

## Psalm 23

Compare the following translations (use your own Bible's translation too, if you wish). Do you like one version better than the others? Why? Does any particular turn of phrase help you rethink or re-imagine a verse's meaning? (The footnotes to the NRSV may give you additional insight.)

KING JAMES VERSION	GOD'S WORD TRANSLATION	TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION <i>(Good News Bible)</i>	NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION
The LORD [is] my shepherd; I shall not want.	The LORD is my shepherd. I am never in need.	The LORD is my shepherd; I have everything I need.	The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.	He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside peaceful waters.	He lets me rest in fields of green grass and leads me to quiet pools of fresh water.	He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; <sup>1</sup>
He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.	He renews my soul. He guides me along the paths of righteousness for the sake of his name.	He gives me new strength. He guides me in the right paths, as he has promised.	he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths <sup>2</sup> for his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou [art] with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.	Even though I walk through the dark valley of death, because you are with me, I fear no harm. Your rod and your staff give me courage.	Even if I go through the deepest darkness, I will not be afraid, LORD, for you are with me. Your shepherd's rod and staff protect me.	Even though I walk through the darkest valley, <sup>3</sup> I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff-- they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.	You prepare a banquet for me while my enemies watch. You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows.	You prepare a banquet for me, where all my enemies can see me; you welcome me as an honored guest and fill my cup to the brim.	You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.	Certainly, goodness and mercy will stay close to me all the days of my life, and I will remain in the LORD's house for days without end.	I know that your goodness and love will be with me all my life; and your house will be my home as long as I live.	Surely <sup>4</sup> goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long. <sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hebrew: *waters of rest* <sup>2</sup> Or *paths of righteousness* <sup>3</sup> Or *the valley of the shadow of death* <sup>4</sup> Or *Only* <sup>5</sup> Hebrew: *for length of days*

Now read through these notes from the *HarperCollins Study Bible (NRSV)*. How do such study notes help you understand the psalm? Do they help you experience God through the psalm?

23.1-6 A song of trust that may have been evoked by an experience of deliverance such as the one described in Ps 22. 23.1-3 The imagery of the Lord as shepherd and the people as the flock is developed here in detail (cf. 95.7; 100.3; Isa 40.11; Ezek 34.11-16; Jn 10.11, 14). 23.1 *I shall not want*, as Israel lacked nothing when wandering in the wilderness (Neh 9.21). 23.4 The confidence here reflects the assuring words of the oracle of salvation that came to those in distress who cried out to God: "Do not fear. I am with you." *Darkest valley* is an image for the experience of terrible distress or suffering, the nearness of death. *Rod*, a club used to fend off wild animals. *Staff* an instrument to keep sheep from wandering off. 23.5-6 The image of the Lord as host conveys the psalmist's experience of the goodness of God. These verses may reflect a sacrificial meal in thanksgiving for God's deliverance. 23.5 *You prepare a table before me*, as God spread a table of provision for Israel in the wilderness (78.19). *You anoint my head with oil* reflects the custom of pouring oil over the head of an honored guest. 23.6 The psalmist is now pursued by God's goodness and mercy instead of by enemies and persecutors (7.5; 71.11).