

In some places what we have done today might be called a naming ceremony. Names are important and David is a great name – I checked online to see what I could find out about people called David: it means beloved and I'm sure little David will experience love through his life. If you're called David you are likely to be independent, resourceful, practical and patient. Also wilful and sceptical and your communication can be stilted, too candid and frank! I have no idea what they are talking about with that.

In Old Testament times names were much more important than they are now. People today tend to pick a family name, a favourite friend or a movie star to name their child. In the OT the child was named before it was born and the parents prayed that the child would grow into the meaning, so they picked a good name like warrior, leader, integrity etc. Another option was when a child was older and becoming someone great they would rename the child what he or she was becoming. Names were really important and over the next few weeks we're going to think about some names of God that tell us something about his character.

Today the name is Jehovah Rohi – you might guess what it means from the reading: it means the Lord is my Shepherd. Throughout the bible Shepherd is a name used of God and in the NT Jesus is called the Good Shepherd. But what is the main thing a shepherd needs? SHEEP!

Psalm 100:3 *Know that the Lord is God.*

*It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.*

There are some similarities between people and sheep. Sheep are stupid – some sheep can eat so much that they kill themselves; think all you can eat buffet! They wander off and find themselves in danger. They don't have a reverse gear – if they find themselves stuck they push in harder and harder because they don't know how to back out.

Sheep are also fearful. A sheep can run off a cliff in fear, or run into things and hurt themselves because they are frightened. A whole flock can find themselves in trouble because they were spooked by something.

Sheep are vulnerable. They get lots of bugs and diseases and don't have sharp teeth, spikes or armour to defend themselves.

Just like us sheep are stupid, fearful and vulnerable. BUT, we have a good shepherd to protect and care for us.

Three things to note about Jehovah Rohi:

First, he will provide for you. Psalm 23:1 *The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing*. Many people are fearful of the future with uncertainty over Brexit and how it will affect jobs, pensions etc. At the same time we are coming up to Black Friday when people are expected to spend millions of pounds buying ‘things’. You can’t buy happiness or contentment and none of us know what is going to happen in the future. David was surrounded by enemies, running a country and building a kingdom when he wrote these words. He understood that without God he had nothing and with God he had everything he needed. Philippians 4:19 *And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus*.

Secondly, Yehovah Rohi will calm you with his peace. I’m not sure if you feel that life is too busy and as we loom towards Christmas it’s only going to get worse. Look at verses 2-3 *Jehovah Rohi makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul*. What does that mean for us? Sheep won’t lie down until they are fed and feel safe. Sheep won’t drink from water that’s running too fast, so they need quiet water. In that place of provision and safety they are refreshed. If you are overwhelmed today, hear these words: Philippians 4:6-7 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*. Jehovah Rohi provides for us and calms us with his peace.

Thirdly, he comforts with his presence. Some of you are lonely. Some are hurt, or anxious, or struggling in some way and you need to hear that Yehovah Rohi comforts you with His presence. Psalm 23:4 *Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me*. Why will I not fear? Because Jehovah Rohi is with me. It’s an interesting image being comforted by a staff – a large stick with a hook shaped end. In those days the shepherd would go at the front of the sheep to lead them and they would follow the noise of the staff hitting the ground as the shepherd walked. It would also be used to lift sheep if they fell and to make a noise to scare away dangerous animals. We like the idea of that sort of comfort – we like that someone will care for us and make sure we have what we need. However, there is another way to understand comfort. On the Bayeux Tapestry there is a section where it says Bishop Odo comforts the troops. Bishop Odo was at the rear, away from the fighting but he is shown with a club in his hand striking the soldiers. In this case ‘to comfort’ means to strengthen, encourage and embolden those who have left the battlefield before the battle is over. That is also the job of the shepherd.

Verses 5-6, Yehovah Rohi, *“You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all of the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”* What does this mean? Why would He anoint my head with oil? Sheep are very prone to parasites. Little flies buzz around and get into the nose or ears of the sheep. They lay eggs and then the parasites crawl into the head of the sheep and drive it mad so that they injure themselves. It’s amazing that it’s often little things that get to us most. A good shepherd would take oil mixed with Sulphur and use it as an insect repellent.

The image of your cup overflowing is amazing when this was written the tradition was that if you visited someone’s house you knew when it was time to go when they stopped filling your cup. You were allowed to stay as long as your cup was full. How long are you allowed to stay in the presence of Yehovah Rohi? As long as your cup is full. My cup overflows and I will dwell in His house forever and ever ... Yehovah Rohi.

Do you need love, care, protection, guidance, peace, rest, refreshment of your soul? If you do, why not make today the day you ask God to be your shepherd and receive all that and more.