

Psalms 28:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up for ever.

Analysis

Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up for ever. The psalm concludes with pastoral prayer for God's people—a fitting ending that moves from individual deliverance (v.6-7) through corporate strength (v.8) to intercession for the nation (v.9). David functions as shepherd-king, praying for his flock's welfare.

"Save thy people" (הַשֵּׁעָה אֶת-עַמָּךְ/hoshi'ah et-ammekha) invokes deliverance for God's covenant people. Yasha means to save, deliver, rescue. The imperative form is urgent petition: "Save!" "Thy people" (ammekha) emphasizes covenant relationship—they belong to God, are His possession. This isn't generic humanitarian concern but intercession for those in covenant relationship with Yahweh. The term "people" (am) specifically denotes covenant community, not humanity generally (goyim/nations).

"And bless thine inheritance" (וָבָרֶךְ אֶת-נַחֲלָתֶךָ/uvarekh et-nachalatekha) requests divine favor upon God's possession. Nachalah means inheritance, possession, heritage—what belongs to someone by right. God calls Israel "mine inheritance" (1 Kings 8:51-53), the people He chose as His treasured possession. Blessing (baruch) encompasses prosperity, protection, fruitfulness—comprehensive divine favor. Deuteronomy 28 details covenant blessings: agricultural abundance, military victory, societal flourishing. David asks God to fulfill covenant promises to His chosen people.

"Feed them also" (מַעֲרֵךְ/ur'em) uses shepherd imagery. Ra'ah means to shepherd, tend, feed, care for—the same verb used in Psalm 23:1 ("The LORD is my shepherd"). This connects divine provision with pastoral care. God doesn't merely provide resources but tends personally like a shepherd caring for sheep. Ezekiel 34:11-16 portrays God as shepherd who seeks lost sheep, binds up injured, strengthens sick.

"And lift them up" (וְאֶנְשַׁנְתִּי/venasse'em) requests divine exaltation. Nasa means to lift, carry, bear up, exalt. This could mean:

1. carrying like shepherd carries lambs (Isaiah 40:11)
2. lifting from trouble/oppression
3. exalting to honor, or
4. sustaining/supporting.

All meanings fit contextually. God both carries His people through difficulties and exalts them to honor.

"For ever" (וְלֹא-צַדְעַת/ad-ha'olam) extends the petition eternally. Olam means perpetuity, eternity, everlasting duration. David doesn't request temporary blessing but permanent divine care. This anticipates New Covenant promises: "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish" (John 10:28). God's care for His people isn't temporary but everlasting.

Historical Context

This verse's pastoral imagery reflects David's dual role as shepherd and king. Before ruling Israel, he shepherded his father's flocks (1 Samuel 16:11). God took him "from following the sheep" to "feed my people Israel" (2 Samuel 7:8). Ancient Near Eastern kings commonly bore the title "shepherd of the people," but David embodied this literally—he knew shepherding's demands and transferred these to royal responsibility.

The concept of Israel as God's inheritance has deep roots. God told Moses to tell Pharaoh: "Israel is my son, even my firstborn" (Exodus 4:22). After the exodus, God declared: "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people" (Exodus 19:5).

Deuteronomy 32:9 states: "The LORD's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." This special relationship distinguished Israel from other nations—not because Israel was superior but because God chose to reveal Himself through them.

The prayer's structure—save, bless, feed, lift up, forever—encompasses comprehensive care: deliverance from danger (save), favor in covenant (bless), provision of needs (feed), support through difficulties (lift up), and eternal duration (forever). This reflects ancient Near Eastern vassal treaty language where suzerain promised protection, provision, and blessing to faithful vassals.

For Israel in various crises—Assyrian threat, Babylonian exile, Persian rule, Greek persecution, Roman occupation—this prayer sustained hope. When human shepherds failed (as Ezekiel 34 indicts Israel's corrupt leaders), God promised to shepherd His people directly. This hope found fulfillment in Christ who declared: "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11).

Early church applied these promises to the new covenant community. Peter calls believers "the people of God" (1 Peter 2:10), God's inheritance. The pastoral epistles instruct church leaders to "feed the flock of God" (1 Peter 5:2), continuing the shepherding imagery. Christ, the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4), delegates pastoral care to under-shepherds while remaining ultimately responsible for His flock's welfare.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What does it mean that believers are God's 'inheritance' (His possession), and how should this shape our identity and confidence?
2. How does the metaphor of God 'feeding' His people as a shepherd encompass more than physical provision, and what comprehensive care does this imply?

3. In what ways does David's dual experience as literal shepherd and royal shepherd inform his prayer for God's people?
4. How does Christ fulfill the roles requested in this verse—saving, blessing, feeding, and lifting up God's people forever?
5. What responsibility do believers have to pray for the corporate church (God's people collectively) rather than focusing only on personal needs?

Interlinear Text

וְרֹא	בְּנַחֲלָת	בְּנַחֲלָת	וְרֹא
אֶת	הַוְשֵׁם	עַמְּךָ	אֶת
Save	H853	thy people	and bless
H3467		H5971	H1288
וְעַל	עַל	כָּלְמָד:	
בְּנֵשָׁא	עַד		
them also and lift them up	H5704	for ever	
H5375		H5769	

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 40:11 (Parallel theme): He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

Psalms 78:71 (Parallel theme): From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance.

Deuteronomy 9:29 (Parallel theme): Yet they are thy people and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest out by thy mighty power and by thy stretched out arm.

Isaiah 63:9 (Salvation): In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.

Matthew 2:6 (Parallel theme): And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

1 Kings 8:51 (Parallel theme): For they be thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron:

Ezra 1:4 (Parallel theme): And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.

Psalms 25:22 (Parallel theme): Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.

Ephesians 1:18 (Parallel theme): The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

1 Kings 8:53 (Parallel theme): For thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth, to be thine inheritance, as thou spakest by the hand of Moses thy servant, when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord GOD.