

Psalm 78:72

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

Analysis

This verse concludes Psalm 78 by celebrating David's shepherding of Israel with two qualities: "integrity of his heart" (Hebrew *ketom levavo*) and "skilfulness of his hands" (Hebrew *uvetvunot kappav*). "Integrity" (*tom*) indicates moral wholeness, sincerity, blamelessness—not sinless perfection but genuine devotion to God. "Skilfulness" (*tevunot*) denotes wisdom, understanding, competent administration. The shepherd metaphor ("fed" and "guided") recalls God's own shepherding of Israel (Psalm 23) and establishes the king as God's under-shepherd. True leadership requires both character (integrity) and competence (skill); neither suffices alone.

Historical Context

David rose from literal shepherd to king, making this metaphor autobiographical. Despite personal failures (Bathsheba, Uriah), his overall reign was marked by genuine devotion to God and wise governance. The contrast with Saul, who had position but not heart, is implicit. This verse anticipates the "good shepherd" prophecy (Ezekiel 34) and ultimately Christ, the Chief Shepherd who leads with perfect integrity and infinite wisdom.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does combining "integrity of heart" with "skilfulness of hands" challenge both anti-intellectual pietism and competent ungodliness in Christian leadership?
2. In what ways did David exemplify shepherding leadership, and where did he fail—and what do both teach us?
3. How does Jesus Christ fulfill this ideal perfectly as the good shepherd who feeds and guides His people?

Interlinear Text

וְיִרְאָם	כִּתְבָּה	לְבָבָךְ	בְּתִבְועָה
So he fed them according to the integrity	of his heart	them by the skilfulness	
H7462	H8537	H3824	H8394
יָדְךָ	יְנִיחָה:		
of his hands	and guided		
H3709	H5148		

Additional Cross-References

1 Kings 9:4 (Parallel theme): And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments:

2 Timothy 2:15 (Parallel theme): Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.