



Carnegie Shul Chatter

May 7, 2020



Light Candles 8:05pm

Services cancelled

In Trying Times

These are trying times for all of us. We are threatened by this pandemic, and we fear for our own health and safety and for the health and safety of our loved ones.

But just as King David acknowledged that God was there for him in his time of need, so must we recognize that God is also there for us in our time of need. Just as a shepherd watches over his flock, our God watches over us. He leads us where it is good for us to go. When we are weary, as we are now, he gives us strength. When he is beside us, we need not fear because he knows what is best for us and will be there for us if only we ask.

Yes, things may not always go as we'd prefer. Yes, we may be afraid. But God will guard over us. Even if our human bodies are at risk, God will protect our souls.

Just as cures and vaccines have been developed for other terrible diseases like polio, smallpox, diphtheria, and many others, so too will a cure and a vaccine be developed for the novel coronavirus.

And goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives, and we will dwell in the house of our Lord forever.

Psalm 23

PSALM 23 A Psalm of David

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restorcth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Most of us know the twenty-third psalm as something that is often recited at funerals. When we are confronted by death, we draw strength from the verse “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

But the twenty-third psalm is much more than a psalm to be said at funerals. It is a psalm that affirms our faith and trust in God at all times, especially when times are tough.

Why did David write this, perhaps his most beautiful psalm? According to Chabad, “Rashi teaches us that David composed this psalm while on the run from King Saul, who was intent on murdering him. Hiding in the dry Judean forest of Hereth, and on the brink of death without food or drink, he was miraculously saved by G-d, who nourished him with a taste of the World to Come. David gratefully burst out in song, describing the magnitude of his trust in G-d.

According to the interpretation of the Targum and Radak, David alludes to how G-d provided for the Jews’ every need throughout their 40-year sojourn in the desert, and to how they will sing when G-d returns them to our Holy Land; David sings, not just for himself, but for every Jew. Throughout the ages, in times of both sorrow and joy, millions of Jews gathered strength from these heartfelt words—words that comforted and uplifted them, and strengthened their trust in the Almighty—trust that G-d, our faithful shepherd, will never forsake His precious flock, and ultimately will uplift and exalt us eternally in His holy house.”

And many people recite this psalm not only at funerals, but also on Shabbos. Again, according to Chabad, “In addition to being said in times of trouble, and as part of the specific set of psalms recited on behalf of a sick person, Mizmor Ledavid (Psalm 23) is most famously sung on Shabbat, during shalosh seudot, the third Shabbat meal eaten in the waning hours of the day. Some even say it three times. Some (including Chabad) also say it prior to eating the other two Shabbat meals (Friday night and Saturday morning), as well as at the conclusion of Friday night services.

Perhaps this above-mentioned reason is also the reason we say it specifically before we begin the meals, before we enjoy the sustenance that G-d bestowed on us.

**The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want.**

—**Psalm 23:1**



Other Reasons for Psalm 23 on Shabbat

Here are a few more interesting explanations on why we recite Mizmor leDavid throughout Shabbat.

- Moses passed away on Shabbat afternoon (according to some opinions), and Moses, as mentioned, is referred to as the “raya m’heimnah,” the faithful shepherd of the Jews. Therefore we say this psalm at this time, affirming that although Moses is no longer with us we are not afraid, because we know that G d is our eternal shepherd.
- Rabbi Menachem Mendel Rimanov (1745-1815), chassidic rebbe and author of Divrei Menachem, explains the verse “You set a table before me in the presence of my adversaries” to refer to the manna that G d provided for the Jews in the desert. Shabbat has a special connection to the manna, as a double portion fell from heaven on Friday for every Jew, for Friday and Shabbat.

(That is the reason we have two challahs at each Shabbat meal). Perhaps that is another reason we say Mizmor leDavid specifically before meals, reminding us of the miracle of the manna, and how even now, just like then, it is G d who provides for us.”

