

ספר תהילים כג | Tehillim / Psalms 23

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Thy Rod and Thy Staff, a Sign of Your Great Covenant!

This week's study is from *Tehillim / Psalms 23:1-6*, and is one of the most well known Psalms that David composed with regard to his relationship with the Lord God Almighty. The Psalm is introduced saying: *23:1 A Psalm of David. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. (NASB)* How does the Lord who "Shepherds" (רָעִי) David cause him not to have want or need for anything? David says that the Lord causes him to lie down in green pastures (בְּבָאוֹת דְּשָׂא יִרְבִּיצֵנִי עַל-מִי מְנַחֹת) *23:2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. NASB*) and to lay beside quiet waters. The Scriptures state: *23:3 He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. (NASB)* the Lord restores our soul and guides us in righteousness all for the reason of His Name. How are these connected, the restoration of the soul, the righteous way/path of the Lord, and the Name of the Lord God Almighty? David states that *23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. (NASB)* He says that no matter where we go, the Lord is with us and we are not to fear. How does the rod and staff of God comfort us? David says: *23:5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. (NASB)* The Lord prepares a table before his enemies, this is significant since when being pursued by our enemies one does not desire food to eat. As a result of the Lord being with David, he says *23:6 Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. (NASB)*

עברית Hebrew

ארמי Aramaic

ελληνικός Greek

ספר תהלים פרק כג	ספר טוביה פרק כג	ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 23
<p>א מְזֻמֹּר לְדָוִד יְהוָה רָעִי לֹא אֶחְסָר: ב בְּבָאוֹת דְּשָׂא יִרְבִּיצֵנִי עַל-מִי מְנַחֹת יְנַחֵנִי: ג נַפְשִׁי יִשׁוּבֵב יְנַחֵנִי בְּמַעְגְלֵי-צֶדֶק לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ: ד גַּם כִּי-אֵלֶּה בְּגִיא צַלְמוֹת לֹא-אִירָא רַע כִּי-אַתָּה עִמָּדִי שְׂבָטְךָ וּמִשְׁעַנְתְּךָ הִמָּה יְנַחֲמֵנִי: ה תַּעֲרֹף לִפְנֵי שְׁלֹחַן נֶגְדַּ צַּרְרֵי דְשִׁנְתָּ בְשֶׁמֶן רֹאשִׁי כּוֹסֵי רוּיָה: ו אֵךְ טוֹב וְחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי כָּל-יְמֵי חַיִּי וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבַיִת-יְהוָה לְאַרְךָ יָמִים:</p>	<p>א תושבחתא לדוד יהוה דזן ית עמיה לעמיה במדברא לא חסרו כולא: ב באתר ציחתא צהוותא בהניית דיתאין ישרינני על מי ניחיא מוי דניח דברני: ג נפשי ייתיב במנא ופסיונין דברני בהלכות צדקא צדיקי מטול גבורת שמיה: ד ברם לחוד כד אזל בגלותא במישר טולא דמותא לא אדחל מבישתא מטול דמימרך בסעדי תיגדאך תריצא ואוריתך הינון ינחמונני: ה סדרת קדמי פתור מנא זקיף קבל מעיקיי דהינתא בעופיא פטימא גושמיה ובמשח רבותא ריש כהנני כלידי רווחא: ו ברם טבתא טיבותא וחסדא ירדפונני כל יומי חיי כד אתיב בבית מקדשא דיהוה נגדא דיומנא דיומא:</p>	<p>23:1 ψαλμὸς τῷ δαυὶδ κύριος ποιμαίνει με καὶ οὐδὲν με ὑστερήσει 23:2 εἰς τόπον χλόης ἐκεῖ με κατεσκήνωσεν ἐπὶ ὕδατος ἀναπαύσεως ἐξέθρεψέν με 23:3 τὴν ψυχὴν μου ἐπέστρεψεν ὠδήγησέν με ἐπὶ τρίβους δικαιοσύνης ἕνεκεν τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ 23:4 ἐὰν γὰρ καὶ πορευθῶ ἐν μέσῳ σκιάς θανάτου οὐ φοβηθήσομαι κακὰ ὅτι σὺ μετ' ἐμοῦ εἶ ἡ ῥάβδος σου καὶ ἡ βακτηρία σου αὐταὶ με παρεκάλεσαν 23:5 ἠτοίμασας ἐνώπιόν μου τράπεζαν ἐξ ἐναντίας τῶν θλιβόντων με ἐλίπανας ἐν ἐλαίῳ τὴν κεφαλὴν μου καὶ τὸ ποτήριόν σου μεθύσκον ὡς κράτιστον 23:6 καὶ τὸ ἔλεός σου καταδιώξεται με πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας τῆς ζωῆς μου καὶ τὸ κατοικεῖν με ἐν οἴκῳ κυρίου εἰς μακρότητα ἡμερῶν</p>

<p>Tehillim / Psalms 23 A Psalm of David. 23:1 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. 23:2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. 23:3 He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. 23:5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. 23:6 Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. (NASB)</p>	<p>Toviyah / Psalms Chapter 23 23:1 A psalm of David. It is the Lord who fed his people in the wilderness; they did not lack anything. 23:2 In a place of thirst he will settle me in pleasant grass; he led me to the waters of rest. 23:3 He will restore my soul with manna; he led me in the paths of righteousness for the sake of his name. 23:4 Indeed, when I go into exile by the plain of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for your word is my help, your straight staff and your Torah, they will comfort me. 23:5 You have set before me a high table of manna in front of my oppressors; you have fattened my body with stuffed fowl, and with anointing oil [you have fattened] the heads of my priests; my goblet is wide. 23:6 Indeed grace and favor will follow me all the days of my life, while I sit in the sanctuary of the Lord for length of days. (EMC)</p>	<p>Psalmoi / Psalms 23 A Psalm of David. 23:1 The Lord tends me as a shepherd, and I shall want nothing. 23:2 In a place of green grass, there he has made me dwell: he has nourished me by the water of rest. 23:3 He has restored my soul: he has guided me into the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake. 23:4 Yea, even if I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will not be afraid of evils: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, these have comforted me. 23:5 Thou has prepared a table before me in presence of them that afflict me: thou hast thoroughly anointed my head with oil; and thy cup cheers me like the best wine. 23:6 Thy mercy also shall follow me all the days of my life: and my dwelling shall be in the house of the Lord for a very long time. (LXX)</p>
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Tehillim / Psalms 23:1-6, and is one of the most well known Psalms that David composed with regard to his relationship with the Lord God Almighty. We do not know when David wrote *Tehillim / Psalms 23*. Perhaps it was when he fled his son Absalom when Absalom tried to usurp David as king of Israel? When David fled from Absalom, he run to the Jordan River at the ford known as Jabbok and entered the land known as Gilead. In Gilead, David met a man named Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim, he was 80 years old at the time of Absalom's revolt. Barzillai was distinguished for his loyalty for David and He provided for the king's followers (*2 Samuel 17:27*). David remembered his kindness on his death bed and commended Barzillai's children to the care of Solomon (*1 Kings 2:7*). According to the Scriptures, Barzillai was a shepherd. It may be at this time that David composed this Psalm saying אֶחָסֵר לַיהוָה רַעִי לֹא אֶחָסֵר: *23:1 A Psalm of David. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. (NASB)* The word David uses here אֶחָסֵר in the first person singular from the root חָסַר meaning when used as an adjective “absent, missing; lacking, incomplete, minus, wanting, deficient, devoid, short” and as a verb “to subtract; give less; deprive; miss.” David says that because God is His Shepherd, nothing is lacking, missing, or deficient, he has not been deprived of anything. How does the Lord who “Shepherds” (רַעִי) David cause him not to have want or need for anything? According to the rabbis in the Aramaic Targum, we read אַ תּוֹשְׁבַחְתָּא לְדוּד יְהוּה דּוֹן יַת עַמִּיה *23:1 A psalm of David. It is the Lord who fed his people in the wilderness; they did not lack anything. (EMC)* The rabbis say that David was thinking of the people in the wilderness having a lack of nothing because the Lord provided all they needed, when he composed this Psalm. What kinds of needs were met for the Children of Israel in the wilderness according to the Torah? According to Parashat Beshlach, *Shemot / Exodus 14:13*, Moshe said יִגַּד לְיִשְׂרָאֵל מִלִּפְנֵי אֱלֹהִים אֵל-הַעֲמָל-הַעֲמָל הַתִּירָאוּ הַתִּיַצְבוּ וְרָאוּ אֶת-יְהוָה *14:13 But*

Moses said to the people, 'Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. (NASB)

The Lord God Almighty was in the process of delivering Israel from bondage in Egypt and according to the Torah He would go on to sustain a vast number of people in a desolate and dangerous desert. During their forty year wilderness journey, the Children of Israel were rarely in an oasis of comfort; however, during all those years in the Desert, God provided for His children and protected them. According to Parashat Ki Tavo, we read in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 29:4-6*, וְאִלֶּיְכֶם וְנִעַלְתֶּם לֹא-בִלְתָּה מֵעַל רַגְלֶיךָ: ה' לָחֶם לֹא אָכַלְתֶּם וַיַּיֵּן וְשִׁכָר לֹא שָׁתִיתֶם לְמַעַן תִּדְעוּ כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: 29:5 [מפטיר] וַתָּבֹאוּ אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וַיֵּצֵא סִיחֹן מֶלֶךְ-הַשְּׁבוֹן וְעוֹג מֶלֶךְ-הַבָּשָׁן לְקָרְאתָנוּ לְמִלְחָמָה וַנִּצֵּם: 29:6 'You have not eaten bread, nor have you drunk wine or strong drink, in order that you might know that I am the Lord your God. 29:7 'When you reached this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon and Og the king of Bashan came out to meet us for battle, but we defeated them; (NASB) Like David the children of Israel were לֹא אָחָסָר (lo echsar) the Lord God Almighty was their Shepherd, and they were not lacking, missing, deficient, or deprived of anything. According to the Torah, the following list can be made regarding the provisions God made for Israel so that they were לֹא אָחָסָר ("without need."

