

# Warrior-Shepherd Imagery, Faith, & Military Service

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# Warrior in the Bible

- In Hebrew (primary terms)
  - “Man of war”: *‘ish milkhamah*
  - “Valiant one/man, hero, mighty (one), warrior”: *gibbor, gibbor khayil*
  - These terms also can be translated as “soldier”
- In Greek
  - “Soldier,” *stratiōtēs*
  - “One who does military service, serves in the army, engages in a conflict,” *strateuomai*

# A Few Historical Details

- No standing army in Israel before Monarchy (10<sup>th</sup>—6<sup>th</sup> c. B.C.E.)
- Farmers, trades people, others
- Mercenaries (David's band of troops, 1 Sam 22:2; Uriah the Hittite, 2 Sam 11:3)
- Bodyguards (Saul, 1 Sam 22:7; Rehoboam, 1 Kgs 14:27)
- Standing armies arise with Neo-Assyrian Empire (10<sup>th</sup>—6<sup>th</sup> c. B.C.E.)

# Shepherd in the Ancient Near East

- **Gudea of Lagash**, late 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C.E.—“the true shepherd of the Land...the shepherd chosen by Ningîrsu...”
- **Esarhaddon of Assyria** (7<sup>th</sup> c. B.C.E.)—“the true shepherd who reorganized the confused people (and) made light shine forth for them.”
- **Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon** (7<sup>th</sup> c. B.C.E.)—“I shepherded with the utmost care the peoples that my lord,...Marduk, had handed over to me, I directed them on the proper course and toward the correct behavior. I protected the loyal, I destroyed the enemy.”

# What are a (political) shepherd's characteristics?

1. Divinely chosen (and responsible to deity)
2. Provides for the flock's needs
3. Governs them by establishing social order
4. Directs in the proper ways of living
5. Protects from harm and destroys enemies
6. Justice in the kingdom is enacted through such actions
7. King has a duty of care for the well-being of the people and bears responsibility for the relationship with them

# Shepherds in the Bible

- Hebrew term: *ro'eh*
  - Pastoralists
    - Abel (Gen 4:2), Moses, (Exod 3:1), David (1 Sam 16:11)
    - "Herders" of Abram and Lot (Gen 13:7)
  - Political
    - Kings of Israel and Judah (2 Sam 5:2; 7:7)
    - Good shepherds and bad shepherds
    - God a divine shepherd (Ps 23; Jer 23:3-4; Ezek 34:11-31)
- Greek terms: *poimen*, *poimainō*
  - Pastoralists
    - Shepherds in the fields get angelic announcement of Jesus' birth (Lk 2)
  - Jesus as shepherd
    - The good shepherd who protects the sheep (Jn 10:11-12)

# Bad Shepherds in Israel & Judah

"Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my people: It is you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the LORD. (Jer 23:1-2 [NRSV])

# God's Condemnation of Bad Shepherds

“Mortal, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel: prophesy, and say to them—to the shepherds: Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, you shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured, you have not brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and scattered, they became food for all the wild animals.” Ezek 34:2-5

# The Divine Shepherd as Exemplar (Ps 23)

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;  
he restores my soul [being]. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod  
and your staff—they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the  
house of the LORD my whole life long.

# Jesus as Shepherd

- Shepherds Israel (Mt 2:6; Heb 13:20)
- Has compassion on people (Mt 9:36; Mk 6:34)
- Judges the people, separating sheep and goats (Mt 25:32)
- Protects the people (Jn 10:11-12)
- Provides for them (Rev 7:17)

# The Warrior-Shepherd Imagery, Faith, & Military Chaplaincy

- Responsibility of shepherd for those over whom he or she exercises authority
- Responsibility for one and all, individual and collective
- Providing for various needs: physical, spiritual, safety, healing
- Defense of flock, both external and internal
- Needs good judgment, observation of others, knowledge of flock
- Killing and death are assumed

Thank you

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