

JEHOVAH ROHI OR YAHWEH ROI

THE LORD MY SHEPHERD

PRAYING THROUGH THE NAMES OF GOD

by Faith Girl

BACKGROUND

For at least part of their history, the Hebrews were a nomadic people who wandered from place to place seeking pasture for their herds of sheep, goats, and cattle. To sustain their livelihood, it was vital for shepherds to keep their animals from straying, protect them from thieves and wild animals, and provide them with plentiful pastures. In the ancient Near East and in Israel itself, “shepherd” eventually became a metaphor for kings.

The Hebrew Scriptures speak of God as the Shepherd of his people and apply this image to religious leaders as well. The New Testament presents Jesus as the Good Shepherd, who protects the lives of his sheep by forfeiting his own life. When you pray to the Lord your Shepherd, you are praying to the One who watches over you day and night, feeding you and leading you safely on the path of righteousness.

Shepherding was one of the earliest human occupations. A family’s wealth was measured by how many sheep, goats, cows, horses, camels, and/ or asses a man owned. Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and David were all shepherds.

Before David fought Goliath, he told Saul: “Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it” (1 Samuel 17: 34– 35).

SCRIPTURE

“The Lord is my
shepherd (Jehovah Rohi),
I lack nothing.”
Psalm 23:1 NIV

“I myself will tend
my sheep and have them lie
down, declares the Sovereign
Lord. I will search for
the lost and bring back the
strays. I will bind up the
injured and strengthen
the weak, but the sleek and
the strong I will destroy. I
will shepherd the flock with
justice.” Ezekiel 34:15-16

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It was the shepherd's responsibility to count each animal to order to make sure none had gone astray. At night, sheep were kept in simple enclosures, in caves or within walls made from bushes. At times, the shepherd would sleep with his body lying across the gate to the enclosure in order to keep the sheep safe.

Both then and now, Yahweh Roi is the one true Shepherd of His people.

According to scientists, sheep have gotten a bad reputation for being, shall we say, less than brilliant. In fact, it appears that sheep are fairly intelligent creatures. They only seem stupid because they are afraid of just about everything. But what's so scary about being a sheep? For one thing, sheep taste good, especially to wolves and other wild animals who love to prey on them because they are defenceless. To make matters worse, sheep are fairly good at getting lost, and when they get wet in a river or a pond, their wool can get so soaked and heavy that they easily drown. Close to shearing time sheep can become so top-heavy that they may fall over and not be able to get up, making them easy targets for predator birds. Sheep, it seems, are a tragedy waiting to happen. It's little wonder that their sense of vulnerability sometimes leads to panic and woolly-brained behaviour.

Though we rarely like to admit it, we too are subject to fears that sometimes cause us to behave stupidly. Afraid of failing in business, we're tempted to cut corners. Frightened by loneliness, we fall prey to relationships that harm us emotionally and spiritually. Fearful that we're going to miss out, we spend money foolishly. Worried that something terrible will happen to our children, we try vainly to control their lives. Fear can become so powerful that it pushes us off the path of righteousness, making us more vulnerable to various kinds of evil. Oddly, some of us are even afraid to admit how fearful we are. Yet fear shapes our behaviours and choices in ways that lead not to greater security, but deepened anxiety.

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me – just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also.

They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd."

John 10:14-18

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If a mob of sheep see a bush fire closing around them, do they run away out of danger? Not at all, they rush round and round in a ring til the fire burns them up. If they are in a river-bed, with a howling flood coming down, they will stubbornly refuse to cross 3 inches of water to save themselves. Dogs may bark and men may shriek, but the sheep won't move. They will wait there til the flood comes and drowns them all.

No wonder we need a Shepherd to keep us safe, to guide us along the right path, and to lead us through the valley of the shadow of death.

Today, ask the Lord to examine your heart, training a spotlight on your fears.

As each one is revealed, ask Him to help you conquer it through faith. Pray that God will replace your fear with a sense of security so strong that you can say with the psalmist, "The Lord is my Shepherd....I fear no evil."

Without Christ we are all directionally-challenged, incapable of living a life that's spiritually on course, and vulnerable to a world of troubles. Like sheep we have gone astray, we are pulled off the path by our disordered desires, our selfish natures, and our attraction to sin. We are like rebellious toddlers who break free from their mother and start running toward traffic, heedless of danger.

Today, reflect on the fact that Jesus is called both the Lamb of God and the Good Shepherd. Thank him for becoming part of the flock, laying down his life so that we might have true life. Take some time to worship Him and to recommit your life to Him. Then pray for a child, a family member, a friend or a business associate who seems far from God. Ask the Lord to search out that one lost sheep. Tell him you won't stop praying until He brings him back.

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Isaiah presents an appealing image of our heavenly Shepherd (Isaiah 40:10-11). He is not only strong but also tender. He is able to defend us against any kind of danger or difficulty. Gathering the lambs in his arms, he gently leads the ewes. He is aware of our weakness and vulnerability and knows exactly who we are.

Jehovah Rohi, you are my shepherd, so I shall not be in want. You make me to lie down in green pastures. You restore my soul. You lead me beside still waters. You prepare a table for me in the presence of those who oppose me. You anoint my head with oil and cause my cup to overflow. Because of you, goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life. Because you are my shepherd, I will dwell in Your house forever. You are the great shepherd. You are the guider of my soul. You are both King and Shepherd over all.

Jehovah Rohi, I often feel as if I am in want. I often look at things I don't have and covet them. Forgive me for my discontent. As my shepherd, you've given me all I need. When I feel lack, it's not because you haven't provided for me. It's because I've disregarded what you have given. Pardon my sins, especially when they rise up in the face of all the blessings you have given me. I must seem like an ungrateful child to you at times, and for that I ask for your forgiveness and grace.

Jehovah Rohi, thank you for being so patient and kind. Thank you for leading me to green pastures and making me lie down there. You know where I will thrive, and you guide me there. You find the place of deepest rest and open up the door for me. Thank you for constantly looking out for my well-being even when I am not doing so myself. Thank you for thinking for me when I fail to think for myself. I've seen your hand of intervention throughout my life - closing doors that would have been harmful to me if I had gone through them. Thank you for being my shepherd, who knows what's best and leads me in that direction.

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Jehovah Rohi, with all the confusion ahead of me, I need you to guide me on the right path. I can't always see which way to go and what decision to make. I need you to be my shepherd and show me the way. Will you help me learn how to listen to you even better than I do now? Will you tune my heart and mind to hear your voice so I will more easily follow you, just as a trusting lamb follows its shepherd? Help me make decisions that honour you and bring you glory. Without you as my shepherd, I would surely wander and eventually get lost. Guide me with your hand and show me your loving care as you shepherd me through life's path.