1. Nobody needed a doctor if they obeyed the Lord (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 7:15*)
2. Nobody needed shoes (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 29:4-6*)
3. Nobody needed new clothing (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 8:4, 29:4-6*)
4. Nobody ate bread and they lived well (*Shemot / Exodus 16:15, Devarim / Deuteronomy 29:6*)
5. Nobody had wine or beer but they did not lack for something to drink (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 29:6*).
6. Nobody doubted the love and care of God who protected them during their wilderness journey.
7. Nobody understood what God was doing until they had a changed heart.
The purpose of the wilderness journey was to weed out the unfaithful and to train the children of God in His Torah so they would know that He is God (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 29:6*).

It is interesting to note that the key to the children of Israel being free from disease is found in Parashat Ekev, *Devarim / Deuteronomy 7:16*.

Devarim / Deuteronomy 7:14-16

7:14 'You shall be blessed above all peoples; there will be no male or female barren among you or among your cattle. 7:15 'The Lord will remove from you all sickness; and He will not put on you any of the harmful diseases of Egypt which you have known, but He will lay them on all who hate you. 7:16 'You shall consume all the peoples whom the Lord your God will deliver to you; your eye shall not pity them, nor shall you serve their gods, for that would be a snare to you. (NASB)

יֵד בְּרוּךְ תִּהְיֶה מִכָּל-הָעַמִּים לֹא-יִהְיֶה בְּךָ עֶקֶר וְעֶקְרָה וּבִבְהֵמָתֶךָ: טו וְהִסִּיר יְהוָה מִמֶּךָ כָּל-חֲלִי וְכָל-מַדְוֵי מִצָּרִים הָרְעִים אֲשֶׁר יִדְעָתָ לֹא יִשְׁיִמָּם בְּךָ וְנִתְּנָם בְּכָל-שְׁנָאֶיךָ: טז וְאָכַלְתָּ אֶת-כָּל-הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ לֹא-תַחֲוֶם עֵינֶיךָ עֲלֵיהֶם וְלֹא תַעֲבֹד אֶת-אֱלֹהֵיהֶם כִּי-מוֹקֵשׁ הוּא לְךָ:

And according to the Apostolic Writings, the Apostle Paul said in *1 Corinthians 10:1-12*:

1 Corinthians 10:1-12

10:1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; 10:2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 10:3 and all ate the same spiritual food; 10:4 and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. 10:5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. 10:6 Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. 10:7 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, 'The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play.' 10:8 Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. 10:9 Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. 10:10 Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 10:11 Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 10:12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. (NASB)

¹Οὐ θέλω γὰρ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν πάντες ὑπὸ τὴν νεφέλην ἦσαν καὶ πάντες διὰ τῆς θαλάσσης διῆλθον, ²καὶ πάντες εἰς τὸν Μωϋσῆν ἐβαπτίσθησαν ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ καὶ ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ, ³καὶ πάντες τὸ αὐτὸ πνευματικὸν βρῶμα ἔφαγον, ⁴καὶ πάντες τὸ αὐτὸ πνευματικὸν ἕπιον πόμα: ἔπιον γὰρ ἐκ πνευματικῆς ἀκολουθούσης πέτρας: ἡ πέτρα δὲ ἦν ὁ Χριστός. ⁵ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐν τοῖς πλείοσιν αὐτῶν εὐδόκησεν ὁ θεός, κατεστρώθησαν γὰρ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ. ⁶ταῦτα δὲ τύποι ἡμῶν ἐγενήθησαν, εἰς τὸ μὴ εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἐπιθυμητὰς κακῶν, καθὼς κάκεῖνοι ἐπεθύμησαν. ⁷μηδὲ εἰδωλολάτραι γίνεσθε, καθὼς τινες αὐτῶν: ὡς περ γέγραπται, Ἐκάθισεν ὁ λαὸς φαγεῖν καὶ πεῖν, καὶ ἀνέστησαν παίζειν. ⁸μηδὲ πορνεύωμεν, καθὼς τινες αὐτῶν ἐπόρνευσαν, καὶ ἔπεσαν μιᾷ ἡμέρᾳ εἴκοσι τρεῖς χιλιάδες. ⁹μηδὲ ἐκπειράζωμεν τὸν Χριστόν, καθὼς τινες αὐτῶν ἐπέειρασαν, καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ὄφρων ἀπάλλυντο. ¹⁰μηδὲ γογγύζετε, καθάπερ τινες αὐτῶν ἐγόγγυσαν, καὶ ἀπόλλυντο ὑπὸ τοῦ ὀλοθρευτοῦ. ¹¹ταῦτα δὲ τυπικῶς συνέβαιναν ἐκείνοις, ἐγράφη δὲ πρὸς νοουθεσίαν ἡμῶν, εἰς οὓς τὰ τέλη τῶν αἰῶνων κατήντηκεν. ¹²ὥστε ὁ δοκῶν ἐστάναι βλεπέτω μὴ πέσει.

Paul continues in *1 Corinthians 11:29-31* saying *11:29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. 11:30 For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. 11:31 But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. (NASB)* (29 ὁ γὰρ ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων κρίμα ἑαυτοῦ ἐσθίει καὶ πίνει μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα. 30 διὰ τοῦτο ἐν ὑμῖν πολλοὶ ἀσθενεῖς καὶ ἄρρωστοι καὶ κοιμῶνται ἱκανοί. 31 εἰ δὲ ἑαυτοὺς διεκρίνομεν, οὐκ ἂν ἐκρινόμεθα:.) In the context of the Lord's table and commemorating the sacrifice of the Messiah, his body and blood (*unleavened bread and wine*) the people involved at that time appear to not be judging themselves and their actions. As a result of this Paul says many are weak, sick, and are dead (διὰ τοῦτο ἐν ὑμῖν πολλοὶ ἀσθενεῖς καὶ ἄρρωστοι καὶ κοιμῶνται ἱκανοί). In the Torah (Parashat Ekev), the people were to **אֶתְכַלְכְּלֵם אֶתְכֹלֵם אֶתְכֹלֵם** “consume all the people” the Lord is giving into their hands (7:16 *'You shall consume all the peoples whom the Lord your God will deliver to you; your eye shall not pity them, nor shall you serve their gods, for that would be a snare to you. NASB*) and the reason was so they do not desire, crave, covet, or lust after evil and carnal things. This is the example that Paul speaks of in *1 Corinthians 10:1-12* saying “these are given as examples so that we do not sin.” We are not to crave, covet or lust after the things of this world. It is interesting how much we can get out of the very first verse of *Tehillim / Psalms 23* on what David is saying **אֲנִי לֹא צָרְכִי אֲנִי לֹא צָרְכִי אֲנִי לֹא צָרְכִי** *אֲנִי לֹא צָרְכִי אֲנִי לֹא צָרְכִי אֲנִי לֹא צָרְכִי* *23:1 A Psalm of David. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. (NASB)* David did not have need, want, or desire for anything (אֲנִי לֹא צָרְכִי); he was not lacking, missing, or deficient, he has not been deprived of anything because he has kept the way of the Lord. According to David in *Tehillim / Psalms 19*, the Torah of the Lord is perfect, restores the soul, the Torah is the testimony of the Lord, and it is given to make one wise, the ordinances of the Lord are right and the commandment enlightens the eyes. In the study on

Tehillim / Psalms 19:5-7, a parallel is drawn between “light” and “speech.” The difference between light and darkness can be understood as a parallel between the knowledge of good and evil. In the light one is able to judge how others are walking and to choose the right path to walk in. Darkness is used to hide ones evil ways, to walk in wickedness without others observing what you are doing. Light has also been used to illustrate the choice of whether to follow the commandments of God, and hope for His eternal rewards, and darkness to follow the enticings of the evil one which persuade man to do evil and become captive and damned to hell in eternal darkness. David walked in the light of God’s holiness and applied the Torah to his life to keep and observe the statutes of the Lord. As a result of this the Lord shepherds him and gives him provisions so that he is not in want or need of anything.

