

Series: The Names of God

Title: Jehovah- Rohi

Text: Psalm 23

Introduction

The name Jehovah Rohi means Jehovah my Shepherd. It is the name that begins the Twenty-third Psalm, translated, "The Lord is my shepherd."

The Shepherd Psalm may be the best-known passage of Scripture in the Bible. It has been a comfort to multitudes of people; it has dried many a tear and dispelled many a fear. It is a psalm of David and was birthed out of his own personal experience. David wrote the 23rd Psalm in the latter years of his life. He looks back upon the stormy, troubled years when King Saul hunted his life. He considers the years of warfare and rebellion and then his own sin and sorrow, and still, he finds God's goodness and guiding presence through it all to be sufficient. He recalls his childhood and youth when he cared for his Father's sheep and sees the beautiful and fitting analogy of his relationship with Jehovah's relationship like that of a shepherd to the sheep.

And now, after the storm and stress of those years which Jehovah has so safely and successfully brought him through, with confident faith, he can look forward to the years ahead and say, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

I. MEANING AND USE OF "ROHI"

The primary meaning of the word "Rohi" is to feed or lead to pasture, as a shepherd does his flock.

Abraham's family were shepherds. The story of Joseph in Egypt opens with Joseph "feeding the flock with his brethren" (Genesis 37:2). In Egypt, his brothers answer Pharaoh by saying, "Your servants are shepherds, both we, and also our fathers . . . your servants have no pasture for their flocks" (Genesis 47:3, 4).

1 Samuel 17 says, "David went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem" (I Samuel 17:15). Jeremiah says that Jehovah promised to give them Israel "pastors for shepherds according to His own heart, who would feed His people with knowledge and understanding" (Jeremiah 3:15).

Both Ezekiel and Jeremiah contrast this with Jehovah's condemnation of the false shepherds. Ezekiel says that Jehovah will feed the false shepherds with judgment (Ezekiel 34:16).

II. JEHOVAH, THE SHEPHERD OF HIS PEOPLE

In the name of Jehovah-rohi, relationship finds its most tender expression, for Jehovah is the Shepherd of His people. No other name of Jehovah has the tender, intimate touch this name does.

The name Elohim revealed God to us as the triune Creator and Sovereign of the universe. As Jehovah, He is the eternal, self-existent God of revelation, especially as God of His covenant people. The name El Shaddai reveals Him as the mighty, sufficient, and satisfying One. As Adonai, He is as our sovereign Lord, the Master of our lives and service. As Jehovah Jireh, He provides the sacrificial Lamb of our redemption. Jehovah Rophe reveals Him as the Healer of life's sicknesses and sorrows. As Jehovah Nissi, He is the banner of our victory in life's conflicts. Jehovah M'Kaddesh sets His people apart for His holy service. As Jehovah Shalom, He is the God of our peace. And as Jehovah Tsidkenu, He is the righteousness of our justification and acceptance.

Jehovah is perfect in purity and glorious in majesty. Isaiah says, His thoughts and ways are immeasurable and transcend the thoughts and ways of His people (Isaiah 55:8, 9). Yet the extraordinary grace of Jehovah expressed in the word "shepherd" means He has condescended to a relationship with mortal, sinful creatures, whom He has redeemed.

The psalmist and the prophets are the first to apply the name shepherd to Jehovah. It appears first directly and personally in the Twenty-third Psalm. Everything in David's life suggests he had such a relationship with God. On one occasion, God said to him, "I took thee from the shepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people" (II Samuel 7:8). Psalm 78 adds, "He chose David ... to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart" (Psalm 78:70-72).

After David designates Jehovah as a shepherd, the term frequently appears in scripture. Psalm 80 says, "Hear us, Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock. You who sit enthroned between the cherubim shine forth. [\(Psalms 80:1\)](#)

In the great chapter of comfort, Isaiah 40, the prophet says, "Behold Jehovah Elohim will come with a strong hand He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young." [\(Isaiah 40:11\)](#)

Ezekiel also gives us a picture of this beautiful relationship in 34:11-16, "'For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they

will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. 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 34:11-16)

Shepherding has not changed much in Palestine. There are still wild beasts that can descend still upon unprotected sheep. The shepherd still lives night and day with his animals. He calls them all by their names, and they know his voice. He protects the sheep from thieves and preying animals by sleeping in the opening of the often makeshift sheepfold. He provides pasture and water even in the wilderness.

It is what David says Jehovah is to all His people. Jacob understood the vigilance and constant exposure required of a shepherd! In the day, the drought consumed him, and the frost by night. The sleep departed from his eyes. When he gave his blessing to Joseph, he said, "May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked faithfully, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,"

(Genesis 48:15)

Psalms 121 says, Jehovah is the Keeper of His people, the shade upon their right hand. He does not allow the sun to smite them by day nor the moon by night. He keeps them from all evil. He who keeps His people neither slumbers nor sleeps (Psalm 121).

