread of God, said YAHSHUA, is He Who comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world; **I Am the Bread of Life**. He who comes to Me will never be hungry, and he who believes in and cleaves to and trusts in and relies on Me will never thirst anymore (John 6:32-34). That's the standing promise to the sheep who has accepted YAHSHUA'S invitation.

After a long day of wandering, the Shepherd makes His sheep to rest. He makes sure that they lie down in soft cool grass, from where they receive not only their rest, but also their nourishment. It is a time of reflection, a time of healing, a time to converse with the Shepherd and hear what He has to say. Oftentimes His sheep spend their energy on things that are of no spiritual values. Sometimes they wander away, far from Him and feel lost in the confusion of their mind. The Shepherd calls them to rest and makes them to do so. It can happen through any means He chooses to do: It can come through prolonged disease or any other ways that will cause them to hear His voice and obey Him. After a restful time in His Word, He then leads them beside the quiet waters. We can never appreciate the quiet waters without first laying down at His feet to be nourished with the bread of life. The quiet waters are the ministry of His Holy Spirit. He came to comfort, to teach, to convict, to guide, among many other things. Our soul is restored with His presence. Our Shepherd then leads us in the path of sanctification for the glory of His name. The paths to sanctification include the hard and fearful valley of death. This is a must for every sheep of YAHSHUA to go through with Him. Fear will not be present in the heart because His presence supplies all they need to overcome the dreadfulness of the valley. The Shepherd uses His rod and His staff to defend, protect and to comfort His sheep. His rod is His weapon against danger that rises against them; it is also the means of discipline when a sheep wanders away from Him. The staff conveys concern, compassion and comfort. Phillip Keller, a shepherd himself, defines the difference of the two: he says, "Whereas the rod conveys the concept of authority, power, of discipline and defense, the staff speaks of longsuffering and kindness." The presence of our Shepherd is key in bringing peace to our heart. When we are near Him we experience His peace and nothing in the world can destroy it. Philip confirms: *"In the course of time I came to realize that nothing so quieted and reassured the sheep as to see me in the field. The presence of their master and owner and protector put them at ease as nothing else could do. Continuous conflict and jealousy within the flock can be a most detrimental thing. The sheep become edgy, tense, discontented, and restless. They lose weight and become irritable. But one point that always interested me very much was that whenever I came into view and my presence attracted their attention, the sheep quickly forgot their foolish rivalries and stopped their fighting. The shepherd's presence made all the difference in their behavior."* – Philip Keller

After the sheep is refreshed, the shepherd then leads them into a life of sanctification with spiritual challenges. The valley of death, is a place where the sheep is lead in order to learn trust and confidence in their Shepherd. They will never walk it alone, for their shepherd promise to be with them always. His presence covers them with a mantle of protection; they will never fear the evil of the valley. At the end of their journey, the Shepherd prepares a feast for His sheep. He spreads a table with abundance of goods in the presence of their enemies. Oil, the symbol of gladness, is poured over their head. They overflow with joy in its abundance, after the battle is won. The Shepherd's goodness, mercy and love-kindness will lead His sheep all the way to eternity through the length of their earthly days. There His presence will be forever their dwelling place.

YAHSHUA'S sheep know Him and He knows them. He calls them each by their name. They follow His voice. He holds them closely to His bosom and secures them with His mighty hands; the enemy cannot and will never snatch them out of His hands. The darkness of the valleys, the wild animals of the wilderness, Fear, the worst enemy of mankind, they all become powerless in the presence of the Great shepherd. They will fear no evil, for He is with them!

A shepherd lives a danger and sacrificial life. He suffers the harshness of the weather, danger of wild life, and lack of sleep. Jacob, when shepherding his uncle's flock for twenty years, described his experiences: By day the heat consumed me and by night the cold, and I could not sleep (Gen. 31: 40). David's experiences as a shepherd was of courage and strength and love toward the flock. He endangered his life when he fought a lion and a bear to rescue his sheep out of their mouths. His presence assured the sheep in times of danger. Their safety depended solely on him.

YAHSHUA, portraying Himself as a shepherd said, I am the Good Shepherd. The Good shepherd risks and lays down His life for the sheep (John 10: 11). No one can be a good shepherd without a certain degree of love for their flock. The risks that a shepherd faces measures the depth of his love for his sheep. But no greater love has ever been found to compare to that of YAHSHUA'S. In John chapter ten

we have the most beautifully described love and care the Lord has for His sheep. His heart is divided in pieces for every sheep individually. When one strays away from Him, He makes the effort to search for it. One sheep has the value of the ninety-nine left behind. His concerns for His sheep rests not only on their physical side, but mainly on their spiritual. He did not die for them to have earthly pleasures; He died for them to have life eternal with Him. He wants His sheep to be where He is (John 17: 24). That's the heart of our good Shepherd!

In Ezekiel thirty-four the Lord God gave the prophet the description of the shepherds' spiritual condition of those days. It resembles well those of today's pastors. This is what the Lord says to all the yesterday's and today's shepherds: You shepherds- pastors hear the word of the Lord: the disease and weak (sheep) you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the hurt and crippled you have not bandaged, those gone astray you have not sought to find...My sheep wandered through all the mountains and upon every high hill; yes, My sheep were scattered upon all the face of the earth and no one searched for them. Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: As I live, says the Lord God, surely because My sheep became a prey, and My sheep became food for every beast of the field because there was no shepherd- neither did My shepherds search for My sheep, but the shepherds fed themselves and fed not My sheep, therefore thus says the Lord God: Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require My sheep at their hand...I will rescue My sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them... I Myself will search for My sheep and will seek them out as a shepherd seeks out his sheep in the day that he is among his flock that are scattered, so will I seek out My sheep (Ezekiel 34). The Lord looks at His flock today and what He sees is not much different from the days of Israel. Many today's pastors are grossly rich; they soak themselves in the riches of the world, meanwhile their sheep struggle to survive. They have fattened their life and abandoned the needy and the hurting of their flock. They take away from those who do not have to fatten their bank accounts in the name of the Lord. This is blasphemy to His name- the name of our Lord YAHSHUA! Their misrepresentation of Who YAHSHUA is has not gone unnoticed. It will be a day when all these shepherds will give an account to the Great Shepherd; they will be finding wanting and rejected for their actions in the words of YAHSHUA: Depart from Me, I never knew you!

My Shepherd is unlike all shepherds; His tender care and love are beyond any pastor's love. He came with the purpose to seek and to save those who were and are lost; He is among His sheep always, ready to save. Therefore, I can say this from my heart: because the Lord is my Shepherd, I lack nothing. Can You say that, too?