As a result of David’s remaining obedient to the Lord, He says that the Lord causes him to lie down in green pastures (ב, בְּנֵאוֹת דְּשָׁא יִרְבִּיצֵנִי עַל-מֵי מְנַחֹת יְנַהֲלֵנִי: *23:2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. NASB*) and to lay beside quiet waters. David also says ג נִפְשִׁי יְשׁוּבָב יְנַהֲנֵי *23:3 He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake. (NASB)* It is interesting here on the choice of words that are being used in *Tehillim / Psalms 23:2*. The Hebrew text states נִפְשִׁי יְשׁוּבָב (nafshi yeshovev) meaning the Lord “causes gladness and joy to my soul.” NASB translates the “He restores my soul.” The Aramaic Targum states ג נפשי ייחייב במנא ופסיונין דברני *23:3 He will restore my soul with manna; he led me in the paths of righteousness for the sake of his name. (EMC)* The rabbis say the Lord restores David’s soul with manna. The Septuagint says τὴν ψυχὴν μου ἐπέστρεψεν ὠδήγησέν με ἐπὶ τρίβους δικαιοσύνης ἕνεκεν τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ *23:3 He has restored my soul: he has guided me into the paths of righteousness, for his name’s sake. (LXX)* The Literal Greek states “my life He returned” (ψυχὴν μου ἐπέστρεψεν) and “He guided me (ὠδήγησέν) upon roads (τρίβους) of righteousness (δικαιοσύνης) because of His name.” The rabbis of the LXX translate that God has restored or returned David’s life to him and in the Aramaic Targum it was the bread from heaven that restores the soul. According to Parashat Ekev, Moshe taught the people saying that man does not live by bread alone but on “all that goes out” (על-כל-מוצא) or proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. The rabbis pick up on Moshe’s words that our life depends upon God’s Word. According to the Torah, bread was generally made from wheat (*Shemot / Exodus 29:2 and Judges 6:19*), though sometimes bread was made from other grains too (*Bereshit / Genesis 14:18 and Judges 7:13*). Unleavened bread was used for Passover (*Shemot / Exodus 12:15-20, Devarim / Deuteronomy 16:3*), the bread of the presence was provided fresh every Shabbat and were to be eaten in the Tabernacle by the Priests (*Shemot / Exodus 25:30, Vayikra / Leviticus 24:8, 1 Samuel 21:1-6, and Matthew 12:4*). The word “bread” (לחם) is also used figuratively in the Tanakh as the bread of sorrows in *Tehillim / Psalms 127:2*, the bread of tears in *Tehillim / Psalms 80:5*, the bread of wickedness in *Mishley / Proverbs 4:17*, and the bread of deceit in *Mishley / Proverbs 20:17*. The Psalms and Proverbs suggest to us that bread is used to illustrate the works of the flesh. This is how and why Yeshua used unleavened bread symbolically to refer to his body. In Parashat Ekev and in Parashat Beshalach Lecha (*Shemot / Exodus 16*) Manna is introduced as bread that God has given to the people from Heaven. On seeing the manna on the ground each man said to his brother in Hebrew “Ma Hu” (אִישׁ אֶל-) which means “What/who is He.” The pronoun “hu” (הוא) may be used in the Hebrew language to refer to a person, place, or thing. The personal pronoun may also refer to a plurality (of Israel) according its usage in Parashat Balak (see *Bamidbar / Numbers 22:12, וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל-בְּלָעָם לֹא תִלְדָּה עִמָּהֶם, (לֹא תֹאֵר אֶת-הָעַם כִּי בְרוּךְ הוּא וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַאֲמָרוּ גִבֹר לְאַחֲוֵיהִי מִנְּאָה הוּא אֲרִי לֹא יָדְעוּ מָה הוּא וַאֲמָר מִשָּׁה לְהוֹן הוּא לְחִמָּא דִּיהָב) indicated by the Aramaic word אַרִי meaning to be uncertain in the sense of seeing like in a vision according to Brown, Driver, and Briggs Lexicon. Studying the Apostolic Writings, in *John 6:31-32*, Yeshua*

the Messiah uses the people's statement "Man Hu" (מָה הוּא) in a midrashic sense to indicate what the people did not know then, he is explaining to them now. He (הוּא) is the one these scriptures are referring too. The true bread that comes from heaven is the Word of the Living God (*John 6:31-32*) and affirms what is written in the Torah of Him in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 8:1-3*. The interesting concept found here in the Scriptures is how the rabbis translate *Tehillim / Psalms 23:3* in the Aramaic Targum ג נפשי ייתיב במנא ופסיונין דברני *23:3 He will restore my soul with manna; he led me in the paths of righteousness for the sake of his name. (EMC)* The rabbis say David's belief is in the Lord who restores his soul will do so giving him manna (מנא). The very next thought is that the Lord will guide (MSS, LXX) or lead (EMC), David in paths of righteousness. This is achieved in the Word of God, according to the Torah. The rabbis have made the connection between Manna and the Word of the Lord. This is the same connection that Yeshua has made in *John 6:31-32*, man does not live by bread alone but by the Word of God, and Yeshua the living Word (*John 1:1-14*), we cannot live without Him in our lives. The Scriptures (David) say the Lord restores our souls and guides us in righteousness all for the reason of His Name. It is because of His name sake that He restores our souls in His Word, in and according to His righteous ways, and in His Son Yeshua the living Word.

ד גם כִּי-אֵלֶיךָ בָּגִיָּא צִלְמוֹת לֹא-אֵירָא רַע כִּי-אִתָּהּ עִמָּדֵי שִׁבְטֶךָ וּמִשְׁעֲנֵתֶךָ הִקְמָה יְנַחֲמֵנִי: *23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. (NASB)* He says that no matter where we go, the Lord is with us and we are not to fear. How does the rod and staff of God comfort us? Interestingly two words are used here in the Psalm. The word שִׁבְטֶךָ from the root שבט meaning as a noun "rod, stick, or tribe, clan," and the word וּמִשְׁעֲנֵתֶךָ from the root שען meaning as a verb "to lean" and as a noun "to support, rest, prop; assistance, welfare." Researching the use of these words, it is interesting according to the Masoretic Text, when Moshe refers to a "staff or rod," he uses the word מַטֵּה, whereas when he refers to "tribe" in the Torah he uses the word שבט. So, what is David trying to say here in *Tehillim / Psalms 23:4* using the words שִׁבְטֶךָ וּמִשְׁעֲנֵתֶךָ (shivtecha umishantecha)? Thinking on the meaning of a shepherds staff throughout the Scriptures, we think of protection against our enemies, to discipline, to guide, and to rescue. In addition to this, a royal scepter was also known as a rod and a rod is frequently mentioned as a weapon. The staff or rod was also symbolic of authority, as for example the scepter that stands between the king's feet. Was this the imagery that David is trying to portray using the words שִׁבְטֶךָ וּמִשְׁעֲנֵתֶךָ (shivtecha umishantecha)? David begins this verse saying גם כִּי-אֵלֶיךָ בָּגִיָּא צִלְמוֹת לֹא-אֵירָא רַע כִּי-אִתָּהּ עִמָּדֵי "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me" the Lord is with David and this is only made possible within the covenant relationship David has with the Lord. David uses the word שבט which has the meaning "tribe or clan," by reason that a person who is among the tribes of Israel is living in the covenant relationship with God. Whether one is native born or a ger (stranger) living in the midst of the people. For example, the man who belongs to a tribe is living according to the Torah, honoring their parents and living with love honor and respect for others, and honoring the Lord God Almighty. In addition to this, paying particular attention to the NASB translation, the translators translated שִׁבְטֶךָ וּמִשְׁעֲנֵתֶךָ (shivtecha umishantecha) as "Your rod and Your staff;" the words שִׁבְטֶךָ וּמִשְׁעֲנֵתֶךָ are not so much expressive of the "rod and staff" imagery as much as it is expressing emphasis upon the Covenant of God with His people, the tribes of Israel, and the one upon whom we are to lean (i.e. וּמִשְׁעֲנֵתֶךָ from the root שען meaning "verb: to lean"). Being in the covenant relationship with the Lord, we are comforted in His presence. This leads to our understanding that He cares for us, protects us, guides us in His word (by His staff), etc. He is Lord and King over our community, relationships, lives, and all that we are. It is interesting to read, based on this understanding, how the rabbis interpret this verse. The Aramaic Targum states ד ברם לחוד כד אזל בגלותא *23:4 Indeed, when I go into exile by the plain of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for your word is my help, your straight staff and your Torah, they will comfort me. (EMC)* The rabbis translate *Tehillim / Psalms 23:4*

to say “*your straight staff and your Torah, they will comfort me.*” They have come to the same conclusion that David is speaking within the context of the covenant relationship, that we have no fear and the Lord will guide us with his “*straight staff*” in His ways according to the Torah. The rabbis of the Septuagint say 23:4 ἐὰν γὰρ καὶ πορευθῶ ἐν μέσῳ σκιᾶς θανάτου οὐ φοβηθήσομαι κακὰ ὅτι σὺ μετ’ ἐμοῦ εἶ ἡ ῥάβδος σου καὶ ἡ βακτηρία σου αὐταὶ με παρεκάλεσαν 23:4 *Yea, even if I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will not be afraid of evils: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, these have comforted me. (LXX)* This follows very close to the NASB translation and suggests that the NASB translators may have made use of the LXX in their translation of the Masoretic Text into English.

