



PSALM 23
PSALM 104
THE BOOK OF RUTH

Build Background

The Book of Psalms The Book of Psalms is the hymnal of ancient Israel. The word *psalm* (sä́m) comes from a Greek word meaning “to play the harp.” Like many other lyric poems, psalms were originally intended to be sung. Most of the psalms were written to be used during worship in the Temple. Many are attributed to King David, who ruled over Israel around 1000 B.C. Before becoming king, David was a shepherd. Shepherds spent long hours watching their flocks and often sang and played the harp to pass the time.

The Book of Psalms contains 150 songs on a wide variety of topics. Each describes a particular way God influences people or events in the world. Psalm 23 focuses on the relationship between God and a single individual. Psalm 104 describes God’s connection to all of nature. Many of the psalms, like these, are songs of praise.

The Book of Ruth If the Book of Psalms presents us with some of the first lyric poems, the Book of Ruth gives us one of the first and most memorable short stories. Ruth is very different from earlier biblical heroes. When the story begins, she is not an important person at the center of Hebrew history. In fact, as a woman who is widowed, childless, and foreign, she is at the bottom of the social scale. Our interest in Ruth is in her story—in what motivates her as a character, in the conflict that she faces, and in how it gets resolved.

Connect to Your Life

The Book of Ruth is a story about a person who is completely dependent on the kindness of others. Think of a time when you had to depend on another person for something important. Did the person come through? What were your feelings throughout the experience? Discuss your experience with a classmate.

Focus Your Reading

LITERARY ANALYSIS: DESCRIPTION


Psalm 23, Psalm 104, and the Book of Ruth come alive through **description**—writing that helps readers picture scenes, events, and **characters**. Good description often involves the use of vivid language:

*The trees of the Lord are full of sap,
the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted,
where the birds make their nests;
as for the stork,
the fir trees are her house.*

As you read, think about the effects created by the descriptive details you encounter.

ACTIVE READING: VISUALIZING

When you **visualize**, you use your imagination to form pictures in your mind. The more precise the **details** a writer supplies, the better a reader is able to visualize a work’s **setting**, **characters**, and events.

 **READER'S NOTEBOOK** As you read these selections, write down the details that help you easily visualize what is being described.

Psalm 23

King James Bible

The Lord is my shepherd;

I shall not want.¹

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
he leadeth me beside the still waters;

5 he restoreth my soul.

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley
of the shadow of death,

10 I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me
in the presence of mine enemies:

Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.²

15 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

1. **want:** be in need.

2. **Thou preparest . . . runneth over:** In this verse, the Lord is presented as a generous host who offers his guest food, oil for grooming, and an overflowing cup of wine. In ancient times, olive oil was used as a cleansing agent and was quite expensive.



David, the young shepherd, plays his pipe and a bell (I Samuel 16: 5–11). French manuscript illustration. The Granger Collection, New York.

Psalm 104

King James Bible



Bless the Lord, O my soul.

O Lord my God, thou art very great;
thou art clothed with honor and majesty.
Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment?
5 Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain?
Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters?
Who maketh the clouds his chariot?
Who walketh upon the wings of the wind?
Who maketh his angels spirits,
10 his ministers a flaming fire?
Who laid the foundations of the earth,
that it should not be removed for ever?
Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment;
the waters stood above the mountains.
15 At thy rebuke they fled;
at the voice of thy thunder they hastened away.
They go up by the mountains,
they go down by the valleys
unto the place which thou hast founded for them.
20 Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over,
that they turn not again to cover the earth.
He sendeth the springs into the valleys,
which run among the hills.
They give drink to every beast of the field;
25 the wild asses quench their thirst.
By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation,
which sing among the branches.
He watereth the hills from his chambers:
The earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works.
30 He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle,
and herb for the service of man:



Detail of *St. John the Baptist in the Wilderness*, Geertgen tot Sint Jans. 42 cm × 28 cm. Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Photo © Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, New York.

That he may bring forth food out of the earth;
and wine that maketh glad the heart of man,
and oil to make his face to shine,
35 and bread which strengtheneth man's heart.
The trees of the Lord are full of sap,
the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted,
where the birds make their nests;
as for the stork,
40 the fir trees are her house.
The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats,
and the rocks for the conies.¹
He appointed the moon for seasons;
the sun knoweth his going down.²

1. **conies:** animals similar to hares or rabbits.

2. **the sun knoweth his going down:** The sun knows when to set.

45 Thou makest darkness, and it is night,
 wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth.
The young lions roar after their prey,
 and seek their meat from God.
The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together,
50 and lay them down in their dens.
Man goeth forth unto his work
 and to his labor until the evening.
O Lord, how manifold are thy works!
In wisdom hast thou made them all;
55 the earth is full of thy riches.
So is this great and wide sea,
 wherein are things creeping innumerable,
 both small and great beasts.
There go the ships;
60 there is that leviathan,³
 whom thou hast made to play therein.
These wait all upon thee,
that thou mayest give them their meat in due season.
That thou givest them they gather;
65 thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.
 Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled;
thou takest away their breath, they die,
 and return to their dust.
Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created,
70 and thou renewest the face of the earth.
The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever;
 the Lord shall rejoice in his works.
He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth;
 he toucheth the hills, and they smoke.
75 I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live;
I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.
 My meditation of him shall be sweet;
 I will be glad in the Lord.
Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth,
80 and let the wicked be no more.
Bless thou the Lord, O my soul.
Praise ye the Lord.

3. **leviathan**: a monstrous sea creature sometimes identified with the whale.