

## The Secret at the Center of the Psalm

I love it when an author makes his or her point exquisitely clear. I want to know how they want to impact me with their writing. If I'm reading something written by a person from another culture, and their culture uses clues that signal the author's point. I want to know those clues.

What's my point? King David, the author of Psalm 23, came from another culture. He wrote in the biblical Hebrew style using clues that we don't use in our current English-texts. If you want to know the secret at the center of this Psalm, read on. Keep a translation of Psalm 23 in front of you as you read.

David uses repetition to tell us his point. He *starts* this Psalm with the name of God; he *ends* it with the name of God, and he puts the name of God at the very *center* of his Psalm. You don't need to read Hebrew to see this pattern, but you do need to know that it's vital to look for repetitions and to notice where they occur.

Maybe a visual analogy will help you remember this pattern. If you see a group of birds flying overhead, they usually form a V: one bird at the right rear, one bird at the left rear, and one bird front and center who leads the whole group to their destination.

In Psalm 23, David shapes his words into a V pattern. Writers call this pattern "inverted parallelism." The words at the center, like the front and center bird, lead the reader where the author wants them to focus. This pattern repeatedly occurs in biblical literature.

Note the use of God's name at the beginning of this Psalm. Then notice the reference to God's presence at the center point of the Psalm.

In inverted parallelism, the center point typically also occurs at the beginning and end of a unit. Here the author is emphasizing that we do not need to fear evil because of God's shepherding presence.

David uses the structure of his poem to convey his meaning. What does he want us to notice about how God interacts with us? How does this information affect our sense of safety when death's shadow threatens? Hidden at the center of this Psalm is a truth David knew first hand - that his victorious God was *never* distant. Our secret to peace when death threatens is a growing certainty of God's ever-present care. May you experience His presence more and more vividly during these challenging days.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for Thou art with me. [Tweet](#)

### **Psalm 23- The Secret at the Center of the Psalm**

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