The word שֵׁבֶט from the root שבט is most often translated as tribe in the Torah rather than “*staff or rod.*” So the task is trying to understand how a staff is related to a tribe? The word מַטֵּה (matteh) as a masculine noun has the meaning “*branch*” and similarly, so does the word Shevat (שבט). Looking at the Torah text, the word Shevat (שבט) is found in Parashat Vayechi in *Bereshit / Genesis 49:10, 16, and 28.*

י לא-יסור שֵׁבֶט מִיהוּדָה וּמַחְקֵק מִבֵּין רַגְלָיו עַד כִּי-יבֹא שִׁילָה וְלוֹ יִקְהֶת עַמִּים:
49:10 *‘The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. (NASB)*

טז דָן יִדִין עַמוֹ כְּאַחַד שֵׁבֶטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
49:16 *‘Dan shall judge his people, As one of the tribes of Israel. (NASB)*

כח כָּל-אַלְהֵי שֵׁבֶטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל נְשִׂיִם עָשָׂר וְזֹאת אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר לָהֶם אֲבִיהֶם וַיְבָרֶךְ אוֹתָם אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר
כְּבָרְכָתוֹ בְּרַךְ אֹתָם:
49:28 *All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them. He blessed them, every one with the blessing appropriate to him. (NASB)*

Here we see the dual usage of the word Shevat (שבט) as both a staff (scepter) and tribe. According to the usage of these words in the Torah, the Shevat (שבט) is used as a reference to a “*ruling rod*” whereas the word מַטֵּה (matteh) is used as a “*supporting staff.*” The word מַטֵּה (matteh) is a branch that bends away from a tree and has been smoothed and sized. A Shevat (שבט) or tribe is a descendant of a particular person. Take the example of Jacob and his twelve sons, like branches of the tree, the twelve sons bend away from their father as they grow and the Lord God Almighty gives his Torah (instruction) to these sons in order that they might be smoothed and sized according to God’s word. Notice how the staff, rod, scepter, and tribe are all interconnected. There is a deep spiritual meaning here that David is bringing out in his Psalm.

- Abraham was the shepherd of Israel (lived 175 years)
- Isaac was the shepherd of Israel (lived 180 years)
- Jacob was a shepherd of Israel (lived 147 years)
- Joseph was a shepherd of Israel (lived 110 years)

ו שְׁמַעְנוּ | אֲדֹנָי 23:6 *23:6 נְשִׂיאֵי אֱלֹהִים אַתָּה בְּתוֹכֵנוּ בְּמִבְחָר קְבַרְיֵנוּ קְבַר אֶת-מֵתָה אִישׁ מִמֶּנּוּ אֶת-קְבָרוֹ לֹא-יִכְלֶה מִמָּךְ מִקְבַר מֵתָה:
‘Hear us, my lord, you are a mighty prince among us; bury your dead in the choicest of our graves; none of us will refuse you his grave for burying your dead.’ (NASB)* It followed then that the people of Canaan regarded Abraham as prince and this was passed on to Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Considering this we find they had both a shepherd and a princely rule. Both roles were as leaders (shepherd and prince) and so when Abraham died, this role was passed on to Isaac, and then Jacob, and then Joseph, etc. In Parashat Shemot, this is why when Joseph died the Scriptures say that “*A new king came into power over Egypt who did not*
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know Joseph” (*Shemot / Exodus 1:8*). This new king did not know Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and therefore he did not recognize the authority of Joseph or the role he had in saving all of Egypt. The staff or rod that Joseph carried, in the role as shepherd and ruler disappeared. It is not until *Shemot / Exodus 3:16-4:5* that we read of the rod Moshe carried.

Shemot / Exodus 3:16-4:5

3:16 ‘Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, ‘I am indeed concerned about you and what has been done to you in Egypt. 3:17 ‘So I said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey.’ 3:18 ‘They will pay heed to what you say; and you with the elders of Israel will come to the king of Egypt and you will say to him, ‘The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. So now, please, let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.’ 3:19 ‘But I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go, except under compulsion. 3:20 ‘So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My miracles which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go. 3:21 ‘I will grant this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be that when you go, you will not go empty-handed. 3:22 ‘But every woman shall ask of her neighbor and the woman who lives in her house, articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; and you will put them on your sons and daughters. Thus you will plunder the Egyptians.’ 4:1 Then Moses said, ‘What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say? For they may say, ‘The Lord has not appeared to you.’’ 4:2 The Lord said to him, ‘What is that in your hand?’ And he said, ‘A staff.’ 4:3 Then He said, ‘Throw it on the ground.’ So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. 4:4 But the Lord said to Moses, ‘Stretch out your hand and grasp it by its tail’ so he stretched out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand 4:5 ‘that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.’ (NASB)

טז לך ואספת את זקני ישראל ואמרת אליהם יהוה אלהי אבותיכם נראה אלי אלהי אברהם יצחק ויעקב לאמר פקד פקדתי אתכם ואת העשוי לכם במצרים: יז ואמר אעלה אתכם מעני מצרים אל ארץ הפנימי והחתי והאמרי והפרזי והחוי והיבوسی אל ארץ זבת חלב ודבש: יח ושמעו לקולך ובאת אתה וזקני ישראל אל מלך מצרים ואמרתם אליו יהוה אלהי העבריים נקרה עלינו ועתה נלכה נא דרך שלשת ימים במדבר ונזכרה ליהוה אלהינו: יט ואני ידעתי כי לא יתן אתכם מלך מצרים להלך ולא ביד חזקה: כ ושלחתי את ידו והכיתי את מצרים בכל נפלאתי אשר אעשה בקרבן ואחרי כן ישלח אתכם: כא ונתתי את חן העם הזה בעיני מצרים והיה כי תלכו לא תלכו ריקם: כב ושאלה אשה משכנתה ומגרת ביתה כלי כסף וכלי זהב ושמלת ושמתם על בניכם ועל בנותיכם ונצלתם את מצרים: א ויען משה ויאמר והן לא יאמינו לי ולא ישמעו בקולי כי יאמרו לא נראה אליך יהוה: ב ויאמר אליו יהוה מזה [מה-זה] בידך ויאמר מטה: ג ויאמר השליכהו ארצה וישלכהו ארצה ויהי לנחש ויגס משה מפניו: ד ויאמר יהוה אל משה שלח ידך ואחז בזנבו וישלח ידו ויחזק בו ויהי למטה בכפו: ה למען יאמינו כי נראה אליך יהוה אלהי אבתם אלהי אברהם אלהי יצחק ואלהי יעקב:

Notice the Torah describes the word מטה (matteh, rod) that Moshe is carrying and God asks מה-זה בידך “Ma Zeh Beyadcha” meaning “what is that in your hand?” It is interesting in the Targum Pseudo Jonathan we read:

א ואתיב משה ואמר והא לא יהימנון לי ולא יקבלון מיני ארום ימרון לא איתגלי יי ב ואמר ליה יי מה דין בידך ואמר חוטרא ג ואמר טלוק יתיה לארעא וטלקיה לארעא והוה לחויה וערק משה מן קדמוי ד ואמר יי למשה אושיט ידך ואיחוד בקוטניה ואושיט ידיה ואתקיף ביה והוה לחוטרא בידיה ה מן בגלל דיהמנון ארום אתגלי לך יי אלקא דאבהתכון אלקיה דאברהם אל-קיה דיצחק ואלקיה דיעקב

*4:1 And Moshe answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken to me; for they will say, The Lord has not appeared to you. 4:2 And the Lord said to him, What is that in your hand? And he said, **The rod.** 4:3 And He said, Cast it on the ground; and he cast it to the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moshe fled from before it. [And He said, Cast it on the ground; and he cast it on the ground.] 4:4 And the Lord said to Moshe, Stretch forth your hand and seize (it) by its tail. [And grasp the place of its tail.] And he stretched forth his hand and grasped it, and it became the **rod** in his hand. 4:5 In order that they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has revealed Himself to you. (TARGUM)*

