

7:14; 1 Chronicles 17:13]? And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, 'AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM [Deuteronomy 32:43, LXX; Psalm 97:7].' And of the angels He says, 'WHO MAKES HIS ANGELS WINDS, AND HIS MINISTERS A FLAME OF FIRE' [Psalm 104:4]. But of the Son *He says*, 'YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM. YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS; THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS' [Psalm 45:6-7]. And, 'YOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH, AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS; THEY WILL PERISH, BUT YOU REMAIN; AND THEY ALL WILL BECOME OLD LIKE A GARMENT, AND LIKE A MANTLE YOU WILL ROLL THEM UP; LIKE A GARMENT THEY WILL ALSO BE CHANGED. BUT YOU ARE THE SAME, AND YOUR YEARS WILL NOT COME TO AN END' [Psalm 102:25-27]" (Hebrews 1:5-12).

Consideration of the additional Psalms applied to the Messiah (esp. Psalm 45:6-7; 102:25-27), where it is seen that Yeshua is integrated into the Divine Identity, is more what is necessary.

Psalm 23:1-4

"The Lord as Shepherd"

"A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."

Psalm 23 is one of the most significant chapters of Holy Scripture, often because of the great comfort and solace which it has been responsible for providing many people. It is easy to recognize how Bible readers often take for granted the word, "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1a), *YHWH ro'i lo ech'sar* (יְהוָה רֹעִי לֹא אֶחָסֵר).¹⁹¹ In the Tanach or Old Testament, the LORD or YHWH is often referred to as the shepherd of His people. Might this communicate anything later in the Apostolic Writings or New Testament, regarding Yeshua the Messiah as shepherd?

As far as it concerns God proper as shepherd, in the Tanach, Tremper Longman III astutely summarizes,

"The metaphor of God as shepherd is by no means unique to this psalm (e.g. Gen. 48:15; 49:24; Pss 28:9; 80:1; Isa. 40:11; Ezek. 34:15; Mic. 7:14). God as shepherd is primarily a pastoral metaphor, but it should be borne in mind that, throughout the Ancient Near East, kings and other leaders were styled as shepherds of their people. In the Old Testament as well, the king was the shepherd of his people. Most often, this metaphor was used in a negative sense of Israel's leaders. They were shepherds who led their sheep astray (e.g. Ezek. 34), but David responded well, though not perfectly, to God's command that he shepherd God's people (2 Sam. 5:2). The extensive use of the shepherd metaphor for leaders reveals that Psalm 23 is a royal psalm. The psalmist expresses confidence in the Lord (Yahweh) as the shepherd-king."¹⁹²

How might the LORD or YHWH being shepherd, carry over into how Yeshua the Messiah both functions as shepherd, and what could be deduced regarding His nature? In a general resource like *The Apologetics Study Bible*, more Messianic significance is stressed from Yeshua being the Good Shepherd or Great Shepherd, as a leader of His people and Kingdom:

¹⁹¹ "Yahweh is my shepherd, I lack nothing" (New Jerusalem Bible).

¹⁹² Tremper Longman III, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Psalms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), pp 134-135.

Approaching the Nature of Yeshua from the Tanach

“The metaphor of the shepherd was a common figure for religious and political leaders of antiquity (2:9). It therefore became a powerful image for the coming Messiah (74:1-4; 80:1; Is 40:11; Ezk 34; Mic 7:14). The NT confirms that passages like this point to the ministry of Jesus Christ, the good Shepherd who lays down His life (Jn 10:14), the great Shepherd who equips the saints (Heb 13:20), and the chief Shepherd who comes in glory (1 Pt 5:4). The descriptions of the shepherd here portray how the Lord teaches, heals, guides, and protects.”¹⁹³

Those who hold to a high Christology, of Yeshua the Messiah being God, might immediately conclude that while there are political and leadership overtones with Yeshua being shepherd—with the LORD or YHWH as shepherd, that clearly Yeshua is integrated into the Divine Identity by being shepherd as well. A bit more restraint is actually necessary, because various agents of God—human agents, in fact—are described by God to have a shepherding function in leading and guiding His people. In his resource *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity*, Richard N. Longenecker sets forth some of the Tanach background behind Yeshua of Nazareth being a shepherd:

“In the Old Testament, the relation between both (1) God and his people, and (2) a human leader and his subjects, is repeatedly portrayed in terms of a shepherd and his flock. The imagery of Ps. 23:1-6 and the title ‘Shepherd of Israel’ in Ps. 80:1 immediately come to mind with reference to God; while with reference to God’s appointed agents, Ps. 77:20, for example...and Isa. 63:11, [recall] the...exodus experience...[B]oth psalmists and prophets spoke of God, to whom the flock belongs, and his vicereagents, to whom was entrusted the care of the flock, as shepherds over their sheep; the one the supreme Shepherd and the others undershepherds. And such representations of leadership, whether human or divine, seem to have been common in the ancient world, and were continued in the intertestamental period among the Jews.

“Of greater significance for our purpose here, are the Old Testament passages which describe the promised Messiah in terms of a Shepherd over God’s people. Micah 5:4...Ezekiel 34:23...And Zech. 13:7...

“The use of the title in regard to Jesus seems to have stemmed from Jesus himself, for it appears as a self-designation in all the Gospel strata. Matthew and Mark report that Jesus applied the words of Zech. 13:7....directly to himself....Luke, in his special Perea material, presents Jesus as alluding to the language and sentiment of Zech. 13:7-9...And John, of course, incorporates into his portrayal the parable of the Good Shepherd and his sheep. In the light of such a background with Judaism and the precedent set by Jesus himself, Jewish Christians continued to speak of Jesus as ‘the Shepherd’ (ὁ ποιμήν [*ho poimēn*] [1 Peter 2:25]), ‘the Chief Shepherd’ (ὁ ἀρχιποιμήν [*ho archipoimēn*] [1 Peter 5:4]), and ‘the Great Shepherd of the sheep’ (ὁ ποιμήν τῶν προβάτων ὁ μέγας [*ho poimēn tōn probatōn ho megas*] [Hebrews 13:20])...”¹⁹⁴

It is too simple to claim that since the LORD or YHWH is shepherd in Psalm 23:1, that Yeshua the Messiah also being shepherd, automatically proves He is God. At the same time, with God proper being shepherd, we may be required to consider those later scenes in the Apostolic Writings where Yeshua as shepherd is being depicted, and evaluate what *function* Yeshua is performing—and from there consider whether or not a created supernatural agent would be seen to honestly perform such activity.

¹⁹³ Ted Cabal, gen. ed., *The Apologetics Study Bible*, HCSB (Nashville: Holman, 2007), 810.

¹⁹⁴ Richard N. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), pp 48,