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## Only One Person Can Separate You From the Love of God. You...

BY RITA BENNETT, WORSHIP COLUMNIST

"The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me."



"Your rod and your staff they comfort me (Psalms 23:4b, KJV MOD). This verse we will look at today.

What do the words "rod" and "staff" really mean?

Jewish thinking sees the rod as God's punishment for sin while His staff is support for the Believer in time of affliction. Both are comforting to a Jew because he realizes that God does not see him as an insignificant straw blowing in the wind. (*Tehillim*, 2001, p. 57)

Generally speaking, Christians are quite grace-centered. Their first choice would probably be that the main purpose for the Shepherd's rod is to beat off the sheep's enemies.

We discovered in our first column on Psalm 23 that the Hebrew spelling for Shepherd is *Roi*. Coincidentally or by God's design, the first letter "R" in Hebrew looks like a Shepherd's crook or curved staff. It was fun to discover that while I was writing my first column in this series.

The staff is very handy for the shepherd's walking in the hills and dales to let the sheep graze. If a sheep falls into dangerous craggy rocks, the crook at the top of the staff can help the Shepherd reach down and rescue his sheep. Also, the sheep pass under the staff when they are counted each night.

So the rod and the staff both comfort the Believer.

The Interpreter's Commentary tells that in ancient Near Eastern literature, Kings were called shepherds of their people. Jesus Christ our Shepherd/King has power and authority over all the forces of darkness, and we have His protection.

### A PLACE FOR DISCIPLINE

But how about discipline? We know that is important, too. Discipline has the word disciple in it. The two are closely related. You cannot have one without the other.

A good parent must use some form of effective discipline. When we do wrong, I believe the greatest discipline for God's children is that we feel separated from the One who loves us most. God doesn't leave us, but it is as though we create an airtight capsule around ourselves that thoroughly blocks our fellowship with Him. He's there all right, but we are blocking His presence.

There's only one person who can separate you from the love of God and that is yourself! And there's only one person who can restore the fellowship and that, again, is yourself, when you humble yourself before God and repent from your sins.

### THE GOOD SHEPHERD

In the Gospel of John, chapter 10, Jesus describes Himself as the good Shepherd. In fact, He states He is the good Shepherd three times in this chapter.

When Jesus gave His life for His sheep, He was showing the greatest love that could ever be expressed for us personally and for the entire human race. The Good Shepherd made *agape*, God's unconditional love, available to us not only at the time of our first accepting Him, but every day of our lives!

God is good and He is love; He's concerned about you personally and longs to bring you into His fold to heal you, restore you, feed you, and comfort you. When you accept your Shepherd, all this and much more is possible.

One day I wanted to be Jesus' disciple, so I said, "Yes Lord." We've been traveling together ever since. I've been grazing on awesome eternal food, and drinking pure living water. His rod protects me. His staff leads me. He is *Roi Tov*, my good Shepherd.

His invitation is open. Whosoever will may come...

(See you next time at the 8<sup>th</sup> Psalm 23 series.)

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