Note here how the Aramaic Targum says **ואמר חוטרא** where God is asking Moshe “*what is in your hand*” and Moshe replies saying a “*stick, staff.*” Note how this is an instrument that is an important part of being both a shepherd and ruler. In *Shemot / Exodus 4:20* we read *4:20 So Moses took his wife and his sons, mounted them upon the donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt, and Moses took the staff of God in his hand. (NASB)* and the Aramaic Targum states *4:20 And Moshe took his wife and his sons, and made them ride on the ass, and returned to the land of Egypt. And Moshe took the rod which he had brought away from the chamber of his father-in-law; and it was from the sapphire Throne of glory, in weight forty sein; and upon it was engraved and set forth the Great and Glorious Name by which the signs should be wrought before the LORD by his hand. (TARGUM)* where the Targum expands upon the text and emphasizes that it was Moshe’s hand that would perform the miracle using the rod. Note also that the miracle was produced by Moshe’s hand and not by the rod according to the Scripture. This is understood from *Shemot / Exodus 4:21* that states *4:21 The Lord said to Moses, “When you go to return to Egypt, see all the signs that I have placed in your hand and perform them before Pharaoh, but I will strengthen his heart, and he will not send out the people. (NASB)* Interestingly, Rashi states “*that I have placed in your hand He did not say this in reference to the three aforementioned signs, for He had not commanded that he [Moses] do them before Pharaoh but before Israel, in order that they would believe him, and we do not find that he performed them before him [Pharaoh]. But [regarding] signs that I am destined to put into your hand in Egypt, such as: “When Pharaoh speaks to you [i.e., asking for you to perform signs], etc.” (Exodus 7:9), do not wonder that it is written: “that I have placed,” [i.e., implying the past tense,] because this is what it means: “When you speak to him, I will have already placed them into your hand.”* (כא) בלכתך לשוב מצרימה וגו'. דע, שעל) מנת כן תלך, שתהא גבור בשליחותי לעשות כל מופתי לפני פרעה ולא תירא ממנו: אשר שמתי בידך. לא על שלשה אותות האמורות למעלה, שהרי לא לפני פרעה צוה לעשותם אלא לפני ישראל שיאמינו לו, ולא מצינו שעשאם לפניו, אלא מופתים שאני עתיד לשום בידך במצרים, כמו כי ידבר אליכם פרעה וגו', (שמות ז, ט.) ואל תתמה על (אשר כתיב אשר שמתי, שכן משמעו, כשתדבר עמו כבר שִׁמְתִים בידך: Note that six of the ten plagues that God brought upon Egypt were performed with the staff of Moshe. The important point to take away from all of this is the reason or purpose David chose to write his Psalm using the words **וּמִשְׁעֲנֵתְךָ וּשְׁבִטְךָ** (shivtecha umishantecha) is found within the imagery that is given in the “*rod and staff*” is connected to the Covenant of God with His people, the tribes of Israel, and the one upon whom we are to lean, the Lord God Almighty. Being in the covenant relationship with the Lord, we are comforted in His presence. There is power to be delivered in His presence. Truly the Lord cares for us, protects us, and guides us in His word (*by His staff*). The Aramaic Targum states **ד ברם לחוד כד אזל בגלותא במישר טולא דמותא לא אדחל מבישתא מטול דמימרך** *23:4 Indeed, when I go into exile by the plain of the shadow of* Copyright © 2013 MATSATI.COM Ministry

death, I will fear no evil; for your word is my help, your straight staff and your Torah, they will comfort me. (EMC) This is indeed consistent with the covenant protection of God in *Tehillim / Psalms 23:4* to say “your straight staff and your Torah, they will comfort me.”

David says הַתְּעַרְוּ לִפְנֵי ה' 23:5 תַּעֲרֹךְ לְפָנַי | שְׁלַחְוּ נֶגֶד צָרָרִי דְשִׁנְתָּ בְשֶׁמֶן רֵאשִׁי כּוֹסֵי רְוִיָה: You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. (NASB) Why would God prepare a table in front of or before our enemies? What is the table? How is the table prepared? What does this mean to us today? The Masoretic Text says תַּעֲרֹךְ לְפָנַי using the word תַּעֲרֹךְ from the root word עָרַךְ meaning “arrange, set in order.” There is no textual variant in the marginal Masorah of Ginsburg’s Masoretic Text, on this word. The meaning of this word (תַּעֲרֹךְ) indicates that God is arranging or setting in order, He is setting things in an orderly way. This implies that God has a plan and that His preparation is done intentionally, everything is under His control because He is actively setting things up for each of us. According to the text, it says שְׁלַחְוּ לְפָנַי | תַּעֲרֹךְ לְפָנַי “*taaroch lefaney shulkhan*” the Lord is preparing a table. The root word for “*Shulkhan*” (שְׁלַחְוּ) is שָׁלַח meaning “to send” or “sent.” This word שָׁלַח << שְׁלַחְוּ has the meaning to “shoot froth, spread out, stretch forth” and it is an interesting way of describing the table as something that is spread out, or stretched out where food is laid out to eat. This is a description of God’s provision, His sustenance is being provided for David and for us in a very special way. He is ordering, setting things out in a very orderly way. In David’s case, the Lord sets a table before his enemies, so the Lord is providing comfort, rest, friendship, heart felt peace, food, love, hope, and mercy in the midst of whatever it is that David is going through. The Lord prepares a table before our enemies, is significant since when one is being pursued by an enemy one does not desire food to eat. In addition to this, the Scriptures say כּוֹסֵי רְוִיָה בְשֶׁמֶן רֵאשִׁי “*You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.*” This brings into context what David is saying, that the Lord God is providing a blessing, provision, food, mercy, and hope. Note something here in the Hebrew text, the NASB says “*You have anointed my head*” but the text itself says simply “*in oil my head.*” Obviously the translators felt David was meaning that the Lord is anointing his head with oil. The holy anointing oil (שֶׁמֶן הַמִּשְׁחָה) according to the Torah was an integral part of the ordination of the priesthood and the high priest as well as having a part in the consecration of the articles of the tabernacle (see *Shemot / Exodus 30:26*) and the subsequent temples in Jerusalem. The primary purpose of anointing with oil was to cause the anointed persons or objects to become most holy (*Shemot / Exodus 30:29*). Originally, according to the Torah, oil was used exclusively for the priests and the Tabernacle articles but was later extended to include prophets and kings (*1 Samuel 10:1*). In addition to this, it was forbidden to be used on an outsider (*Shemot / Exodus 30:33*) or to be used on the body of a common person (*Shemot / Exodus 30:32*) and the Israelites were forbidden to duplicate any like it for themselves (*Shemot / Exodus 30:32*). The reason was this oil was mixed with incense that was for use specifically and exclusively for the Temple only. Thus, even in the midst of his enemies, the Lord is providing for David, it is as if the Lord has anointed him and his cup overflows. As a result of the Lord being with David, he says וְיָמֵינוּ יִרְדְּפוּנִי כָּל-יְמֵי חַיֵּי וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית-יְהוָה לְאָרְךָ יָמִים: 23:6 אֲדָן טוֹב וְחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי כָּל-יְמֵי חַיֵּי וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית-יְהוָה לְאָרְךָ יָמִים: Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. (NASB) Goodness and mercy will follow all of the days of our lives if we seek the Lord too. The Lord sets a table before us today even in the presence of our enemies. He has provided comfort, rest, friendship, heart felt peace, food, love, hope, and mercy in His Son Yeshua the Messiah so that no matter what we are going through or how difficult something may be, we can know that the Lord God Almighty is with us. What an Awesome God we serve. Let’s Pray!

Rabbinic Commentary

The Rabbinic Commentary (Midrash) on *Tehillim / Psalms 23* has 7 parts. Reading through the Midrash we will be looking at Parts 2, 3, 5, and 7. Let’s begin by outlining *Midrash Tehillim Chapter 23*,

Part 2

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתחיל** (Dibur Hamathil) “*Another comment on The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*”
- The **פתיחתא** (Petihta) “*the homiletic introduction*” to the Midrash says “*These words are to be considered in the light of the verse I understand more from the ancients (Tehillim / Psalms 119:100).*”
- The **משל** (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the **פתיחתא** (Petihta), the rabbis discuss the shepherd and how the work of the shepherd is despised of all people.
- The **נמשל** (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the **משל** (mashal) goes on to expand upon the discussion of the shepherd and how God is called a shepherd.”
- The Concluding phrase says “*But David said, I understand more from the ancients, meaning that Jacob called God shepherd, as it is said The God who has been my shepherd all my life long (Bereshit / Genesis 48:15); so I too call God shepherd, The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.*”

Part 3

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתחיל** (Dibur Hamathil) “*Another comment on The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*”
- The **פתיחתא** (Petihta) “*the homiletic introduction*” to the Midrash says “*These words are to be considered in the light of the verse The Lord your God has blessed you in all the work of your hand (Devarim / Deuteronomy 2:7).*”
- The **משל** (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the **פתיחתא** (Petihta), the rabbis discuss the following:
 - The man who does not work
 - The parable of the wayfarer
 - Manna and meat (quails)
 - The Lord’s hand waxing short and His provision for the children of Israel
- The **נמשל** (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the **משל** (mashal) goes on to expand upon the meaning of “*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*”
- The Concluding phrase says “*For in each of the forty years that the children of Israel were in the wilderness, the angel of death smote fifteen thousand and an odd number of them. And how large was that odd number? Four hundred and eighty nine.*”

Part 5

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתחיל** (Dibur Hamathil) “*He restores my soul (Tehillim / Psalms 23:3)*”
- The **פתיחתא** (Petihta) “*the homiletic introduction*” to the Midrash says “*means that Israel said, God restores my soul with Torah, of which it is said The Law of the Lord is perfect, resorting the soul (Tehillim / Psalms 19:8).*”
- The **משל** (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the **פתיחתא** (Petihta), the rabbis discuss the ways in which the Lord restored Israel.
- The **נמשל** (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the **משל** (mashal) goes on to expand upon the restoration of the children of Israel by providing examples from the Torah.
- The Concluding phrase says “*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies (Tehillim / Psalms 23:5), a table of manna and quail. A table in the presence of my enemies, Issi son of Akiva took these words to imply that the heaps of manna were sixty cubits high. And he who does not believe this, he will not look upon the sweetness to come, as is said He will not look upon the*”

rivers, the flowing steams of honey and curd (Job 20:17)."

