

Psalm 23 in Three Modern Translations with Footnotes

New Jerusalem Bible (1985) PSALM 23

The good Shepherd^a

Psalm Of David

- 1 Yahweh is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
- 2 In grassy meadows he lets me lie,

By tranquil streams he leads me

- 3 to restore my spirit.
He guides me in paths of saving justice
as befits his name.

- 4 Even were I to walk in a ravine as dark as death
I should fear no danger, for you are at my side.^b
Your staff and your crook are there to soothe
me.

- 5 You prepare a table for me under
the eyes of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;^c
my cup brims over.

- 6 Kindness and faithful love pursue me
every day of my life.
I make my home^d in the house of Yahweh
for all time to come.

23 a. The care of God for the upright, illustrated by two images; the shepherd, vv. 1–4. and the host of the messianic banquet, vv. 5–6.

b. ‘for you are’ a later addition to the text, probably to harmonise with 1 S 22:23. and to stress the allusion to David. The original text was probably: ‘at my side are your crook and your staff . . .’

c. Gesture of hospitality in the East. 92:10; 133:2; Qo 9:8; Am 6:6; Lk 7:46.

d. ‘my home’ versions; ‘I shall return to’ Hebr. (a simple correction of vowels).

The Amplified Bible (1954, 1987) Psalm 23

A Psalm of David.

1 THE LORD is my Shepherd [to feed, guide, and shield me], I shall not lack.

2 He makes me lie down in [fresh, tender] green pastures; He leads me beside the still and restful waters.(A)

3 He refreshes and restores my life (my self); He leads me in the paths of righteousness [uprightness and right standing with Him--not for my earning it, but] for His name's sake.

4 Yes, though I walk through the [deep, sunless] valley of the shadow of death, I will fear or dread no evil, for You are with me; Your rod [to protect] and Your staff [to guide], they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with [a]oil; my [brimming] cup runs over.

6 Surely or only goodness, mercy, and unfailing love shall follow me all the days of my life, and through the length of my days the house of the Lord [and His presence] shall be my dwelling place.

[a] Psalm 23:5 It is difficult for those living in a temperate climate to appreciate, but it was customary in hot climates to anoint the body with oil to protect it from excessive perspiration. When mixed with perfume, the oil imparted a delightfully refreshing and invigorating sensation. Athletes anointed their bodies as a matter of course before running a race. As the body, therefore, anointed with oil was refreshed, invigorated, and better fitted for action, so the Lord would anoint His “sheep” with the Holy Spirit, Whom oil symbolizes, to fit them to engage more freely in His service and run in the way He directs—in heavenly fellowship with Him.

New American Bible (revised 1991)

23

- 1 A psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack.
- 2 In green pastures you let me graze; to safe waters you lead me;
- 3 you restore my strength. You guide me along the right path for the sake of your name.
- 4 Even when I walk through a dark valley, I fear no harm for you are at my side; your rod and staff give me courage.
- 5 You set a table before me as my enemies watch; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
- 6 Only goodness and love will pursue me all the days of my life; I will dwell in the house of the LORD for years to come.

- 1 [Psalm 23] God’s loving care for the psalmist is portrayed under the figures of a shepherd for the flock (Psalm 23:1-4) and a host’s generosity toward a guest (Psalm 23:5-6). The imagery of both sections is drawn from traditions of the exodus (Isaiah 40:11; 49:10; Jeremiah 31:10).
- 2 [1] My shepherd: God as good shepherd is common in both the Old Testament and the New Testament (Ezekiel 34:11-16; John 10:11-18).
- 3 [3] The right path: connotes “right way” and “way of righteousness.”
- 4 [4] A dark valley: a different division of the Hebrew consonants yields the translation “the valley of the shadow of death.”
- 5 [5] You set a table before me: this expression occurs in an exodus context in Psalm 78:19. As my enemies watch: my enemies see that I am God’s friend and guest. Oil: a perfumed ointment made from olive oil, used especially at banquets (Psalm 104:15; Matthew 26:7; Luke 7:37, 46; John 12:2).
- 6 [6] Goodness and love: the blessings of God’s covenant with Israel.