The shepherd must be resourceful, committed, and strong. Jacob calls Jehovah "the mighty God . . . the shepherd" (Genesis 49:24). Everything that the shepherd is to the sheep, Jehovah is to His people. In Exodus 29, God said, "Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God. They will know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God." (Exodus 29:45-46)

The word dwell is the word Shekinah, indicating His glorious presence. Jehovah as Shepherd offers His people the intimacy of His presence. The intimacy of the shepherd is the most precious privilege the sheep possess. But it comes only by constant association and abiding in His presence.

Jehovah Rohi is not only the Shepherd of His people; He is my Shepherd, the Shepherd of each one of His people. As the God of each individual, He is intensely personal. Not that Israel indulged in vague philosophical speculation or pantheistic dream about Jehovah, but every one of His flock could say, "I am the Lord's, and he is mine." They understood that He had each one of them in mind. He knew them all by name. Each person could say, "You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar." (Psalms 139:2)

The Psalm is full of personal pronouns. It is the Psalm of personal experience with a personal God to whom every sheep of the fold is precious. It is a Psalm anyone can claim.

III. JESUS OUR SHEPHERD

Of all the names of God in the Old Testament, none is more beautifully pictured in the New Testament than the name Jehovah Rohi. Jesus Christ is our Jehovah Rohi. He is the glorious Shepherd of the sheep. Jesus is the Shepherd who is seen going after the sheep that was lost in John chapter 10. The glorious announcement of His birth was first made to shepherds keeping watch by night over their flock. And His last instruction to Peter before ascending to sit at the right hand of God the Father is to feed and tend His sheep.

In John 10:11, he said, "I am the good shepherd," No one could not have mistaken His meaning. He was the "I am" of Isaiah 40:11, the Lord Jehovah who was to come as a mighty One and feed His flock like a Shepherd and gently lead them. He fulfilled the words of Ezekiel, "For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. 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 34:11-16](#))

His shepherd's heart melted with compassion for the people of Jerusalem, who were like sheep without a shepherd. He would have rescued and gathered them, but they would not. Peter reminds us that we were once going astray like sheep, but now we have returned to Him, who is the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls (1 Peter 2:25). As our Shepherd, Jesus has gone on before us to prepare the way forward for us. After He offered one sacrifice for all sins, He sat down at the right hand of God (Hebrews 10:12), giving us the boldness to enter the holy place because of His sacrifice for us (Hebrews 10:19, 20).

As the good and great Shepherd of the sheep, Jesus meets every need of His flock (Philippians 4:19), and there is no want to those who trust him. He guides us in the paths and promises to be with us. He promised that as the Spirit of truth, He would guide you into all truth (John 16:13). In John 14, Jesus said, "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you." ([John 14:16-17 NKJV](#))

By day our Shepherd gently leads, and by night He is the door of the sheep (John 10:9, 10). He protects us from the perils that are very real. When Paul was at Miletus, he warned the elders of the Ephesus church, "For I know this, that after my

departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock" (Acts 20:29). For I know this, that after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock." (Acts 20:29 NKJV)

Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. (Matthew 7:15 NKJV)

The abiding presence of the Spirit of truth will keep us from these false teachers who exploit and destroy faith. The Shepherd will keep us from the poisonous plants they try to feed the sheep. Jehovah Rohi will keep us from the pitfalls of error into which we may wander. His eye is always alert for the snakes whose sting was death, and he crushes their heads with his staff. So the great Shepherd, who has already sealed the serpent's doom, will deliver us from falling into his power. We are safe at the table He spreads before us even in the presence of the enemy.

Jesus knows every one of His sheep by name. He knows our needs. He knows our weaknesses. Do you know the voice of the Shepherd as you should? Do you trust the Lord and follow Him as we should? Is there the beautiful intimacy between you and the Lord that there should be? Do you love the Shepherd's presence? Can you distinguish His voice from the voice of the wolf in sheep's clothing which comes to wreck your faith?

As His sheep, the Shepherd leads us. Sometimes the path is through fresh green meadows; sometimes over rough, steep, rocky trails, sometimes through dark places where the sun scarcely shines. But after the heat and burden of the day, He gathers us into the fold, where there is no more fear of wolf or thief and where all abides safely.

And then we know that whatever the sufferings and sorrows, the trials and terrors of the day, His goodness and loving-kindness followed us.

Conclusion

Jesus qualified Himself to become that good and great Shepherd by first becoming a lamb. He experienced the needs of the sheep. Hebrews 2 says, "For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham." (Hebrews 2:16 NKJV)

He partook of our flesh so that as He Himself suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. (Hebrews 2:18 NKJV)

He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, for He was tempted and tried in all points as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). He learned obedience and was made perfect through suffering (Hebrews 2:10). As the Lamb of God, Jesus subjected Himself willingly to the Father's will and became worthy to be that good Shepherd of the sheep, who gave His life for the sheep (John 10:11).

It is the Lord Jesus, our Jehovah Rohi, will lead us into that final fold and rest "before the throne of God" where, John says, "they serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them.

Revelation 7 says, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more: neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat: for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd" (Revelation 7:15-17, ASV). Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

(Revelation 7:15-17 NKJV)

And so "shall we dwell in the house of Jehovah, forever."