Part 7

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתחיל** (Dibur Hamathil) "*The Rabbis taught that this entire Psalm applies to the children of Israel.*"
- The **פתיחתא** (Petihata) "*the homiletic introduction*" to the Midrash says "*Thus He makes me to lie down in green pastures refers to God's promise, I will feed My Sheep, and I will cause them to lie down (Ezekiel 34:15).*"
- The **משל** (mashal) "*the parable,*" goes on to explain the **פתיחתא** (Petihata), the rabbis discuss how the psalm applies to the children of Israel.
- The **נמשל** (Nimshal) "*expansion on the parable*" expands upon the **משל** (mashal) goes on to expand upon how the psalm applies to the children of Israel.
- The Concluding phrase says "*And I will dwell in the house of the Lord, in the Temple. May it be built soon and in our own days. Amen and Amen. For the length of days for time never ending, that is, life in the world to come.*"

Midrash Tehillim 23, Part 2 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (**דיבור המתחיל**) saying "*Another comment on The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*" The rabbis say in the homiletic introduction "*These words are to be considered in the light of the verse I understand more from the ancients (Tehillim / Psalms 119:100).*" The midrash states "*In the whole world you find no occupation more despised than that of the shepherd, who in all his days walks about with his staff and his pouch.*" (**ב"ר הניבא אתה מוצא שאין אומנות**) Why are shepherd's most despised among the people? A shepherd (רועה) or shepherder, is a person who tends, feeds, and guards flocks of sheep. Shepherding is one of the oldest occupations as we know according to the Scriptures beginning some 6,000 years ago in the Middle East. Sheep were kept for their milk, meat and their wool. Sheep were integrated in the family farm along with other animals and in order to maintain a large flock, the sheep needed to be able to move from pasture to pasture; this required the development of an occupation separate from that of the farmer. The duty of shepherds was to keep their flock intact and offer protection from wolves and other predators. The shepherd also supervised the migration of the flock and ensured they made it to market areas in time for shearing. In ancient times shepherds also commonly milked their sheep, and made cheese from this milk; only some shepherds still do this today. Metaphorically, the term "*shepherd*" is used for God, especially as it is described here in *Tehillim / Psalms 23*. Yeshua also refers to himself as the "*Good Shepherd.*" (Note how Yeshua says the "*good*" shepherd.) The Ancient Israelites were a pastoral people and thus shepherding was a common trade among them. It is also worth noting that many Biblical heroes were shepherds, among them the patriarchs Abraham and Jacob, the twelve tribes of Israel, Moshe, and King David; and the prophet Amos, who was a shepherd in the rugged area around Tekoa (*a Jewish settlement in the Gush Etzion region of the Judean Mountains (Israel)*). In the Apostolic Writings, the angels of God announced the birth of Yeshua to shepherds. According to the Torah, Shepherds were most hated of the Egyptians (see *Bereshit / Genesis 46:34*). Shepherds in the first century were poor and despised perhaps because some of their flock would wander and feed on private property. Because shepherds were poor it may have been tempting to become a thief? Because shepherds were tempted to become thieves, the rabbis needed to put in place laws to deal with the problem by prohibiting the purchase of sheep, wool, or milk directly from shepherds. The rabbis also warned parents to steer their children away from shepherding as a career path according to *Mishnah Kiddushin 4:14*

Mishnah Kiddushin 4:14

"Abba Gorion of Zaidan says in the name of Abba Guria: A man should not teach his son to be an ass-driver or a camel-driver, or a barber or a sailor, or a herdsman or a shopkeeper, for their craft is the craft of robbers."

מסכת קדושין פרק ד

אבא גורין אש צדין אומר משום אבא גוריא, לא ילמד אדם את בנו, חמר, גמל, ספר, ספן, רועה, וחנוני, שאומנותן אומנות לסטים.

Shepherds were uneducated and therefore would not have known the proper way of handling themselves in public and to those things pertaining to purity in the Temple service. They were at the bottom of the social ladder. So those who met a shepherd would have likely felt themselves to be superior and therefore this kind of self image would have had an impact upon the self image of the shepherd himself. It would have been a very humbling occupation to be a shepherd. The interesting aspect of the midrash is that *“Yet David presumed to call the Holy One blessed be He, a shepherd. But David said, I understand more from the ancients, meaning that Jacob called God shepherd, as it is said The God who has been my shepherd all my life long (Bereshit / Genesis 48:15); so I too call God shepherd, The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”* ודוד קרא להקב"ה רועה, אלא אמר דוד מזקנים אתבונן, יעקב קרא לו רועה, שנאמר האלהים הרועה אותי מעודי (בראשית מה טו), אף אני קורא אותו רועה, ה' רועי לא אחסר The Lord being our shepherd, is the Lord God Almighty humbling Himself by referring to Himself as a Shepherd? The Apostle Peter said in *1 Peter 5:5-7* saying *5:5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE. 5:6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, 5:7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you...* (NASB) The Lord God Almighty (Our Father in Heaven) is not subordinate to anyone or any thing, thus by induction (*A process of demonstration in which a general truth is gathered from an examination of particular cases, one of which is known to be true, the examination being so conducted that each case is made to depend on the preceding one; -- called also successive induction.*) our Father in heaven would not have need to be humble. However, does the Lord show Himself to be humble? Is there Scripture showing God humbling Himself? According to the Scriptures, Yeshua showed himself to be humble, and Yeshua said that if you have known me you would have known my Father in Heaven (*John 14:7*). Therefore by this reasoning, our Father in heaven would also show Himself to be humble in the image of His Son, the living Word of God. The important aspect of this discussion is that humility conquers pride. To be humble before God is to be subject to His will and protection and to find comfort in the Lord for those who seek Him and His ways. David said *“I understand more from the ancients, meaning that Jacob called God shepherd, as it is said The God who has been my shepherd all my life long (Bereshit / Genesis 48:15); so I too call God shepherd, The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”* The way that David and others viewed God as their shepherd meant that the Lord is the one who guides and protects them and not in the sense of despising, beating, or destruction. In this way, by the example of our Lord and Savior Yeshua, we are to wait humbly for the Lord God Almighty and seek His face. *Devarim / Deuteronomy 4:29 But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul. (NASB)*

Midrash Tehillim 23, Part 3 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying *“Another comment on The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.”* The rabbis say in the homiletic introduction that *“These words are to be considered in the light of the verse The Lord your God has blessed you in all the work of your hand (Devarim / Deuteronomy 2:7).”* How is *“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want”* connected to *Devarim / Deuteronomy 2:7* that the Lord blesses all the work of your hand? The rabbis discuss (i) the man who does not work, (ii) the parable of the wayfarer, (iii) the manna and meat (quails), and (iv) the Lord's hand waxing short and His provision for the children of Israel. How are all of these connected? In Parashat Beha'alotcha, in *Bamidbar / Numbers 11* we read the story when the children of Israel grumbled against the Lord for not having meat to eat in the wilderness. Then the Lord brought meat for a month until the people were sick of eating meat. In *Bamidbar / Numbers 11:23*, when Moshe brought the people's complain to the Lord, God replied to Moshe saying, *‘Is the hand of the Lord short? Now you shall see whether My word will come true for you or not.’* (ויאמר יהוה אל-משה היד יהי תקצר עתה תראה) The Masoretic text has the Lord God stating whether the hand of the Lord is limited or shortened. The Targum Onkelos states *“Is the*

Word of the Lord detained?” According to the Aramaic Targum, it is through the Word (הַמֵּמְרָא, Memra) of the Lord that the God is bringing meat to the children of Israel to eat. In Parashat Shelach, the people have sinned by refusing to enter the promised land. The Lord states that none of the men from this evil congregation will enter the Promised Land.

