

*Chapter 1: YAHWEH-God's Personal Name
Shepherd-God's Famous Alias*

“The Lord is my Shepherd,” Psalms 23:1, These five words introduce one of the most beloved and famous poems of all ages. Its popularity, however, is based largely on sentimentality with little understanding of the spiritual teachings. Many use this psalm as a magical formula for giving comfort and assurance during serious illness or at funerals to console and comfort the grieving survivors. To some it is only a sentimental Band Aid used “in case of an emergency.” This superficial understanding leaves the reader as unsatisfied for spiritual nourishment as a person who tries to quench their thirst by looking at a photograph of a crystal clear pool of spring water.

W. Philip Keller, a successful shepherd who lived the year-round-life of a shepherd, wrote the classic book called, “A Shepherd Looks At Psalm 23.” He takes the reader step-by-step, hour-by-hour, on the 365-day cycle of a good shepherd.

Keller further enriches us by providing an accurate understanding of the words of the psalms. Most helpful is his ability to apply lessons to our present life. Sentimentality fades away when the reader becomes personally acquainted with the Good Shepherd.

David wanted the readers of his poem to get personally acquainted with the shepherd to whom he belonged. David explains why he totally and joyfully committed himself to be owned and managed by this Good Shepherd, To understand the full impact of who the shepherd is we must do a little word study.

My name is Jack, and identifies the essence of who I am. This explains my actions and positions in society. I am a preacher, writer, father, brother, and husband. I am what these words describe because of who I AM.

So, David shouts with excitement: “Just look who my Shepherd is. My shepherd is none other than Yahweh!” He could have used El Shaddai (God Almighty), El Elyon (God Most High), or El Olam (God the Everlasting), or other titles. But they are just descriptive titles. David designated God by his personal name. YAHWEY does not describe what God does. It identifies the essence of who God **IS!**

Yahweh first appeared to Moses in the burning bush and commanded him to go to the Pharaoh of Egypt and demand that he liberate God’s people. Moses asked God what his name was and God replied, “Tell Pharaoh ‘I AM’ sent you”. Exodus 3:13-15. God needs no descriptive words to explain who he is or what he does because he never changes. He is what he has always been and will never stop being that.

David exults in praise: “Yahweh, ‘I AM’, is my shepherd!” Then he uses the remaining 115 words of the psalm to tell how marvelously and abundantly the shepherd has provided everything he has needed.

David was the son of a shepherd, and was himself a career shepherd until God elevated him to become the Shepherd King of Israel. He knew that a good shepherd literally lives with, and among his sheep. He would sacrifice his life for them. He knows each one personally and intimately. He was there when they were birthed. He gave each a name. They knew his voice, his touch and his scent. The lamb was more dependent on the shepherd for water, food, care and protection than from their near-helpless mother. The shepherd became their most intimate life-long companion. David knew an excellent shepherd when he saw one and loudly and proudly proclaimed that he had become what he was and who he was, because the Lord, Yahweh, was his owner and manager.

You and I need a divine shepherd for we, like sheep, have gone astray and turned to our own way. We find ourselves cast into positions and circumstances where we need help getting back on our feet. We often find ourselves overwhelmed by feeling fear, doubts, guilt, anger, lonely, vulnerable, ill, helpless, hopeless and wounded and need God’s healing touch.

Yahweh, also known as the Good Shepherd, welcomes everyone to come under his shelter, guidance, security, healing, love and provisions that are described in this beautiful psalm.