

On August 10, when I was telling you about William Shakespeare, I told you that it looked like he had inserted his name into Psalm 46 in the King James translation of the Bible, which he helped to produce. At that time, I didn't explain a Psalm (pronounced 'Saam') is a kind of sacred song of the Jewish people, and the Bible collects together 150 Psalms in the BOOK OF PSALMS, which is located near the middle of the Bible. If you divide 46 by 2, you get 23 and Psalm 23 is one of the loveliest and the most famous in the Bible - and I thought I would give it to you today, using the King James translation of the Bible (where the Bible was originally written in Hebrew, and then translated into Greek and Latin long before the English got to translate it into English):



### PSALM 23

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

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

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,  
I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me;

Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me.  
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies;  
Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:  
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

A couple of points about this Psalm.

First, did the line 'I walk through the valley of the shadow of death' remind you of anything? If not, go back to the poem I gave you on September 5 - 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' - and just read the third line of that poem. When Tennyson wrote that line, he knew that his readers would be familiar with Psalm 23, and in particular the King James translation of Psalm 23. So by talking about the 'six hundred' members of the Light Brigade riding into the 'valley of Death', he was telling the readers, without telling them, that they didn't have to fear any evil, because God was with them; which would have been a very comforting thought for those who had lost loved ones in the charge of the Light Brigade.

Second, though the language of the Psalm is from the seventeenth century, which is when the King James translation of the Bible is produced (it was published in 1611), it is much lovelier and more musical than modern translations of Psalm 23. Compare the first few lines of the New International Version translation of the Psalm, which was produced in 1978:

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

He makes me lie down in green pastures.  
He leads me beside quiet waters.

He refreshes my soul.

Or the Passion Translation of the Bible's version of Psalm 23, which was produced in 2017:

The Lord is my best friend and my shepherd.

I always have more than enough.

He offers a resting place for me in his luxurious love.

His tracks take me to an oasis of peace, the quiet brook of bliss.

That's where he restores and revives my life.

There's just no comparison with the original King James translation.

'I shall not want' is way better than 'I lack nothing', which is too abrupt (even though both sentences have four syllables in them). And 'I always have more than enough' is way too long, and sounds like what someone who gets to go to McDonalds every day would say.

When the King James translators of the Bible used the phrase 'still waters', they knew what they were doing. There is a phrase that comes from Ancient Rome, which says 'still waters run deep' - which means, that waters which look nice and safe and still actually could be very dangerous - they run deep and you could drown in them. And so when the King James Version describes God as leading someone 'beside the still waters', that's supposed to make you think of God steering you safely past all sorts of hidden dangers that we can't see. The New International Version translators of the Bible completely lost that reference by using the phrase 'quiet waters' instead. And the Passion Translation has God actively leading someone on to 'an oasis of peace, the quiet brook of bliss' - which is completely the opposite of what that line originally meant.

This is why I said on August 12 that those who don't like English, or England, are very keen on people's not reading the King James Version of the Bible and encourage them to read some other translation instead - because if you can get everyone reading different translations of the Bible, then they lack a common language, a set of phrases and references, that can bind them together. And the other translations are simply not as good. So even though some of the words are hard to understand, always try to read the King James Version of the Bible in preference to any other translation.