פרשת ראה ספר במדבר פרק יד פסוק לה-לו

לה אָנִי יְהוָה דְּבַרְתִּי אִם-לֹא | זֹאת אֲעֲשֶׂה לְכָל-הָעֵדָה הָרָעָה הַזֹּאת הַנּוֹעֲדִים עָלַי בְּמִדְבַּר הַזֶּה יִתְמוּ וְשֵׁם יָמָתוּ: לוֹ וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר-שָׁלַח מֹשֶׁה לְתוֹר אֶת-הָאָרֶץ וַיָּשָׁבוּ וַיִּלְוֹנוּ [וַיִּלְיִנוּ] עָלָיו אֶת-כָּל-הָעֵדָה לְהוֹצִיא דָבָה עַל-הָאָרֶץ:

14:35 ‘I, the Lord, have spoken, surely this I will do to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be destroyed, and there they will die.’ 14:36 As for the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land and who returned and made all the congregation grumble against him by bringing out a bad report concerning the land, (NASB)

תרגום אונקלוס ספר במדבר פרק יד פסוק לה-לו

לה אָנָא יְיָ גְזָרִית בְּמִימְרֵי אִם לָא דָא אֲעֵבֵד לְכָל כְּנִשְׁתָּא הָדָא דְאֲזַדְמְנוּן עָלַי בְּמִדְבְּרָא הַדִּי יְסוּפוּן וְתָמֹן יָמוּתוּן: לוֹ וַגְּבַרְיָא דִּי שָׁלַח מֹשֶׁה לְאֶלְלָא יַת אַרְעָא וְתָבוּ וְאַרְעִימוּ עָלוּהֵי יַת כָּל כְּנִשְׁתָּא לְאַפְ-קָא שׁוּם-בִּישׁ עַל אַרְעָא:

I, the Lord, have made the decree in My Word,- if I will not do unto all this evil congregation who have gathered together against Me; in this wilderness shall they find their end, and here shall they die. And the men whom Mosheh sent to search the land, and who returned to make all the congregation murmur against him, by bringing forth an evil name upon the land; those men who brought out the evil name upon the land died by the plague before the Lord. But Jehoshua bar Nun and Kaleb bar Jephuneh lived, of those men who went to explore the land. (Onkelos)

In the Masoretic text on *Bamidbar / Numbers 14:35* we read that it says “*I the Lord have spoken,*” (אָנִי יְהוָה דְּבַרְתִּי) as compared to the Aramaic text that says “*I the Lord decreed through my Word,*” (אָנָא יְיָ). The Aramaic Targum suggests that God does everything through His Word. The Lord God doing everything through the Memra is consistent with what is written “*in the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and was God*” in *John 1:1*.

In *Devarim / Deuteronomy 1:26-27*, Moshe is reiterating the rebellion of the people against going into the Promised Land.

פרשת דברים ספר דברים פרק א פסוק כו-כז

כו וְלֹא אָבִיתֶם לַעֲלֹת וּתְמָרוּ אֶת-פִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: כז וַתִּרְגְּמוּ בְּאֶהְלִיכֶם וּתְאָמְרוּ בְּשִׁנְאָת יְהוָה אֲתָנוּ הוֹצִיאָנוּ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְתַת אֲתָנוּ בְּיַד הָאֲמֹרִי לְהַשְׁמִידָנוּ:

1:26 ‘Yet you were not willing to go up, but rebelled against the command of the Lord your God; 1:27 and you grumbled in your tents and said, ‘Because the Lord hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us. (NASB)

תרגום אונקלוס ספר דברים פרק א פסוק כו-כז

כו וְלֹא אָבִיתוֹן לְמַסַּק וְסָרְבִיתוֹן עַל מִימְרָא דִּי אֱלֹהֵכֹן: כז וְאַתְרַעְמִיתוֹן בְּמִשְׁכְּנֵיכֹן וְאַמְרִיתוֹן בְּדִסְנֵי יְיָ יְתָנָא אִפְקִנָא מְאַרְעָא דְמִצְרַיִם לְמַמְסַר יְתָנָא בִידָא דְאַמְרָאָה לְשִׁיזְיוֹתָנָא:

But you were not willing to go up, but were rebellious against the Word of the Lord your God, and murmured in your tents, and said: Because the Lord hath hated us, He hath brought us from the land of Mizraim to deliver us into the hand of the Amoraah to destroy us. (Onkelos)

Comparison of the Hebrew and Aramaic translations on *Devarim / Deuteronomy 1:26*, “the people rebelled against the mouth of the Lord” (וַתְּמָרוּ אֶת-פִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם) in Hebrew and “the Word of the Lord” (וְסָרְבִיתוֹן עַל מִימְרָא דִּי אֱלֹהֵכֹן) in Aramaic. Rebelling against the Memra (מִימְרָא, Word) of the Lord is synonymous to rebelling against God Himself. In addition to this, the Lord states what He is going to do as the people cross over into the Promised Land in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 31:2-3*.

פרשת וילך ספר דברים פרק לא פסוק ב-ג

ב וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם בֶּן-מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה אֲנֹכִי הַיּוֹם לֹא-אוּכַל עוֹד לְיָצֵאת וּלְבוֹא וַיהוָה אָמַר אֵלַי לֹא תַעֲבֹר אֶת-הַיַּרְדֵּן הַזֶּה: ג יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ הוּא | עֹבֵר לְפָנֶיךָ הוּא-יִשְׁמִיד אֶת-הַגּוֹיִם הָאֵלֶּה מִלְּפָנֶיךָ וַיִּרְשָׁתָם יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הוּא עֹבֵר לְפָנֶיךָ כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה:

31:2 And he said to them, ‘I am a hundred and twenty years old today; I am no longer able to come and go, and the Lord has said to me, ‘You shall not cross this Jordan.’ 31:3 ‘It is the Lord your God who will cross ahead of you; He will destroy these nations before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua is the one who will cross ahead of you, just as the Lord has spoken. (NASB)

תרגום אונקלוס ספר דברים פרק לא פסוק ב-ג

ב וְאַמְר לְהוֹן בֶּר מְאָה וְעֶשְׂרִין שָׁנִין אָנָּא יוֹמְא־דִּין לִית-אַנְא־יְכִיל עוֹד לְמַפְק וּלְמַעַל וַיְיָ אָמַר לִי לֹא תַעֲבֹר יַת יַרְדֵּנָא הַדִּין: ג יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיךָ מִימְרָה יַעֲבֹר קֳדָמָךָ הוּא יִשְׁצִי יַת עַמְמֵיָא הָאֵלִין מִקֳדָמָךָ וַתִּירַת־נֹן יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הוּא עֹבֵר קֳדָמָךָ כְּמֵאֲדִי מִלִּיל יְיָ:

And he said to them, I am the son of a hundred and twenty years this day. I am no more able to go out and to come in; and the Lord hath said to me, Thou shalt not pass over this Jordan. The Lord thy God, He goeth over before thee; He will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt inherit them. Jehoshua, he goeth over before thee, as the Lord hath said. (Onkelos)

In *Devarim / Deuteronomy 31:3* we read that the Lord God tells the people that He will cross ahead of the children of Israel into the Promised Land (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ הוּא | עֹבֵר לְפָנֶיךָ הוּא-יִשְׁמִיד אֶת-הַגּוֹיִם) whereas the Targum Onkelos states that “The Lord your God, His Word will pass before you” (יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיךָ מִימְרָה יַעֲבֹר) (יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיךָ הוּא | עֹבֵר לְפָנֶיךָ הוּא-יִשְׁצִי יַת עַמְמֵיָא הָאֵלִין מִקֳדָמָךָ). The Memra (מִימְרָה, Word) passing before the people into the Promised Land (Aramaic Targum) in comparison to the Lord God passing before the people into the Promised Land (Masoretic text), indicates that the Lord God is working through His Memra (מִימְרָה, Word) to deliver the people. The point of studying these Scriptures is to show us how the Lord is providing support and life for His people, like in the parable of the wayfarer from Midrash Tehillim 23 Part 3, that the first day of blessing is greater than the last day. The man who does not work or who sits idle does not receive the blessing of God because Scripture states “The Lord has blessed you in all the Work of Your Hands” (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 2:7*). The Lord has shown us by example that we are to work, He provided manna and meat in

the wilderness, his hand did not wax short to provide for his people. The rabbis discuss (i) the man who does not work, (ii) the parable of the wayfarer, (iii) the manna and meat (quails), and (iv) the Lord's hand waxing short and His provision for the children of Israel, realizing the parallels that are found within all of these Scriptures regarding the Scripture from *Tehillim / Psalms 23:1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.* (NASB) The point that is being driven forward in all of these verses is that the Lord God works in and through His Word and we are to follow God's word to produce the fruit of our faith that we have in the Lord and in His Messiah Yeshua. Studying the Rabbinic commentary and comparing the Aramaic (Targum Onkelos) with the Hebrew (Masoretic text) Scriptures reveals to us that the Lord is our Shepherd and we have need for nothing; it is through the Word that God makes His covenant with His people, the Word is our redeemer, the Word also requires obedience of us before God.

Midrash Tehillim 23, Part 5 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying "He restores my soul (*Tehillim / Psalms 23:3*)" The rabbis say in the homiletic introduction that this verse "means that Israel said, God restores my soul with Torah, of which it is said *The Law of the Lord is perfect, resorting the soul (Tehillim / Psalms 19:8).*" The rabbis say the soul is restored by the Law of God and draws a parallel saying "He leads me in the paths of mercy, that is, to manna, to quail, to waters of the well, to clouds of glory; and these are given to me not because I have merit, but for His name's sake (*Tehillim / Psalms 23:3*)." (ינחני) (במעגלי צדק. במן בשליו במי באר בענני כבוד, ולא שיש לי זכות, אלא למען שמו) In the eyes of the rabbis, the Torah is merciful, restoring of the soul, like waters of the well, like manna and quail, and like clouds of glory. They state that these things were not given because of our own merit but for His name's sake. Is this different from the manner in which the Apostle Paul describes the Law? How does our understanding of the Torah today conflict with this description according to the midrash or even of *Tehillim / Psalms 19:8*? The midrash also continues with a discussion on the "rod and staff" of God.

