

Psalm 95:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice,

Analysis

This verse establishes the relationship between God and His people through the metaphor of shepherd and flock, while introducing an urgent temporal element with 'To day.' 'For he is our God' reasserts the intimate covenantal relationship: God is not merely the great God of the universe but 'our' God, characterizing Him as intimately committed to this particular people. 'And we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand' employs pastoral imagery to describe the relationship. The 'people of his pasture' suggests not merely possession but provision - God is the shepherd who provides for His flock. 'Sheep of his hand' emphasizes divine care and control; the sheep rest in the shepherd's protecting hand. The metaphor is particularly powerful because sheep are vulnerable creatures requiring constant guidance and protection. The word 'To day' (Hebrew 'ha-yom') introduces a time-bound element suggesting that this relationship and opportunity for worship are contingent, urgent, and demand immediate response. The conditional 'If ye will hear his voice' (partially quoted here) that follows in verse 7 indicates that covenant relationship is maintained through responsive obedience. This verse moves from God's cosmic supremacy (verse 3) to His intimate shepherding care, and from corporate identity to individual responsibility.

Historical Context

The shepherd metaphor for God's relationship to His people permeates biblical literature (Psalm 23, Isaiah 40:11, Jeremiah 23:3-4, Ezekiel 34, John 10:11). In the ancient Near East, shepherd was a standard metaphor for kingship - the king was

responsible for the well-being of his subjects. Israel's kings were understood as under-shepherds appointed by YHWH to care for His people (2 Samuel 5:2). During the exile, when Israel's earthly king was in captivity, the assurance that YHWH remained their shepherd would have been crucial. The concept of Israel as God's 'people' ('am') emphasizes the communal rather than merely individual relationship. The use of 'hand' recalls the protecting hand of God in delivering Israel from Egypt (Exodus 13:9) and suggests ongoing protection. The phrase 'people of his pasture' appears also in Psalm 100:3, indicating this was a regular component of Israel's self-understanding. The urgency of 'today' suggests that each generation must renew their covenant commitment and responsive obedience, rather than relying on the faithfulness of previous generations.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does the shepherd-sheep metaphor describe both protection and the vulnerability of dependence on God?
2. What is the significance of God being 'our' God - intimate and particular rather than merely cosmic and universal?
3. Why does the psalm introduce the urgent element of 'today,' and what might we be tempted to postpone or neglect?
4. How does understanding ourselves as 'sheep' of God's hand both humble us and provide security?
5. What does 'hearing his voice' imply about the nature of relationship with God and the responsibility it entails?

Interlinear Text

מֶ רְעִיתֹן עֲזָבָה יְהוָה יְהוָה חָנָן וְאַתֶּן כִּי
H3588 H1931 For he is our God H430 H587 and we are the people H5971 H4830
וְאַתָּה אַתָּה בְּקָלְלָה תִּשְׁמַעְתָּ
and the sheep of his hand To day his voice if ye will hear
H6629 H3027 H3117 H518 H6963 H8085

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 3:15 (Parallel theme): While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

Hebrews 4:7 (Parallel theme): Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Revelation 3:20 (Parallel theme): Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

Psalms 74:1 (References God): O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever? why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?

Psalms 48:14 (References God): For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.

1 Peter 2:25 (Parallel theme): For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

Hebrews 3:13 (Parallel theme): But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Hebrews 11:16 (References God): But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

Acts 20:28 (References God): Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Psalms 23:1 (Parallel theme): The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

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