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Get Acquainted With the Good Shepherd

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

"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" (Psalms 23:1-6). We will look at verse six today.

The story is told that a young man heard this verse read aloud, and thought it was speaking to him personally. He was dating a woman named Shirley. He heard, "Shirley, with goodness and mercy (like two little puppies), will follow you all your days." So he decided to propose!

This is of course not the proper way to use scripture! Nor should we close our eyes, open the Bible, point, then open our eyes and read expecting the best answer for our need!

I like the Hebrew rendition of this verse: "May only goodness and kindness pursue me all the days of my life" (*Tehillim*, p. 57).

The word kindness comes from the word *chasadh* (Heb). "It is cen-

tral to God's character... though men may prove unfaithful to this relationship, God's *chasadh* is everlasting" (Isaiah 54:8, *The Complete Word Study*, AMG published 1994.)

Looking at the two words used in verse six – goodness is God's Spirit working within us, and kindness is us reaching out to others. "The combination of the two terms expresses a desire that one will experience personal growth while not neglecting to help others (*Tehillim*, *Ibn Ezra*).

GOD'S GRACE IS ETERNAL

Chasadh is also close to the Christian word, grace, which means receiving "God's unmerited favor."

The prophet Isaiah puts it this way, "For the mountains may leave and the hills be removed, but My grace will never leave you, and My covenant of peace will not be removed," says *Adonai*, who has compassion on you" (chp. 54:10, *Complete Jewish Bible*, Stern, 1998).

ANOTHER DIMENSION

"I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever" (Psalm 23:6b). How is that going to happen for us? Where is this house located? All we know is that it is a planet in the beautiful star studded galaxy of outer space. It's called *shaymayim* (Heb.) in the very first verse of the Bible (Genesis 1:1).

B'rasheet barah Elohim et ha shaymayim veh et ha ahretz, in Hebrew. Translated, "In the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth."

"Heaven is a real eternal place, not only an earthly spiritual experi-

ence. There, we will find unconditional love, tangible peace, beauty, total acceptance, history, heavenly music, praise, worship, dancing, friendship, family reunions, fulfillment, amazing light, mountains, rivers, and rainbows. We will experience shining gemstones, wisdom, knowledge, learning, thirst-quenching drinks, delicious fruit in variety, heavenly manna, trust, joy, kindness, health, timelessness, and eternal life. These are for starters" (R. Bennett, *Heaven Tours*, Bridge-Logos, 2009).

After Jesus completed His "operation rescue" for the human race with His death and resurrection, He said, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am you may be also" (John 14: 2b,3).

This is what the Good Shepherd of Psalm 23 meant that forgiven Believers can look forward to; the reward of eternity with God in His Home with His family forever.

Tell the good Shepherd that you want to belong to Him. Then take some time to repeat Psalm 23 slowly personalizing it, first person. "You Lord are my good Shepherd and that means I shall not want."

Take your time. Enjoy every moment. (See you next time at the 11th Psalm 23 series.)

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