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me, the rod is Your chastisement; the staff, Your Torah. Or, Your rod and Your staff may be read as Your stay and Your staff (Isaiah 3:1), stay being the Written Torah, and staff, the Oral Torah. Lest Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me might lead one to think that comfort from the Written and Oral Torah may be had without chastisement, therefore the word only which begins the next verse (Tehillim / Psalms 23:6) makes the comforting conditional. Lest one might think that they comfort one only in this world, therefore the verse says first, Goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, that is in this world, and then says, And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever, that is, in the world to come. (Midrash Tehillim 23, Part 5)

וז. דתנעשמו דטבש [רחא רבד]. הרות וז [דתנעשמו, וירוסיה ולא] דטבש. דתנעשמו דטבש
 ינומחני המה. הפ לעבש הרות וז הנעשמו, בתכבש הרות וז נעשמ, (א ג היעשי) הנעשמו נעשמ
 ימי לכ ינופדרי דסחו בוט דא רמול דומלת, הזה מלועב לוכי, דא רמול דומלת, וירוסי אלב לוכי
 אבה מלועל. מימי דרואל זה תיבב יתבשו. הזה מלועב, ייה

The rabbis say that the rod and staff can be read as "Your stay and Your staff" with a reference to *Isaiah 3:1-2* that states "3:1 For behold, the Lord GOD of hosts is going to remove from Jerusalem and Judah Both supply and support, the whole supply of bread And the whole supply of water; 3:2 The mighty man and the warrior, The judge and the prophet, The diviner and the elder,..." So the rod and staff are paralleled to supply and support, bread and water, a mighty man and warrior, judge and prophet, and diviner and elder. The rod and staff is also paralleled to the Written Torah and the Oral Torah (Mishnah) and the comfort that is derived from these things comes by chastisement and correction. Here within the covenant context of the Torah, God will chastise His chosen people when they sin. We are convicted of sin and will be led by the power of the Spirit into His paths of righteousness. The Concluding phrase of *Midrash Tehillim 23, Part 5* says "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies (*Tehillim / Psalms 23:5*), a table of manna and quail. A table in the presence of my enemies, Issi son of Akiva took these words to imply

that the heaps of manna were sixty cubits high. And he who does not believe this, he will not look upon the sweetness to come, as is said He will not look upon the rivers, the flowing streams of honey and curd (Job 20:17).” What exactly are the rabbis trying to say here in Midrash Tehillim 23 part 5? Manna is symbolic of bread that comes down from heaven. Bread within the Torah context is symbolic of life itself. In its highest aspect, according to the Scriptures and according to the rabbis it is considered to be spiritual nourishment (manna). Manna (bread) is also known as to represent spiritual knowledge. Bread connects us to the physical aspect of life, our need for food, the symbolism of the body of the Messiah, with the spiritual aspect of truth, and life that comes down from heaven and all of these other things. It is in this way that the rabbis connect the “rod and staff” to the Written and Oral Torah. The Word of God feeds us spiritually and staying away from sin is productive for both the spirit and the flesh. The Lord also chastises us according to His Word to draw us back to Himself. The importance of these truths are allegorized to say that the manna that is prepared upon a table in the presence of our enemies is sixty cubits high. The rabbis draw a similar parallel in Midrash Tehillim 23, Part 7, but state that the chastisement of God will occur in Gehenna (Hell) and the Lord God will cool the fires of hell. (זו דינה של גיהנם, שהוא מצנן לי גיהנם. שבטך) The Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) for *Midrash Tehillim 23, Part 7* states “*The Rabbis taught that this entire Psalm applies to the children of Israel.*” Do the rabbis have a doctrine of purgatory in their interpretation on the rod and the staff? There certainly is not a belief system of purgatory in Judaism, but this is how the “rod and staff” are understood, the rod is a reference to “afflictions in exile” and the staff is the “sustaining merit of the Torah” in which one occupies one’s self in exile. This is emphasized in the Mishnah on the merit of studying Torah in *Mishnah Zeraim, Peah, Chapter 1*.

Mishnah Zeraim, Peah, Chapter 1

These are the things the fruits of which a man enjoys in this world, and the stock of which remains for him in the world to come, honouring one’s father and mother, and charity, and making peace between man and his fellow but the study of the Torah is equal to them all. (“Mishnayoth” by Rabbi Phillip Blackman. Varda Books, 2012, 4042p)

Do the rabbis suggest that studying Torah supersedes the commandments that are listed? The point that is being made is on the importance of studying God’s Word and obeying. The Concluding phrase of *Midrash Tehillim 23, Part 7* says “*And I will dwell in the house of the Lord, in the Temple. May it be built soon and in our own days. Amen and Amen. For the length of days for time never ending, that is, life in the world to come.*” The rabbis seem to suggest that studying God’s Word is as dwelling in the house of the Lord and in the Temple. Thinking on the meaning of the rod and staff, we think of protection against our enemies, to discipline, to guide, and to rescue, all of these things are found within the midrash on Tehillim 23. However the rabbis draw an antithetical (contrary or opposing) aspect between the rod and staff. That the rod is a reference to afflictions whereas the staff to the sustaining support of God. The rabbis also use the light and darkness to compare the righteous with the unrighteous. Scripturally, the rod and staff are symbolic of authority (*i.e. the scepter that stands between a king’s feet*). Was this the imagery that David is trying to portray using the words *שִׁבְטֶךָ וּמִשְׁעַנְתֶּךָ* (shivtecha umishantecha)? David begins this verse saying *גַּם כִּי-אֵלֶּךָ בְּגִיא צִלְמוֹת לֹא-אִירָא רַע כִּי-אַתָּה עִמָּדִי* “*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me*” so the rabbis draw parallels to the rod as afflictions (walking in the shadow of death) and the staff as sustaining support (the Lord is with him) is not too far of a stretch. The Lord is with David and this is only made possible within the covenant relationship David has with the Lord. The rabbis say the Lord will tame down the fires of Hell (Gehenna) so His people are not destroyed, and this is a reference to the afflictions that take place in exile and the Lord rescuing Israel. In *Tehillim / Psalms 23*, David uses the word *שבט* having also the meaning “*tribe or clan,*” may very well be the reason he used this word possibly as a reference to him who the Lord is with and to those who remain in the covenant relationship with God. Regardless of whether one is native born or a ger (stranger) living in the midst of the people. The man who belongs to one of the tribes of Israel is living according to the Torah, honoring their parents

and living with love honor and respect for others, and honoring the Lord God Almighty. Therefore David's use of these words **וּמִשְׁעַנְתֶּךָ וְשִׁבְטֶךָ** (shivtecha umishantecha) as “*Your rod and Your staff;*” the words **וּמִשְׁעַנְתֶּךָ** are not so much expressive of the “*rod and staff*” imagery as judgment and deliverance like the rabbis suggest, as much as it is expressing emphasis upon the Covenant of God with His people, the tribes of Israel, and the one upon whom we are to lean (*i.e.* **וּמִשְׁעַנְתֶּךָ** from the root **שׁען** meaning “*verb: to lean*”). Remaining in the covenant relationship with the Lord, we are comforted in His presence. This leads to our understanding that He cares for us, protects us, and guides us in His word (*by the study of the Torah*), etc. He is Lord and King over our community, relationships, lives, and all that we are. The Aramaic Targum states **ברם לחוד כד אזל בגלותא במישר טולא דמותא לא אדחל מבישתא מטול דמימרך בסעדי תיגדאך תריצא ואורייתך**: *23:4 Indeed, when I go into exile by the plain of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for your word is my help, your straight staff and your Torah, they will comfort me.* (EMC) The Aramaic Targum (rabbinic translation of the Psalm) on *Tehillim / Psalms 23:4* says “*your straight staff and your Torah, they will comfort me.*” The translators have come to the same conclusion that David is speaking within the context of the Torah and the covenant relationship he has with the Lord God Almighty. The greatness of God is that He sent His only Son Yeshua the Messiah to Save us, to Redeem us, and to Deliver us from sin. There is no fear because the Lord is with us and His word tells us that we have a future and that nothing can separate us from him. The Apostle Paul wrote in *Romans 8:35-39*, saying *8:35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 8:36 Just as it is written, ‘For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ 8:37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 8:38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 8:39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (NASB) Let's Pray!

Heavenly Father,

We thank You for Your rod and staff, for these help us to realize the covenant relationship that You have established is the surety of our life and hope in the Messiah Yeshua. Help us Lord to seek the True Messiah, the One who is able to bring us into a covenant relationship with You. Lord forgive us for all of our sins and keep each of us so that our sins do not rule in our lives. We thank you Lord for sending us Your Son Yeshua who paid the covenant price for the forgiveness of our sins. We believe that in Your Son Yeshua, we have the hope of eternal life. Help us to trust in You Lord as we wait patiently for You and Your presence each day. Help us to dedicated our lives to You each day, fill us with Your presence Lord and thank You for revealing these truths to our hearts. We praise Your Holy Name and give You all of the honor, and the glory, and the praise forever and ever.

In Yeshua's (Jesus') Name I pray! Amen!

Be Blessed in Yeshua, Christ our Messiah!

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:
 Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
 “Yeshua” King Messiah forever and ever

Notes

