

READING PLAN WEEK 6 for **The Epic of Eden – Psalms – Like a Shepherd Lead Us**

Word from the Author: “Our text this week is probably the most well-known Psalm of our Old Testament, Psalm 23. I sometimes speak of it as ‘a psalm for sheep and shepherds’ because this psalm speaks as directly to the sheep (congregation) as it does to the shepherds (pastors). This psalm comes from the very first collection within the Psalter. It is a psalm of David (the shepherd) it is a hymn of praise, and it rests upon our hearts the way a cup of good coffee or chamomile tea rests within our chilled hands on a crisp, bright November morning. My ambition in our lessons this week is to make what is old new, what is familiar unfamiliar, and to thereby remind you and me who we are, *whose* we are, and encourage you with the inalterable truth of your inheritance.”

Day #1: Read Psalm 23:1, 1 Samuel 17:34-37, Psalm 23:2-3, Psalm 74:1, Psalm 79:13 and Psalm 100:1-3. Lots of clips here, but the common thread is there; we are seeing various scriptural references to sheep (and shepherds). Why do you think that might be? As to the sheep, the predominant livestock in Israel were mixed flocks of Awassi sheep and Black Sinai goats. The latter are tough-as-nails and extremely adaptive. The former, while the more valuable asset, were also the most vulnerable. Among other things, Awassi sheep are terribly nearsighted, get lost easily, and also panic easily. So, when, in scripture, God compares us to sheep, He is making a reference which was known to Israel. What overarching themes about the character of sheep come through in the readings you saw today?

Day #2: Read 1 Samuel 17:14-15, 28, 34-37. Today we'll focus more on the role of the shepherd, beginning with David. We caught a glimpse of his character yesterday in 1 Samuel 17:34-37, when David replied to King Saul about his defending credentials when the Israelites were confronted with Goliath and the Philistines. This has certainly given us some broad-stroke insight into the characteristics of a “good” shepherd leader. On the other hand, God uses a severe bad shepherding metaphor to chastise those who did not protect His flock from the exile of Israel in 586 BC. For extra credit, **Read Ezekiel 34:1-16** to hear God's harsh words.

Day #3: Read Micah 5:2 and 5:4. Then **Read Matthew 2:1-6.** The sheep and shepherd metaphors are invoked again here in a big way. Finally for today, **Read John 10:1-8** and meditate on the deep message Jesus is trying to convey to us here.

This week's reflection question: We have to realize that the metaphor of the shepherd and the sheep applies to us today, even though sheep are not part of our cultural points of reference. The character of both ARE familiar to us. This week, let's give meditative thought to the fact that Jesus, speaking with Peter after His resurrection invoked the image of shepherding and sheep when he spoke to Peter (who himself was a fisherman, not a shepherd) on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus said, “Feed my sheep” three times. Does He say this to us as spiritual leaders in our families and faith communities? I'll give you a hint at the answer, yes, He does. For context and proof, feel free to have a look at 1 Peter 5:1-4.

[illegible]